

Vlog For Me

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Vlog For Me

by [justputsomeglitteronit](#)

Summary

Alya Césaire's lived a fairly normal life... until she came to Paris and got introduced to its superheroes, Lady Luck and Karma, and supervillains, Mme. Mite and M. Méfait.

Now, this budding journalist is gonna become the city's leading expert on the magical and supernatural, while providing whatever help she can for the heroes with the "luckyblog." Not only is Alya a hardcore superhero fan but, maybe with all the magic and chaos in the air, she's developed the uncanny (and unlucky) ability to always find herself in the middle of magical brawls. Who else but her is perfect for the job? Besides, who wouldn't want to help out superheroes given the chance?

Notes

Disclaimer: I do not own Miraculous Ladybug nor do I make money from writing

A/N: No characters were whitewashed in creation of this fanfiction

let Bunnyx handle it

Chapter Summary

The avatar of time has some sound advice for the new kid, after a day gone wrong.

Chapter Notes

A/N: This story's idea came to me while writing Mesh and how Alya almost always found herself in the chaos, now given how I already had her set to receive a Miraculous there, I was thinking: what would it be like if she wasn't a Miraculous holder but was still an all-around badass? And thus, this idea was formed!

Nooroo cannot feel the emotions of others in this story; how people get akumatized happens differently than in the show

Wikipedia told me collègue (middle school) and lycée (high school) refer to their teachers as professeur

I belatedly realized, twelve chapters in, that I never gave Émilie's miraculous a camouflaged description; although now that I think about it, that is because I never wrote her with it not transformed.

Thursday, September 3rd, 2020

Alya looks at herself in the mirror. She puts her hair in a high ponytail as she examines her first day outfit hanging on the door: a long-sleeve plaid red and yellow button-up shirt and a pair of grey jeans.

Her mother, Marlena, landed the head chef job at *Le Grand Paris Château* so the whole family up and moved from Louisiana, North America to Paris, France.

Her father, Otis, was filling out an application for a job at the zoo. Nora, her elder sister, traveled already for her kickboxing circuit so the move was no change for her. Likewise her little sisters, Etta and Ella, had no problem with moving because they hadn't started school yet.

Moving wasn't... necessarily a problem with her, meant she wasn't around long enough to be that weird kid obsessed with superheroes and superpowers.

The family arrived in the city two days ago, just in time for the first day of the school year – as Nora liked to remind her. Her mother was going to register her and if everything went well, she'd be starting school today too.

She puts on her lucky *Knightowl* undershirt then takes her first day outfit off the door and gets dressed.

Alya puts on her small silver hoop earrings and grabs her chapstick, lotion, and hand sanitizer putting them in her backpack's front pocket then grabs her notebooks, notepad, cell phone charger, and calculator stuffing them into her backpack. She puts on her *Super Mackerel* red and yellow socks then hoists her *Knightowl* backpack over her shoulder.

Marlena is on the phone but she waves her second-oldest over. While still talking on the phone, Marlena loosens some strands of Alya's hair so they fall around her face. She bids the person she's on the phone with goodbye then gives her daughter a thumbs-up. "Better."

"Thanks, Ma. I'm all set. What's my school's name again?"

"François Düpont." Marlena replies. "It's fairly new... less than a decade old, but rumored to be one of the best schools in the city." The orange-haired woman shrugs. "Seeing is believing. If you're all set we're off. Have to drop by my new job to check-in with slash meet the boss. They say the Bourgeois family is impossible to please and they go through head chefs like the latest fashion craze." Alya whistles.

"Don't worry, Ma, you got this. If they're the first people *ever* to fire Marlena Césaire, the whole world will know it's because of their incompetence not because of your inability to make some bomb ass food."

"I was fired from my first two jobs, you know."

"One was a racist clown who got their restaurant shut down because of you so that's a win, and the second fired you before you became *Marlena Césaire*. You were just some cook then. Bet they'll be taking the credit for your career taking off."

Marlena laughs cradling her daughter's face. "What would I do without you, My Light?"

“Have a lot more one-sided arguments.”

“I know! Why are the twins so quick to jump to Otis’ side when we disagree?”

After breakfast, they hop on Marlène’s motorcycle and make their way to François Dupont.

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“*Oh crap!* I’m late!”

Sabine looks up at the ceiling hearing her daughter yell, followed by a series of crashes and groans.

“I’ll get the first-aid kit.” Tom says heading into the shop. Sabine pauses drinking her juice when she no longer hears anything.

“Marinette?” There’s a loud bang that has the blue-haired woman jumping up out of her seat. “What the hell was that?” Frowning, Sabine heads up the stairs then opens the trap door to her daughter’s bedroom then gasps when she sees Marinette flailing underneath her mannequins. “Oh, dear. What—how did this happen?”

“I was trying to get my lucky dragonfly clip when I tripped over my purse string, then I fell into one mannequin while the others fell on me. And to top it off I broke my clip!” Struggling not to laugh, Sabine helps her daughter up.

“Xiè xiè, māmā.”

Sabine tip toes to pat her daughter’s head. “I know the school is the next block over but you really need to work on your time management.” Marinette nods with a salute, “you also need to change. Your shirt has a huge hole in it.”

Marinette looks down and gasps, “*oh no!*” She holds out her floral red shirt in front of her grimacing at the gaping hole near the bottom, “I made this outfit specifically for my first day of quatrième!” She runs her hands down her face then gasps and removes her hands, “I’ll have to get the back-up.”

Sabine watches her daughter undress as she runs around her destroyed room. “You made a back-up first day outfit?”

“It was just something new I was fooling around with. I put the finishing touches on it—*whoa*, when I woke up.” Sabine winces and puts her hands over her eyes as Marinette hops on one foot in nothing but her underwear until she reaches the only upright mannequin that has a red romper on it. “Ta-da~”

Sabine slowly removes her hands as Marinette puts the romper on. “Marinette, this is beautiful!” She gasps, “I mean, I’m *always* in awe of your clothing but this...” Sabine puts a hand on her cheek. “When did you begin making this?”

“When nǎi nai visited. She helped with the snake. It’s so much harder to stitch together a dragon’s head than its whole body. Snakes were less detailed so I made that instead. I’m gonna take a picture wearing this—”

“Have a seat and let me fix your hair.” They both look around the room, “uh... put some socks on and come downstairs so I can do your hair.”

Marinette nods then tip-toes over everything to find a pair of red socks and holds them up humming. Given she shot up like a rocket over the summer, she had to get an entirely new wardrobe. Of course, that was an excellent reason for her to make herself some new clothes as well as buy some. She puts the socks down then grabs the shoebox under her bed and opens it picking up the red ballet flats with the snake pattern bow she’s sewn into them.

“This is your year, Marinette Dupain-Cheng.” She pumps her fists in the air then juggles her flats for a few seconds before grabbing them. “This is your year.” She repeats. Nodding to herself, she leaves her room then trips down the stairs slamming into the wall. “Keep up that optimism.” She murmurs sliding to the floor.

When Marinette regains consciousness her father is sighing pressing a bandage against her cheek. “Are you okay?” He moves his pointer finger in front of her face from side to side, with their standard concussion regimen. “Seeing doubles?” Marinette shakes her head. “Any pain anywhere?”

“No. I feel fine.” She winces as she feels her forehead stinging. Sabine sighs pressing a cotton ball into the bottle of disinfectant.

“You’re gonna have a couple of cool scars to start off your year.” Tom puts another bandage on her face, this time on her forehead.

Meanwhile, Sabine gets to work on styling Marinette's hair. She combs then parts Marinette's hair tying the ends into buns. She makes it look effortless compared to when Marinette does it. But that's natural considering her mother wasn't cursed with clumsiness. Marinette gets it from Tom, it's just twice as bad, she also got her father's height and love of combat sports. From her mother she got her looks, no disrespect to her father but she's grateful for that, she also got her mother's critical eye for detail and intolerance for bullshit.

It was Sabine's mother, Xiùlán, who instilled Marinette's love of fashion. Watching all sorts of fashion competitions with her. Even having them sew and work on clothing together. Even after they left Shanghai to come to Paris nearly a decade ago, Marinette and Xiùlán always found a way to stay in contact and never miss any fashion competitions.

"You're good to go." Tom reports eyeing the box on the counter. Marinette follows his movement and stares at the box with the boulangerie pâtisserie's new logo on it – the logo they asked her to design. It's a simple S & T then a BP in cursive but they went nuts over it.

Right. Every year she carries a box of pâtisseries for her classmates and *every year* the school's "queen bee" Chloé Bourgeois – the mayor's daughter who decided two years ago, when they met, she wanted to make Marinette's life a living hell – makes some snide comment about her parents pâtisseries, then Marinette makes a comment about Chloé's (appalling) fashion sense for someone related to *The Queen of Fashion*, Audrey Bourgeois, then Chloé makes some minor threat about something then pouts for the rest of the school day. Why Damocles kept them in the same class for two years in a row she has no idea? Probably because she's the only one who won't take the blonde's crap. She honestly wouldn't be surprised if it became three years this year.

Marinette lost track of how many times Chloé's made a threat to get the boulangerie pâtisserie shut down in the past, but after Chloé's own father made a large purchase from their shop *for Chloé's birthday*, she moved onto threatening something else.

"How about breakfast?" Sabine asks.

"I'll just take a pâtisserie." She grabs a banana fritter and stuffs half in her mouth then grabs the box and heads to the door putting on her ballet flats and slips her bag over her shoulder. She mumbles her goodbye then leaves the shop.

"Those macarons aren't gonna make it to the school." Tom says with a sigh.

"Nope."

“Oh. Why did I have to give her my clumsiness?!” Tom takes a step then trips over the chair but manages to grip onto the counter so he doesn’t fall on his face. He sighs and Sabine laughs.

Marinette makes it to the crosswalk where there’s heavy foot-traffic heading in her direction. She barely manages to make it to the other side intact and when she turns around to catch her breath she notices the tiny bespectacled old man struggling to cross the street with his cane. How he avoided that crowd is a mystery but Marinette heads over to him before the light changes. She mumbles something momentarily forgetting the fritter in her mouth. The man looks up at her in confusion until she gestures – box in hand – toward the other side of the street.

The guy gets the memo and nods hooking onto her arm so he can cross.

They cross the street but a navy towncar pulls up dangerously close to them and Marinette pulls the guy out of the way accidentally tossing the box into the sky. Then she gapes which has the fritter falling out of her mouth.

The towncar’s back door opens before the chauffeur can open it and *Chloé* walks out of the towncar and laughs haughtily then freezes and does a double take at Marinette, “*whoa!*” Scowling, she shakes her head. “So you hit a growth spurt. Doesn’t matter, you’re still *you*. Watch where you’re going, Dupain-Cheng or I’ll tell my chauffeur to hit you next time.” She flips her ponytail then walks into the boulangerie pâtisserie.

“That *bi—*” The old man clears his throat holding out the box to her. “W-Wha—? H-How?”

“They fell into my hand. I could not save the thing that fell out of your mouth, though.”

Marinette sighs, “that’s fine, I’ll mourn my fritter when I get in the school. I appreciate your help.”

The old man shakes his head with a smile, “oh no. It was you that assisted me.” Marinette opens the box and offers it to the man.

“Go on and take one. All my parents’ pâtisseries are gluten-free because I’m allergic to gluten. These look like their mint chocolate chip and coffee macarons.”

The man takes one and bites into it moaning appreciatively, “they’re delicious.”

“My parents own the shop right there in case you’re ever looking to satisfy your sweet tooth. They also make savory pâtisseries.”

“I’ll have to take you up on that offer.”

Marinette closes the box. “Do you need help getting to your destination?”

“Oh no. Don’t worry yourself over an old man like me—”

“Are you—” The bell rings, “shit—I-I mean *crap*.” She winces rubbing the back of her neck then juggles the box and sighs in relief when she doesn’t drop it. “Guess that’s my cue. Take care.”

“And you as well.” He watches the teen walk off then turns to the blonde who exits the boulangerie pâtisserie glaring at him before getting into the town car. He watches the town car drive off in the direction of the school then cracks his back and heads to the shop. He could use a pâtisserie or two.

And if his hunch about the magic he sensed was correct, he’ll be visiting this shop a lot more.

Marinette skids to a halt bumping into someone standing on the staircase. “Whoa! Are you okay?” An unfamiliar voice asks. Marinette shakes the stars out of her eyes and squints at the blond in front of her.

“*Adrikins!*” She hears Chloé screech then she hears Chloé’s bodyguard yell after her. The blonde glares daggers at Marinette, specifically around the hand that the blond is holding. “You’re gonna get Dupain-Cheng’s clumsy all over you.” She grabs the box of macarons with one hand and the blond’s arm with the other. “I’ll be taking these. They’re in better hands than yours. Come along, Adrikins, I’ll show you around the school. There really isn’t much to look at, though.”

Without the blond’s support, Marinette flails backwards until she falls into something soft. “Good thing I was here.”

“Kim!” She sighs in relief as the brunet sets her upright. Chloé sticks her tongue out at them before dragging the green-eyed blond into the building. Odd. That boy looked kinda familiar. Oh well.

“You okay? I see Chloé’s starting with her shit early this morning, huh?”

Marinette sighs, “I won’t let her get to me this year.”

“Atta girl.” Kim claps her on the back, “does that mean we’re gonna stoop to her level?” He rubs his hands together.

“No, Kim. We’re too good for that.”

“We don’t have to be! I’m just *itching* to be Chloé’s level of petty but you won’t let me.” Marinette laughs putting an arm around Kim’s shoulder as they enter the building.

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“What do you mean he *left*?” It takes everything in the blue-haired woman not to flinch at the tone. “You’re supposed to be keeping track of Adrien 24/7 and even past that! What are we paying you for if you’re not going to do your job?”

“Émilie, I understand your anger but yelling at Nathalie won’t solve anything.” The blonde huffs folding her arms over her chest. “Where did he say he was going?”

“To school.” Nathalie replies.

Émilie and Gabriel exchange a glance. For some inexplicable reason, their son Adrien had become obsessed with teenage dramas recently and claimed to want “a real teenager experience.” Whatever the hell that meant. They admittedly ignored him so that’s probably why he snuck off. But Nathalie not trying to stop him was new. Gabriel hired her seven years ago because of her efficiency, if that was starting to slip she was no longer going to be of use to either of them.

“Find out what ‘school’ Adrien snuck off to then find him and bring him back.” The blonde pauses, “no, wait. On second thought. Don’t do that. We don’t want to seem unreasonable.” Gabriel raises an eyebrow at her and she gives him a knowing look in response. “Check out the school and see if it’s good enough for him. If it is, we let him stay. If it isn’t, we’ll select a school for his caliber.”

Gabriel frowns. “I trust your judgment explicitly, Love, but is this truly a good idea?”

“No, but we’re gonna do it anyway. His tutors are always talking about how he drifts off and has his head in the clouds. Perhaps he won’t be so inclined to do so in a proper school setting. We don’t want him growing up to resent us for taking away the one thing he’s asked us for.”

“Of course, Love.” Émilie shoos Nathalie. The woman bows then quickly walks off.

Smiling, Émilie turns to Gabriel. “Also, if Adrien’s not here he won’t aimlessly wander and find out what we’re up to.”

“That’s a ...fair point, but we are doing this for him too. Shouldn’t he know?”

“No. It’s bad enough he *knows* he’ll never have a biological sibling because of my stupid body—” Gabriel holds her hands.

“Never say never. It’s why we found the miraculouses. We’re going to make our wish come true and have more children.” Émilie smiles at him. “We should test them out, in the field. Practicing in the atrium only goes so far.”

“Fine.” The blonde playfully rolls her eyes. “Let’s give it a shot.” They walk hand-in-hand to the atrium. Émilie picks up the box on the pedestal and takes out the small lavender oval brooch; as she puts it on her shirt collar it retains its color but changes shape to a hexagon. A tiny lavender butterfly swirls into existence beside the brooch inclining its head.

“Greetings, Mme. Graham de Vasily.”

She pats the butterfly on the head, “greetings to you too, Nooroo.”

Gabriel opens his box on the pedestal and picks up the chrome and blue feathered brooch; when he puts it on his shirt under his tie, the brooch retains its shape but changes color to all bronze. A blue peafowl swirls into existence beside him spinning in the air. “Duusu, stop that.”

“I can’t help myself, M. Agreste~” The peafowl sing-songs, “the love in the air has me feeling giddy.” Gabriel shakes his head with a sigh.

“Nooroo, wings rise.”

"Duusu, spread the feathers."

The creatures float into their respective jewelry and the humans, holding hands, transform. Émilie is now wearing a lavender mermaid gown and a pair of matching lavender gloves that go all the way to her elbows. A large black butterfly mask covers her entire face sans her mouth, and she grows translucent butterfly wings fluttering at her back. Lastly, she has on a pair of black heels. Gabriel turns blue and has a beret that has feathers flowing downward over his left eye and he's wearing a navy three-piece suit and navy shoes with peafowl feathers in various shades of blue on his lower back. They turn to each other and kiss.

"Let's make our wish come true, Gabriel Dear."

"Let's, My Love."

Émilie holds her hand out and conjures a purplish-black butterfly. Beside her, Gabriel takes a feather off his fan and hands it to his wife where she puts the butterfly on. "My precious little akuma, use this feather to find a strong emotion to latch onto and wreck havoc on the city."

"If the book was right about the Miraculouses needing a Guardian, they'll show their faces when the city is in danger."

Émilie holds his hands, "I hope you're right."

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"Alright Rose, why are we skulking in the halls?"

"We're..." The blonde pauses for dramatic effect, "gonna start a band!" She exclaims. Ivan stares at her like she's grown a second head. "C'mon, you don't think it'll be fun?"

"Who wants to hear *me* sing?"

"Mylène might, for one—" Ivan blushes. "Besides, think of the *battle of the bands* contests we can get into!"

Ivan stares at Rose. Her expression isn't giving anything away which is odd because Rose is easily the most expressive person Ivan's ever met. This could just be another fixation his best friend came up with on the fly. He honestly wouldn't put it past her. "We're gonna have a band..." He frowns, "with just two people?"

"W-Well, *no*—" Now Rose frowns then freezes. Ivan follows her movement watching a tall, purple-haired girl walk by with a guitar case strapped to her back. Once she's no longer visible, Ivan turns to Rose who shrugs with a sheepish smile.

"I see. How do you know she's not a solo act?"

"I *don't*!" Rose wails, "I've never seen her before which is odd because I'd remember spotting someone so beautiful!"

"To be honest, Rose, she's kinda giving off a '*don't talk to me*' vibe."

"B-But, she's so *beautiful*!"

Ivan sighs shaking his head. "Let's get to class? We have Professeur Bustier this year and I've heard nothing but good things about her."

"So have I!" Rose squeals.

When they get into the classroom there's a brunette standing by the professeur's desk looking around. When Rose happily greets the newcomer she flinches then stares at the blonde wide-eyed. "O-Oh. You startled me. Hello. I'm Lila. I just moved to Paris this morning with my mamma."

"Welcome to François Düpont!" Rose moves into greet her with a cheek kiss but freezes.

"*Oh!* You're going to give me the standard greeting." Rose nods then she and the brunette cheek kiss. "I've read about the cheek kiss. They don't do anything like that in Naples."

"Naples?"

Lila nods, "It's a city in Italy. I was born there and spent most of my childhood there too. Is there anything I should know about the school?"

“What do you mean?” Ivan asks.

“You know...” Lila lolls her head from side to side, “the social hierarchy. The most popular kids in school? The students to avoid?”

Ivan and Rose exchange a glance before turning to Lila. “Chloé.”

“What?”

“Chloé Bourgeois is the answer to both of those questions.”

“Are my ears ringing?” A blonde says walking into the classroom with a box in one hand and another blond in the other arm. She tosses the box to Ivan. “Clumsy’s in this class and she brought those from her parents' lame shop—”

“Maybe I’m imagining things but that bag under your arm has the same logo from the same lame shop.”

Chloé glares at Ivan who snaps his mouth shut, “not my fault they’re the only boulangerie pâtisserie with any competency. Doesn’t mean they’re not lame. Especially for giving birth to Dupain-Cheng.” She pauses looking over the brunette, “who is this hobo chic chick?”

The brunette gapes then schools her features, “I’m Lila. Lila Rossi. I just moved—”

Chloé holds up a hand, “don’t care about your life story.” She looks Lila over again. “Cute shoes though.” She drags the poor boy on her arm up the stairs to the last row then sits down like she’s royalty or something.

“I see what you mean.” Lila mutters.

“Don’t worry!” Rose pats her on the back, “there’s only one Chloé in this school and that’s... well Chloé. Everyone else is super nice!” The blonde squeals and Lila winces. “Oh! Sorry. Still working on my volume control.” She grabs Ivan by the arm then they sit in the second row. Lila watches the blonde obviously try to avoid staring at the purple-haired teen that walks in the class and walks up the stairs.

She reaches the second to last row and Chloé tosses a bag onto the desk. “That seat is occupied, Gotherella, sit somewhere else.”

“No one’s in it.”

“Not yet.” The blonde makes a shooing motion. “Go away, Bats. I have garlic in my salad and I’m not afraid to use it.”

“Chloé—” She takes out a pâtisserie from the bag and stuffs it in the green-eyed blond’s mouth. The purple-haired girl glares then stomps down the stairs to the first row and plops down on it.

Lila watches as the remainder of the students file into the classroom. The big guy – Ivan – gives the tiny girl with the rainbow hair a flustered greeting that’s interrupted by Chloé snapping her fingers hurrying the girl along. “I’ve told you, Mylène, the commoners aren’t worth your time.”

“R-Right, Chloé. Sorry, Chloé.” She gives Ivan an apologetic smile he returns before turning to the front of the classroom.

“What would your maman think about you associating with *that*?” She carelessly gestures toward Ivan nearly hitting the green-eyed blond in the face. Lila hums. There’s something familiar about that kid but she can’t put her finger on it. Oh well. “She’d roll over in her grave! Important people, such as ourselves, need to stick together.” The tiny girl nods sadly. “Speaking of important people...” Chloé waves at the pale, orange-haired bespectacled girl who walks in the classroom. She, like Chloé, seems to command the entire class’ attention as she walks up the stairs. She and Chloé cheek kiss before she sits next to the tiny rainbow-haired girl.

“Hi, Mylène.”

“H-Hi, Sabrina.”

“I’m so glad we’re all in the same class this year. Last year was so annoying.” She says with a groan.

“I pulled some strings with Damocles to get us all in the same class.” Sabrina happily claps her hands together then pauses.

“I-Is that...?” She gasps, “you didn’t!”

“Yup. Even convinced Adrikins to come to our school. Kinda surprised his parents—”

“Adrien Agreste, to Principal Damocles office.” The loudspeaker requests.

“—Let him.” Half the class gasps excitedly staring at the blond still in Chloé’s clutches. “You couldn’t’ve done anything wrong. The school day didn’t even start yet!”

The blond – Adrien (Adrien Agreste, no wonder he looked so familiar!) – finally manages to wriggle out from under Chloé’s arm and walks down the stairs. He nearly bumps into a tall blue-haired girl as they reach the door at the same time. Chloé huffs indignantly which makes Lila want to know who this girl is.

“S-Sorry!” Adrien squeaks out then flees.

The girl shrugs then walks into the classroom with an equally tall brunet. She and Chloé make eye contact and Lila could swear the classroom’s temperature dropped several degrees just from one stare.

Having taken her seat in the front of the classroom, in front of Rose and Ivan, she turns to them. “Who is she?”

“I don’t know.” Ivan confesses.

Rose squints then gasps, “n-no way! I-I think that’s Marinette!” Ivan looks at her confused, “she lives at the boulangerie pâtisserie up the street from here—” Rose gestures at the box in Ivan’s hands.

“Ah! I’ve heard about her but I don’t think we’ve ever met.”

“She’s super nice. It’ll be a great opportunity to meet and be friends with her.”

The tall duo head to the second to last row on the left side fully aware of Chloé in the last row on the right glaring at them. The brunet sticks his tongue out at Chloé who gasps then folds her arms over her chest with a huff.

Their professeur, a redhead with her hair in a bun wearing a crisp navy suit, bustles into the classroom. “I-I apologize for my tardiness class, some of you may not know me. I’m Professeur Bustier. There was a new student Principal Damocles wanted to introduce me to before coming to class—”

“Then why did he have Adrien go to his office?”

“Who? *Oh!* No. It wasn’t him.” Bustier motions at the door and a beautiful bespectacled girl with long, wavy orange hair in a ponytail walks in the classroom. Lila looks around the class seeing *everyone* have their attention on the newcomer. Oh no. This won’t do. “Class, this is Alya Césaire. She came all the way from North America to—”

Lila stands up, “P-Professeur Bustier, I’m also new to this school and country.”

“Are you? Damocles didn’t tell me about two new students. Please come down here so we can be introduced to you as well.” Nodding, Lila makes her way down to the professeur’s desk. “Now, as I was saying this is Alya and she’s come from North America. Let’s all make her feel welcome.” She gestures to Lila.

“Oh. I’m Lila. Lila Rossi. I came from Naples, Italy. I’m still learning French so I should apologize in advance for my terrible pronunciation.” Bustier pats Lila on the shoulder then gestures for both girls to take a seat.

“As today is the first day we’re gonna get class representative voting out of the way—”

Sabrina raises her hand, “Professeur, how can we vote on a class rep when we don’t know everyone yet?”

“That’s *why* we’re voting. Anyone interested raise their hand then come down to the front and explain why they want to become class rep.” Chloé raises her hand. “O-Oh, we have a candidate already?”

Chloé stands, “everyone knows who I am. As for why I want to be class rep. The answer’s obvious. I was class rep the past two years—”

“And you never did anything.” Chloé glares at the blue-haired girl.

“Professeur, I don’t recall anyone raising their hand.”

“She’s right. If there’s an issue—” Bustier sighs as the girl raises her hand. “Go ahead.”

“For the past two years, she was the *worst* class representative in history! We barely got to go on our class trips because of her!”

“If you think you’re gonna do such a better job then why don’t you apply!?”

“I don’t recall seeing anyone raise their hand, Professeur.”

Bustier sighs, “I can tell there’s a lot of... tension between you two. I think you should sit next to each other to diffuse that.”

“That’s utterly ridiculous! I’m not sitting next to *her*.”

“Are you trying to make me fail your class?”

Bustier picks up a piece of paper and skims it. “Everyone up. I’m assigning seats.” The class grumble as they reluctantly comply with the professeur’s order.

Ivan hands the macaron box to Marinette and she offers the box to everyone. Chloé’s jaw drops as by the time Marinette gets to her the box is empty. “You did this on purpose!”

Marinette shrugs going back to stand next to Kim who subtly fist-bumps her.

□□

When Adrien returns to the classroom, everyone is seated in different seats. Nathalie and his bodyguard slash chauffeur came by; his parents were disappointed by him slipping away without their knowledge but decided on giving the school a trial run. He hugged Nathalie in thanks since his parents weren’t there. The only thing he wanted more than going to public school was to have a sibling but he knows he’ll never get that; at least he’ll get to go to an actual school!

“M. Agreste.” Professeur Bustier beckons him, “you’ll be seated in the front right here next to Lila.” The brunette waves at him and Adrien doesn’t know why but he feels a shudder run through his body. Nevertheless, he takes his assigned seat and Lila almost immediately presses herself against his arm, clutching it. And he just regained feeling in it after Chloé’s death grip.

“Hi. I’m Lila. I’ve done a little modeling myself, and I think it’s so weird how we keep missing each other. Since we’re both new to public schooling we should be friends. Look out for each other, you know? Model to model.”

“Y-Yeah. Sounds good.” His only friends are Chloé and Sabrina, so he could use all the new friends he’s capable of making. “B-But I’m gonna need my arm to write.”

“Oh.” Lila giggles, “silly me. Of course, you do.” She loosens her grip on him enough so that he can put his arm on the desk.

The professeur put her next to Dupain-Cheng in the second row on the left so she has a pretty good view of that brunette digging her claws into Adrikins’ arm. The blonde glowers. Who does that girl think she is? Chloé hears a loud yawn in her ear and rolls her eyes as the blue-haired teen slumps in her seat, arms moving wildly as she stretches. “Can’t you control your lanky, uncoordinated limbs?”

“I don’t know. Can you shut up long enough for me to try?” Chloé’s eyes narrow then an explosion reverberates through the building throwing her out of her seat and onto the floor.

“Earthquake!” Bustier yells, “everyone under your desks *now!*”

The students all dive under their respective shared desks as another explosion rocks through the classroom.

There’s some kind of howl then the roof gets torn off the building. The class looks up in awe at the giant *painting with limbs* that reaches into the building then comes out with a professeur with purple hair. Alya rummages through her bag to get her phone to record what she’s seeing. “My art isn’t just scribbles, Professeur Mendelev and with these powers you’re about to experience that firsthand!” The painting *talks* then walks off with the shouting professeur in their hand.

The loudspeaker crackles to life, “*attention students, this is Principal Damocles. Due to... whatever we just witnessed school is canceled. Return to your homes immediately!*”

“No school!” Kim yells then the rest of the class cheers gathering their belongings.

“Be careful on your way home!” Professeur Bustier yells as the students rush out of the classroom.

Alya gathered her belonging on autopilot as she stared at her phone. That looked like an honest to goodness comic book villain come to life! They even had a cliché line! And where there are villains there are sure to be heroes. She giggles to herself and nearly bumps into the blond.

“Sorry. I just seem to keep almost bumping into people today.”

“No worries. I was excited by the prospect of seeing a superhero so I wasn’t looking where I was going.”

“Superhero?”

“Yeah, man. Didn’t you see that giant painting-thing? Something or someone’s gonna show up and stop it and when they do...” She pats her phone, “I’m gonna record it.”

“Ooh. Can I come? I love superheroes.”

“Sure. If we’re both recording we’re bound to get some good angles. I’m Alya.”

“Adrien.” She greets him with a cheek kiss and he blushes. His blush deepens when she grabs his hand.

“Let’s go grab some superhero footage!”

□□

Sabine and Tom run over to Marinette as soon as she enters the shop. “We saw the news. Are you hurt?” Sabine asks.

“No. I’m fine. Just a little hungry. I dropped my fritter when Chloé’s town car nearly hit me.”

“We heard.” Sabine pinches the bridge of her nose, “I swear that girl and her family raise my blood pressure.”

“A nice elder fellow told us you helped him cross the street and moved him out of the way of the town car. He says you gave him one of the macarons too.” Marinette nods, “he said his name was Fù Wáng and he owns a massage parlor and incense shop a few blocks from here.”

“Cool.” Tom holds out a tray in front of her, “*ooh*. Thanks, papai.” She grabs a cheese danish from the tray. “I’m gonna work on some designs that popped in my head when I was in school.”

“Remember to drink water and take breaks!” Sabine calls out as Marinette runs up the stairs. “We’ll call you down for lunch!”

“Okay!” Marinette yells back.

Marinette stuffs half the danish in her mouth as she opens the trap door. She could swear she saw something moving out the corner of her eye but when she looks there’s nothing there. Shrugging, she plops down on her desk blinking at the unfamiliar box there.

Marinette looks at the box and stares at the character in hanzi. “Destruction.” She reads. “Right. As if I need a *box* to tell me how destructive I am.” She tosses the box over her shoulder and takes out her sketchpad from the desk’s drawer.

As she begins sketching, she *definitely* sees a flash out the corner of her eye. Turning in her swivel chair she finds herself face to face with a pair of green eyes. “Yo.” *It speaks*. Marinette wordlessly slamming her sketchbook onto the thing’s head. “Oww...” It mutters. When she lifts her sketchbook, she sees a floating black cat-ish plushie thing rubbing its head with its eyes closed. “I was expecting a scream or something thrown but not a direct hit...” It murmurs rubbing its head.

“What? What are you?”

A green eye opens and the thing continues rubbing its head, “besides *in pain*? I’m Plagg, a kwami... your kwami.”

“What’s a... whatever you just said?”

“Kwami. *An ancient being of magical power.*” The kwami’s voice takes on an annoying game-show host accent. “We give our Intendeds a wedge of our powers. Mine’s destruction.”

“Listen, uh, Plug the uh k-whammy, I don’t need any additional destruction going on in my life.”

“It’s *Plagg* and I’m a *kwami*. And *whoo boy*, don’t I know it! You can practically power yourself with all that bad luck swirling around you.”

“I *knew* I was cursed!”

“It’s not a curse. No curse in the nine dimensions is powerful enough to bring on the string of bad luck in your life. But I suppose that’s natural when you’re the avatar of bad luck. You’re gonna hit some snags in your life but being the avatar of bad luck means persevering through them all, which you have gracefully.” Plagg clears its throat, “right... the Guardian said I had to give the standard spiel. You were chosen because of your, well, bad luck – like I said. We’re gonna work together to take down that monster tearing through the city.”

“Excuse me?”

“Haven’t you always wanted to be a superhero?”

“*No!* I want to be a fashion designer!”

Plagg looks around the room, “I see that. *Damn*. I think the Guardian goofed.” They float over to Marinette and sniff her. “Nope. That’s definitely bad luck but all this is...” They shake their head. “Never mind. We’re together and you smell like the good bread so we’re gonna team up.”

““Good bread?””

“The best bread.” Plagg wipes their mouth with their hand. “To power up just say: Plagg, claws out. To power down, you say: Plagg, claws in.” Plagg’s eyes widen as they stare at the danish. “Are you gonna eat that?”

“Yeah, but you can have half.”

Beaming, Plagg takes the piece Marinette breaks off and swallows it whole. “You keep making snacks like that and we’re gonna get along great.”

“What am I supposed to tell my parents? A tiny plushie said I need to go stop monsters because I’m bad luck personified?”

“Why do you need to tell anyone anything? It’s none of their business. You look a bit... younger than my last Intended but he didn’t seem to have a problem keeping me a secret.”

The shop shakes. “*Dammit!* I don’t wanna play superhero, I just wanna sketch! Plagg, claws out!” They stare at each other for a few seconds. “Is something supposed to happen...?”

“Is something...” Plagg facepalms, “*duh*. I forgot to give you the Miraculous.” Chuckling to themselves, they fly over to the box Marinette threw. “By the way, try not to be so careless with my Miraculous in the future?” There’s a ring that looks like green beads on a cat’s paw inside the box. Marinette picks it up to examine it and it flashes then changes before her very eyes into a plain thin red gold ring. “You’re not trying to pawn it. You’re gonna wear it to transform.”

“Just looking at what I’m working with, and wondering how it changed.”

"Magic."

"Right. What answer was I expecting?" Marinette slides the ring on her right middle finger then takes a deep breath. “I know I’m gonna regret this. Plagg, claws out!” When Plagg flies *into* the ring, Marinette knows she’s made a mistake.

There’s a blinding light coming from her hand. Her ring changes form again, returning to the green cat’s paw. Next, black fingerless gloves materialize over her arms and her nails elongate and magically paint themselves green. Her mostly black catsuit forms over her body, it like the gloves, has a herringbone pattern that puts some green into it. An obnoxious green crystal bell ties itself around the green ribbon around her neck. She gets a pair of green boots the same color as her nails and its herringbone pattern is the inverse of the rest of her suit. A green baton appears over her head and she catches it. There’s a black cat paw in the center and she presses it and the baton splits in two.

Her hair... oh her hair *grows and turns green*, her twintails that barely touched her shoulder are now flowing over her chest. “Oh. So *that’s* what I’d look like with longer hair.” Black ribbons appear and tie themselves around her twintails.

She feels her lips tingling and grabs a compact to see they're green. Then she gasps as she looks over her whole body with the compact. Her eyes are yellowish-green and have cat-like slits. "Sweet Colonel Mustard, what am I *wearing*!?"

Oh. She did not notice the bushy black tail attached to her ass nor did she notice the *moving* black and green cat ears on her head. Marinette tweaks her ears and yes they are real.

A black domino mask is over the top half of her face, with the same herringbone pattern as the rest of her outfit.

Marinette climbs out her room onto the roof and takes a deep breath. Her ears twitch – as if she needed more validation for them being real. Frowning, she feels the side of her face and doesn't feel ears. Even under where her mask is.

She puts a hand above her eyes and sees the giant painting-thing still holding the professeur. She twirls a baton in her hand and it hits her in the head. "Still clumsy." Marinette moves to climb down the fire escape and falls into a hole.

Instead of falling on her back she gently lands on her feet. She looks around at the ...nothingness surrounding her. "I welcome you, avatar of destruction." Marinette squints at the horse guy bowing at her. "I am the guardian of the miraculouses and the avatar of space. Thank you for accepting your duty."

"Wasn't really given much of a choice."

"We never are." He lifts his head. "Has Plagg informed you of what is required of you?"

"I have to stop the monster?"

"Yes, although it is rarely that simple. The monster is corrupted by the power of two miraculouses. The peafowl miraculous invokes the power of emotion while the butterfly is transmission."

"Oh fuck—" Marinette slaps a hand over her mouth, "sorry, continue." She mumbles.

"While the Miraculouses have worked separately in the past, they are exceptionally

dangerous combined. You'll need to destroy the akuma possessing the monster and the amok amplifying their anger."

"And I have to do all this by myself?!"

The horse nods. "It's dangerous putting another miraculous in circulation when we don't know—"

"What about the danger *to me*? My fourteenth birthday is in a week! I don't wanna die before then because of some magical BS I had no say in getting involved in! I've got family coming from all over the world just to see me!" She stomps her foot in frustration and the floor cracks. "Uh...?"

"You *are* the power of destruction."

Marinette nods slowly, "good to know."

"By the way, this is important. As the avatar of destruction, you can absorb the corruption of any miraculous. However, it is imperative you do not make direct contact with the corruption. It could spread to you and have... ill effects."

"And we're back to dying." Marinette sighs, "just let me off at the next monster turn." Nodding, a portal opens up underneath her and she falls through.

□□

Marinette lands on the top of François Dupont and beside her is the professeur she saw earlier but they're unconscious. She gently nudges the professeur – being the *avatar of destruction and whatnot* – but they don't move.

"Hey!" The painting is hovering over her. "What the hell are you!?" A lavender butterfly-shaped mask appears over the top of the painting. "The black cat!" An ethereal voice booms. "Surrender your miraculous or we'll make the city an abstract art exhibit."

"After the day I've had, I'm not surrendering shit!" Marinette unclips the twin batons from her sides then brings them together.

One of the painting's limbs tries to grab her but she touches it and it disintegrates into ash. Marinette's eyes widen, at the same time the painting takes a step back. She uses the baton to pole vault herself into the painting and it explodes upon contact.

Marinette lands on her feet in front of the building and catches the screaming student in her hands. "W-Wha—? What happened?" She wordlessly points up and the student screams at the purplish-blue smog forming into a large pair of faces. The student jumps out of Marinette's arms then runs off.

"The Guardian's shown their hand." The first face is shaped like a butterfly while the second is shaped like a peafowl. At least she sorta gets to meet the assholes who are gonna ruin her life. "Citizens of Paris, is *this* what you want protecting you?" The butterfly face asks. "A child, playing dress-up?"

"Better than an insect and a winged rat terrorizing people!"

The butterfly face glows, "*how dare you!*?" It screeches. "This insufferable wretch has doomed the entire city! You will *never* be safe from—"

Marinette points the baton at them and hits the paw-shaped button absorbing the smog. When she releases the button, the batons separate. They glow black briefly then nothing happens so she puts them back on her hips.

Alya watches the hero yawn then rotate their shoulders. Adrien's yelling after her as she runs up to the black cat. "That was awesome!"

The cat jumps a few centimeters in the air then lands on their feet. "What the hell? You scared the crap outta me!"

"Sorry. It's just... That was totally badass. You just—" The orange-haired teen makes a series of blaster sound effects and articulates wildly around her. She thrusts her phone in front of the cat's face. "What's your name?"

"My... huh. Didn't think of one."

"How did you get your powers? Do you have a familiar? Were you scratched by a radioactive cat? Are your ears real?" The bespectacled teen begins babbling incoherently then starts hyperventilating.

Marinette grabs the orange-haired teen's shoulders and she stops hyperventilating. "I can't answer any of your questions yet. I still need some of my own."

The ground shakes then Alya gasps taking a step back holding up her camera to record the roof of the building bathed in a black and green light re-fitting itself in place. "Are you doing this?" She asks and the cat shrugs. Alya moves her phone around to try and catch everything. When she looks back at the cat they're eyeing the ring on their hand. One of the five beads isn't glowing green like the others.

"I think I need to go."

"Wait!" The cat takes a step then disappears into a hole that literally just appeared as they moved. "Awesome..." Alya breathes.

□□

Marinette looks up at a pair of blue eyes looking down at her. "Déjà vu?"

"Not quite, Kitty Chaos."

"*Please* don't tell me people are calling me that?"

A white-gloved arm helps her up and Marinette is staring at a person in a rabbit costume. Not all that weird considering she's still dressed like a cat. "Nope. Just my little nickname for mini-you." The rabbit pauses, "of course, you technically were never very 'mini.' Anyway, I'm Bunnyx. Avatar of time and holder of the rabbit miraculous. You're in one of my time portals."

"Why?"

"Because this universe is all outta whack. The kind of calamity the Guardian is unleashing just by having you active without your counterpart is far more dangerous than anything the insect and winged rat can do combined."

"*What!?* Seriously!?"

“Don’t worry. Don’t worry. You let Bunnyx handle it. I’m gonna send you back in time to before the Guardian selected you and gonna bring your partner to Paris so we can do this right.”

“Will I remember this conversation?”

“Yes and no. Time likes making everyone its bitch.” Bunnyx puts a hand on Marinette’s shoulder, “two pieces of advice: the perfect name will just come to you. It has in every other universe. And keep on smiling, Kitty Chaos. No one says we can’t have a little fun with this gig.” She hugs Marinette.

“Every other universe?”

Bunnyx lets Marinette go. “No two universes are the same though this is one of the few you were selected as the avatar of destruction rather than creation; which is the power your partner will have. Weird thing about you and your partner is you’d each fit both. Guess that’s what makes you two a perfect match.” Bunnyx opens their umbrella and a portal appears in front of Marinette.

“Will you... still exist if we change things?”

“Oh yeah. I’m not going anywhere. I got a whole multiverse to make sure of that. Keep your eyes peeled, Kitty. Shit’s gonna get rough.”

“Yeah. It usually does.” With a sigh, Marinette steps in the portal.

this feels familiar

Chapter Summary

It is the strangest sense of déjà vu for Marinette Dupain-Cheng

Chapter Notes

A/N: While transformed a human's hair and eye color resemble their kwami's

Thurs, Sept 3rd, 2020

Alya looks at herself in the mirror. She puts her hair in a high ponytail as she examines her first day outfit hanging on the door: a long-sleeve plaid red and orange button-up shirt and a pair of black jeans.

Her mother, Marlana, landed the head chef job at *Le Grand Paris Château* so the whole family up and moved from Louisiana, North America to Paris, France.

Her father, Otis, was filling out an application for a job at the zoo. Nora, her elder sister, traveled already for her kickboxing circuit so the move was no change for her. Likewise her little sisters, Etta and Ella, had no problem with moving because they hadn't started school yet.

Moving wasn't... necessarily a problem with her, meant she wasn't around long enough to be that weird kid obsessed with superheroes and superpowers.

The family arrived in the city two days ago, just in time for the first day of the school year – Nora liked to remind her. Her mother was going to register her and if everything went well, she'd be starting school today too.

She puts on her lucky *Knightowl* undershirt then takes her first day outfit off the door and gets dressed.

Alya puts on her small silver hoop earrings and grabs her chapstick, lotion, and hand sanitizer putting them in her backpack's front pocket then grabs her notebooks, notepad, cell phone charger, and calculator stuffing them into her backpack. She puts on her *Super Mackerel* red and orange socks then hoists her *Knightowl* backpack over her shoulder.

Marlena is on the phone but she waves her second-oldest over. While still talking on the phone, Marlena loosens some strands of Alya's hair so they fall around her face. She bids the person she's on the phone with goodbye then gives her daughter a thumbs-up. "Better."

"Thanks, Ma. I'm all set. What's my school's name again?"

"François Düpont." Marlena replies. "It's fairly new... less than a decade old, but rumored to be one of the best schools in the city." The orange-haired woman shrugs. "Seeing is believing. If you're all set we're off. Have to drop by my new job to check-in with slash meet the boss. They say the Bourgeois family is impossible to please and they go through head chefs like the latest fashion craze." Alya whistles.

"Don't worry, Ma, you got this. If they're the first people ever to fire Marlena Césaire, the whole world will know it's because of their incompetence not because of your inability to make some bomb ass food."

"I was fired from my first two jobs, you know."

"One was a racist clown who got their restaurant shut down because of you so that's a win, and the second fired you before you became Marlena Césaire. You were just some cook then. Bet they'll be taking the credit for your career taking off."

Marlena laughs cradling her daughter's face. "What would I do without you, My Light?"

"Have a lot more one-sided arguments."

"I know! Why are the twins so quick to jump to Otis' side when we disagree?"

After breakfast, they hop on Marlena's motorcycle and make their way to François Düpont.

□□

Marinette wakes up to the sound of her alarm. She looks around her room as much as she's able without actually moving. For some reason, something feels... off. Groaning, she sits up and takes off her alarm. Her eyes widen as she stares at the time. "*Oh crap!* I'm late!" She jumps out of bed but her foot gets tangled into the sheet and she falls on her face.

"Marinette?" She hears her mother call from downstairs, "are you alright?"

Marinette slowly lifts her face from the floor, "yes!" She fights with her sheet until it relinquishes her leg. As she's gathering her stuff for the bathroom she pauses staring at the black mannequin in the corner wearing the red romper her nǎi nai gave her the design idea for. She barely managed to put on the finishing touches but it was good enough to wear. Frowning, Marinette glances at the outfit she already selected for her first day of quatrième: A red shirt with pink peonies on it and a pair of grey pants to match.

She shot up like a rocket over the summer, and had to get an entirely new wardrobe. Of course, that was an excellent reason for her to make herself some new clothes as well as buy some.

She grabs the romper and takes it with her as she carefully climbs down the stairs and heads to the bathroom.

After showering, brushing her hair, brushing her teeth, and getting dressed she bolts back upstairs and hits her head on her trap door. "What the hell? I could swear I left that open?" Frowning, she opens the trap door and enters her room. She sets her bathroom basket on her bed then crawls under her bed to grab the red ballet flats with the bow she sewn a snake into.

She hits her head on the bed then wriggles out from under the bed accidentally tossing the box in the air. Gasping, she dives for the box running straight into the mannequin with the clothing she was supposed to wear. The rest of her mannequins topple over and fall on her.

Her mother, Sabine, opens the trap door and gasps. "Oh dear. What—how did this happen?" Marinette flails underneath the mannequins looking at her mother trying not to laugh.

"I was grabbing my ballet flats when the box fell out of my hand then I bumped into one mannequin and the others fell on me." Sabine loses the battle to not laugh and chuckles as she helps her daughter up.

She tip-toes to pick out some loose threads out of Marinette's hair. Marinette gasps then looks down at her outfit. "Turn around." Sabine instructs. Marinette does a 360-degree turn then

faces her mother. “All good.” Sabine hums, “You know, I’ve never seen this outfit before. I mean I’m always in awe of your clothes but this is so beautiful. When did you make it?”

“When năinai visited. She helped with the snake. It’s so much harder to stitch together a dragon’s head than its whole body. Snakes were less detailed so I made that instead. I’m gonna take a picture wearing this—”

“With your hair like that?”

Marinette helplessly lifts her hair falling over her shoulders. “What should I do with it?”

“Let’s try something new. Have a seat and...” They both look around the room before staring at each other, “come downstairs and I’ll do your hair. I know the school is the next block over but you really need to work on your time management.”

“I know, māmā.”

Sabine pats her daughter on the cheek before leaving through the trap door.

Marinette grabs her backpack then takes a step and winces. She hops on one foot then looks down at her broken lucky dragonfly clip and peels it off her foot. “Son of a bitch.” She moans. “That’s gotta be a bad omen.” She shakes her head. “No. No, no, no. You’re not gonna be bested by your clumsiness. This is your year, Marinette Dupain-Cheng.” She pumps her fists in the air sending her flats flying again. She manages to catch one but the other hits her in the head. “This is your year.” She repeats, a little forced as she clutches her flats. “Focus on those positive vibes.” Her bag snags on her desk. “Seriously!?” She tugs her bag free then completely misses the staircase and falls out of her room slamming into the wall. “Keep up that optimism.” She murmurs sliding to the floor.

When Marinette regains consciousness her father is sighing pressing a bandage against her left cheek. “Are you okay?” He moves his pointer finger in front of her face from side to side, with their standard concussion regimen. “Seeing doubles?” Marinette shakes her head. “Any pain anywhere?”

“No. I feel fine.” She winces as she feels her forehead stinging. Sabine sighs pressing a cotton ball into the bottle of disinfectant.

“You’re gonna have a couple of cool scars to start off your year.” Tom puts another bandage on her face, this time on her forehead.

Meanwhile, Sabine gets to work on styling Marinette's hair. She combs then parts Marinette's hair in two tying the ends into buns. She makes it look effortless compared to when Marinette does her hair. But that's natural considering her mother wasn't cursed with clumsiness. Marinette gets it from Tom; she also got her father's height and love of combat sports. From her mother she got her looks, no disrespect to her father but she's grateful for that, she also got her mother's critical eye for detail, and intolerance for bullshit.

It was Sabine's mother, Xiùlán, who instilled Marinette's love of fashion. Watching all sorts of fashion competitions with her. Even having them sew and work on clothing together. Even after they left Shanghai to come to Paris nearly a decade ago, Marinette and Xiùlán always found a way to stay in contact and never miss any fashion competitions. Speaking of her grandma, she needs to send her that picture of her outfit – preferably before Marinette ruins it.

"You're good to go." Tom reports eyeing the box on the counter. Marinette follows his movement and stares at the box with the boulangerie pâtisserie's new logo on it – the logo they asked her to design. It's a simple S & T then a BP in cursive written in a heart-shaped pâtisserie and they went nuts over it.

Right. For the past two years attending François Düpont, she carries a box of pâtisseries for her classmates on the first day, and for the past two years the school's "queen bee" Chloé Bourgeois – the mayor's daughter and an all-around spoiled pain in the ass, who for some inexplicable reason decided, when they first met, she wanted to make Marinette's life a living hell – makes some snide comment about her parents shop even though she'll eat from there no problem. Then Marinette, in turn, will make a (correct) comment about the blonde's appalling fashion sense, which is all kinds of wrong as she's the daughter of Audrey Bourgeois: *The Queen of Fashion*. They'd glare at each other and Chloé would make some meaningless threat then pout for the rest of the school day. Why Principal Damocles kept putting them in the same class for two years in a row she has no idea? Probably because she's the only student who won't take the blonde's crap. Marinette honestly wouldn't be surprised if this year was unlucky number three and she and Chloé were in the same class again. As long as they don't get Professeur Clark *again* this year. Marinette heard the man became a quatrième professeur because the Bourgeois' had him in their back-pocket and he heavily and obviously favored Chloé which Marinette wouldn't stand for. It ended up with her spending a lot of days in the principal's office doing nothing. Because Damocles damn sure wasn't gonna speak out against Chloé's family.

"How about breakfast?" Sabine suggests. "We have some cheese danishes fresh from the oven."

"Or banana fritters." Tom waggles his eyebrows, "wanted to have your favorites ready and waiting."

“Sorry māmā, gotta go with the fritter.” Tom moves to pump his fist in the air but accidentally punches himself in the forehead.

“What am I gonna do with you two?” Sabine chuckles.

Marinette grabs a fritter and stuffs half in her mouth then slips her bag over her shoulder and slips in her ballet flats. Sabine hands her the box. “Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to get these pâtisseries to François Düpont.” Tom says.

“You can count on me, Mission Control.” The fritter slips out of Marinette’s mouth and lands on the box. Her parents stare at the box then at their daughter. She chuckles awkwardly, “I... probably shouldn’t talk.”

Sabine puts the fritter back in her daughter’s mouth. “Have a good day.” She nods mumbling her goodbyes as she leaves the shop.

Tom sighs, “that box isn’t gonna make it to the next block.”

“Nope.”

“Why oh why did I have to give her my clumsiness?” Tom bends down to pick up a crumb off the floor but he ends up hitting his head on the bottom counter.

Sabine chuckles then rubs her husband’s back. “Let’s put some ice on that.”

Marinette makes it to the crosswalk but that’s not really much of an accomplishment given it’s three steps from the shop. She grimaces at the heavy foot-traffic heading in her direction once the light changes. She barely manages to make it to the other side of the street, with not only herself but her box intact. With a sigh of relief, she turns to catch her breath and notices the tiny bespectacled old man struggling to cross the street with his cane.

He managed to avoid colliding with anyone but he won’t make the light. Marinette heads over to him mumbling incoherently forgetting about the fritter in her mouth. The old man looks up at her in confusion until she gestures – box in hand – toward the other side of the street.

The guy gets the memo and nods hooking onto her arm so he can cross.

Before they cross the street a navy towncar pulls up dangerously close to the curb and Marinette pulls the guy out of the way accidentally tossing the box in the sky. She looks up and gapes causing the fritter to fall out of her mouth, and it hits the ground. Groaning, the teen facepalms.

The towncar's back door opens, before the chauffeur can reach it, and *Chloé (because of course it's Chloé)* steps out of the towncar in a sunny yellow plain a-line dress. "Oh it's... whoa." Scowling, she shakes her head. "You hit a growth spurt, huh? Doesn't matter. You're still *you*. Watch where you're going, Dupain-Cheng, or I'll have my chauffeur hit you next time."

The blonde flips her ponytail haughtily then walks into the boulangerie pâtisserie.

Marinette's right eye twitches. "That *bit*—" The old man clears his throat holding out the box to her. "*B—wha?!*"

"They fell into my hand. Unfortunately, I could not save whatever you were eating."

Marinette looks down at the fritter on the ground and sighs, "I'll just mourn my fritter when I get to school." She shakes her head, "what matters is you being okay. You're okay, right?"

The old man nods with a smile. "Me? I'm fine. I appreciate your assistance."

"You're the one that assisted me, keeping these from the same fate as my fritter." She opens the box and offers it to the man. "Go ahead and take a few. My parents pâtisseries are gluten-free thanks to my allergy." She jerks her head back, "that's their shop. These look like their mint chocolate chip and coffee macarons."

The man takes one and bites into it moaning appreciatively, "they're delicious."

"They'll be happy to hear that." He grabs two more macarons. "If you're ever looking to satisfy your sweet tooth you know where to go, they also make savory pâtisseries and we got a custom thing going on."

"I'll take you up on that offer."

Marinette closes the box, "let's see if we can make it across the street without a wayward

towncar this time.”

“Here’s hoping.” The old man hooks his arm in Marinette’s and they cross the street when the light changes.

“Do you need help getting anywhere in particular?”

“Oh no. This is more than fine. My destination is up the street and there are no more crosswalks to contend with. No need to worry yourself over an old man like me.”

“If you’re—” The bell rings and Marinette gasps looking toward the school. “Sh—uh... *uh*, crap.” She winces rubbing the back of her neck then juggles the box of macarons sighing in relief when she doesn’t drop them.

“I suppose that’s you’re cue.”

“Sounds like it. Take care of yourself.”

“And you as well.” He watches the teen run toward the building. The man turns around eyeing the blonde exiting the boulangerie pâtisserie glaring at him as she puts the sunglasses on her head over her eyes getting into the towncar. The towncar passes by him as it makes its way to the school, stopping at the end of the block.

Hmm. He finishes the macaron in his hand. He could use another pâtisserie or two, but later.

If his hunch about the magic he’s been sensing was correct, he’ll be visiting this shop a lot more in the future. He turns back to the school and starts walking.

Marinette runs up the stairs and as she reaches the door it opens; she narrowly avoids getting hit but loses her balance if it weren’t for the arm that shoots out and grabs hers she and the macarons would be sprawled out all over the stairs. “Whoa! Are you okay?” An unfamiliar voice asks.

She opens her eyes nodding and squints at the blond, “yeah, thanks. You saved my as—carons.”

“*Adrikins!*” Chloé’s shrill ear-drum piercing scream makes Marinette shudder. Then

Marinette hears Chloé's bodyguard of the week yell after her. The blonde marches up the stairs then glares daggers at their joint hands. "Adrikins, don't touch *that*, you'll get the clumsy all over you." She wrenches Marinette's arm free and takes the box of macarons. "I'll be taking these. They're in much better hands than yours." Without the blond's support, Marinette flails backwards and the green-eyed blond moves to grab her again but Chloé grabs his arm hooking it with hers. "Come along, Adrikins, I'll show you around the school. Not there's much to really look at."

"B-But what about—"

"Don't worry about her. This is the norm."

The blond winces as the blue-haired girl flails backwards. He sighs in relief when someone runs up the stairs to catch her. The last thing he sees is the brunet setting the blue-haired girl upright before the doors close behind them.

"Good thing I got here when I did, huh? See Chloé's already up to her shit this morning."

"Yeah but I'm not gonna let her get to me this year, Kim."

"Atta girl!" Kim claps her on the back, "does this mean we're stooping to her level?" He rubs his hands together and chuckles darkly.

"I don't think we could physically stoop to her level of petty. Besides, we're better than that."

"That may be so but we don't always have to be! C'mon, I *know* there's a part of you that's itching to give her some just desserts. Speaking of desserts...?"

"Chloé took my box."

"Oh hell no! We gotta get it back. She'll get her Chloé germs all over your parents grub!" Kim wraps an arm around Marinette's shoulder, "by the way, I had the most kickass idea for you and Alix's birthday cake."

□□

Fù lost track of how many students passed by him without so much as a second glance as he

leaned against school crossing sign struggling to reach the cane he dropped. As he resigns himself to not finding a miraculous wielder, a black beetle stops in front of the curb.

Fù watches the tiny blue-haired girl gracefully exit the car closing the door behind her. The girl is wearing a pair of black jeans and a black and grey horizontal striped shirt. She looks around the area then her brown eyes fall on him. Hoisting her backpack she makes her way over.

She wordlessly picks up his cane then digs in her bag to pull out a roll of black athletic tape. She wraps the tape around the cane Fù hadn't even realized was cracked then tests the cane by tapping it on the floor a few times before handing it to him. "This should suffice." She says in English.

"Ah. That's... ingenious." He replies in English. "I had no idea it was even broken." He accepts the cane and puts some of his weight on it. "Thank you."

"No problem. May I ask for your assistance with something?" Fù nods, "this school... what is the name of it?"

"I believe it's François Düpont. Is this not the school you were looking for?"

The girl shakes her head, "I'm looking for Paris International School of Arts."

"Oh. Oh dear. I believe that's in the 3rd arrondissement."

"And where is this...?"

"The 21st, but don't worry. I believe that's about a fifteen minute drive—" Fù watches the beetle drive off, "...from here." He finishes. "As you are already here, it may not hurt to go inside this school?"

"I suppose. If nothing else, I can use the telephone to inform my grandmother the automatic driver may need recalibrating." She bows, "thank you for your help."

Fù bows back. "You helped me first. I'm simply paying your kindness forward."

The girl nods then heads up the stairs. When she reaches the top stair she pause then turns to

Fù, “will you be alright?”

“Yes. I will be more than fine. Thank you.” Nodding, she walks into the building.

□□

“*What do you mean he left?!*” It takes everything in the blue-haired woman not flinch at the tone. “You’re *supposed* to be keeping track of Adrien 24/7 *and beyond that!* What the hell are we paying you for if you’re not gonna do your job!?”

“Émilie, Love, I understand your anger but yelling at Nathalie won’t solve anything.” The blonde huffs folding her arms over her chest. “Did he happen to say where he was going?”

“*And why didn’t you stop him!?*”

“He said he was going to school and that Chloé Bourgeois would vouch for him.”

Gabriel and Émilie exchange a glance, “Chloé?” They repeat. “School?” For some inexplicable reason, their son Adrien had become recently obsessed with teenage dramas. He claimed to want the “real teenage experience.” Whatever the hell that meant. Admittedly, they ignored him – not once thinking Adrien would do anything behind their backs. So that’s on them but Nathalie not trying to stop him was on her. Gabriel hired her seven years ago after Émilie found out she was pregnant. She was just supposed to stick around until the baby came but then Émilie had a miscarriage and the woman proved to be efficient as hell so she stuck around. If her efficiency was starting to slip she wasn’t gonna of any use to either of them much longer.

“Find out what school Chloé attends, I’m sure that’s the one Adrien snuck off to, and bring him back.” The blonde pauses, “wait—on second thought. Don’t bring him back. If we drag him back kicking and screaming he’ll just rebel in another way.” Gabriel gives his wife a questioning glance, “we don’t want to seem unreasonable and we definitely don’t want him resenting us. Find out what school he’s in and check it out. If it’s good enough for him, we let him stay. If it’s not, we’ll select a school for his caliber.”

“I doubt Chloé would attend a school beneath her; Audrey would never allow it.”

“Audrey may not know about it.”

“True. With her absence, André could’ve just stuck Chloé in any school and called it a day.” Émilie nods, “now, Love, I trust you implicitly – you know that, but the mere thought of putting Adrien in public schooling leaves a sour taste in my mouth.”

“It is a terrible idea, I agree, but if that’s what he wants who are we do deny him? He doesn’t ask us for anything.”

“He didn’t *ask* for this either.”

Émilie chuckles, “true. In any event, his tutors are always going on about he drifts off and always has his head in the clouds. Perhaps he won’t be so inclined to do so in a proper school setting. And who knows? Maybe he’ll get sick of school and come back to being home schooled?”

“Maybe...” Émilie shoos Nathalie. The woman bows then quickly walks off.

Émilie turns to her husband smiling, “most importantly, if Adrien isn’t here aimlessly wandering he won’t find out what we’re up to.”

“Fair point, but we’re doing this for him too. Shouldn’t he know what we’re doing?”

“No. It’s bad enough he knows he’ll never have a biological sibling naturally thanks to that big mouth doctor and my stupid body—”

Gabriel holds her hands, “never say never. It’s why we found our miraculouses. We’re going to make our wish come true and have more children. Then Adrien will have everything he’s ever wanted.” Émilie smiles at him, nodding. “We should test them out, in the field. Our miraculouses I mean. Practicing in the atrium only goes so far.”

“Fine.” The blonde playfully rolls her eyes. “Let’s give it a shot.” They walk hand-in-hand to the atrium. Émilie picks up the box on the pedestal and takes out the small lavender oval brooch; as she puts it on her shirt collar it changes shape to a hexagon. A tiny lavender butterfly swirls into existence beside the brooch inclining its head.

“Greetings, Mme. Graham de Vasily.”

She pats the butterfly on the head, “greetings to you too, Nooroo.”

Gabriel opens his box on the pedestal and picks up the chrome and blue feathered brooch; when he puts it on his shirt under his tie, the brooch retains its shape but changes color to all bronze. A blue peafowl swirls into existence beside him spinning in the air. “Duusu, stop that.”

“I can’t help myself, M. Agreste~” The peafowl sing-songs, “all the love in the air has me feeling giddy!” Gabriel shakes his head with a sigh.

“Nooroo, wings rise.”

“Duusu, spread the feathers.”

The creatures float into their respective jewelry and the humans, holding hands, transform. Émilie is now wearing a lavender mermaid gown and a pair of matching lavender gloves that go all the way to her elbows. Her hair turns lavender and ties itself into a neat bun. A large black butterfly mask covers her entire face sans her mouth which gets painted lavender, and she grows translucent butterfly wings fluttering at her back. Lastly, she has on a pair of black heels. Gabriel turns blue and has a navy beret that has feathers flowing downward over his left eye and he’s wearing a navy three-piece suit and navy shoes with peafowl feathers in various shades of blue on his lower back. They turn to each other and kiss.

“Let’s make our wish come true, Gabriel Dear.”

“Let’s, My Love.”

Émilie holds her hand out and conjures a purplish-black butterfly. Beside her, Gabriel takes a feather off his fan and hands it to his wife where she puts the butterfly on. “My precious little akuma, use this feather to find a strong emotion to latch onto and wreck havoc on the city.”

“If the book was right about the miraculouses needing a Guardian, they’ll show their faces when the city is in danger.”

Émilie holds his hands, “I hope you’re right.”

□□

“Alright Rose, why are we skulking in the halls?”

“We’re...” The blonde pauses for dramatic effect, “gonna start a band!” She exclaims. Ivan stares at her like she’s grown a second head. “C’mon, you don’t think it’ll be fun?”

“Who wants to hear *me* sing?”

“Mylène might, for one—” Ivan blushes sputtering. “You don’t have to sing if you don’t want to! You can play an instrument! Rock out on the guitar like Jagged Stone! *Think* of all the *battle of the bands* contests we can get into!”

Ivan stares at Rose. Her expression isn’t giving anything away which is odd because Rose is easily the most expressive person Ivan’s ever met, and always has been. This could just be another fixation his best friend came up with on the fly. He honestly wouldn’t put it past her. “We’re gonna have a band...” He frowns, “with just two people?”

“W-Well, *no*—” Now Rose frowns then freezes. Ivan follows her movement watching a tall, purple-haired girl walk by with a guitar case strapped to her back. Once she’s no longer visible, Ivan turns to Rose who shrugs with a sheepish smile.

Ah. “I see. How do you know she’s not a solo act?”

“I don’t!” Rose wails, “I’ve never seen her before which is odd because I’d remember spotting someone so beautiful! And the school’s not really that big! I would’ve remembered.”

“To be honest, Rose, she’s kinda giving off a ‘don’t talk to me’ vibe.”

“B-But, she’s so *beautiful*!”

Ivan sighs shaking his head. “Admire her beauty from afar.” Rose frowns. “Let’s head to class. We have Professeur Bustier this year and I’ve heard nothing but good things about her.”

“So have I!” Rose squeals. When Rose and Ivan enter their classroom there’s a brunette standing by the professeur’s desk looking around. “Hi!” Rose chirps. The brunette flinches then stares at the blonde wide-eyed. “Sorry for startling you.”

“N-No problem. I’m Lila. I just moved to Paris this morning with my mamma.”

“I’m Rose! And this is Ivan. Welcome to François Düpont!” Rose moves to greet her with a cheek kiss but freezes.

“Oh! You’re going to give me the standard French greeting. Go ahead.” Rose nods then she and the brunette cheek kiss. “I’ve read about the cheek kiss, but they don’t do anything like that in Naples.”

Rose tilts her head to the right, “Naples?”

Lila nods, “It’s a city in Italy. I was born there and spent most of my childhood there too. Is there anything I should know about the school?”

“What do you mean?” Ivan asks.

“You know...” Lila lolls her head from side to side, “the social hierarchy. The most popular kids in school? The students to avoid?”

Ivan and Rose exchange a glance before turning to Lila. “Chloé.”

“Huh?”

“Chloé Bourgeois is the answer to both of those questions.” Ivan replies, “the latter more so than the former.”

“Are my ears ringing?” A blonde says walking into the classroom with a box in one hand and another blond in the other arm. She tosses the box to Rose. “Clumsy’s in this class and she brought those from her parents' lame shop—”

“You have a bag under your arm from that same lame shop.”

Chloé glares at Rose who snaps her mouth shut, “not my fault they’re the only boulangerie pâtisserie with any competency. Doesn’t mean I have to like it or them. They’re lame, even more so for giving birth to Dupain-Cheng.” She pauses, looking over the brunette, “who is this hobo chic chick?”

The brunette gapes before shaking her head to school her features. “I’m Lila Rossi. I just—”

Chloé holds up a hand, “don’t care about your life story.” She looks over Lila again, “cute shoes though.” She drags the poor green-eyed blond boy on her arm up the stairs to the last row on the right side of the classroom then sits down like she’s royalty or something.

Lila turns back to Rose and Ivan, “I see what you mean.” She mutters.

“Don’t worry about her.” Rose pats the brunette on the back, “there’s only one Chloé in the school and that’s... well, Chloé. Most of the students in this school are really nice.” The blonde suddenly squeals loudly and Lila winces clutching her ear. “S-Sorry! Still working on volume control. Hope you like our school!” She grabs Ivan by the arm and pulls the boy to the second row on the right side of the classroom. Lila watches the blond obviously try to avoid staring at the purple-haired girl that walks in the class up the stairs past her.

The purple-haired girl reaches the second to last row and Chloé tosses a bag onto the desk. “That seat is occupied, Gotherella, sit somewhere else.”

The girl eyes the seat then narrows her visible eye at Chloé. “No one’s in it.”

“Obviously.” The blonde rolls her eyes, “they aren’t here yet.” Chloé makes a shooing motion, “Go away, Bats. I have garlic in my salad and I am not afraid to use it.”

“Chlo—” The blue-eyed blonde takes out a pâtisserie from the bag and stuffs it in the green-eyed blond’s mouth. The purple-haired teen glares then stomps down the stairs to the first row on the left and plops down on it.

Chloé rolls her eyes then shakes her head.

Lila takes a seat in front of Rose and Ivan and looks around the class watching the rest of the students file into the room. A tiny girl with rainbow hair gives the big guy a flustered greeting he returns the greeting just as flustered. The tiny girl opens her mouth but Chloé interrupts snapping her fingers. “Let’s go Mylène, I have your seat already.”

“R-Right, Chloé. I’m—”

“Now.” Mylène frowns then gives Ivan an apologetic smile he returns, then she shuffles up the stairs to the seat where Chloé’s bag is. Chloé holds out her hand and Mylène puts the bag in. “Honestly, Mylène, your maman would roll over in her grave seeing you associate with *that*.” Chloé carelessly gestures toward Ivan nearly hitting the green-eyed blond beside her in

the face. Lila hums. There's something familiar about that kid but she can't put her finger on it. Oh well.

"But Ivan is nice."

"I don't care if he was a descendant of a king of France! He's a worthless commoner. Your maman was my maman's adviser, that makes us important people and as important people we need to stick together. I pulled a lot of strings to get Damocles to have us in the same class this year. You should appreciate me looking out for you."

"I-I'm sorry."

"Don't apologize, it's beneath you. Just do better."

The rainbow-haired teen nods sadly. "O-Okay."

Chloé looks around, "where the hell is Sabrina?"

The intercom loudly crackles to life. "*Adrien Agreste, please report to Principal Damocles' office.*" The blond – Adrien (no wonder he looked so damn familiar! He's Adrien Freaking Agreste: the teenage heart-throb model. Lila taps her chin. He isn't as cute in person as he is on billboards. Oh well.) – looks up at the ceiling with his eyebrows furrowed. "My parents must've found out I left." He sighs.

"If they try anything, I'll have Papa talk to them."

"Thanks, Chlo." She nods at him. He gets up after Chloé finally releases him and heads down the stairs smiling sheepishly at everyone outright gaping at him. He nearly bumps into a tall blue-haired girl as they reach the door at the same time. "S-Sorry!" He squeaks then flees.

The girl shrugs then walks into the classroom with an equally tall brunet. She and Chloé make eye contact for less than a second and Lila could swear the temperature in the classroom dropped several degrees. She needs to know who this girl is.

She turns back to Rose and Ivan. Ivan has his head down frowning and Rose pats him on the head, "who is she?" Rose looks at her quizzically and Lila jerks a thumb in the direction of the blue-haired girl who makes her way up the stairs to the second-to-last row on the left side.

The brunet beside her sticks his tongue out at Chloé before they sit down. The blonde huffs indignantly folding her arms over her chest, turning toward the wall.

Rose squints, “I’m not sure...” She stares a few seconds longer then her eyes widen, “no wait! I-I think that’s Marinette! We were in the same class last year. She’s super nice and really creative. She’s also in the art club...” Rose frowns, “but she was not that tall three months ago. I’ve been this height for years and she just grows twice as tall practically overnight?” Now Rose puts her head down and Ivan pats her on the head without lifting his head.

Their professeur, a redhead wearing a crisp navy suit wearing her hair in a tight bun, bustles into the classroom. “Greetings students, I apologize for my tardiness. For those of you who don’t know me, I’m Professeur Bustier. There was a new student Principal Damocles wanted me to introduce to you—”

“Then why did Adrikins go to his office if you were just gonna introduce him?” Chloé interrupts.

“I’m sorry?”

“Adrien Agreste? He was just called to Damocles’ office.”

“Oh yes. So I’ve heard. He wasn’t the student I was talking about.” Bustier motions at the door and a beautiful bespectacled girl with her long wavy orange hair tied in a ponytail and some strand of her hair cutely framing her face, walks in the classroom immediately capturing everyone’s attention. Oh no no no. This will not do. “Class this is—”

Lila stands frantically raising her hand, “P-Professeur? Professeur, I’m a new student too!”

“Are you? I was only told about two new students, not three.” The professeur hums, “well, please come down so we can be introduced to you.” Nodding, Lila makes her way down to the professeur’s desk standing at the woman’s left while the other new student stands at the right. “Where was I? Oh yes. Class, this is Alya Césaire. She came all the way from North America. Let’s all make her feel welcome.” The class nods.

Bustier nods at Lila. “O-Oh. I’m Lila. Lila Rossi. I came from Naples, Italy. I’m still learning French so I apologize in advance for my terrible pronunciation.” Bustier pats Lila on the shoulder then gestures for both girls to take a seat. The other girl takes a seat in the first row on the left next to the purple-haired girl.

“Okay. Now as today is the first day we’re going to—”

The door opens and a pale, orange-haired bespectacled teen walks in the classroom. “Sorry I’m late, Professeur, traffic was weird this morning.”

“It’s quite alright. We were just getting started.” The girl heads to the seat in front of Chloé. The blonde leans forward to hug the girl from behind. “Now then, we’re going to get class representative voting out of the way—”

Chloé raises her hand, “there’s no need for that, Professeur. I’m always class representative.”

“Here we go...”

Chloé glares at the blue-haired girl briefly then turns back to the professeur. “If you don’t believe me you can ask my papa, the mayor of the city?” Bustier blinks at her. “Only important people are allowed to hold positions of power. And as an important person, I’m one of the few here qualified to be class rep.”

“I-I see.” The professeur furrows her eyebrows before forcing a smile. “Well then, Mlle Bourgeois—”

The blue-haired girl raises her hand, and the professeur acknowledges her, “you’re seriously just gonna appoint her class rep? She never does anything! We almost missed our class trips because of her.”

“We still got to go, didn’t we?” The blue-haired girl rolls her eyes, “and if you are so damn opposed why don’t you run? Oh, that’s right. Because you’re a loser.”

“Loser, my twintails! I’m not gonna run because you’re just gonna sabotage me.”

“I wouldn’t need to sabotage *you* to win.”

“Keep telling yourself that. I seem to recall you sabotaging my *Next Big Designer* design idea because your maman was a judge!”

“She’s far too busy to look at anything of *yours*—”

“Girls, *please!*” Professeur Bustier interrupts. She looks at the blue-haired girl, “are you interested in running for class rep?”

The blue-haired girl snorts out a laugh, “yeah right. You’re just gonna appoint Chloé because she’s gonna, once again, remind you who her papa is. I won’t waste time convincing you not to give in.”

Lila lets out an impressed hum as the professeur outright gapes at the girl. “I volunteer.” The woman snaps out of her stupor staring up at Lila raising her hand. The blonde narrows her eyes and the blue-haired girl is giving her an unreadable expression. “I was class rep at my old school.”

“That’s wonderful, we have two candidates and that means we’ll put it to a vote.”

“I don’t care if you were class rep a hundred times over, New Girl # 2! *I* run this class! Anyone who doesn’t vote for me can’t go to Jagged Stone’s back to school performance at Le Grand Paris this weekend.”

Lila gasps, “y-you’re *bribing* your classmates into voting for you?”

“Do you not know how voting works?” Chloé folds her arms over her chest. “What are you gonna give the class *if*— and I mean *if*— you were to somehow win?”

“I-I’d just try to make the classroom as comfortable for everyone—”

“*Boring!* Unless you’re giving us plush seats you can’t do anything. My papa can easily fix the broken down seats in this class. I’ll tell him to up the school’s budget so we can get nicer things in the classroom. I doubt you could do anything like that so it’s obvious I’m gonna win. You know why? Because I *always* win! It’s best you recognize that now.”

Bustier clears her throat, “s-so... all in favor of Mlle. Bourgeois?” There are only four students, aside from Lila, who don’t raise their hand. “I suppose that’s that.”

“Unfreakingbelievable.” The blue-haired girl mutters nudging her friend who also didn’t raise his hand.

Bustier clears her throat, “now I’m gonna assign seats.” The class gasps.

“B-Before we do that—” The blue-haired girl interrupts, “I have macarons from my parents’ boulangerie pâtisserie.”

“Do you have enough for the class?” She nods. “Well, then you’re free to pass them out. Everyone come to the front.” The class reluctantly complies walking to the professeur’s desk. The blue-haired girl goes one-by-one in front of everyone offering the box and they thank her, accepting a macaron or two. When she gets to Chloé who is at the end of the line leaning against the wall, the blonde gasps in outrage as she opens the empty box.

“You did this on purpose!” The blonde growls.

“Yeah, because I calculated how many macarons I’d need to make sure you didn’t get any.” She rolls her eyes ignoring Chloé glaring at her. The blonde misses Marinette subtly fist-bump the brunet beside her.

□□

When Adrien returns to the classroom he sees Chloé glaring at the front of the class while everyone else is sitting in different seats. “Are you trying to make me fail your class, Professeur?” The pretty blue-haired girl exclaims at her seat in the front row on the left. “I’ll never be able to hear you with her constant blathering.”

“It’s utterly ridiculous you want me to sit next to her! She’s a walking disaster!”

“This obvious tension between you is the reason you’re sitting next to each other. Now, Mlle. Bourgeois, please take your seat.” Screaming, Chloé stomps over to her seat and gracelessly plops down next to the blue-haired girl who shifts away as much as their shared desk would allow. With a sigh, she turns to Adrien. “Oh. Oh dear...” The redhead surveys the class, “ah. M. Agreste, you’ll be seated right here in the front next to Lila.” The brunette waves at him and Adrien doesn’t know why but he feels a sudden shudder rake through his body.

At the principal’s office, Nathalie was standing there with a tablet that had his parents’ disappointed faces on it. His parents are mostly reclusive – ironic given their career choices – but Adrien doesn’t share that perspective. He enjoys being outside and around other people. He was halfway expecting his parents to demand he return home but he was so surprised to hear they’re giving the school a trial run that he hugged the tablet. The only thing he’s wanted more than going to public school was to have a sibling but that’s not gonna happen. He spoke to his parents about adoption but for some reason they vetoed that option immediately. Oh well, one out of two certainly is not bad.

He plops down next to Lila and she smiles at him. The look in her eyes is enough to make his hair stand on end. “I’ve done a little modeling myself.” She begins, conversationally, “weird how we’ve never met before. Guess the modeling world is bigger than I thought. Since we’re both new to public schooling we should be friends. Look out for each other and junk, you know? Model to model.”

“Y-Yeah. Sounds good.” His only friends are Chloé and Sabrina and they’re only his friends because all of their parents know one another. To have friends of his own his parents haven’t selected? He’s gonna make as many friends as he’s capable of making. Adrien looks over at Chloé who is glowering in front of her desk with her arms folded. With Professeur Bustier turning to the board, Adrien jumps out of his desk and taps Chloé before sitting back down. She stares at him, eyebrows furrowed, and he points to his mouth then smiles.

She smiles at him briefly before scowling at her desk.

□□

“Hey.” Alya heads toward that other new girl – Lola? What was her name, again? “Just so you know, I would’ve voted for you.”

“Thanks, Alya.”

“No prob. I don’t even know who Jagged Stone is but I doubt he’s worth these kid’s souls.” Alya shrugs, “anyway, just wanted you to know that. See ya.”

“Bye.”

Alya walks by the seething blonde as the tiny girl with the glasses attempt to console her. Ugh. Alya’s not looking forward to spending the school year around her. Why is there always one mega brat in every school she attends? She opens the locker Damocles assigned her and hears a loud scream. Alya turns around and a pile of purplish-blue ooze where the blonde was standing. Eyes widening, she whips out her phone and starts recording.

The ooze expands and shifts then dissolves. The blonde is back but her hair is now loose and down past her waist; she’s wearing an all-gold tux that’s, quite frankly, blinding. It’s hard to look at her with how shiny her suit, tiara, heel, and scepter – with a freaking diamond in it. “Behold your school’s one true Idol!” She sings. “Your Queen Idol!” The tiny girl flinches as the scepter is pointed at her. “Prove your loyalty to me, Sabrina Raincomprix, and I’ll make you my knight.”

The girl flinches as the scepter touches her head. For a second nothing happens, then the girl transforms in a blinding gold light to one of those medieval armor knights. The girl kneels, “My Queen Idol, I am yours to command.”

As the blonde beams, she motions for the knight to stand. “We have a peasant to put in their place.”

Alya continues to record as the blonde and the knight walk away. She slowly lowers the camera. “What the fuck? That was...” She clutches her phone, “an honest-to-goodness supervillain!” She screams and some of the students flinch. Alya kicks her locker shut, cackling as she follows behind the blonde.

As she starts recording again, the blonde aimlessly waves her scepter turning everyone in her path into medieval knights but their armor isn’t shiny like the one beside her.

This is like a twisted cartoon come to life! And if there’s a gaudy supervillain sashaying through the halls there’s bound to be a superhero to stop them!

Damn! With the sheer amount of knights the blonde’s made, she lost track of her but she continues to record the blonde’s warpath on her phone.

“*Attention students.*” The intercom crackles to life, “*this is Principal Damocles. I don’t know what the hell is going on in the halls but school is—aggggh!*” He screams. The students in the hall look up at the intercoms with worried expressions.

“*Thank you, Principal Damocles. My subjects, you have but one task: Find Marinette Dupain-Cheng and bring her to me. Your Queen will shower you with affection if you succeed.*”

□□

Marinette clutches her chest as she closes the boulangerie pâtisserie doors, leaning against them. “Marinette?! W-What are you doing here?” Tom asks.

“I don’t know what happened to Chloé but she hit a put on me—” Marinette shakes her head and growls, “she put a hit on me! Kim threw himself at some students dressed like knights that were trying to bring me to her!” She screams, “coming home was the obvious thing! I have to go somewhere else—”

“Marinette, calm down!” Tom grabs her shoulders, “whatever is going on we’ll—”

“Tom, get over here quick!” They run into the living room as Sabine turns up the volume on the television.

“Don’t be bemused, it’s simply... the news.’ To be perfectly honest, I’m not sure what I’m witnessing. A cosplay convention gone awry? One of those ‘flash mobs?’” The burgundy-haired woman shrugs scratching her head, “who knows? But Knights are scouring the city looking for Marinette Dupain-Cheng.” A blinding gold light hits the newscaster transforming her into a knight, “so she might as well surrender herself!” Then she charges toward the camera cutting off the feed.

“We have to—*oh*.” Sabine sighs in relief, “you’re already here.”

“But I can’t stay. Chloé knows where I live, and I will not have her coming after you guys just to get to me.”

“Marinette, we’re your parents. It’s our jobs to worry and protect you. Not the other way around. If and when Chloé comes, *we*’ll handle it—”

“*But*—!”

“No buts.” They both hug her, only releasing her when Marinette’s stomach growls loudly.

“I...” She chuckles awkwardly, “didn’t get to eat. I dropped my fritter this morning when Chloé’s townear nearly hit me and this old-*er* fellow.”

“What!?” Sabine yells. “First she tries to run you over, then she has the whole city looking for you! I swear that awful girl and her family raise my blood pressure.”

Tom rubs Sabine’s shoulders, “deep breaths. Deep, calming breaths. Honey, why don’t you do some sketching to take your mind off things? We still have some danishes left over if you need a pick-me-up.”

Nodding, Marinette takes a cheese danish from behind the counter then goes up to her room. As she opens the trap door she could swear she saw something moving out the corner of her

eye in the direction of her window, but when she looks she doesn't see anything. Shrugging, she plops down on her desk stuffing the danish in her mouth.

She angrily bites the danish, then pauses blinking at the hexagonal box on her desk.

Chewing, she picks it up with her free hand and glances at the character written in hanzi. ““Destruction?”” She scoffs. “Right. As if I need a box telling me how destructive I am—” She pauses, putting the danish down on her notepad. “This feels familiar.” Biting her lip, she cracks open the box a little and a blinding black light has her dropping the box on the floor to shield her eyes.

Marinette slowly lowers her hands and a giant black bug floats up from the ground. She quickly picks up her sewing machine from the desk and slams it on the bug's head. It yelps then drops to the ground.

Sighing in relief, she picks up the box – that the bug fell beside – and opens it fully examining the ring green beads on a cat's paw, when she picks it up to examine it further it changes before her eyes to a thin strawberry gold ring. “Whoa. Magic. This can't be happening.” Marinette squints at the ring, “is this real gold? Never seen a piece of jewelry so *pink*.”

As it turns out, the bug isn't dead... and it isn't a bug. When it floats up a second time, with a large lump on its head in between its two cat-like ears, it glares up at her. “That was way more painful than last time!”

“Last time? I've never seen you before—” She covers her mouth with both her hands.

“Okay. Let's go through the motions again and hope the rabbit doesn't have to pull another trick out of her umbrella.”

Marinette slowly lowers her hands, “what are you talking about?” She whispers.

“Hm? I'm talking about our partnership.” The creature looks around, “where's the snack? Did it change in this timeline?” Marinette stares wide-eyed at the thing and it sighs. “Let me start over. I'm Plagg and I'm a kwami—” It pauses, “I'm your kwami. I've been sent by the Guardian of the miraculouses to help you – the avatar of destruction – harness your abilities. With me so far?” She nods slowly. “There's some creature or something out there we need to stop. I don't know how different this timeline is to the last one we were in together.”

“I’m, uh... no longer with you.”

“That’s okay. This is confusing. I get it. Alright. You don’t remember me?” Marinette shakes her head. “Then you won’t remember the bunny either. Long story short: the Guardian – the person responsible for giving me to you – messed up and I knew something felt off but I didn’t know what. Bunnyx is the avatar of time. When something is screwed up so bad it fucks with the whole multiverse, Bunnyx comes in and corrects the mistake. She’s like a human backspace button or a walking jar of correction fluid. Kwamis all use the same source of magic so we remember every instance of Bunnyx fixing things but our Intendeds rarely remember things outside their timeline and if they do it comes in dream form. Because if you’re remembering things from too many timelines the memories will constantly conflict and you’ll go insane.”

“That’s good to know. So, uh, Plug was it?” They sigh. “I don’t need any additional destruction going on in my life, thank you. I’ve got thirteen-and-a-half years of solid proof backing me up.”

“It’s *Plagg* and I’m afraid you have very little say in already being the embodiment of destruction. You were born with this power.”

“So I’m cursed. *I knew it!*”

“No, no. It’s not a curse. Though your predecessors all viewed it that way. There isn’t a single power in the nine dimensions strong enough to give anyone the shitty card hand you’ve been dealt.”

“Right. So it’s a culmination of powers that dumped a pile of destruction into my parents making me?”

“Not how I would’ve said it but, yeah.” Marinette sighs. “But being the avatar of destruction means you’ll always have the cards stacked against you but you’ll still gracefully persevere —” Plagg pauses, “maybe not gracefully but you’ll shine nonetheless.” Marinette frowns, “now I know you wanna do your fashion thing and you still can, but first we gotta kick some monster ass. Hopefully, Bunnyx helped Master find your partner because kwamis aren’t meant to function solitarily. It’s why we have matches; it’s why we’re given to humans to work with. Bunnyx portal-ed in and paid me a visit and reminded me of this. In my defense, it has been over a century since I was last activated. The Avatars of Destruction and Creation don’t come as often as other Avatars.”

Marinette toys with the ring in her hand, “and this is somehow gonna help me help you...

help me?” Plagg nods.

“Ah! There’s the snack.” Marinette glances at the danish Plagg is eyeing, then gestures at Plagg to take it and take it Plagg does. Marinette grimaces as Plagg swallows the danish whole. “These are delicious.”

Marinette hears screams from downstairs. “Shit. She found me.” She puts the ring on her right middle finger. “Plagg, claws out!” Her eyes widen, “wait... how did I—” Her eyes widen further as Plagg flies into the ring. “Oh fuck.”

There’s a blinding light coming from her hand. Her ring changes color and shape, returning to green beads on a cat’s paw. Next, black fingerless gloves materialize over her arms and hands, with a basketweave pattern that has every second line green, and her nails elongate and magically paint themselves green. After that, a mostly black catsuit forms over her body – same pattern as her gloves. An obnoxious green crystal bell ties itself around the equally obnoxious green ribbon around her neck. She gets a pair of green knee-high boots the same color as her nails and its basketweave pattern is the inverse of the rest of her suit. A green baton appears over her head and she catches it; there’s a black cat paw in the center and she presses it causing the baton to split in two.

Her hair grows, making her twintails that barely touched her shoulders loosened, flow over her chest, and turns the same green as her nails and to finish it off black ribbons appear and tie themselves around her twintails.

She feels her lips tingling so she grabs her phone and opens the camera app flipping it to selfie mode to see her lips are green. Then she gasps as she looks at her yellowish-green green eyes that have cat-like slits. A black domino mask forms over the top half of her face, with the same basketweave pattern. She examines her entire body with the camera before setting her phone down. Her ears – she has black fluffy cat ears and a bushy black tail with a green ribbon on its end. She tweaks her ears because she can’t help herself and yup, they’re real. “Sweet Colonel Mustard, what the hell am I *wearing*?”

There’s an explosion that shakes the whole building. Marinette hooks her batons on her belt then crawls out the window and slides down the fire escape. Then she makes a mental note to clean her room when she gets back.

As Marinette gets to the front of the shop, the door opens and a red cord wraps itself around her body. The cord pulls her away from the door right as Chloé, being carried in a throne by her knights, is lifted out of the shop and Sabine and Tom are tied together against the back of the throne.

Marinette gapes at the person the cord is attached to. They're wearing a red and black polkadotted catsuit but what's really mesmerizing are the fiery orange-red crystal wings that are just fluttering beautifully and there are also half-black, half-red antennas poking out of their head. They have bright red ear-length hair in a bob (at least where one's ears would normally be without a domino mask over it) and red lipstick. "Bwha—?" Marinette sputters.

"I don't understand what's going on myself. Did a chatty..." They look her over, "cat, I guess, tell you it was your duty to stop that thing?" Marinette nods. "Then you must be my partner." Marinette nods again. Upon closer inspection, her partner appears to be a ladybug. Makes sense. Ladybugs are often viewed as symbols of good luck. (A dragonfly would've been cooler but whatever.)

The ladybug extends her hand and Marinette shakes it. "I take it your chatty ladybug told you that you were the 'avatar' of something?"

"Good luck and creativity." The ladybug scoffs. "I've never been particularly lucky in life." Their eyes narrow and they clutch the yo-yo in their hands. "But this isn't about me. We need to destroy the corrupted object. Something called an 'amok' is amplifying that blonde's anger while an 'akuma' is what transformed her into what we just saw."

"Your kwami told you all that? All I got was a conversation about timelines and the avatar of time."

"My kwami mentioned that to me as well. They said us not meeting is why the timeline was messed up. My arrival to the city was... expedited. And to top it off I was given incorrect information about the school I'm supposed to be attending."

"You really aren't good luck." She swings her yo-yo and it snaps back hitting Marinette in the head. "I think that was my bad luck overlapping yours."

"Two negatives equal a positive." The ladybug swings the yo-yo again and it ties around a chimney.

"Just how long is that string?"

"It's magic. There's no explanation for it otherwise." Marinette nods, "hold onto me. I heard the blonde mentioning execution."

“You *what!*?”

□□

Alix just wasn't sure what the hell was happening anymore. Maybe she didn't wake up and she was dreaming? She overslept – it happened more days than it didn't, time seemed to enjoy making her its bitch. When the pink-haired teen made it to the school, every entrance slash exit was blocked by a pair of shiny knights. Then the more Alix looked around the more knights she saw; there were even a few shiny and some non-shiny ones patrolling the school grounds.

And she could swear she saw *Chloé Bourgeois* with hair extensions wearing a shiny gold tux once or twice.

That was it. No more triple-fudge milkshakes before bed. She. Was. Done.

Shaking her head, she decided fuck this and turned to skate back home but one of her wheels dislodged from her skate and she fell face first on the sidewalk. “Uncool.” She mutters.

Bunnyx watches the pink-haired girl from inside her time prism, get up then dust herself off. She's bleeding in a few places but she shrugs it off and skates off with just the one intact skate. Bunnyx sighs pressing her hand against the time window. “Atta girl.” She whispers. “Just nine days...” Bunnyx mutters removing her hand from the time window and it vanishes. She presses her hand against another spot on the wall and another time window opens.

Minibug and Kitty Chaos have Queen Idol hogtied and KC slams her baton down onto the tiara and a feathery purple and blue swirled butterfly flutters out of the now broken tiara.

Minibug startles as she taps the can of motor oil against the butterfly and it explodes into a bright pink light that blankets the sky.

Bunnyx rolls her eyes as a swarm of blue feathers turns the sky blue then forms a peafowl's face. “Congratulations.” The face speaks, “you two have selfishly doomed the city all because you wouldn't surrender your Miraculouses. Hope you can live with yourselves.”

Minibug and KC nod to each other. The can of motor oil turns back into the yo-yo and the bug thrusts it at the face that screams as the feathers disintegrate and the sky turns pink once

more.

There's this... flash that Bunnyx even feels in her time prism and when she clears the stars dancing out of her eyes she sees the city once again intact.

Minibug and KC actually hug rather than high-five or fist bump. Interesting. They've never done that in any universe before. It... *probably* won't hurt anything.

She did the right thing. If she hadn't, Minibug wouldn't be here and this world would end. And there's no coming back from that. Believe her, she's tried.

Unfortunately, such a drastic quick change to the timeline will create paradoxes even she isn't aware of.

She watches the duo wave to each other as they go their separate ways. Bunnyx moves her hand from the time window and it closes. She taps her foot for a few seconds then turns around and presses both hands against the wall opening a new time window.

behold, the luckyblog

Chapter Summary

after getting their names, as well as the names of the villains, Alya and some classmates create a blog for the new heroes

Chapter Notes

A/N: I don't know how I completely forgot about Ladybug's **net** that she catches akumas with {facepalm}

Fri, Sept 4th, 2020

"Alya?!" Nora rubs her eyes fully opening her little sister's bedroom door. "It's..." She glances down at her watch, "five in the fucking morning! What the hell are you doing awake?"

"I needed to know the largest memory card size I could fit into my phone without frying it. The internet said my phone is compatible with 1TB of external memory. What's a TB?"

"Terabyte. That's a shit-ton of memory, Als. My PS4 has a terabyte external memory and with all the games I have it's only half full." Alya hums, "now this doesn't explain *why* you're looking up memory cards at five in the morning?"

Alya turns in her swivel chair toward her sister. "Superheroes."

"Excuse me?"

"The city has superheroes. I saw them." Then she turns back around.

"Oh no. You're not getting off that easily." Nora turns the chair back toward her, gripping the arms, "explain." Alya grabs her phone from her desk and unlocks it, scrolling through a few

things in the gallery then turns her phone toward her sister and presses play.

Nora squints at the blue feathers that form a face that starts moving. “Wasn’t close enough to get any audio.” It looks like mid-rant, a yo-yo hits the face causing the features to explode and a pink light eclipsed the sky before that too exploded, and all the people in armor return to normal through a blinding pink light.

The camera moves down and Nora sees the backs of two individuals – one wearing a black and green suit with a tail and the other wearing a red and black polkadotted suit with wings. The one in the black is significantly taller than the other but they hug briefly before waving to each other. The one in black heads left while the one in right heads right then the video cuts off.

Nora moves back from the chair. “*This* is what has you awake? Two minutes of audioless footage?”

“We’re talking two superhero-filled minutes of audioless footage, thank you very much.” Nora rolls her eyes. “I heard the feather face talking about something miraculous.”

“Something *what* miraculous?” Alya shrugs. “Do me a favor and get some sleep before you do more research?”

“Why bother? I have to be up in about an hour for school.”

Alya guzzles one of Nora’s disgusting but effective energy drinks as she gets ready for school. There was a brief period in which she thought she could *hear* minutes passing by but other than that she was fine. Nora dropped her off at school and gave her another energy drink because school is nine hours long and she may need another boost of energy throughout the day.

That blonde who turned into the purple ooze walks into the building with half her hair in a low loose ponytail while the rest of it is out. She’s wearing a pair of oversize black sunglasses over her eyes and is holding a paper bag in her hands. Her pantsuit is all black as is the jacket she’s wearing over it, she’s walking with a limp and Alya realizes it’s from her left broken heel. Her baby pink lipstick is smeared down the sides of her lips.

The students that are in the halls stop and stare at her as she walks by. Someone greets her and she hisses at them.

Alya snaps a quick picture of the girl before she disappears behind the classroom. Then she remembers she has to go in that same class so she hopes the girl didn't see her.

This... this is an interesting development. Perhaps it has something to do with what went on yesterday? Some kind of post-possession trauma. She needs more information. That'll require her getting close to the blonde. *That...* might prove difficult.

When Alya walks in the class, Professeur Bustier looks up from her desk and gasps in shock. "G-Good morning, Mlle. Bourgeois." The blonde scoffs then sits at her desk, upturning the paper bag in her hands allowing whatever falls out of the bag to fall into her open mouth. "Oh my! D-Do you need to see the principal?"

The blonde lifts her sunglasses revealing her bloodshot eyes then she slams the half-empty bag down. She swallows the food in her mouth then glares at the professeur, "*why* would I need to see the principal? Will he be able to explain why I feel cold even though it's 16°C and I'm wearing two jackets? Or why I can't comb my hair without screaming? Maybe he'll tell me why I keep hearing those voices calling out to me?" She rubs both hands on her face, smearing six vertical powdered sugar lines across her face. "I told my papa about how I felt and you know what he said?" The professeur gulps shaking her head, "he said, 'I'll book you the earliest therapist appointment available, Sugarplum!' I-I—" She sniffles, "I feel so *helpless* and..." She breaks down in tears, covering her face.

Alya doesn't even think as she walks over to the girl hugging her which makes her breakdown harder. No one else, aside from Alya and the professeur, is in the classroom to see the blonde in such a state.

"—lling ya, I can swim laps around that clown." The blonde freezes in Alya's arms at the sound of the voice in the doorway. Alya glances over and sees a brunet walking in the class backwards with his hands folded behind his head. "You gotta watch me embarrass him as I try out for the swim team."

"I'll be there." The blue-haired girl replies walking in the classroom behind the brunet – and her voice makes the blonde stiffen further, "but they say he's the youngest professional swimmer in the world, Kim."

"So he's a professional, doesn't automatically make him the best."

The tiny pink-haired girl walking beside the blue-haired girl snorts. "Also doesn't mean you're close to his level."

“You’ll see after school.”

More students start filing into the classroom. The blonde frantically starts loosening her hair out of its tangled ponytail then angrily swipes her hand through her hair. Alya lets go of her as she rubs at her face. The blue-haired girl – who, Alya notices is pretty tall; correction: she’s pretty *and tall* – stops at the desk. She does a double-take. “*Chloé?*”

She grabs the blue-haired girl by the collar, “you didn’t see anything.”

“You have powdered sugar all over your face.” The girl deadpans. Chloé releases the girl then takes out her compact out of her purse and screams. Rolling her eyes, the blue-haired girl offers a packaged towelette at the blonde.

“*No, no, no, no!* Dupain-Cheng, you don’t get to be *nice* to me. What the hell is wrong with you? Whatever the fuck I went through yesterday is not going to change things for us. Mercury is not in retrograde nor is it ‘opposite day.’ We. Hate. Each. Other. That is not supposed to change!”

“Chloé, there isn’t a person in existence I dislike more than you. I thought I’d save you the embarrassment of looking worse than you usually do.”

The blonde whimpers then takes the towelette from the blue-haired girl and tears it open angrily rubbing her face. Once her face is clean, she nods at the blue-haired girl who nods back before taking her seat.

Chloé looks up at Alya, “I... suppose I should thank you as well.” She squints then her eyes widen, “wait, you’re the pretty new girl from yesterday. I’m inviting you to eat lunch with me at my parents’ hotel, Le Grand Paris.”

“Yeah? Thanks.”

“Yes, well... You’re as beautiful as I am. You have no idea how refreshing that is in a class full of uggos and average people.” For some reason, the way she said average people seemed like more of an insult than just straight-up calling someone an uggo.

“You actually look good with no makeup on, Chloé.”

Her eyes narrow at the brunet, “what that fuck do you mean by ‘*actually?*’ I *always* look good, Lê Chiên.”

“I just thought you wore all that makeup because you were ugly without it.” The brunet says with a shrug as he walks to his seat with the pink-haired teen cackling behind him.

Chloé glares at the brunet who walks up the stairs to his desk. He sits down and she turns her attention to her bag rummaging through it. “I really was out of it. I don’t have a single ounce of makeup in my bag. My maman’s gonna be pissed.” She glances at Alya, “you’re pretty. Do you have any makeup I can use?”

“All I got is some chapstick.”

Alya takes it out of her pocket and Chloé examines it, “it’s better than nothing. Is it color or sheer?”

“It’s color. Kinda a dark reddish brown color.” Chloé rubs some on her finger then rubs her finger on her mouth then turns to Alya, “looks good.”

Chloé rubs in some more chapstick on her lips then brings her lips together, then hands it back to Alya, “thank you.”

“No prob.” Alya heads to her desk.

□□

“Welcome to music class. I’m Professeur Blanchet. We’re gonna see which musical instrument resonates with you.” The class stares at her as she chuckles, “just a little sound humor to get class off on the right note~”

“Professeur, will you teach us how to play the guitar like Jagged Stone?” A student asks and some other students murmur excitedly.

“I’m afraid it takes years of practice before that’s possible. But who knows? Maybe one of you will become the next great music sensation! You should know that I personally taught Clara Nightingale to play the piano.” Half the class gushes. “Everyone, please select an instrument you wish to learn more about on the pamphlet on your desk.” Lila raises her hand, “yes?”

“Professeur, are there no castanets in this pamphlet?”

“I’m sorry, no. If you’d like, we can make some?”

“Could we? Oh, that would be so wonderful. Thank you, Professeur!”

Chloé nudges Adrien, “Adrikins, what instrument are you gonna pick? You already play piano so there’s no reason to pick that.”

“I was thinking the violin.”

Chloé leans over her desk to pat him on the head, “you poor thing.”

Adrien frowns, “what’s wrong with a violin?”

“I won’t even address that. It can’t possibly be a serious question.”

Adrien sighs, “*fine*. What instrument were you thinking of?”

“A carillon.”

“A what?”

“Carillon.” Chloé shows him the picture on the pamphlet, “I looked it up and it’s the loudest instrument in the world. You should pick a more exciting instrument, Adrikins. Like the drums!” She gasps, “ooh or the—” She brings her hands together one in front of the other and wiggles her fingers. “That one.”

“Chloé, I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Adrien looks around the classroom at the other students examining their pamphlets or talking amongst one another. Chloé’s on his left and Sabrina is on his right. In every class yesterday, sans Professeur Bustier’s, he was bracketed by both of them. At this rate, he was never gonna make a new friend. He turns around to see the bespectacled boy behind him with his left hand propping up his face and his right hand flipping through the pamphlet. He glances up at Adrien. The blond waves and the boy narrows his eyes and lowers his left hand.

“Adrikins, pay attention. I’m explaining the most expensive and exciting instruments this school can afford.” She turns him around to her.

“What do you think of the Pretty Boy?” Kim asks, “an honest-to-goodness professional model is our classmate. He’s cuter in person. The billboards don’t capture just how *green* his eyes are.”

“Don’t care.” Marinette mumbles, “trying to decide between a harmonica and a pan flute.”

“Pick the pan flute, and what do you mean you don’t care?” Alix asks, “I mean, he’s objectively pretty – Kim’s poetic waxing about his eyes aside, and he’s not only Gabriel Agreste’s top model but his son.”

Marinette gives the pink-haired girl a flat look. “While I’m sure his portfolio is just oozing with all sorts of... fabulous accolades, he’s latched onto Chloé and I want no part of that.”

Alix sucks in a breath, “good point. He could be another Sabrina.” The pink-haired girl shudders.

“Or another Mylène?” Kim points out. “He could very well be another prisoner of circumstance because their folks run in the same circle. I bet he could use some non Chloé friends?”

“Good luck with that then.” Marinette says, “I think I wanna use an ocarina.”

“Which instrument should I play, Ivan?” Rose asks. “I want something loud.”

“What about those things you bang together?”

“The cymbals?” Rose rubs her hands together, “yes.” Ivan chuckles shaking his head. “What are you gonna go with?”

“I...” He glances over at Mylène sitting next to Aurore; she chuckles and Ivan blushes turning back to Rose, “I think I wanna play drums. That way I can get free lessons here and play them in our band too.”

The blonde gasps excitedly, “so you’ll join?!” Ivan nods and Rose squeals. When everyone looks at her she rubs the back of her neck, “sorry. We were just... talking...” Ivan shrugs helplessly as everyone looks at him.

Everyone jots down their instrument of choice and hands it to Professeur Blanchet on the way out of the classroom. Lunch is next, so Chloé tells Adrien and Sabrina to meet her outside. They have nearly an hour and a half for lunch, so why bother spending it in the school?

Chloé finds Alya at her locker so she escorts the girl outside to her towncar, arm-in-arm, where Sabrina and Adrien are already waiting.

“I’m in the mood for something sweet.” Adrien says, “how about some pâtisseries?”

“Fine. I’ll have my butler grab us some. But *not* from Dupain-Cheng’s. They don’t need my money twice in the same day.” She motions for Adrien to get in the towncar. He sighs as he gets in. Sabrina and Alya cheek kiss in greeting before they both get in the towncar. It’s a fifteen-minute drive to Le Grand Paris without traffic. Chloé exits first reaching for Alya’s hand, Alya takes her hand and they walk in the hotel.

Sabrina frowns walking behind them.

□□

Gabriel sighs leaning back in his chair. “Anger, jealousy...” He flexes his fingers, “emotions I can manipulate.” Duusu’s perched on his shoulder loudly munching on a biscuit.

“You should get Mme. Émilie.” Duusu says popping the rest of the biscuit in her mouth.

“No. I don’t want to bother her. Spread, the feathers Duusu. We’re taking care of this ourselves.” With a shrug, Duusu flies into the brooch under Gabriel’s tie.

Transformed, Gabriel plucks a feather from his fan. The feather pulses in his hand. “Go my precious amok. Go and embody those negative emotions and sentienate them!” He laughs as the feather flies out of his hand and phases through the office’s door.

□□

Sabrina angrily shovels her food around her takeaway container. As it turns out, Alya's mother Marlana is the head chef here meaning the girl's probably gonna be around them more often than not.

What's the deal with the girl being so damn nosy and asking Chloé all sorts of questions?

Chloé's already decided the girl is pretty and important enough to devote time to – and because of that it was only natural she was gonna address the girl's concerns. Sabrina has to wonder if Chloé thinks of her as pretty? She knows she's important because her papa is the police chief but she's never heard the blonde speak about her appearance.

“...So what exactly happened? I mean, where did the ooze come from?”

“I don't even know. One minute I'm pissed about the utterly ridiculous seating arrangements. I mean putting me next to Dupain-Cheng of all people? A disaster waiting to happen. Anyway, one minute there was *that* then the next... I'm hearing voices in my head telling me to get Dupain-Cheng. And the weird thing was she wasn't even what pissed me off.” Chloé pauses, “this time.” Nodding, Alya jots that down in her notepad. “You really think you can figure out what gave me that cute outfit and made me change all those people into knights?”

“I'm gonna try. I'm gonna see if I can get some key eyewitness takes on what went down. See if anyone remembers their time as a knight.”

“Sabrina was right beside me the entire time.” Both girls turn to Sabrina who flinches, “do you remember what happened yesterday when you were in the armor?”

Before Sabrina could open her mouth a blue feather falls into her takeaway container. She gasps and a feathery blue domino mask outline appears over her eyes.

Chloé screams, jumping to her feet. “I-It's happening again!” Alya takes out her phone and starts recording.

“You're supposed to be *my* best friend!” Sabrina's voice takes on a distorted echo-y lilt. “We pinky swore on our Pretty Princess Dolls!” She holds up her takeaway container and it doubles then triples then grows so large it busts through the roof of the suite. Then blue feathers surround the giant square changing it into a large doll. It picks up Sabrina with both hands then places her on their crown. Next, one of the arms shoot out and grabs Chloé and the other arm grabs Alya.

Adrien dives out of the way as the doll takes a step forward, foot breaking through the floor and possibly all the floors underneath.

“**Adrikins, get help!**” Chloé screams as the doll walks through the hotel destroying it.

Adrien stares at the doll shaped hole in the hotel. The mayor runs into the suite then screams. “What happened?! I heard screaming! Where is my precious Chloé?” Adrien wordlessly points at the doll. The man squints then his eyes widen. “What on earth...?” He pulls his cellphone out of his suit pocket then starts dialing a number. Adrien hears yelling on both sides before the mayor screams into the receiver, “—*find some way to get back my daughter, or you’re fired!*” Then he angrily hits the end call button. He turns to Adrien, “tell me *everything* that happened!”

□□

Plagg happily takes a large bite out of his grilled cheese. His Intended was deftly stitching together a purse for him to relax in while she was in school. He requested a special snack pouch she said she’d try to fit in.

She still had close to a half-hour to work on it and finish her lunch before she had to head back to François Dupont. The avatars of creation and destruction were a strange duo, each of them possessed traits of the other but destruction weighed heavily in Marinette’s favor over creation.

The boulangerie pâtisserie shakes and Marinette stabs herself in the thumb, “*oof*. Motherf—” She pulls the needle out and immediately sucks the blood off her thumb.

Plagg takes another large bite out of his sandwich then flies toward the window. He swallows his bite with a gulp, “uh... Kit? We’ve got an issue.”

Marinette gently puts the needle down on a visible spot before getting up and heading to the window, “I don’t—” She screams and a large hand comes through her window. “Oh come on!” It took them *hours* to clean up the boulangerie pâtisserie after Chloé stormed in it yesterday!

“My bestie wants pâtisseries!” A high-pitched voice cackles. The large hand feels around the floor before punching through it. Marinette gasps as the hand goes through the floors. She hears her mother scream then the hand retracts with the entire glass display case.

Then the hand disappears.

Marinette side-steps the large hole in her floor then runs to hole in her ceiling. The hand was attached to what looks like a giant woman walking away, carrying the display case. “Time to suit up, Kit.”

Marinette nods moving from the broken wall, “claws out, Plagg.” The transformation washes through her and she unclips one of her batons and squints noticing there’s a small black button on the top. She presses it and an extra compartment pops out nearly hitting her in the face. “‘Calling...?’ W-Who is it calling!?” She tries to jam the compartment back into the baton but she hears this weird clicking noise then her partner’s face pops up on the screen.

“Partner? We seriously need to come up with names if this is going to become a reoccurring thing.”

Marinette moves the baton so she’s on the screen and sees herself in the corner. “I agree. But later. If you’re transformed then you saw the—”

“Giant doll stomping through the streets?” Her partner nods with a sigh, “yeah.”

“Doll? Huh. Thought it was a giant person.”

The ladybug shakes her head, “an eyewitness said it was a ‘Pretty Princess’ doll.”

“Never heard of it.”

“Neither have I.”

“Wait, you spoke to an eyewitness?”

“A boy. He said his name was Adrien Agreste—” Marinette suppresses a groan, “and that one girl was holding a takeout container that expanded then shifted to the doll. But he says he doesn’t know how it happened. He also said the doll is carrying two other girls, one in each hand. One is his best friend Chloé and the other is a girl named Alya.”

“If the girl holding the takeout box didn’t change form along with it I’m gonna go on a limb

and say we're dealing with an amok today and not another akuma like yesterday."

Her partner nods, "likely. And the same rule applies in terms of the corruption."

"Got it. Destroy it or purify it, but don't touch it."

The ladybug looks up and sighs, "she's heading toward the Eiffel Tower."

"I can be there in... ten minutes? Gonna see if I can pole vault with my batons."

"Be careful. Can't do this by myself."

Marinette snorts a laugh, "copy that." That gets a *smile* out of her partner before the screen blacks out. "Ooh. That was so... *cute*." Marinette giggles to herself unlatching her other baton then pressing them both together.

There isn't another building close enough to the boulangerie pâtisserie to test the baton's sturdiness in a tight-rope situation. She does manage to pole vault herself off her balcony although she does it with no destination in mind and soars through the air. Wait where did that building come from!?

She jams her baton into the building, narrowly avoiding slamming face first into it. Sighing in relief, she climbs the baton then jumps on it. Damn, that's sturdy. Magic is wild.

She jumps from the baton to the roof then pulls her baton out of the building and jumps from rooftop to rooftop before reaching the Eiffel Tower.

Reaching the Eiffel Tower is difficult with nothing to pole vault off of but her partner catches her in mid air and they swing to the top. "You've been practicing!"

"I took your advice and read a few Spiderman comics. Miles Morales is an inspiration."

"Damn right he is." They reach the top of the tower where Chloé is holding onto for dear life screaming. Marinette *yowls* ...which is new.

The blonde stops bawling when she sees the two of them. "Y-You came to save me!" She

cries. “Sabrina’s gone nuts! She said I was only allowed to have her as a best friend! She’ll be lucky if I ever speak to her again putting me through this shit!”

“Tell us what happened.”

“I don’t know! I was talking to my new pretty friend Alya and we were asking Sabrina about the crap that happened yesterday but a feather dropped in her lunch then it turned into the very first Pretty Princess doll Sabrina’s maman bought the two of us, just... you know *blue*. Sabrina’s maman was sick a lot and she died from cancer when we were four. With her papa becoming the newly appointed police chief, my parents vowed they’d take care of Sabrina like their own daughter; which they did thank you very much. Then she pulls this shit the minute I speak to someone who isn’t her! Her behavior is not only utterly ridiculous but completely unbecoming!”

“I think I liked her better when she was possessed.” Her partner whispers and Marinette barks out a laugh then covers it up with a cough.

Chloé narrows her eyes at Marinette who waves her off. “Where did the doll and Sabrina go?”

“Back to Le Grand Paris. Alya’s maman works there and she said she’ll eliminate the threat to her friendship one family member at a time. I mean, I get why she’s completely obsessed with me. I’m a catch. I know—” Marinette and her partner exchange a glance, each rolling their eyes, “—but possessive behavior is *so* archaic! She might as well have clubbed me over the head and dragged me off like the cavedweller she’s acting like!”

Her partner peels Chloé’s fingers off her iron grip of the tower then holds her in the princess carry. The blonde shuts up mid-rant and blushes, gawking at the ladybug.

Somehow her partner manages to carry Chloé and swing to Le Grand Paris. Marinette follows close enough behind with her baton.

They land on the balcony of the penthouse suite. As her partner puts Chloé down, they hear screams. Nodding at each other, they dash to the staircase.

Marinette’s never been inside *Le Grand Paris Château* prior to now, she generally tries to stay away from places Chloé’s family is involved in. Thankfully, most of the places the Bourgeois family owns are places Marinette wouldn’t go to anyway.

Marinette doesn't know how many stories this building has but they jump from the penthouse staircase all the way to the ground floor and manage to survive with their limbs intact. They burst through the stairwell door with their weapons bared and run through the lobby.

People stop and gawk at them as they run by.

When they burst into the kitchen an all blue woman is stalking toward the corner humming.

The ladybug thrusts her yo-yo forward tying up the woman. Her head turns around a full 360 degrees and she widens her eyes at them. "Do not interfere!" She booms.

"That's the same doll from earlier but shrunken." Marinette whispers to her partner, "guessing she couldn't fully convey her threat being twenty meters tall?"

"Wouldn't she be more threatening taller?"

"*Maybe...* but the backwards head is freaking me out." Her partner tightens her grip.

The doll's eyes glow blue then a whirlwind of feather surround it, changing its shape to a bear in a doll dress. And throughout it all the head is still backwards. The bear is also small enough to fit into the kitchen without busting through the walls.

The ladybug releases her hold on the bear doll. "Annoying flies get *squashed!*" It screams poised ready to strike.

"Stop!" The bear-doll turns to Sabrina, "*they—*" A feathery blue mask outline materializes over the teen's eyes. "*—er* miraculouses must remain undamaged when you kill them." The ladybug motions to the side and Marinette sees the girl holding onto her phone sitting on the counter. The bear-doll lifts both hands then slams them on the ground. Marinette and her partner manage to jump out of the fist's range, then they slip under the bear's legs. Marinette grabs the girl on her phone and her partner grabs an orange-haired woman who was sitting on the floor in the corner.

The bear-doll screams as they run out of the kitchen.

"I twisted my ankle running away. It's such a cliché." The woman groans with a wince. "I don't wanna slow you two down."

“We’ll find some safe place to hide you...”

Marinette takes a quick glance at the phone pointed at her, “what are you doing?”

“Making a video about my rescue. Wasn’t close enough yesterday to really capture the two of you on screen. By the way, what’s your superhero name? And your partner’s? Did you get scratched by a super-powered cat? What are your powers? What are her powers? Do either of you have a familiar? What *are* miraculouses?”

“Listen, I’d be more than happy to answer any reasonable questions once we’re not being chased.”

“Yeah...” The girl looks over her shoulder, as Marinette was carrying her piggyback style. “That’s probably for the best.”

The mayor runs out of a room and into the lobby screaming. “Chloé? My darling Chloé, where are you? Your maman will kill me if I can’t find you!”

“André Bourgeois!” The bear-doll is holding Sabrina in its arms, approaching the mayor. “*You’re* responsible for this!”

“S-Sabrina? Where is Chloé?”

“On top of the Eiffel Tower. She might’ve fallen by now.” The mayor pales, “ *You* hired that woman so it’s your fault that girl is taking all of Chloé’s attention!”

“What woman? What are you talking about?”

“Don’t play dumb with me!” The bear-doll swipes at the man. He screams at the near-miss then runs off. “*Get back here!*” As the bear-doll still carrying Sabrina starts chasing the man around the lobby. The ladybug hands the woman off to the doorman who nods carrying her out of the hotel.

Marinette puts the girl down, “if you’re gonna record be smart about it. Don’t get yourself killed over a blurry shot.”

The girl nods, gripping her phone. “R-Right.”

Once she makes sure her mother is safe outside the hotel, Alya peers out from behind the lobby desk and resumes recording. The mayor is on the ground by the elevator unconscious. The ladybug is twirling a polkadotted baseball bat while the cat is brandishing two green batons. How could she have missed so much in the span of a few seconds?!

“Time to crack open this piñata~” The cat says. The two of them march toward the blue bear in a dress.

“You think your fancy sticks will help you defeat me?” It snarls.

“Why don’t we find out?” The ladybug replies.

A whirlwind of feathers surrounds the bear and it grows twice its previous size when the feathers no longer surround it. As the bear laughs, the ladybug and the cat each hit their weapons against the bear’s feet.

The bear yelps in pain throwing Sabrina in the air to rub its aching feet. Sabrina screams and the cat jumps in the air to catch her.

The spectators in the lobby cheer. The bear changes shape again back into a doll but keeps its size. “You can’t beat me!” The doll taunts, “as long as Sabrina is feeling hurt by the selfish actions of that girl, I’ll be around forever!”

“You *know* you just told us how to defeat you, right?” The cat and ladybug exclaim simultaneously.

“*Hey.*” Sabrina flinches in the cat’s arms. “Don’t you know it’s unhealthy to keep your feelings bottled up?” Her partner gives her an odd look before shaking her head. “You gotta help us take out this personification of your pain.”

“Y-You want *my* help?” Sabrina blushes, “n-no one asks me to help them with anything.” There’s this loud shattering noise and the doll’s face begins to crack.

Alya angles her phone so she can get as much into the screen as possible.

The blue from the doll starts fading into grey.

When the ladybug puts a hand on Sabrina's shoulder, the crack on the doll's face spreads.
"How can we help?"

Sabrina shakes her head, "it..." She looks down with a frown, "you can't. I overreacted. *Badly*. I don't own Chloé. She's free to make new friends other than me. It won't stop us from being friends."

"Personally, I don't get why you'd want to be friends with her anyway..." The cat blinks as her partner frowns at her. "U-Uh... but I mean, to each their own?"

Sabrina gasps, "*oh my gosh!* I-I really left Chloé hanging from The Eiffel Tower?! I'm the worst!"

"We saved her. She should still be in her suite."

Sabrina sighs in relief. "Thank goodness." The cat sets her down. The doll wails loudly and the three of them turn to it.

"These feelings won't just go away because you spoke of them now for two measly minutes! I'll *always* be part of you, Sabrina Raincomprix. Jealousy is a fickle bitch that always gets what it wants. You have not seen the last of me!" Sabrina whimpers as the crack splits the whole doll in two then it explodes into a plume of dust.

When the dust settles there's a bright blue feather, the same color as the doll, sitting on top of a takeaway container.

The baseball bat turns into a net then the ladybug catches the feather in it. Then the net morphs into a yo-yo and the ladybug opens the yo-yo to release the now pink feather into the air. "You are free from your corruption, little feather." It floats away. She tosses her yo-yo in the air, "*miraculous cure!*"

The yo-yo flashes brilliantly and everyone shields their eyes.

As the light dissipates, the hotel begins restoring itself.

The two heroes fist-bump.

Alya runs over to them nearly knocking Sabrina over. “I gotta know your names!”

They exchange a glance. The ladybug brackets her antennae with her hands as she starts beeping. “Just my luck.” She blinks, “*luck...*”

A large purple butterfly flutters into the hotel lobby. A few people scream. “*People of Paris, sorry for the late introduction. I can’t be there in person so my akuma will have to do. I am Madame Mite! The pleasure is all yours. Do you really want to put your trust in the hands of a pair of incompetent brats?*”

“A pair of ‘incompetent brats’ that just kicked you and your partner’s asses two days in a row.”

The butterfly laughs, “*beginner’s luck. What you witnessed was merely a fraction of what myself and my partner, Monsieur Méfait with his amoks, are capable of. The worst is yet to come. However, I’d be willing to forego all this drama and prevent a multitude of suffering if you two were simply to relinquish your Miraculouses to us.*”

The cat laughs loudly, “I think your nectar got laced. If anyone’s gonna be relinquishing miraculouses, it’s gonna be you two.”

“*You think you can threaten me? How foolish!*”

“She wasn’t making a threat. She was stating a fact.” The ladybug swings her yo-yo then jumps in the air as it turns into a large net. She catches the butterfly, “and we’re done listening to your bullshit cliché monologue.”

The butterfly screams as it crumbles into pink dust.

The ladybug lands on her feet sighing.

Alya lowers her phone as she gapes. They are *so* badass! She’d be kicking herself if she hadn’t caught this. “Luck.” Alya lets out a surprised gasp, blushing slightly as the ladybug turns to her. Alya stares at the blue eyes staring back at her. “I’m called Lady Luck.” She jerks her head back toward the entrance.

“Guess that’s my cue.” The cat jumps over several people with the aid of her baton and lands next to her partner, expertly flipping her baton and separating it in two smaller batons she puts on her belt, “you can call me Karma.” She blows the crowd a kiss. “We gotta book it.”

Everyone is rightly speechless as they watch the duo run out of the hotel.

Alya happily cradles her phone against her chest.

Sabrina shakes out of her stupor running over to the mayor. “I am so, *so* sorry Uncle André. Chloé’s safe. Lady Luck and Karma made sure of it.”

The mayor slowly gets to his feet. “Who? O-Oh, yes. As long as Chloé’s safe.” He sighs. “And you too.”

“I should apologize to Chloé. But first I have to get back to school.”

“If Chloé is here we’ll grab her then go.” The mayor heads over to the elevator.

Sabrina approaches Alya, “I’m sorry about all this. My insecurity caused this disaster. I don’t have many friends and—”

Alya puts a hand on her shoulder, “it’s all good. I’d never make light of your feelings or what you went through but this did help us learn the names of the two heroes.”

“True. Huh. Silver lining.”

□□

It’s like the entire mood of the school shifted between lunch.

Chloé changed her outfit into something less monochromatic. She’s wearing a pink, yellow, and white sheath dress with a color-block diamond pattern and a pair of white ankle boots. She even swapped out her all black sunglasses for a white pair with yellow lenses. The only thing she kept the same was her hair, though she did run a comb through it. “Dupain-Cheng.” Alya watches the pretty blue-haired girl roll her eyes before turning to Chloé.

“What?” Chloé holds out a pink handkerchief toward the girl.

“A favor for a favor.” The girl examines the handkerchief. “It’s monogrammed.”

“‘CCABB?’ How many names do you have?”

“Two first names and two middle names.” The entire class is looking at the blonde. She rolls her eyes. “Like you don’t have all those names MLDC?”

“How the hell do you know my middle initial?”

“It’s on your student identification card. Speaking of which. As class rep—” The blue-haired girl scoffs, “it’s my duty to inform you all of class pictures Monday. The theme is casual so dress for the occasion. Doesn’t matter what you all wear because I’ll outshine everyone.”

“Chloé, what do all the initials stand for?”

Chloé frowns at the pink-haired girl. “I’ll tell you. Never say I haven’t done anything to help out a fellow classmate.” The girl shakes her head. “Also, you should all cherish this moment. My full name is Charmainé Cloris. Abbyegael. That’s A-b-b-y-e-g-a-e-l. Blayre. B-l-a-y-r-e. Bourgeois.”

“I bet your whole name just shows up red when you type it out, huh?” The pink-haired girl asks.

Chloé sighs, “unfortunately. Not like yours doesn’t A-L-I-X?” They just stare at each other, each with an eyebrow raised. “My name was a blessing from my maman. She wanted it to be as unique as I am. I just wish she didn’t feel the need to make it so damn long. *But* I wouldn’t dare question my maman’s genius process.” The class look among one another, “in any event, take the damn handkerchief. You gave me the towelette earlier so I’m returning it with something your wardrobe could use.”

“I don’t want your personalized handkerchief. It’s weird. Just give me a pencil or something... unless that’s personalized too.”

“I hate you.” Chloé opens her purse then digs in it. “I’ll give you something—*Ah-ha!*” She pulls out a tiny red tube. “Here.”

The blue-haired girl takes the tube questioningly, “rose salve?”

“It’s good for everything. Given how clumsy you are, you get scraped up constantly. Just put the salve on and it’ll reduce scarring. You could also use it as lip balm and cuticle treatment.”

“That’s... surprisingly halfway decent of you Chloé.” A tall brunet comments.

“Yeah, well... if Dupain-Cheng and I gonna be sitting next to one another I’d hate to rub up against her jagged elbows and bruise my delicate skin.”

“And there it is.” He sighs.

“Thanks, Chloé.”

“Don’t *thank* me. I’m returning your favor. A favor for a favor. Like I said. Nothing more. Nothing less. Now all of you scatter. I need to sit down.”

The students clear out from the desk and Chloé sits down, placing her bag on her desk. The blue-haired girl leans back in her seat.

Alya goes to her seat and her deskmate is already sitting there. Alya would consider herself personable. She could make almost anyone feel at ease just with her presence. She’s even been told so, but her deskmate? The redhead replies to her inquiries monosyllabically. He looks as though the very notion of speaking in full sentences would cause him to combust.

After half a class period of mumbled responses, Alya stopped badgering the poor boy. He spent the class periods they had with Professeur Bustier doodling. Well, Alya wouldn’t call them ‘doodles’ because when she thinks of doodles she thinks of random scratches. His drawings are artwork.

Okay. So she told herself she’d leave him alone yesterday but that was before *this* happened. Alya eyes the boy draw the kid in front of him. “Nathaniel.” He flinches then turns to her wide-eyed. “I know I’m a pain and I talk a lot but I could use your help with something.”

The redhead swallows thickly, “*m-my* help?” Alya nods, “w-with what?”

Alya slides her phone over to him and he leans into see. “See, I’m gonna make a blog about them—” She taps her screen on the picture she snapped of Lady Luck and Karma, “but I’m gonna need an artist’s eye to make sure they’re captured perfectly.”

Nathaniel rubs the back of his neck. “A-And you want *me* to do it?” Alya nods. The redhead stares at the phone until the screen blacks out. “O-Okay.” He nods. “I’ll do it.”

“Yeah?”

He nods again. “T-That butterfly was terrifying.”

“Butterfly? You were at Le Grand Paris?”

“Hm? No. There were multiple large purple butterfly sightings showing up throughout the city projecting what was going on at Le Grand Paris.” Alya nods with a hum. “I-If you want to create a blog, I can help with that too.”

“Really?” He nods then slinks into himself. “Thank you so much.” She whispers. He blinks at her then nods.

After school, Alya heads to the art room with Nathaniel. There’s only a small handful of students inside and Alya immediately recognizes the tall blue-haired girl and the short pink-haired girl. Alya looks on in awe at the two girls spattering paint on a large canvas.

Her feet take her in that direction and she nearly bumping into a different tall blue-haired kid. “O-Oh! I’m so sorry. Wasn’t looking where I was going.”

“I-It’s okay.” The kid replies. “I-I’m Marc.”

“Alya.” Nathaniel takes her hand dragging her away. “See ya around!” Marc waves as Nathaniel sets his stuff down on a table then pulls Alya along. “What’s the hurry?”

“I was hit by inspiration during math so I drew this.”

Alya gapes at the picture of Lady Luck juggling oversized polkadotted number. “Holy fuck!

This is incredible!”

“T-Thanks. I have more stuff I worked on.”

Alix takes off her goggles and looks over at Nathaniel and that new girl hunkered over a desk. Humming, she skates over to them. She couldn’t wear her skates to school, anymore, but there was no rule against shoes with the skates built-in. Alix made sure only to skate when there wasn’t an authoritative figure around to bust her. The new art professeur wasn’t a big stickler for rules but they frowned upon making light of another student’s art. “What’cha working on?”

Nathaniel startles then shyly spreads out all the papers on the desk. “Alya asked me to help her make a blog for Karma and Lady Luck.”

“Oh yeah? That sounds dope. I’m here for badass girl superheroes. The world needs more of ‘em.” Nathaniel and the orange-haired girl nod in agreement, “by the way, I’m Alix. It’s Alya?” The orange-haired girl nods. “*Hey!* I just got this idea.” Alix skates off then returns with a short bespectacled boy. “Alya, this is Max. Max, this is Alya. How long would it take to create a website?”

The boy adjusts his glasses, “anywhere from fourteen days to four months. What’s the purpose of the website?”

“To keep up with the new heroes.”

Max taps his chin with a hum, “admirable. I can assist with that.” The three of them gape at him, “it just so happens I have all the requirements for creating a website. Minus the actual website’s creation. I was... debating the name but I’d be more than willing to give the website to you instead.”

“Why?”

“Because this is more important. I found the new heroes fascinating and I would enjoy learning more about them. Endless nuggets of information about magic is waiting to be unearthed.”

“Dude, why did you—”

Max waves Alix off, “the reason wasn’t important. As it turns out, I need to do a bit more research anyhow.” Alix gives him a skeptical look. “The website is yours to do with whatever you wish.”

“I appreciate this. If you ever need help with anything just ask.” Max nods with a smile, “but, um, I could use your help with... running the website?”

“I’d be more than happy to assist with that as well.”

Nathaniel turns to Alya, “what are you calling the website?”

“Luckyblog.” She takes out a doodle she drew that has luckyblog in bubble letters with the g as a yo-yo and the first l as a baton. “*Behold*, the luckyblog.”

“‘Lucky’ blog?” Alix interrupts. “Why not the karmicblog or something with both their names?”

“‘Lucky’ just spoke to me—”

“Besides,” Nathaniel interrupts, “Lady Luck was wearing red and thirteen years of comic book lore has taught me the one in red is always in command. So, why wouldn’t it be named after Lady Luck?”

“*There’s only two of them*,” Alix argues, “one can’t be in command. It wouldn’t be fair. I got thirteen-and-a-half-years of comic book lore in my head too.”

“Perhaps we could argue once we have the website up and running?” Max suggests.

“Besides, one can’t argue that Karma isn’t involved as her signature weapon is also in the name.”

“Can you Nathaniel the logo up for me?” Alya asks.

“N-Never heard my name used as a verb before but, sure, I’ll try.”

Mon Sept 7th, 2020

Alix yawns. Fucking class pictures. The students of Professeur Bustier's class were lined up as the photographer took their individual pictures. The photographer yelps shooing away the birds from his face. Alix perks up. Wait. *Birds?! There are two black birds circling the photographer.*

The purple-haired girl sighs, then steps out from under the backdrop.

"Oh my God! Did Count Tackula over there summon her crows to avoid having her picture taken?" Chloé snickers.

"Talk about overkill. A vampire wouldn't show up in a picture anyhow!" Sabrina cackles. The two girls laugh loudly.

"If that's the case, we're gonna see bats or whatever familiar witches use nowadays when it's you two's turn." Alix snarks. Chloé and Sabrina abruptly stop laughing to glare at her.

The birds fly away and the photographer sighs in relief, "w-wha—? *Wait!* Where did—?"

"Hurry up and take the next picture!" Chloé yells. "My papa's paying for this and he better get his money's worth or you're gonna be screwed!"

The photographer straightens up, "n-next—!" Ivan startles before approaching the backdrop.

"W-Wait a second!" Rose yells raising a hand, "what about—"

"I'll get her photo once I've went through the rest of the class." Rose lowers her hand then frowns.

Chloé groans folding her arms over her chest, "why do I even have to stand on line anyway? I should've been first."

"Tell me about it." Sabrina mutters. "Professeur Bustier should've given you a heads up before telling everyone else to line up." The blonde nods in agreement.

“Um, Chloé?”

Chloé and Sabrina turn toward the brunette in the orange and white pinstripe t-shirt dress behind Sabrina shuffling her feet. “Uh... why are you addressing me?”

“I wanted to apologize.”

The blonde raises an eyebrow, pursing her lips, “I’m listening.”

“I’m new to the school so I don’t know how things operate. Had I known, I wouldn’t’ve tried to oppose you—”

“Back up. What the hell are you talking about? You wouldn’t be standing there if you tried opposing *me*.”

“She tried to run for class rep Thursday?” Sabrina mentions.

Chloé’s eyes narrow, “did she?” The blonde hums. “It takes guts to admit when you were wholly wrong. I accept that you’re now aware of your position in this school. I’m obviously the number one and below me is Sabrina and Adrikins, then Mylène—if she can get her act together.” The rainbow-haired girl, standing in front of Chloé, shrinks in on herself. “After that is Alya, then there are the commoners and *lastly* is Kubdel and Dupain-Cheng.”

The aforementioned pink-haired girl, two people in front of Mylène, flips Chloé the bird with a smile.

“Your position in the class depends on what you can bring to Chloé.”

“Huh?”

“What do your parents do?” Sabrina clarifies.

“M-My mamma is a diplomat.”

Sabrina and Chloé exchange a glance then the shorter girl tip-toes to whisper in the blonde’s ear. “That does nothing for me, whatever your name is. What about your papa?”

“He died. He was an army doctor. Got killed in combat.”

“Trying to milk sympathy points won’t do anything for you.”

“And how did a doctor get killed in combat? Aren’t they usually left behind?”

The girl shakes her head, “he was a field medic.”

Sabrina frowns and Chloé elbows her, “like that dumb game Adrikins plays where the ‘healers’ are fighting alongside you?” The shorter teen nods in understanding. “Look Pinstripe, if you want to be worth anything in this school up your fashion game. That’s a spring Agreste® dress and it’s autumn.”

“It’s still summer.” Sabrina whispers.

“Really? Whatever. *Point is*, don’t just approach me out of nowhere unless your outfits can be approved by my maman *The Queen of Fashion*. Sabrina will send you a link to her website to get you up to speed. We’re done talking now.” Chloé and Sabrina turn back around, missing the brunette’s bewildered expression. Chloé groans, “*Kim*, if I have to stand in these heels any longer than necessary, I’m gonna have your own sister sue you!”

“Chloé, I told you to wear flats on line.”

“No one will get the full glamour of my outfit without the heels, Sabrina. As my maman says —”

“‘Beauty is pain.’” Sabrina recites. “I know. I’m just thinking it shouldn’t have to be.” As Chloé turns her head to the orange-haired teen, Sabrina frantically holds her hands out in front of her. “Not that I would *ever* question Tante Audrey in **anything!**”

As the line moves up, Sabrina sighs in relief.

Making his way toward the other students who got their pictures taken, Kim winks at Chloé who rolls her eyes in reply.

As the gymnasium double doors bursts open, Chloé watches Dupain-Cheng zip by. Just how

the hell did she get so fucking tall in three months? Chloé opens her mouth to address the blue-haired girl when she sees Adrien approaching the line, *behind Dupain-Cheng*. “Son of a *bitch*.” She grumbles.

Adrien catches his breath then winces as his back cracks when he stretches. He was hardly expecting his parents to have him resume acting and modeling *while attending school*. Not only that but they expect him to get damn near perfect marks in order to stay in school. He only hastily agreed because he thought they’d change their minds if he didn’t.

Once he’s done stretching he does a double-take, taken aback at the person in front of him. It was that tall blue-haired girl Chloé seemed to hate and vice versa. U-Uh—”

The girl fully turns to him and Adrien begins choking on air. Okay, well, he was hardly expecting her to be so beautiful! Chloé loved immersing herself in all things beautiful: Jewelry. Clothing. *People*. Adrien’s certain his “prettiness” is one of the reasons she openly considers him one of her best friends. It’s also the reason she warmed up to Alya so quickly. (Well that and Alya’s maman being the hotel’s new chef de cuisine.) How could Chloé not want to be around this girl? Adrien needs to know and he has a feeling he’s not gonna like the answer.

The girl pats him on the back for a few seconds and it allows him to begin breathing normally. “T-Thanks.” He rasps.

“No prob.” Then she turns back around.

“I-I like your outfit!”

She’s wearing a red shirt with some kind of pink flower pattern on it and a pair of blue jeans. “Uh... thanks? I made it myself.”

“Get out. Seriously? That’s incredible!” Now the girl narrows her eyes at him and Adrien gulps.

“Adrikins!” Chloé waves beckoning him, “You don’t have to stand all the way in the back. Come up here!”

“Chloé, I can’t just cut the line.”

“The hell you can’t. Get your ass over here Adrien Agreste.”

“No. I’m not moving.” He takes a deep breath. “I’m gonna stay here.”

Everyone on line in between Chloé and Adrien look between the two of them. Surprise briefly overtakes Chloé before she purses her lips. “*Fine.*” She turns around. Everyone stares at Adrien several seconds longer then go back to looking ahead of themselves on the line.

Adrien runs a hand down his face. Great. He knows that expression all too well. She won’t do anything to get him kicked out of the school but he’s gonna spend the rest of the month trying to make this up to Chloé.

“Marinette, I *love* that purse.” A tall brunet runs over to the blue-haired teen. Adrien glances down at the red circular purse hanging from the teen’s arm.

“Just finished last night.”

“Can I see—”

“No!” The boy looks taken aback, “...t now. Not now. Gotta make sure I got all my stuff ready for the picture. You know.” The brunet shrugs then starts talking about birthdays.

Adrien looks down and the purse *opens* and something black pokes out of it.

Alya steps up to the backdrop. After that tragic picture from last year at her last school, she takes her glasses off. As soon as the camera shutters, the lights cut out. Alya puts her glasses back on then takes her phone out of her pocket opening the camera app.

A spotlight shines on the basketball hoop where someone in a garish swirled tie-dye blue and purple puffy ruffled dress, blue and purple striped socks, and blue and purple swirled tie-dye thigh-high platform shoes; with their hair tied in two twisted twintails that match the dress. Their eyes are bright pink, as is their lipstick. “You can all see me *now*, can’t you?” They drop down from the hoop and the spotlight follows them.

Students get out of the line as they stride toward Chloé. The blonde’s eyes widen as she’s gripped by the chin. “I don’t think this outfit is approved by Audrey Bourgeois.” When they

let go of Chloé, the blond screams then changes into a duplicate of the person in the blue and purple outfit. “Ah. Much better.”

The former blonde looks down at herself in horror. “*What did you do to me!?*” She hisses.

They twirl, “I made you stand out more! I’m Mirror Image and *everyone’s gonna look like me~*” Suddenly, as Mirror Image puts a hand on Sabrina she also changes into a copy. “Let’s take the *best* class picture **ever!**” The students scream as they run out of line and out of the gym. “Come on! Don’t be shy!”

“Wait! You don’t have to do this!” Rose yells carefully approaching Mirror Image. “The photographer said he was going t—”

Mirror Image boops the blonde on the nose changing her. “I can’t escape the Couffaine family photo curse but now I don’t have to!” They cackle and their twintails change anyone they touch into a replica of her.

Alya drops her phone before she’s changed, then picks it up and resumes recording.

□□

“What does François Düpont have to offer my daughter?”

Kagami leans to the side in her seat as the principal visibly cowers behind his desk. They say the number thirteen is unlucky in certain countries, but that shouldn’t matter to the “avatar of good luck” right? After all, the numbers seven and eight didn’t provide any good luck for her so far. The three of them have been to twelve other schools today and if one met with either her mother or her grandmother’s approval it didn’t meet the other’s.

The principal audibly gulps, “we have a wonderful music program.” His eyes dart between Azami and Tomoe, he can’t see the latter’s expression due to her sunglasses and when he looks at the former’s he quickly clears his throat.

“*Music.*” Azami spits. “*Music!?*” She nearly screams. “Are you mocking my granddaughter?”

“W-What!? *N-No!*”

“What good is *music* to *her*?” She all but yanks Kagami toward her, gesturing to her ears – or more accurately her clunky in-the-ear model hearing aids. The principal puts his hands over his mouth.

“I’m terribly sorry! I hadn’t noticed! I-I hadn’t *realized*! I’m so terribly—”

“What about baseball?” Kagami interrupts. She *feels* her mother glaring at her without looking at the woman.

“B-Baseball?” Kagami developed a bit of a baseball fixation – or rather a bat fixation. There was something about a baseball bat that fascinated her. At her last school, she tried out for the team and made it, then got kicked off after fracturing a teammate’s skull because he made fun of her disability.

Her mother was *pissed* when Kagami got herself expelled. (Mainly because her daughter picked up a hobby that wasn’t pre-designated for her rather than her nearly murdering a classmate.)

“Do you have anything involving baseball in this school?” Kagami clarifies.

Kagami could hardly contain her glee when her lucky charm gave her a baseball bat the other day. She hoped Bunnyx was right about her need to attend this school. Tikki scolded the avatar of time for “getting too involved” but Bunnyx claimed whether she got involved or not, Kagami would be attending this school. Thing was, Bunnyx never specified *when*.

The principal looks between the two women again before his eyes land on Kagami. “I’m afraid we don’t have a baseball team. Though I am not certain if it is in physical education.”

“What contact sports do you have?”

“*Kagami.*” Tomoe snaps just as the principal opens his mouth. The man shuts his mouth with a gulp.

“Don’t scold the girl for her curiosity,” Azami says. Tomoe’s head whips toward her mother so fast Kagami could swear she heard something crack. “I too am curious. The amount of clubs and ‘electives’ this school has is laughable. How are you in the top ten best schools in the country?”

“We have a small amount of clubs because these are the clubs the students themselves selected. By giving the students to select what electives and clubs they have, we cater to the students' needs.”

“I’ll admit that is... impressive. But one good answer doesn’t mean I’m sending my granddaughter here.”

The door opens. “Principal Damocles~” Kagami turns toward the girl in the puffy blue and purple swirled tie dye dress. “I think we need to hire a new photographer.” She hops over Tomoe and Azami landing on the principal’s desk. The principal screams as he’s picked up and changed to a copy of the girl in the girl’s hands.

“What in the hell—?” Is all Azami is able to get out before she’s changed.

Tomoe manages to parry the girl’s kick with her bokken.

Her grandmother told her stories about how she was the only female member of her school’s jujitsu club and how she single-handedly allowed other girls to participate in the sport after she kicked the entire club’s ass. Her grandmother taught her mother several fighting styles then doubled down after the... *incident*. It’s why Tomoe Tsurugi was a household name and such a revered and feared self-defense instructor. And that’s why she’s going toe-to-toe with an akuma-possessed individual. Why her own mother hadn’t bothered teaching her anything, Kagami didn’t know – she had an inkling, but she needed solid proof.

“Ooh. I like you.” The girl purrs.

Kagami slips out of the office then runs down the hall. That turns out to be a mistake because the hall is full of duplicates. She runs around the whole school pretty much until she finds a secluded area. Kagami runs into the all-gender bathroom, shutting and locking the door.

Tikki flies out of her jacket. “Um... I-I have no words for that.” Kagami looks around. There’s a window she can climb out of. As she was reading some comic books at her partner and Bunnyx’s suggestion, she found all sorts of inaccuracies and plot holes. Like how the heroes never got caught when they not once ever covered their tracks? Or transforming in public places without getting found out?

Kagami opens the window and sticks her head out looking around. The coast is clear. She sticks her head back in. “Spots on, Tikki.” After she’s transformed, she unlocks the bathroom door with her yo-yo and crawls out the window.

As Lady Luck, she opens her yo-yo and calls Karma.

The connection is almost immediate. “What’s up?” The cat replies out of breath.

“Good question. What’s going on?”

Karma moves the camera over her shoulder where the akuma is running after her, gaining speed. What happened to her mother? “*C’mon Kitty, I just wanna give you a makeover!*”

“Lead her to the gymnasium and I’ll meet you there.”

“Aye aye.” Then Karma cuts the connection.

Lady Luck looks around the gym upon arriving; “miracle vision” (as Bunnyx dubbed it) flaring up without the lucky charm. Camera equipment and a backdrop are lit up in a dull red.

“Hey.” Karma greets weakly. Lady Luck turns around and *stares* at the blue and purple girl shrugging helplessly. “So... I wasn’t fast enough to avoid getting caught. *But* in my defense, her fucking twintails *tapped me* and it altered me into this. I am *feeling* these boots though!” She lifts her leg showing off the thigh-high tie dye boot. “Didn’t think I could walk in heels but I proved myself wrong.” The girl struts back and forth perfectly with the heels.

“I take it you lost your batons due to the change?”

Karma nods, “but just get me any blunt instrument and I can achieve the same effect.”

“We’ll—”

“Lady Luck!” Someone squeals. Everyone in the gymnasium is a copy of the akuma-possessed girl but that voice is familiar. Gratingly (and annoyingly) familiar. The copy runs over to her grabbing her hands. “If only I had my phone to take a selfie of us... ugh—” She shudders, “on second thought maybe that’s a good thing.”

“What did you do now?” Karma asks, pulling the copy’s hands off Lady Luck’s.

The copy blinks, “*me?* I didn’t do anything! In fact, I’ve never done anything wrong in my entire life!” There are murmurs of disagreement and the copy stomps her foot. “Is it *my* fault I was born beautiful and wealthy? No! So I should not be blamed for it! I can’t control other people’s jealousy.” The copy beside her flinches. “*Ooh. Oops.* Sorry, Sabrina.” The talking copy’s eyes narrow. “If... you *are* Sabrina.” She huffs. “As for this annoyance, I don’t even know who it is for it to be my fault.”

“That’s not true!” Another copy storms over to her pointing accusingly at her, “you didn’t let that girl get her photo taken *and* you were making fun of her!”

“*Her?* Can’t say this is much of an improvement.” The copy rolls her eyes. “In any event, she was asking for it! Dressing like a goth fairy godmother for pictures? If she can’t handle the truth she should transfer schools.”

One copy lunges at the other, “you’re a terrible person!” She screeches.

“Get off me you demented circus pixie!”

“Chloé! Uh... I *think* you’re Chloé. Hey, get off of maybe-Chloé!” Several copies pull the screaming one off the other on the ground.

“This is confusing.” Karma says tearing the sleeves off her dress. “Everyone shut up!” The copies gape at their sleeveless counterpart. “Did the akuma say anything that could give us a clue on how to beat her?”

“She said something about a family photo curse.” One copy replies.

“And she kept talking about taking the best class picture ever.” Says another copy.

“Karma.” Lady Luck jerks her head back toward the camera equipment. “How good are your photography skills?”

“I’m sure they’ll be enough.” She rubs her hands together, “if they aren’t, I can always improvise.”

“What can we do to help?” A copy asks. “As good as this dress makes my legs look, I’m not doing too well walking in heels.”

“I’m afraid there’s nothing you can do. You all look like the akuma which means she could very well be hiding among you.” The crowd gasps, looking among themselves.

“You did tell me to lead her here. I didn’t know who was who... so I led all the Mirror Images here. I just hope she doesn’t overhear our stupendous surefire plan to de-akuma her.”

“*Lucky charm!*” Lady Luck tosses her yo-yo in the air and it morphs into something small that she barely catches. “What the hell?” Copy-Karma leans over her shoulder as Lady Luck opens the polkadotted object in her hands.

“A tiny mirror?” Karma whispers.

Lady Luck closes the mirror then latches the straps around her left wrist. The “miracle vision” highlights all the copies, along with what the lucky charm gave her and the camera equipment now glows a brighter red.

Lady Luck looks up at her partner with a smirk. “Let’s go over that stupendous surefire plan again.”

“Simply put: We’re gonna give the akuma what she wants. A good ol’ class photo! Line up now.” Karma picks up the camera from the tripod then walks over to the group. “*Everyone smile for the camera!*” The copies pose in the most ridiculous fashion and when Karma presses the shutter it’s like a domino effect; one copy falls causing the rest of the copies to fall.

The duo exchange a glance side-stepping all the duplicates. Karma points her camera at several of them trying to find the original. When Karma points the camera at this particular copy their hand inadvertently covers their face while they try getting up as Karma snaps a picture. Guess she really is cursed. Well, if miraculouses and magic exist there’s no reason curses can’t also exist.

“*No!*” She growls as Lady Luck hauls her up. “This was supposed to break my curse!”

“Where’s the akuma?” Karma demands.

“I’ll never tell you! This is the only way I can be seen!” Lady Luck pops open the wrist mirror and Mirror Image gasps in horror as she looks at her reflection. “*My akuma’s in my hair clip.*” She squeaks out.

Lady Luck tapped her wrist mirror against the swirled tie dye blue and purple hair clip. The clip cracks and a purple butterfly floats out of it.

The mirror morphs into a tiny net that Lady Luck catches the butterfly with. “That’s the end of your corruption, little butterfly.” With the butterfly fluttering away, the net turns back into the yo-yo. “Miraculous cure!” Lady Luck swings her yo-yo in the air and it turns the ceiling pink. Students slowly begin returning back to normal through a tie dye ooze.

The purple-haired girl is leaning against Karma panting.

“You are so very lucky this magic wasn’t permanent!” Chloé yells as she stomps away flipping her ponytail. “Hey!” She snaps her fingers at the photographer. “Get up and take my picture already!”

“Are you okay?” The teen blushes slightly looking up at the cat’s green-yellow eyes with a speck of blue in them. The purple-haired teen nods slowly. “I like your outfit. Plaid is a hard to pattern to work with. The fact that you are matching the pattern’s innermost color with your plain shirt is genius. I’m gonna have to steal that idea. If I could make a suggestion, you should cuff your pants legs inward. Show off those kickass boots without the attention on your cuffed pant leg.” Karma gently brushes some of the girl’s hair out of her eye then puts the cracked clip over it. “There. Picture perfect.” She looks around at everyone gaping at her. “Huh. Um... stay in school, kids!” She turns back to the girl, “ooh. Just had an idea! Where’s your phone?”

“My phone?”

“We’re gonna break your photo curse.”

“You—” She gasps, “you *can*’t! It’s been like this my whole life.”

“I’m the embodiment of bad luck. If anyone can hack a lifelong curse, even temporarily, it’s me.” Gulping, the purple-haired teen nods shyly taking her phone out of her pants pocket. “By the way, what’s your name?”

“J-Juleka.”

“Nice. I like that.” She blushes as Karma wraps an arm around her. They’re close enough to the same height. Karma holds the phone. “Ready?” Juleka nods then Karma takes the picture.

Juleka was half expecting the class to photobomb but they've been standing stock-still since Karma told them to stay in school. Maybe even before that.

Juleka gasps at the photo on the phone. It's not blurry nor is there some random animal or object obstructing her face. Tears well up in her eyes but she blinks them back. "I-I can't believe it." She whispers.

Karma holds out her fist and Juleka gently fist bumps her. "Look me up next time you wanna take another pic, alright?" Juleka nods. "Later!" With a wave, Karma runs out the gymnasium.

□□

"That was sweet of you."

Karma jumps several centimeters in the air. "I'm still only human in this costume." Lady Luck is swinging her legs on the roof. Karma extends her baton then climbs it to join her partner. "When did you slip out?"

"During the purification process. I had to check on my family."

"Are you a student here?"

"No. Not yet. How many times have you interacted with Bunnyx?"

"Who? *Oh*. You mean the avatar of time? I... hm. I haven't. At least, I haven't in this timeline. Plagg says she came to me right before she had to hit the backspace button on the previous timeline where we weren't partnered up... or whatever he said she did. How many times have you interacted with her?"

"A few. My kwami doesn't think it's a good idea because it might interfere with the timeline but I think Bunnyx is lonely. She has to watch over time by herself. We're the only other two avatars active in this timeline. I... we must have loneliness in common."

"Hey Double L, you're not alone. You got me. If you ever need to talk I'm just a magical call away." Lady Luck chuckles. "I'll talk to my kwami about Bunnyx. See if I can get some more information. Or if I can find some way to reach out to her. She's not alone anymore with us here."

“Keep up that optimism.”

“I always do...” Karma frowns, “huh. Weird. Somebody told me to keep on smiling but I don’t remember who. Maybe I dreamed it?”

“Or maybe it was in the previous timeline that got... backspaced. It could’ve been Bunnyx. She uses humor to mask things. When you think about it, we’re stuck doing this—” She gestures between them, “until we either kill or capture Mite and Méfait.”

“Yeah... that *is* a depressing thought. But what’s even more depressing is not knowing if they’re our only magical headache. I mean curses—” Karma gestures to the school. “multiple timelines? Our miraculouses. I’m optimistic in nature but even I’m having trouble finding a silver lining in this.”

“I suppose that would be that we’re in this together.”

Karma throws an arm around her partner drawing her near. “That is a reason to keep on smiling.”

“And let’s hope we aren’t the only avatars in the city aside from Bunnyx and the Guardian.” Lady Luck hums, “although that does pose the question of whether or not Mite and Méfait are their respective power avatars.” Karma strokes her chin. “I also express concerns about how this whole ‘avatar’ process even works.”

“Believe me. You’re not the only one.” Karma sighs, “we need to find the Guardian without alerting the *you know who duo*. If I met Bunnyx in the last timeline, I might’ve met them too.”

“Then let’s agree to look for the Guardian this weekend.”

“Ooh...” Karma rubs the back of her neck, “can it be Sunday? I have... civilian plans on Saturday.”

Lady Luck nods standing up, “Sunday is fine. We’ll meet at the Arc de Triomphe at four.”

“Aye aye.” They shake hands.

“Until then.” Then Lady Luck swings away on her yo-yo.

blackberry clobber

Chapter Summary

...Lady Luck and Karma meet the Guardian/Avatar who gave them their miraculouses

Chapter Notes

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

Sat, Sept 12th, 2020

The Luckyblog took off as soon as Max officially created it. Apparently, Alya wasn't the only citizen to record footage of Lady Luck and Karma over the course of the past week and a half.

Max moderates what goes on the website and what doesn't. Nathaniel's drawings of the duo are on the front page, and there's a page dedicated to other fanart – that Max also moderates. He claimed it's a full-time job (and Alya believes him, she saw some of the stuff they didn't post on the website and all she could say about them was *yikes*), but his robot companion Markov was more than up to the task.

Armed with her phone and its one terabyte of memory, Alya puts a plain white shirt on then loosens her hair from its ponytail.

“Where are you going?” Etta asks, sitting on her bed.

“Birthday party for Alix and Marinette. I don't know Marinette but Alix tells me she's cool, so this'll be a good opportunity to make a new friend.” Alya stuffs her keys and wallet into her pants pockets then picks up her gift boxes. “Need me to bring you or El anything?”

“No. We're good. Have fun.” She slides off Alya's bed then hugs her sister.

Alya pats her on the head then leaves.

Just as she leaves her building, a navy townear pulls up and the back window rolls down. “Thank goodness I caught you!”

“Chloé?” Alya walks over to the town car. “What are you doing here?”

“*Please* don’t tell me you’re going to Kubdel and Dupain-Cheng’s joint ‘party?’ I mean, how poor are you that you can’t even afford your own birthday party?”

“I don’t think that’s the reason they have a joint party.”

“Doesn’t matter. You are way too good for that. XY and Bob Roth are staying at Le Grand Paris this weekend. We can have them give us a private concert!”

“I’m good. You should come to the party.”

“I don’t care how good their pâtisseries are. The reason I don’t go there on weekends or Wednesdays is because *she’ll* be there behind the counter with that dumb look on her dumb face.”

“How about we go to the party for a bit then we can go back to the hotel?”

“Seems fair. Just a bit. I can snag a pâtisserie or two when no one is looking.” The window rolls up then Chloé opens the town car. “Let’s go. To the...” The blond shudders, “Sabine & Tom Boulangerie Pâtisserie.”

“I’m curious. What’s your beef with Marinette?”

Chloé groans closing the door behind Alya as the orange-haired teen takes a seat, “she’s a meddling goody-two shoes! That’s my *beef* with her. If she’d fall in line like the rest of the school we’d have no issue but she’s determined to make my life a living hell. And Kubdel is Satan herself, in case you were interested in wondering.” Alya nods with a hum.

There are streamers and party favors decorating the building and the entire block. (How tacky. Isn’t Dupain-Cheng supposed to be some kind of designer or something?)

Chloé exits the town car after Alya and looks around. She doesn’t see Dupain-Cheng or Kubdel, maybe she can sneak some—

“Chloé? What the hell are you doing here?”

The blonde glares at the tall brunet glaring back at her. “If you didn’t want people showing up you should’ve made the *event* private.” She pushes past the boy to a table.

The boy lets out a heavy sigh, “sorry, that’s my fault.” He turns to her, “Chloé tried to get me to not show up, but I wanted to see Alix so I suggested we stop by for a bit then go back to Le Grand Paris for some private concert with someone named XY?”

“Chloé probably showing off because you’re new. XY’s not even that great. I’m Kim.” He gives her a wave. “I’d be careful if I were you. Chloé seems to only have two attitudes toward people: adoration or hatred.”

“Got it. Thanks for the heads up.”

The brunet looks over her shoulder at something. “Anytime! Help yourself to whatever.” Then he runs off.

Shrugging, Alya walks over to where Chloé is. The blonde is stuffing pâtisseries into her purse. “You know you look really suspicious, right?”

“We’ve spent enough time here, right? I’ll call my towncar—”

“Hold your horses, Girl, at least let me wish the birthday girls happy birthday.”

Chloé rolls her eyes, “fine. I’ll be here.” Alya nods then jogs off.

“Oh dear. I was hardly expecting to find the mayor’s daughter stealing our homely pâtisseries.”

Chloé turns to the large, normally jovial man staring at her with a rather out-of-place neutral expression. “Can you steal something that’s free, M. Dupain?”

“No. I don’t suppose you can, Mlle. Bourgeois.” Chloé smirks then picks up a profiterole from the croquembouch tower. “We may not be as cultured as your family but even I know it’s considered bad taste to show up to a party, uninvited, and take as much food as your purse can carry; all the while not bothering to give the birthday girls – the whole reason for the party – a gift.”

The blonde's eyes narrow. "You have a point. I'd *hate* for people to think the Bourgeois' are... uncultured." She takes her wallet out of her purse shaking off the crumbs. "I'll just give them a little pocket change. A thousand euros a piece should suffice, right?" Before Tom can open his mouth, Chloé takes out two cheques then hastily scrawls on them. "A shame they discontinued the 500 euro note." She hands the cheques to Tom. "Anyway, there's my gift. Now if you'll excuse me, there are pâtisseries I have not tried."

□□

Marinette and Alix stare at the cheques in Tom's hand. "'Pocket change?'" They repeat.

Tom nods handing them each a cheque. "If she considers a thousand euros mere 'pocket change,' I am rather curious about how much she considers a lot of money."

Alix holds up the cheque to the light, "you only do that with fake notes, Alix." Marinette whispers.

"Oh."

"Are you two alright? Birthday party serves no purpose without the birthday girls." Tom furrows his eyebrows as they exchange a brief glance. Must be that best friend secret communication thing. Sometimes they can even read each other's minds without making eye contact. It's as impressive as it is... disturbing.

"Papai, can Alix stay here?"

"For the sleep—" Marinette quickly shakes her head, "of course she can. For however as long as she needs to. Is... did something happen at home?"

"I-I—" Alix sighs, "I don't know how to explain it, but I got caught in a magic time loop* where my papa and Jalil sorta competed to kill me... if that counts?"

"They *what!*? A time loop!?" Tom massages his temples, "this is why I don't touch magic. Just give me good ol' physical carnage. This magic stuff hurts my head. Isn't this the sort of thing one presses charges for? We have Vinh. Although she's the Bourgeois' personal lawyer she does pro-bono as well. I mean I've always known that man was neglectful but to try and kill you!? I don't even care the reason! He's not getting within a kilometer of you. Neither is

your jackass of a brother. Give Marinette your house key and the two of us will gather all the stuff you can't live without when we know neither of them will be there."

"Damn, M. D, I wasn't expecting full-on rage mode."

"You're like a daughter to me, Alix, and a sister to Marinette. I'd put my life on the line for you—" He pauses, "something tells me I already did." He sighs, "*magic*." He grumbles shaking his head. "Take as much time as you two need. I'm gonna conflag with Sabine."

"Bàba." Both Marinette and Alix shake their heads at him.

"What? Your fashion judges can talk fancy but I can't? That's terribly biased!" They both laugh as he walks down the staircase.

"See? I told you they'd be cool with it, and even if they somewhere weren't you had Vinh and Kim as option two. Even Mlle. Sasha would've let you stay." Marinette puts a hand on your shoulder, "all of us want you out of that toxic environment. I'm just glad I didn't have to invoke the rite of favors to convince you to stay."

Alix playfully shoves Marinette.

□□

Sun, Sept 13th, 2020

The electronic billboard lights up and there's a blonde in a black and white pinstripe romper walking to the centre of the billboard. "Greetings all, Queen of Fashion: Audrey Bourgeois here. Fashion is never-ending. Always evolving. Thanks to the introduction of Lady Luck last week, *polkadots* have been *trying* to make their way into high fashion." The woman pinches the bridge of her nose, "I wholly understand 'imitation being the sincerest form of flattery...' but while the outfit *somehow* works for the hero there hasn't been a single replication to do the look justice. So here I am, on September 13th 2020 at 1:46pm, calling upon **all** designers of every skill level to prove me wrong. Make that high fashion red and black polkadotted outfit paying homage to our new hero. We're going to do things a little old school. Submit your looks by physical photo and mail them to Le Grand Paris Château and address them to me and polkadots. I look forward to being blown away." Then Audrey disappears from the billboard and some soft drink ad pops up.

Alix is laying on the chaise tossing a volleyball in the air. Thankfully, she doesn't take up

much space (there's a short joke that's just not in her heart to make) so Marinette only had to rearrange enough space to fit a bed for her. They hadn't started yet so Alix shared Marinette's bed with her last night. Marinette is biting her lip and the pencil in her hand. Alix spares a glance at her best friend, "you gonna enter?"

Marinette screams spinning in her swivel chair accidentally throwing her pencil across the room that Alix catches with ease, "I don't know! She's specifically asking for designers, which... *you know* – I am, but 'high fashion' isn't what I excel at. Not that 'high fashion' is even an accurate category of fashion. What does it even mean? Fashion shouldn't be *hoarded* by a single group of people based on how much money they can shell out!"

"You should add that to your entry."

"I-I don't even know if I'm entering! Audrey Bourgeois is *impossible* to impress! She's *always* 'looking forward to being blown away' and she **never** is! **Never**, Alix! The only record of her not saying something vaguely mean was when—"

"She discovered Gabriel Agreste at some one-off contest she put together because the masses were starting a fashion movement.' I *know*, Marinette. You've told me this story so many times I feel like it's playing on loop."

Marinette's eyes widen then she glares at Alix, "**too soon.**"

The pink-haired teen snickers, "look, alls I'm saying is: You fail at 100% of the tricks you don't try, so enter the damn contest and end 'high fashion' once and for all."

Marinette frowns, "I'll enter... only if you help me."

Alix hums, "I don't know anything about fashion, sad considering how long we've known each other, but if that's what it'll take; I'm game." She sits up, "wait, did Chloé's maman say it was one something? We gotta head to the park for the roller derby tryouts at two!"

Marinette springs out of her seat, "then I have to meet Lady Luck at Arc de Triomphe for four!"

Alix jumps up, "roller derby. Make your contest outfit a roller derby outfit inspired by Lady Luck and Karma! Can't understand why everyone's up Lady Luck's ass and forgetting how much of a badass Karma is but I guarantee you'll be the only one who uses both."

“You’re biased. You’re only Karma’s number one fan because Karma is me.”

“Wrong. I was a fan of Karma before you told me, and you are Karma, not the other way around. Karma wouldn’t exist if Marinette wasn’t already such a badass.”

“*Alix!*” Marinette blushes.

“Let’s get our skates~”

Alix taught Marinette how to skate when they were seven years old. Marinette found out skating was one thing she could use her clumsiness to her advantage. When they saw the commercial for the roller derby team tryouts for girls ages 14-17 they literally jumped at the chance; having both turned 14 yesterday.

By the time they reach the park with their skates in hand, there’s a decent size group under the roller derby tryouts banner. Alix recognizes the tall purple-haired girl who got possessed by an akuma earlier in the week and beside her is a blue-haired guy with a guitar strapped to his back and a bespectacled grey-haired woman decked out in pirate garb minus the hat.

The purple-haired girl blows some hair out of her left eye then skulks over to the group the same time Alix and Marinette do.

“This is quite the turnout.” A woman with long black hair tied into two braided twintails says into the megaphone. “Let’s see how good you skate~”

Alix glances at the purple-haired girl putting on her helmet then putting her long purple hair into a ponytail.

“You’ll be skating in twos along the pavement.” The woman says.

About twenty girls hurriedly skate over to the pavement. As Marinette is tying her skates, Purple-hair is looking around like she’d rather be anywhere else. “How much do you love me?”

“With all my heart.” Marinette replies unblinkingly, still tying her skates.

“I see a girl from our class—”

“Go ahead.” Marinette interrupts, “I’d probably just make her even more nervous with my rambling.” Alix hugs Marinette then gets up skating toward the girl.

As Marinette gets up, she hears someone gasps then turns to see *Sabrina* coming to a stop in front of her. “Marinette?! W-What are you doing here?” Marinette gestures to her helmet then skates, “ah. Right. Walked into that one. I guess my question would be *why* are you trying out for roller derby?” The orange-haired girl snorts. “Don’t you cause enough destruction just walking?”

“You’re gonna be the first person I ram.” Then Marinette skates off toward the group.

With a huff, Sabrina skates after her. And that’s only because they’re heading in the same direction. Her father’s damn *fiancée*—the word makes Sabrina gag. Anyway, the woman was trying to ruin Sabrina’s life so she needed something to vent her frustration. She was going to invite Chloé once she saw the commercial but that billboard of Tante Audrey came out a few minutes later and Chloé threw herself headfirst into designing.

Sabrina wouldn’t be surprised if Chloé hadn’t realized she left the hotel.

She doesn’t have the heart to tell the blonde her design won’t impress her mother because Chloé spent her whole life emulating her mother’s style, so everything Chloé will create will be something Tante Audrey already saw.

Things were still a little... weird between them since the damn feather fell in her takeout container. To be indirectly possessed (*by a feather of all things*) wasn’t like what Chloé went through, but it was still scary having your agency ripped away from you like that. (When she saw a blue bird yesterday morning, it made her throw up.)

As the first two skaters lap around the pavement, the rest of the girls are standing on the grass cheering them on. Juleka is holding her left arm with her right hand. This was a bad idea. *The Captain* said it would be a good idea to “interact” with her peers outside of school. Thing was, Juleka didn’t want to interact with her peers inside or outside of school. Unlike her brother and mother, she relished being alone and playing her guitar. Her brother Luka was a social butter—uh... he was someone who could gather a crowd of people together whether it be through his music or his appearance. Juleka’s heard the giggles and whispers about all the things people wanted Luka to do to them while playing his guitar. It made her want to buy noise canceling headphones and wear them whenever she and Luka went out together. While Luka was nowhere near as extroverted as *The Captain* (a fact their mother was disappointed

in), he still knew how to converse without feeling like he was gonna throw up. Unless he *does* feel as bad as Juleka and not only hides it well but has yet to share the secret with her.

Captain Anarka “Anarchy” Couffaine had one rule about their houseboat Liberty. “Live your best life and cause as much chaos as you could.” If one wanted to get technical, that was two rules but that wasn’t the issue.

This issue... while these weren’t considered “rules,” Anarka wanted her kids to play music – like her – and be loud – like her. She also wanted the three of them to have a damn decent photo but they were cursed. Juleka hadn’t told her family about Karma and the picture they took together. She’d ask for a second picture with the feline superhero before getting her hopes up.

Juleka wasn’t loud by any stretch of the imagination. *She couldn’t even play the guitar loud.*

The purple-haired teen was doomed to be a tall mousy goth girl constantly overlooked, fading into the background. Her mother *knew this* yet persisted, trying to get her to do things outside her comfort zone. And Juleka Piper Couffaine didn’t have a big comfort zone to begin with.

The tiny pink-haired teen in her class skated over to her and introduced herself, then asked if she minded if they skated together. When Juleka said she didn’t mind, the girl nodded then didn’t say anything else. It was almost as if she *knew* Juleka was a second and a half away from barfing if forced to make small talk.

The girls go skating by twos, Juleka hears her family cheering for her when it’s her turn alongside the pink-haired girl. It’s clear the girl – Alix, she said her name was – is slowing down for Juleka’s benefit.

Learning how to skate was another activity her mother forced her into, to “break her out of her shell.” At least *there*, she had Luka beside her.

“Are you kidding me?!” Juleka goes to stand on the grass next to Alix as an angry man with his equally angry son are standing in front of the black-haired woman. “Refusing to allow my son to join the roller derby team is sexist!” The man bellows.

The woman rolls her eyes, “it’s not sexist, Monsieur.”

“Bullshit! Not letting someone join a sport *you would benefit from having in him* due to their

sex is sexism!”

“You can’t be sexist against men.” One of the parents call out.

“Who says?!” The man sneers. “Oh I see. You have your feminist garbage going on, huh? That’s why my son can’t join?”

“Your son can’t join because you’re a jackass.” The man balks, “furthermore, roller derby isn’t a sport that males are involved in. Period. End of discussion. It’s hardly sexist given the amount of sports women are exempt from. Anyhow, I’m sure there are plenty of sports he’d be welcomed where they’d benefit from his presence.” The son bristles. “Now get out of my sight before you’re escorted out.”

“You really think—” A group of tall, buff women on skates surround the man. “I-I—” He pales, “you haven’t heard the last of me! I’m taking this straight to Mayor Bourgeois!” Then he and his son scurry away. The women skate over to the girls who cheer.

“As you probably realized, this is what roller derby will do to you!” The girls squeal in excitement, “meet my old roller derby team from America, The Hell Rollers. My name is Camilla Hombee—”

“W-Weren’t you the president of the united states!?” A girl gapes out.

“Yes, I was.” The group murmurs excitedly to themselves. “Served my two terms too.”

The girls cheer, “will you run for mayor?” A parent asks, “Mayor Bourgeois’ six years is almost over and we’d do well to have someone else in office.” The crowd murmurs their agreement.

“We’ll see. For now, I’m just trying to empower young ladies through some roller derby!” The crowd cheers loudly. “Everyone here is now part of the team, if they choose. All of you can skate and that’s pretty much fifty percent of what’s needed to play the sport. Next week we’re gonna meet at the skate part to work on learning the rules of the sport. I’m going to pass out a sign-in sheet. Please put your name, phone number, and email or instagram or however other way you can be contacted.”

Juleka watches Alix and the tall blue-haired girl jump up and down which is impressive as they are standing in the grass while wearing skates.

Catching her mother clap excitedly, Juleka signs away her life to roller derby. She was half-expecting that sexist prick to be possessed by an akuma or feather but he didn't return by the time everyone was finished signing the sheet and exchanging contact information.

Just to avoid questions from her mother, Juleka exchanged contact information with Alix and her friend Marinette. Plus another girl, also in their class, Aurore. Luka excitedly clasps on the shoulder as they exit the park.

"Marinette!" Aurore skates over to the blue-haired girl, "thank goodness you're here! I was gonna swing by the boulangerie pâtisserie to commission you. There's a weatherperson contest coming up next weekend and I *have* to enter!"

"Who are you competing against?"

"Dozens of other kids around the city..." She takes a deep breath, "including Chloé." The blonde sticks out her tongue shaking her head, "why am I even doing this to myself? I'm not a masochist! This competition will be just like two years ago and the *No Beans About It* spokesperson ad."

"It won't—"

Frowning, Aurore points at the digital billboard by the park's exit with Chloé's (condescendingly) smiling face on it holding a can of *No Beans About It* coffee. "She bribed her way into the competition then threatened the judges for looking at the other contestants with her standard *my maman is The Queen of Fashion and my papa's mayor* bull!"

Alix chuckles at the blonde's perfect imitation of Chloé.

"Come over tomorrow after school and we'll work on your outfit."

Aurore hugs the blue-haired teen, "you're the greatest, Marinette Dupain-Cheng. Seriously. At least I'll look cute when I lose." Alix barks out a laugh as Aurore releases Marinette and skates off.

□□

Karma scrambles to climb the top of Arc de Triomphe. She should've known her clumsiness

didn't take a break while transformed.

A portal opens and Bunnyx steps out. Before she opens her mouth, Marinette—*Karma*—jumps to her feet hugging the Avatar of Time. “Don’t get all mushy, KarmicKitty. I... I wanted to let you know I appreciate you. Always have. Always will.”

“Same for me.”

“When we get our matching tattoos, make sure you don’t wear a low cut shirt. I mean, we won the lawsuit but still.”

“Huh?”

“Something Future You wanted me to tell you.”

“Future ...*Me!*?”

“You didn’t think I was the only one who is still at this gig four years later, did you? Why do you think I call Lady Luck ‘*Minibug?*’”

“*Four years!?* Y-You’re so... *tall!*”

“Mini-Me gushed at that too. But you get taller too so...” Bunnyx scoffs, “never got my moment in the sun next to you. *But* I’m taller than Future Kim and Future Nath.” She pumps her fist in the air. “Okay, Kim and I are the same height but...” Bunnyx gives a one-shoulder shrug, “semantics.”

“W-Why would I be wearing a low-cut shirt to begin with?”

“To impress a certain someone.” Bunnyx points to her mask, “I was waggling my eyebrows but remembered you can’t see them. She’s gonna be alright, you know. Okay, you’re worrying about more than one person. Minibug and Mini-Me are gonna be okay. Next time I see you I’ll bring a picture of the three of us. Don’t wanna spoil the rest of the team... because the members and powers and everything aren’t set in stone.”

“So there *are* things you can’t talk about.”

“Everything I say has already happened. It’s etched in – let’s say – bookmarks in time. You offering me a place to stay after the time loops BS? Always happens in every timeline. Though I have never, in any timeline, figured out how they stopped altogether.” She shrugs. “The tattoos happen – the pred... sub... the shit that happens before it? Not set in stone. So *no low-cut shirt*.”

“But if it’s gonna happen what’s the harm?”

“You really want some creep ogling your goodies so hard he screws with your tattoo? And... *you know*—” Bunnyx gestures to her chest.

“Good point. But if I’m not wearing the low cut shirt and he screws up anyway...” Karma moves her hands in a seesawing motion, “I don’t know what to say. You know me as well as I know myself, so you’d know as well as I do that if I’m trying to impress someone I’m gonna fail spectacularly.”

“Not always.” Bunnyx winks at her.

“When do we find out who Lady Luck is?”

“*That* is not set in stone. I mean you always find out but—” Bunnyx makes vague hand gestures, “even *I* can’t predict a timeframe.”

“You came here knowing I’d be early.”

“Now you’re catching on.” Bunnyx releases her. “You’re a good, *Kit*, Karma. Gotta go.” She kisses Karma on the forehead then opens a portal. “...See you tonight.” Then she jumps in the portal.

A few seconds after the portal closes, Lady Luck gracefully lands on the Arc.

“Now you’re just showing off.”

She takes a little bow and Karma chuckles. “Have you been here long?” The Avatar of Destruction shakes her head. Before Lady Luck can open her mouth, a portal opens underneath them and they fall in.

Lady Luck gracefully lands on her feet while Karma flails a bit and lands in a crouch.

“Greetings, Lady Luck. Greetings, Karma.” Karma gets to her feet and they both turn around to someone dressed as a horse who is bowing. “You may call me Cosmic Colt.”

“Must we?” Lady Luck elbows Karma, “ooh... wasn’t supposed to say that out loud. Sorry.”

To both girl’s surprise, Cosmic Colt chuckles. “No harm done. My kwami insisted on a flashy name as well as an alteration. I delivered on both accounts. In any event, as I’m certain you realized, I am the one who handed you your miraculouses—”

“Are you also responsible for distributing Mme. Mite and M. Méfait’s miraculouses?” Lady Luck interrupts.

“No. They were stolen from my partner...” Cosmic Colt clears his throat, “the only bright spot in this horrible scenario is that they are being used together so we won’t have to look in multiple places when we retrieve them.” He takes a knee setting down a large octagonal box. Lady Luck and Karma hesitantly approach. When Cosmic Colt opens the box, it separates and splits in two directions. The side on the left has five spaces on the outer side with two spaces in the centre. The side on the right has six spaces on both the outer and inner sides.

Four spaces are empty on the side with seven spaces that make up the colors of a rainbow, while three are missing from the side with twelve spaces. Each of the nineteen spaces from the two combined box sides is a different color. “This is my miracle box. Guardians from The Miraculous Order are taught in pairs.”

“I don’t think we’re gonna like how this story ends...” Karma mutters.

“I was fortunate to have my partner beside me in life and in training. She guarded the miraculouses you two wield, as well as the miraculouses of M. Méfait and Mme. Mite. The entire half of her miracle box was stolen due to my carelessness and still she—she only blamed herself.” Cosmic Colt sighs heavily, “it took us... a while but we thankfully managed to secure all the missing miraculouses. However, the peafowl and butterfly were later lost in the chaos.”

Karma eyes her partner folding her arms over her chest. “Where is your partner?”

“She is...” The man absently turns the ring in his hands, “she is... at our homebase.” Karma

and Lady Luck share a glance and the former gives a one shoulder shrug. “Up until two centuries ago, the usage of miraculouses were more common. Unfortunately, as a result more and more people attempted to steal the power and use it for personal gain, which caused an increase in corrupted miraculouses. In order to combat this, The Order decided to hide away the miraculouses from the world and train fewer Guardians to protect them.”

“How does a miraculous become... un-corrupt?” Karma asks.

“I will let you know as soon as I become aware.”

“You don’t know?” Lady Luck hisses.

“I am essentially ‘new’ at this gig. It hasn’t even been fifty years since I became a Guardian.” Karma whistles, “neither my partner nor myself have seen a corrupted miraculous in person, therefore we have yet to see the reverse corruption process. I would imagine it is the opposite of the corruption process but that’s a vague answer.”

“What happens to a miraculous when it becomes corrupt, then?” Lady Luck asks, “or have you not seen that either?”

“You are not the first ladybug to doubt her power or destiny, Lady Luck.” Karma eyes her partner who bristles. “Nor the first to shield yourself behind a snide, lackadaisical attitude.”

Lady Luck’s eyes narrow. Karma quickly looks between the two of them. “H-Hey! Let’s talk about what’s missing from—*oh*. Is that a rabbit face? That’s Bunnyx’s, miraculous, right? In the white space?”

Cosmic Colt shakes his head then his eyes snap up toward Karma. “Y-Yes, it is. Apologies. I was ...distracted. The other missing miraculous is my partner’s, the ox.”

“Ox?” Karma eyes the half on the right. Twelves spaces with a rabbit, an ox, a horse are all missing? “These are the zodiac animals. Huh... and I’m the cat.”

Lady Luck gives her a strange look, “are you referring to *Fruits Basket*?”

“You’ve seen that anime?!”

Lady Luck clears her throat, “without a school to attend, I have had... free time.”

“Do you need other recommendations? Are you watching the reboot—”

Lady Luck clears her throat again, a bit louder this time, “we can speak more on the subject later.” Karma nods happily. “If those are the zodiac animals, what do the others represent?”

“Wǔxíng and yīnyáng.”

Karma pumps her left fist in the air, “thank you māmā for teaching me Mandarin.” She whispers, “I don’t recall any wǔxíng tale being about animals.”

“The miraculouses have existed since the dawn of time. Tales involving them have... changed.” Cosmic Colt clears his throat, “in any event, I will tell you two about all the miraculouses under my care, as well as everything I know that the butterfly and peafowl are capable of.”

□□

Alix spits her soda out in front of her as a portal opens in the air, throws Karma out, then closes and disappears. Karma manages to land on her feet in front of Alix. “Well... that was odd.”

Karma blows out a breath, “I’ll tell you all about it. Be right back. Claws in, Plagg.” Alix shields her eyes as a black light engulfs Karma’s body, and when it disintegrates Marinette is left standing there with her kwami floating near her head. She gives Alix a two-fingered salute before climbing down the fire escape.

Alix climbs back into the bedroom, at the same time as Marinette pops open the trap door. The blue-haired teen collapses on the chaise. “You found the Guardian?”

“He found us. Told us all about the nineteen miraculouses he had in his care, including yours.”

Alix takes her pocket watch out from under her hat, Fluff floats out of her hat as well. “During your maman’s pregnancy, she and your papa met with the sages. They sensed you were the Time Avatar and sent for them, giving them my miraculous to give to you on your

fourteenth birthday. While the Kubdels were hailed for being ‘ahead of their time,’ the pocket watch you received from your papa is not the one he received from his papa.”

“Did me being the Avatar of Time kill my maman?”

Fluff looks down frowning, “I honestly do not know.”

Alix sighs heavily and Marinette puts an arm around his shoulder drawing her near. “Hey, wait—! If... If I didn’t get the same pocket watch as my old man. A-Are you saying there are *fake* miraculouses out there?”

Plagg picks up Alix’s soda then takes a gulp full. “There are.” Fluff replies, side-eyeing the cat kwami as he belches, “there is one fake miraculous for every real one out in the world. It’s something the sages devised in case of theft. Hasn’t always worked but with my miraculous, it had.”

“My family *stole* the fake miraculous of the rabbit and passed it off as an heirloom?” Fluff nods, “those... *assholes!*”

“Wait, if you or the sages or whoever gave M. Kubdel the real miraculous – does he know about you?”

“No. I mean, yes.” Fluff frowns, “he knows about the existence of kwamis and the existence of me, in particular, but he and I have never met. The sages didn’t trust him, and rightfully so all things considered, so I was released from my miraculous. That... as it turns out, clouds a kwami’s connection to its miraculous. Wasn’t able to properly watch over Alix because of it. Anyway, the reason for your repeated deaths was to recharge my miraculous and return my connection to it. Your family stole my miraculous’ power and you had to pay the price for their greed. Being a Kubdel and the Avatar of Time was... ironic to the sages.”

“So they sadistically allowed Alix to die more than fourteen times?! That makes them as big a bunch of assholes as Alix’s family!” Marinette yells. Beside her, Plagg nods in agreement.

□□

Tues, Sept 15th, 2020

As Max adjusts his schoolbag, Markov happily chitters beside him. “Update completed.”

Markov's eyes flash grey before turning back black, "my update has determined the possibility of alerting civilians when there is an amok or akuma attack."

Max pauses in putting his shoes on to look over at Markov, "*how?*"

"Based on my analysis of Alya Césaire's footage on the Luckyblog regarding the three possessions she was present for, there is a significant albeit brief decrease in air quality when one becomes possessed. However, I believe if I can be recalibrated to pick up magical energy, it might prove more useful."

"Uh..." Max scratches his head, "I don't think that's something *I'm* capable of doing for you, I don't know the first thing about detecting magic let alone how to locate it. And I absolutely have no idea how to locate anyone with the ability to find magic." With his mother already having left for work half an hour ago, Max locks up the apartment and heads to the station. Instead of stopping, the metro zooms past everyone waiting. The other people waiting begin murmuring to one another as they look around. Markov beeps then turns to Max with an image of Lady Luck and Karma swinging after the metro.

"Attention patrons—" The intercom crackles to life, "—this is station master Melvin. As I'm certain you just saw, the brakes on one of the metros stopped functioning. Don't worry though, Lady Luck and Karma were informed of the situation and should be in the process of stopping the metro."

Max glances up at Markov who shakes his head.

Everyone else in the station murmurs excitedly.

The intercom crackles on once more several seconds later, "attention patrons, this is station master Melvin again, I've just been informed that Lady Luck and Karma managed to secure the metro before a crash could occur." The other people in the station begin cheering. "Another metro should be arriving at your stop within the next ten minutes. Have a good day."

When Max enters François Düpont, there's this crowd surrounding a brunette, in an olive green shirt that matches her eyes and a pair of blue jeans, who is sitting on a staircase. "It was so terrifying! The metro had to be going at least 300 miles! People were screaming and holding onto each other. Out of nowhere in true superhero fashion Karma just like burst through the train doors!" The crowd gasps excitedly.

Max spots Alya among the crowd happily holding up her phone like a professional reporter.

He makes his way over to the orange-haired girl. “What’s going on?” He whispers.

“Lila was on the metro this morning! The one that lost control of its brakes? Did you hear about it?”

Max nods, “I was there—” Alya gasps turning to him, “in the station, not on the metro.” She visibly deflates as she nods. “Lila, what else can you tell us? I need this for the Luckyblog.” It could be Max’s imagination or his glasses are in need of cleaning, but an almost predatory look crosses the brunette’s face for a fraction of a second before she smiles brightly.

“The Luckyblog, you say?” She gracefully gets up from the stairs and the crowd parts as she steps down the stairs over to Alya. “I’d love to be on your blog! I owe Lady Luck and Karma my life after all.”

“See you in class, Max.” He waves as the two girls start walking arm-in-arm, “do you think an akuma was involved?”

“Oh no! This was a *totally* different entity...” Max and Markov exchange a dubious glance as the rest of the crowd scatters.

“**Kubdel**, *don’t let me catch you in my halls with skates again!*” Damocles yells.

Max turns around from his locker just as Alix stops in front of hers. The pink-haired teen opens her locker retrieving a pair of sneakers from the top compartment. She sets the sneakers on the floor then *jumps* out of her skates and lands in the sneakers.

Markov chirps happily floating over to Alix, “that was impressive. And I caught it in real time.”

“Heya, Markov.” Markov preens as Alix pets his head. She turns to the left, “hi, Max.”

“Hi.” Alix ties her skate laces together and puts them on her backpack, then she starts subbing things from her bag to her locker and vice versa.

“Alix, you were involved in the creation of the Luckyblog—” Markov begins.

“Not really.” Alix interrupts.

“—irregardless, do you know how I can be recalibrated to sense magic?’ Blinking, she looks up at Markov. “I believe that upgrade can help me assist Lady Luck and Karma in terms of alerting Paris whenever there is an akuma or amok attack.”

“Okay... I get *why* you wanna do it but magic doesn’t—” She abruptly stops talking and her eyes widen, “I know who you can talk to.”

“You do?!” Max asks.

Alix turns to him beaming. “I do! Meet me here after school. I’ll even skip art club for this~” Whistling, she closes her locker, hefts her backpack over one shoulder, then walks down to another locker opening it.

When Max enters the classroom, Lila is sitting on a desk talking about the metro while the majority of the students are surrounding her. Max walks past the crowd and heads to his seat. Markov floats over to him a few seconds later. Max gives Markov a questionable glance as the robot floats down to the desk.

Chloé and her pale, nasally friend walk into the classroom laughing. They both abruptly stops walking upon seeing the crowd, “*what* the fuck is all this?” The blonde yells. The crowd dissipates as nonchalantly as they can before Chloé marches up to the brunette. “You’ve got some nerve putting your ass on my desk.”

“I was just telling the class about the metro incident this morning.”

Chloé’s eyes narrow, “the what?”

Lila gasps, “how did you not hear about the metro incident? It’s all over the news!”

“Does it look like *I*—” She points to herself, “frequently traverse to *metro stations*? I don’t think so.” She huffs, “and regardless of what happened it doesn’t justify *you sitting on my desk!*”

“I—”

“How’d you like it if I rubbed myself all over your desk?” Chloé pulls the brunette off her

desk then pushes her to her desk. “Stay *there*.” Grumbling, the blonde takes some sanitizer out of her purse and sprays the desk.

“Wow. Is that necessary? It’s not like I have a contagious disease or anything!”

“Oh you have one, alright. It’s your ignorance and I don’t wanna catch it.” Chloé sprays the seats for good measure then takes some paper towels from Professeur Bustier’s desk and wipes down the desk and seats. “The next time you cross me, Sausage Hair, you’re gonna regret being in this class.”

The brunette gapes, subconsciously stroking the front bits of her hair —~~that kind of do look like sausage links.~~

Professeur Bustier walks in the classroom. “My goodness, what a morning! Is everyone alright? Did anyone happen to get stuck in the station due to the metro incident?” The professeur sets her briefcase down nodding at the hands raised, “I’m glad you’re all alright and able to be here today. Now everyone, please take your seats.” A few students squeak in the classroom before the professeur closes the door.

Chloé props her face with her right hand, eyeing that girl chatting up Adrien. Chloé is very protective of her naïve best friend, and a girl like that will take advantage of said naïvety. Out the corner of her eye, she sees Dupain-Cheng with a sketchbook in her notebook. Oh please, that little ploy didn’t work last year. What makes her think it’ll work now?

Before Chloé can open her mouth, she stares wide-eyed at what the blue-haired teen is sketching. It looks like a romper but with shorts and it’s black with red polkadots and there’s a helmet with cat ears that are red in the middle. Is that an inverse of Lady Luck’s look—*for her mother’s contest!*?

With the blue-haired teen distracted, Chloé subtly takes her phone out of her purse and snaps a quick picture of the sketch pretending like she’s looking through her phone. As much as she hates to admit it, doing an inverse look is pure genius. And when her outfit is twice as good as Dupain-Cheng’s she’ll win the contest for sure! Unlike her father, her mother won’t automatically pick her as the winner once her name pops up. Something about in-epti-tude and... a bunch of other big words Chloé didn’t know the definition of.

Once class ends, Lila waits for everyone to exit the room before making her way to the professeur’s desk. “Professeur Bustier, what is the school’s policy on bullying?”

“It’s not tolerated.” The redhead recites, “why?”

“I believe I’m experiencing bullying... from Chloé Bourgeois.”

“Oh.” The professeur frowns, “are you certain?”

“What?” Lila deadpans.

“Are you certain?” The professeur repeats, oblivious to the brunette’s change in tone. “Mlle. Bourgeois is very... particular. Not to mention her being possessed by an akuma had to be a harrowing experienc—”

“Are you...” Lila takes a deep breath, “I’m sorry.” She pauses to take another deep breath. “Are you seriously *justifying* her behavior, Professeur? She’s terrible! Worse than any akuma!”

“I don’t believe that. No one is truly terrible—”

“I don’t even know why I bothered.” The brunette grumbles walking out of the classroom, oblivious to the professeur gaping at her retreating form.

□□

Because it’s too much of a hassle hopping on the metro to go home then come all the way back, Alya stays in the building or goes to Le Grand Paris with Chloé and Sabrina for lunch. Today, she opted for the former. She’s sitting in the art room giggling to herself. Lila gave her permission to upload the interview onto the Luckyblog. Now all she had to do was wait for Markov to scan the recording and it’ll be on the website.

There weren’t any feathers or butterflies, so this wasn’t the work of Mite and Méfait. Lila claimed it was a different magical entity involved, rather than just a faulty brake like the station master claimed. It’s *possible*.

Alya knows a bit about trickster entities thanks to Nora, who named her kickboxing persona after the West African spider trickster Anansi. (Together they did research on all West African deities for the best name.)

That, along with the reported encounters she heard people had with the superheroes Majestia and Knightowl, made her want to become a journalist.

Majestia and Knightowl were clearly adult superheroes; yet Karma and Lady Luck appeared to be teenagers. Then again... magic. Then again... again, Alya doubted magic made them look as young as they are. Superheroics didn't seem to care what age you were as long as you could get the job done halfway decent, you kept your gig. [That explained why Kid Mime was still a superhero despite his half-ass-id-ness.]

Alya wouldn't be foolish enough to post important information about the heroes that Mite and Méfait or any evildoer asshole sympathizers could read about and use to their advantage. *However*, if she did ever find out important information about the heroes she might faint from excitement.

The art room door opens and Kim enters with a sigh, shutting the door behind him. "Hiding from someone?" Flinching, Kim turns to her but remains splayed out against the door.

"I am. You know that swim champ Mortimer?"

"The one apparently named after a Greek god or something? In troisième?"

Kim nods, "yeah. *That guy*. I beat him in a swim race about a week and a half ago so he challenged me to a rematch then I beat him again." Alya whistles, "I thought that would be it but he won't leave me alone! Every day he sees me he challenges me to a swim-off! It's like being caught in a bad cartoon or something!" He runs a hand down his face, "worse of all, the swim professeur thinks I can go pro but I don't know if that's what I want. Sure, I like swimming well enough but..." He trails off with a sigh.

"You don't gotta decide now."

"Guess that's true... but I don't wanna be in the same vicinity as that dude. Maybe I'll join the art club. Everyone but Marinette, Marc, and Nathaniel are short. I can reach high stuff off the shelves for everyone."

Alya snorts a laugh. "I should join the art club myself. I'm always here."

"Kim!" Mortimer screams, "**Kim!** I just wanna race!" Kim locks the door then crouches down. The bang on the door startles Alya; the black-haired teen presses his face against the

door window and looks around as much as he's able before disappearing, screaming Kim's name.

"Whoa. That is just like a bad cartoon..." Alya takes her feet off the table, "he might be at it for a while. We still have an hour of lunch left." Groaning, Kim slumps to the ground. "I have some blackberries my ma packed for my lunch. We can share?"

"I have... an issue with blackberries." Kim says with a frown.

"Is it because they're not the right color? My sister's like that."

"Well there's *that* and they always get stuck in my teeth." Kim's stomach grumbles loudly, "*but* I'm not really in a bargaining position. You got yourself a deal."

Lunch ends then they head to Professeur Mendeleiev's for science. Or they *try to* except there's an akuma that's half fish – their top half – and half person – their bottom half – standing in front of the classroom. Alya can already guess who this is but she takes her phone out and starts recording all the same. "*Kim!*" It screeches turning to them, "now you can't get away from our race!" Alya zooms in on Kim's horrified expression.

"What the—" Alya angles her camera downward then has to make sure she didn't accidentally hit a filter or anything because water is filling up from the floor.

Professeur Mendeleiev bursts out the classroom door hitting the akuma, "*everyone out, the school's flooding!*" The students panic and start screaming as they run out of the building.

"Oh no, you two aren't going anywhere!" Alya turns around in time for the akuma to gather his bearings then grab her and Kim with its clammy hands.

"Eww!" They cringe simultaneously.

"Keep recording, *Unluckyblogger*, I want Lady Luck and Karma to see this." Still grimacing from the clamminess, Alya reluctantly angles her phone at the akuma's face. "Hello ladies, I am Proteus and I'll drown François Düpont unless I get your miraculouse! And *you*—" He turns to Kim, "—you'll never run away from another race again!" Once he starts cackling, Kim cradles his face in his hands.

Marinette chokes on air and Alix pats her back. Lunch ended like five minutes ago and they were making their way back to the building when droves of students were running *out* of the building that started pouring out water. Alix suggested checking the Luckyblog and sure enough “Proteus” appeared.

“The school is *flooded*!?” Sabine asks as they re-enter the shop. Alix wordlessly shows her the live footage from the Luckyblog from her phone. “We should look into another collège.” She mumbles, putting a hand to her head.

“We’ll be upstairs.” Alix says ushering Marinette up the stairs.

As soon as they’re in Marinette’s room, Marinette opens her purse and Plagg flies out. “Something is seriously wrong with the butterfly miraculous user.” He sighs.

Fluff lifts Alix’s hat then floats out of it, “you know that the butterfly wielder has no control over the transformations. It’s the affected soul that chooses what they appear to be.”

“So someone *deliberately* decided to be half-fish, half-person? And picked the fish half for the top!?” Alix asks. Fluff nods with a frown.

“Right. Time for my post-lunch cardio. Claws out, Plagg.” Alix looks away as Marinette transforms. Yet somehow, she still has stars in her eyes when she opens them.

“I’ll do the whole pillow cover for you.” She clears her throat, “and I know how to perfectly imitate your voice.”

Karma blinks at her, “h-how?! That—we gotta do a ventriloquist thing someday.” Alix grins at her. Karma climbs out the balcony. Alix waves before she pole vaults off the building.

□□

Kagami opens her eyes to see Tikki frantically waving her hands. “Wha...?” The blue-haired teen sits up and picks up her hearing aids from the table and puts them in. “What is it?”

Pausing, Tikki turns to her. “Your phone. There’s an akuma at François Düpont!”

“Again? This makes the fifth of six akuma or amok attacks on the city that’s come from there. *Technically*, it is the fourth at the building as the second attack overall was a student who attended there but the attack happened somewhere else.” Kagami sighs, “either way, is Bunnyx certain I should be attending this collège?” Kagami picks up her phone and sees the *live* notification from the Luckyblog. Odd. She... doesn’t remember adding that app on her phone. She glances up at Tikki, “I believe there is something you neglected to mention to me.” Before Tikki can reply, Kagami turns her phone to her. “It explains why you knew my phone was alerting me.”

“It’s a blog – whatever that is – about you and your partner. Says it also informs civilians about an amok or akuma attack. Seemed like a good idea to add it.”

“How did you even bypass my password?”

Tikki shrugs, “I’m magic.”

Kagami frowns, “right. Spots on, Tikki.”

□□

Lady Luck opens her eyes and scowls as she’s floating upside down in Cosmic Colt’s portal, “what... the fuck is going on?”

“You—” Another portal opens dropping Karma, “are in need of assistance to defeat this akuma.” Karma shakily lands on her feet breathing a sigh of relief. Lady Luck is set rightside up; she does a double-take staring at the bowing ox before them. “I am Bovine. I create the potions that kwamis need to power up. François Düpont is flooded, you won’t be able to enter as you are.”

“What about all the students?!” Karma asks.

“Fortunately, all but three students – including the akuma – have been taken out of the school by Cosmic Colt via portal.” Bovine holds out two blue vials, handing one to each of them. “I need to know your kwami’s preferred food of choice so that I may have Cosmic Colt drop off the appropriate items at your places.”

“Huh?”

“There are power-ups available for your kwamis. Eight, to be precise. I will cook the potions into food for your kwamis for easy usage. Understand?”

“No, but do it anyway.” Karma says locking her hands behind her head.

“Tikki has an affinity for sweets.” Lady Luck states. “Cookies in particular. I don’t have much of a sweet tooth so my mother has found my recent purchases to be... odd.”

“There are savory cookies you could buy. Or even some pâtisseries you can make that aren’t that sweet they won’t arouse suspicion.”

“I am incapable of baking. Plus, the hotel room we are in doesn’t have an oven.”

“What if... I get your kwami’s food for you? Like a weekly supply. We start patrolling the city for weirdness and I give you the snacks on Sunday to last you the whole week. Maybe about, uh, fifty things a week.”

“Why so many?”

“Seven times seven is forty-nine. If Tikki eats as much as Plagg does you’re gonna need a lot of food. But if it’s too much let me know and I’ll downsize.”

“That’s very nice of you. I appreciate it.”

Karma smiles at her before turning to Bovine. “As for me, Plagg’ll eat anything. He gripes about not having whatever camembert is but he’ll eat any food I split with him and then some. I guess you can make his potion from cheese danishes?”

“Camembert is an expensive and malodorous type of cheese. It’s native to France.”

“Is it? I’ve never heard of it.”

“Then perhaps we can trade? Your pâtisseries for some camembert weekly.”

“Sounds good.” Karma gently shakes the vial, “do we... drink this?”

“Oh, no! We haven’t tested its effects on humans and I doubt now would be the best time. You break transformation, give it to your kwami to drink, as you transform again say power-up aqua upon calling your kwami’s name.” Karma and Lady Luck exchange a glance and the latter gives a one-shoulder shrug. Two blacked-out curtains drape themselves over where the heroes are standing. “I already know your identities but you don’t know each other yet. And I do not think now isn’t the best time to find out. And to drop you off back at your houses only to bring you back again will take too much time.”

“Very well. Spots off, Tikki.” Karma squints in Lady Luck’s direction and doesn’t even see the flash of light Alix says happens when a transformation breaks. (These are some seriously powerful curtains.) She even pokes the curtain, pushing at it, and it does not move.

With a shrug, Karma utters, “claws in, Plagg.”

Plagg flies out of her ring then sniffs the vial hesitantly, “eww... what *is* that?”

“The aqua power-up.” Plagg looks around wide-eyed, no doubt trying to locate the voice. “Don’t tell me you forgot my voice after just one century.”

“Sugarcube?”

The cheery voice giggles. “Yup! Gouda to hear your voice, Your Cheesiness.”

“Y-Yours too.” The kwami chokes out. Marinette hums. So *that’s* why Bovine did this. So the kwamis could talk to each other, no matter how brief.

“I’d hate to cut this reunion short but we have civilians to save.”

“R-Right.” The cheery voice deflates. Lady Luck sounds a bit... different when not transformed. Not that much different but Marinette doesn’t recognize the voice anyhow. She has to wonder if she sounds any different transformed. She’ll ask Alix.

“Spots on, Tikki: power-up aqua.”

“Bye Plagg!”

“Bye, Sugarcube...”

Plagg sighs then turns to her. Marinette pats him on the head, “we’ll find some way for you to see each other again.” She whispers. Plagg blinks up at her in surprise then nods, downing the vial. “Plagg, claws out: power-up aqua!” She goes through the motions of her transformation except it feels like getting hit with a refreshing splash of water on a hot summer day. There are green *scales* on her suit and she has a mermaid tail. Hell, she even has *gills*. “Check it out, I’m a catfish!”

The curtains raise and Lady Luck's whole suit is redesigned: the whole thing is covered in scales; the black spots of her suit are now different types of black seashells with her tail being the inverse: black with red seashell spots.

“Ready?”

“Wha—?” A portal opens underneath them. “Aw, crap!” Then they fall through.

As soon as they fall through the other side of the portal they’re submerged in water.

“I can’t swim.” Lady Luck hisses.

Karma grabs one of her arms, “maybe we can magically swim through magic water.”

They can’t. And Karma isn’t that great of a swimmer. It’s like frantic paddling especially since she’s still holding onto Lady Luck. Maybe she’ll ask Kim for swimming lessons.

Karma manages to aggressively paddle them to the top where Lady Luck takes a huge gulp of air climbing onto a desk. Wait... a *desk*? Karma looks around noting they’re in a classroom, a science lab to be exact, and most of the desks have floated to the top.

Karma paddles over to the desk, “now what?”

Lady Luck sits up then looks around, “something’s moving on the roof.” She easily (and surprisingly) pulls her partner out of the water, then grabs her by the waist and yo-yos out the window and they swing back to land on the roof.

“You know, I was getting tired of waiting.” Lady Luck blinks then rubs her eyes. There is a half-fish, half-person sitting on a lawn chair holding a tall brunet in one hand and the recorder girl in the other. The half-fish person stands and the butterfly mask outline appears over their face, “do you have any idea how many students I’ve drowned because you two were taking your sweet time? Couldn’t even challenge Kim either.” The outline disappears, “but once I get your miraculouses we’re gonna have the best swim-off ever!” Rather than letting his hostages go, the fish person grows two extra arms to keep a hold of them.

“I don’t even think we’re dealing with a fish anymore.” Lady Luck says making a face.

“I’m not just one fish, Mlle. Lady. I am Proteus and I’m every deadly fish known to man—” He paused then cleared his throat, “—a-and women. And—” He groans. “—*people*? Wait. That’s not right. Every deadly fish known to *humankind*!” He breathes a sigh of relief. “Sorry. I’m striving for equality for everyone. Plus, I’m kind of a huge fan and—” The mask outline reappears over his eyes, “yes, Mme. Mite. I’ll get the autographs after I retrieve their miraculouses.” He blinks, “b-but what *are* their miraculouses? I don’t think I’ve ever heard you say what they are.”

“Looks like Mme. Mite doesn’t have full control of the individual affected by her akumas.” Alya whispers to the camera, turning it to her briefly before facing Proteus once more. “Is this recording live?”

Wait a minute... Alya’s eyebrows furrow. What’s the deal with Lady Luck and Karma’s outfits? It almost seems like they’re fused with a fish or something. Alya makes sure to zoom in and take in every detail of their new outfits as much as she’s able. (She might need to get a different phone with a better camera. Or maybe just go old school and use a camera?)

Proteus is having trouble dodging Lady Luck and Karma’s assault while still keeping a hold of them. He grows a third pair of arms and Lady Luck slices one at its seems with her yo-yo.

(Her yo-yo is shaped like a seashell! Alya internally screams.)

“Why don’t we even the playing field?” Proteus lifts his free arms and the water level begins to rise. As Lady Luck looks around, she notices no other building in the vicinity isn’t affected by the water.

“*Lucky charm!*” She yells before the water completely submerges her... again. A fishing net drops into the water in front of her. “Karma, can you use your ability?”

“My...? Oh.”

Karma's face falls and Lady Luck blinks at her, “you... your kwami still hasn't told you about your abilities yet?”

“I...” Karma rubs the back of her neck, “I also haven't... asked? I'm still stuck on the batons, truth be told. Plus, we kinda haven't needed 'em?” She chuckles then clears her throat as Lady Luck narrows her eyes, “b-but I'll make sure we have the conversation tonight.”

Lady Luck grips the fishing net. “Let's play!” Proteus screams swimming toward them with empty arms. Karma quickly looks up seeing two silhouettes above them. Lady Luck grabs Proteus in the fishing net redirecting him toward the top of the water.

He screams as he jettisons from the water then dives back into the water toward the two.

Karma hits Proteus with her fin as she tries swimming toward Lady Luck. “Maybe your lucky charm should've given you water wings instead.”

As they try swimming away from Proteus, he grabs them with his extra arms. “Why don't we go for a swim, ladies!” He cackles as he drags them deeper underwater.

“If you're trying to drown us, you'll be here a while. We have gills.” Proteus abruptly stops and Lady Luck uses his surprise to use the end of the net's stick to jab him in the throat.

Karma winces as he starts wheezing. When Lady Luck pulls the stick away there's a pendant on the end of it. A purple ooze surrounds Proteus before it dissolves reverting him back to whoever he is. Neither of them have any idea. He frantically looks around before swallowing water.

The akuma flutters out of the pendant and Lady Luck's fishing net turns into the “miracle net” and she scoops up the akuma. “No more corruption for you, little butterfly.” The net morphs back into the yo-yo and Lady Luck tosses the yo-yo in the air, “miraculous cure!” The water surges upward and before they can fall, tiny pink glowing ladybugs surround them then the entire building.

The water disappears entirely and the five of them are transported in front of the school. And their power-ups disappear in a flash of pink as well.

“I couldn’t even record because of all the water!” The recording girl screams.

Karma holds out her fist and Lady Luck stares at it, “talk to your kwami.” She says before they fist bump. After Karma nods, they both help up the previously possessed guy.

“O-Oh my gosh!” He shouts halting Lady Luck from yo-yoing away, “i-it... it’s such an honor to meet you both!” He blushes, “T-Though I wish it weren’t...” He sighs, “I’m... I’m so sorry I let my jealousy get the better of me and—”

“Lady Luck!” The reporter girl runs over to her other side, eyes sparkling, “Alya Césaire: Luckyblogger. C-Can I interview you for the Luckyblog?”

The reporter girl retracts her phone as Lady Luck’s eyes narrow, “you wish to interview me?”

“Yes?”

“And what of Karma?”

The reporter girl does a double-take, “w-what about Karma?”

The orange-haired girl flinches as Lady Luck takes a deep breath, “that’s the problem, isn’t it?”

“Wha—?”

“I understand your intentions were no doubt honorable creating the ‘*Luckyblog*’ but Karma and I are partners standing on equal ground. She’s literally the only reason I’m involved in this. No interview inquiries about her mean none with me.” Nodding at her partner, Lady Luck swings away. As everyone is gaping at where Lady Luck was just standing, Karma silently creeps away in the opposite direction.

□□

“I... can’t believe I just did that.” Kagami unceremoniously collapses on her bed.

“You’re a very passionate young lady. I think it’s admirable standing up for your partner like you did.”

Kagami grabs her phone and unlocks it opening the Luckyblog app. So Karma is pictured there with her batons and her colors were in the alternating letters of the website’s name. *However*, most of the inquiries on the website pertain to Lady Luck.

Grumbling, Kagami sits up then scans the website from page to page. “This is ridiculous!” She throws her phone but Tikki flies over and catches it before it hits the wall. “What is wrong with people? Is Karma invisible to them? 337 questions about Lady Luck and **four** about Karma and they only ask about the nature of her relationship with Lady Luck!”

“You’re biased.” Tikki sets the phone down on the bed, “you don’t want the attention as Lady Luck—”

“I’m used to getting negative attention, Tikki. I’m also used to obvious pity. *This?* This has nothing to do with me. It’s completely unjust that Karma is brushed aside when we arrive and kick ass together. You... well I’m not certain if you see what I see when we are fused but...” She grits her teeth, “even that well-meaning girl just brushed Karma off. It’s completely unacceptable.”

“Remember what the Avatar of Space said, Duusu – the peafowl – is the kwami of emotions. Méfait uses people’s emotions to get them possessed by an amok or akuma. I mean... wait a second. I’m guessing Méfait uses Duusu’s feathers to locate an individual with a strong emotion then Mme. Mite uses the akuma to possess them? I believe that’s correct. In any event, they’ll use your anger against you and you absolutely cannot be possessed! **Ever.**”

“In case you hadn’t noticed, I have a fairly short temper.”

“Yes, but you also have a blithely objective albeit jaded view of the world. It’ll take a lot to get you truly angry enough to get possessed over.” Tikki sighs, “like your partner not bein—”

“Appreciated to her full potential.” Kagami takes a deep breath. “I suppose I cannot be faulted for the ignorance of others.” Tikki gives her a flat look. “Whatever. I need to work on my meditation techniques anyhow.” She picks up her phone and exits out the Luckyblog app then opens a browser to a fancy cheeses website.

Fri, Oct 2nd, 2020

“Lady Luck and Karma—”

“Karma and Lady Luck—”

“Lady Luck, of course with Karma—”

“Once again, Lady Luck and Karma—”

Groaning, Émilie throws down the remote and massages her temples. *“This is your weathergirl, Chloé Bourgeois, with the weekend forecast.”* The blonde looks up at the television seeing her goddaughter pointing to the map of Paris on a green screen.

“Wait... *what?* Gabriel!? Gabriel, when did Chloé become a weathergirl!?”

Gabriel comes into the living room with two mugs, “what?” He turns to the television and sees Chloé prattling on. “No idea. What time is it? Shouldn’t she be in school?” He sets one mug down in front of his wife and the other in front of him as he sits down.

The doorbell rings and Gabriel groans before getting up and heading to the front door.

He’s hardly expecting Audrey to be on the other side. She takes her sunglasses off. “Gabriel! Where is she?”

“Émilie?”

“No. Charmainé Cloris.” Beaming, she holds up a photo. Gabriel squints at the black and red polkadotted romper with a red collar. “I can’t believe *my* previously thought talent-less daughter produced *this!* I am losing my mind over it.” She barrels into the house and plops on the couch next to Émilie. “Look at this. Can you believe my daughter made this?”

“Honestly? No.”

“Neither can I!” Audrey sinks back into the couch, “she’s a finalist in the little competition I

made a few weeks back.” Audrey takes another photo out of the manila folder in her hands and hands it to Émilie, “this is my other finalist. Marinette Dupain-Cheng. I’ll admit, it’s not what I think of when I hear high fashion but, evidently, ‘high fashion’ isn’t really a thing. I got an article about it. The girl’s got guts, I’ll give her that and this... although the outfit speaks Lady Luck it also doesn’t. It’s interesting.”

Émilie stares at the black jumpsuit that has cherries all over it. “Is this... a *roller derby outfit*?”

“They call themselves blackberry clobber. Obviously, she modified the uniform to be cherries rather than blackberries but the damn thing is genius. And get this, Camilla Hombee is in charge of the team.”

Émilie frowns, “Camilla Hombee. She was as terrifying as she was beautiful.” They both sigh heavily and Gabriel stares at the two of them.

□□

“*Go, Marinette!*” Sabine cheers. Beside her, Tom enthusiastically waves a banner in his hands. On her other side, Kim and Vinh were cheering loudly. Mme. Camilla Hombee paid Marinette for the creation of their team uniforms and told them Marinette and Alix were the best skaters on the team and that Alix was tiny but a powerhouse. (Sabine believed her; Alix could lift Marinette over her head with ease. Given they lived in a time with superheroes, supervillains, magic, and *time loops*; Alix being born with super-strength was hardly surprising.)

Sabine saw Alix’s father and brother among the crowd. They’ve been trying to get in contact with Alix, especially after Tom and Kim finished getting all of Alix’s stuff out of the apartment last week. Surprisingly, Alix didn’t have a lot of stuff. It was less than ten boxes of stuff, they put neatly in Marinette’s closet. According to Alix, all she needed was her skates. They just... didn’t realize just how many pairs of skates Alix Kubdel had. At least two of her boxes were nothing but skates. All gently used.

The most surprising thing about roller derby was the tiny, pale orange-haired bespectacled girl Sabine had often seen in Chloé’s company was working in tandem with Marinette. Honestly, Sabine had no idea how this sport worked but it was entertaining to watch.

Chloé glowers at her hands. It was hard to check her nails with this damn terrible lighting. Sabrina sending her an invite to a roller derby match she was participating in was surprising. Being on the same team as Beauréal, Dupain-Cheng, and Kubdel was even moreso.

Sabrina had skated up to her before the match started and started babbling about one thing or another; Chloé doesn't remember. But what she does remember is seeing Dupain-Cheng *completely* changed her outfit idea from a few weeks back! It's a good thing the only thing Chloé stole was the idea to do the inverse polkadot colors. She didn't make the romper with shorts like Dupain-Cheng did and her romper was sleeveless with a red collar.

Dupain-Cheng's outfit wasn't even high fashion, Chloé doubted her mother would consider it.

"Isn't this exciting, Chlo?" Adrien asks.

"Of course it is, Adrikins." She tonelessly replies trying to turn her phone screen to her nails so she can clean her cuticles. She felt a hangnail but she couldn't see it.

As the teen beside her gasps, Chloé boredly looks over to the rink where *Sabrina* – meek and tiny (though not as tiny as Kubdel) – Raincomprix brazenly shoulder bashes a much larger girl distorting her momentum. Chloé's jaw drops. The large girl catches herself before she can faceplant onto the rink. She bares her mouthguard shaking off the hit as she skates off. Sabrina speeds up to catch her. Chloé stands, "*ram her again, Sabrina!*" The blonde blushes then abruptly sits down.

Chloé huddles closer to Adrien who has a rulebook in his hands, "hits from behind are illegal." He whispers.

Chloé makes a face, looking down at the rulebook before glancing up at the rink again. "Wait! What's happening?!" She shouts as everyone gets off the rink.

"They're switching," Adrien replies. "Now it's the blackberry clobber girls turn to select the jammer. That's the one who scores. The girl Sabrina bashed. While the other team has their blockers try to prevent the jammer from scoring by lapping them." Chloé nods. She doesn't understand it but as long as Sabrina's team wins. "Marinette already went up a few minutes ago—" Oh good. Chloé missed that. "Looks like they're picking Alix."

Chloé scoffs, leaning back in her seat. "This should be interesting."

Alix Kubdel is *small*. Like she hadn't grown after école primaire, small. But thankfully Chloé didn't know her then. Didn't matter how small she was though, the little freak was strong. She arm wrestled a freakishly muscle-bound boy in troisième last year and *won*.

So Chloé was hardly surprised when Alix came up that no one was able to catch her or ruin her momentum by bashing her. (The blonde begrudgingly applauded along with the crowd.) Alix was damn near untouchable on skates and was prone to physical contact. This sport was cultivated for her. Damn. Now she's sorta bummed out she missed Dupain-Cheng flailing all over the rink.

The ref blows the whistle, "winner: Blackberry clobber!" Eleven girls skate onto the rink waving at the cheering crowd. "And let's give it up for peach meringue bandage!" The other team, with fourteen girls – Chloé counted – skates onto the rink hugging and high-fiving the other team. "Don't forget to check the scheduling for next Friday's match. Thank you all and have a wonderful evening!"

Adrien gets up as the crowd starts leaving but Chloé pulls him back to his seat. "We'll wait for the commoners to clear out before making our way to Sabrina." He nods.

"Jules! You were awesome!" Luka hugs his sister over the railing. "Introduce me to your team!"

"Half your team is gone." Anarka says with a frown.

"The league only allows fourteen competitors." Juleka replies, "some girls were cut." Juleka was surprised when she breathed a sigh of relief that her name wasn't called among the group of girls no longer on the team. She spent the past two weeks building a camaraderie with Alix, gushing about how awesome Karma is. Sure, Lady Luck was cool too but Juleka preferred Karma – for obvious reasons. One being breaking her family's photo curse. After the first team photo, they took after cuts and Juleka wasn't obstructed by anything she screamed and dropped her phone, cracking it.

She took some pictures with Alix, Marinette, and Aurore afterward and sure enough she was clear in all of them.

"Juleka!" Luka looks up at the blue-haired goddess skating in seemingly slow motion over to the railing. When she reaches the railing time resumes normally. "All of us are gonna grab a bite to eat at this new 'scratch-made' restaurant Adélaïde's parents own."

"I'll—ow!" Juleka turns to her brother who gives her a knowing look, eyes quickly darting to—oh. She chuckles, "this is my brother Luka. Luka, this is Marinette."

The goddess extends a hand Luka (eagerly) shakes, "nice to meet you."

“Nice to meet you too.” She even sounds heavenly. Juleka subtly elbows him and he (reluctantly) releases Marinette’s hand.

“Let me ask my maman if I can go.” Anarka grabs her daughter and they give the duo wide berth.

“You were incredible out there.”

“Yeah? Thanks. The team is great. Hell, the whole league is great.”

“Are all the teams named after fruit?”

“Yeah! Aside from the two teams today we also got raspberry chocolate scuffle, banana split knuckles, lemon uppercut, and grape jab. So far there are only six teams in the league but we’re hoping to expand to eight by next year. Mme. Hombee is really passionate about roller derby.”

“I can see why. It’s amazing.”

Juleka skates over to them grabbing Marinette’s arm, “we’re all good. See you at home, Luka.”

“Bye Luka. Nice talking to you.”

“Maybe we can talk more after your next match?”

Marinette smiles and nods, “I’d like that.” Juleka rolls her eyes pulling Marinette along.

“*Please* don’t tell me you have the hots for my brother?”

“W-What? We just met! I mean, sure he’s absurdly cute but... we just met.” Marinette squirms, “do those gauges hurt? I’ve always felt weird looking at them. Like there’s a giant hole in your ear. I mean, I have my ears pierced but you can’t see the hole and it’s certainly not seeable through it.”

“Luka’s got all sorts of piercings... if you’re interested.” Juleka waggles her eyebrows. “Too young to get a tattoo though. Maman said she’ll do it herself but—” Juleka sucks in a breath.

“Your maman sounds amazing. You gotta introduce her to the team.”

“You’re gonna wanna retract that statement once you meet her.”

Marinette laughs.

□□

“I can’t believe your papa of all people just went off on my old man!” Alix laughs, doubling forward putting her hands on her knees. “I was sure he was gonna get possessed by an akuma!”

Marinette laughs, about to put the key in the boulangerie pâtisserie (her parents were taking a calming stroll at the park to prevent being possessed), when she sees a woman in an all-too-familiar black and gold romper with the patented cursive A on the back of the left pant leg to the right of the shop.

Alix follows Marinette’s line of sight at the woman just as she turns to them. She takes her sunglasses off (though neither of them are sure why she’s wearing them when it’s past 8 and the sun has been down for about an hour or so). “Finally! I’ve been waiting here for five whole minutes! Is there any particular reason you are closed so early?”

“Roller derby. My parents closed the shop to watch my match. There’s a sign on the door—”

“I’m perfectly capable of reading, Darling. I saw the sign. The sign that neglected to mention when the shop would be open again and who to call in case of an emergency.”

“An ‘emergency’ that you need a boulangerie pâtisserie for?” The woman raises an eyebrow at the glowering pink-haired teen. She turns back to Marinette.

“Where can I find a Marinette Dupain-Cheng?”

“Uh... *I’m* Marinette Dupain-Cheng.”

“Are you?” The blonde looks her over (and Alix grits her teeth because that expression alone just pisses her off). “Well, I’m certain as you know just by looking at me. I’m Audrey Bourgeois: International Queen of Fashion. Ironical as it sounds, I have selected your anti-high fashion look as a finalist in my polkadot high fashion competition.” Marinette’s jaw drops. “Oh Darling, that is most unprofessional. Not to mention utterly unbecoming.” She gently puts a gloved hand under Marinette’s chin closing her mouth. “You’ll report to Le Grand Paris Château tomorrow at noon to replicate your outfit for me. Your angry pink-haired assistant is also welcomed. And just remember: professionals are never late.” The chauffeur gets out of the car *with Audrey Bourgeois’ face on it* and opens the door *for Audrey Bourgeois*. She gets in the towncar, closing the door herself; the chauffeur nods at them both before scurrying to the driver’s seat then driving off.

“This is a good news, bad news situation huh?”

Marinette snaps out of her stupor, “I’ll say.” She shudders, “just the way she speaks alone reminds me of Chloé.”

“She had to get her bitchy attitude from somewhere, right? Might as well be hereditary.”

□□

Sat, Oct 3rd, 2020

“Chloé, you look so professional!” Sabrina squeals. The blonde turns to her adjusting the lapels of her baby blue suit jacket. “Doesn’t she look amazing, Mylène?”

“Hm?” The rainbow-haired teen startles then nods, “y-yes. She looks incredible.” She sighs internally. She’d rather be anywhere but here but as long as her grandparents are working with the Bourgeois’ she’s doomed to be here. Pretending to give a damn about whatever they’re doing.

Sabrina helps wrap Chloé’s hair into a neat bun and the blonde puts on a pair of glasses with the frames that match her suit. “Alright girls, it’s time to win us a contest.”

When her mother told her she was a finalist, Chloé was hardly surprised but she put on a surprised face. As she exits the elevator with Mylène and Sabrina following suit, her heart drops into her stomach when she sees who her mother is talking to.

“Oh, it’s Mari—” At Chloé’s glare, Sabrina begins coughing.

“It’s utterly unacceptable that *she* is here. *Imagine* being a finalist in a competition created by Audrey Bourgeois, standing next to Dupain-Cheng.”

“Chloé, she made our team’s uniforms. She’ll hella talented.” Chloé gives the orange-haired teen a deadpanned stare, “*but you’re much, much better!*”

Huffing, Chloé walks – more like stomps – over to her mother. “Ma—uh... Mme. Bourgeois.” She salutes, “Chloé Bourgeois, reporting here for designing.”

“I like your energy.” She pats Chloé on the shoulder causing the blonde to frown. “Marinette. Charmainé Cloris. The rules are simple. You have three hours to replicate your design outfits in front of me. There is every fabric known to humankind in my travel cart *but* there’s a limited quantity on everything so first come first serve. Remember to represent the polkadots and do Lady Luck proud.”

“Um, what about Karma?”

The blonde pauses then turns to the pink-haired girl, “I’ll hold another contest to represent Karma.” The pink-haired teen scowls. “*Look*, no one was showing up with anything in basketweave patterns so I didn’t make a contest for it! Polkadots aside, Lady Luck’s color scheme is better anyhow. *Green?* It’s so two years ago.” Alix grits her teeth but Nathaniel holds her back. “Now, when the timer hits zero you shop for the materials you need then begin designing.”

Before either of them could open their mouths the timer dings with a big red zero on it. Marinette and Chloé exchange a quick glance before dashing off with their “assistants” behind them.

Audrey sighs, “I love fashion.” She goes to take a seat.

The travel “cart” was more like a mobile walk-in closet. While Chloé was grabbing up everything in her path, Marinette was more meticulous about her materials. Marinette called Kim to be her second assistant but Kim nominated Nathaniel instead, figuring he would be a better fit. Marinette had no problem with the idea, Nathaniel was one of the most creative people she’s ever met. Even if they really have never spoken to each other without Alix or Kim around. Or... maybe they haven’t spoken to each other *ever*.

“Out. *Out.*” Chloé dumps all the stuff in her hands into Sabrina and Mylène’s then grabs more stuff. The blonde looks around. All the fabrics are one color. How the fuck is she supposed to do a polkadotted challenge without polkadots?! Her eyes widen. Wait... she’s not supposed to *make* polkadots herself, is she? Oh, thank goodness this isn’t live.

She sneaks a glance at Dupain-Cheng delegating to Kubdel and... whats-his-face-not-Kim to grab certain fabrics.

As soon as she figures out how to DIY polkadots, she’s gonna crush this competition!

Chloé exits the travel cart then drops her fabrics down on her workstation, “how the hell do you make polkadots?” She whispers.

“I thought polkadots were pre-made?”

“Evidently, they aren’t in this competition, *Sabrina*, or I wouldn’t be asking.”

Mylène happens to take a peek over in Marinette’s direction. The blue-haired teen and her assistants, she recognizes Alix easily but not the redhead, calmly exit the travel cart and Marinette holds up a dark blue fabric to the light. Chloé is so going to lose. And she’s never gonna hear the end of it.

Chloé screams running her hands through her hair ruining her bun. Rolling her eyes, Audrey gets up from her chair then walks over to her daughter’s workstation. “Let me guess: You stole someone else’s design and had one of my tailors make the romper for you?”

“I-I... I didn’t steal anything but ...yes to the last bit.”

“Okay. Fair. If you didn’t steal the design idea Charmainé Cloris Abbyegael Blayre Bourgeois, what material is your dress made of?”

Chloé gulps, “huh?”

“Materials, Dear. Fabrics clothing consists of? Don’t you know the most basic of fashion terminology?”

“Of course I do! I learn from you!”

Audrey irritably taps her foot, “did you? Well, you clearly haven’t learned enough! I should’ve known better than to put my hopes on you. I was so excited. Actually proud of you for once.” Chloé gapes at her, “did you steal that girl’s design?” She jerks a thumb over in the blue-haired teen’s direction.

“I told you I didn’t steal anything.”

“Based on what I see before me, I refuse to believe you came up with that design all by yourself. Serena.”

“U-Uh... it’s Sabrina.”

“Not the point!” The orange-haired teen snaps her mouth shut. “Did you see my daughter come up with this romper design?” Sabrina looks between Chloé and Audrey. “*Well!*?”

The orange-haired teen *meeps*. “No. B-But! I didn’t see her not come up with it!”

“There you have it. I believe in layman’s terms that means you forfeit and Mlle. Dupain-Cheng is automatically the winner.”

“Like hell she is! I can come up with something twice as good as her!”

“I doubt that very much. Jean-Jacob—” The man opens his mouth but Audrey holds up a hand, “I don’t need your life story. Clear Charmainé Cloris’ workstation. She’s done here.”

“You can’t do this to me!”

“The hell I can’t! I will not have you riding on my coattails expecting to get a free handout in the fashion world, Charmainé Cloris! My empire is too important to ruin with your inadequacy!”

“Bet you 200 euros she’s getting possessed again.” Alix whispers to Nathaniel.

“Bet her maman gets possessed instead.” He whispers back. They stare at each other before shaking hands.

“Your *empire* is more important than your own daughter!?”

“You’re both of equal importance but I made this empire on my own and *no one* will destroy what I’ve created! Family or no family.” They both glare at each other with Marinette, Alix, Nathaniel, Sabrina, and Mylène looking on. Alix divides her attention between looking at the staredown that’ll undoubtedly create an akuma possession and the akuma in question approaching.

Chloé screams, “*fine!* I don’t need this. I’m out of here!” Huffing, she storms out the building.

Audrey rolls her eyes, “she’s so damn dramatic.” She sighs heavily. “Mlle. Dupain-Cheng, please continue working. You have two hours and forty-five minutes remaining.” Marinette nods then continues to work on her outfit.

□□

“What do you mean 'no?'”

“Chloé didn’t prove to be an efficient possession and Audrey is no longer angry enough.”

Émilie sighs, “I’m starting to lose so much patience you might as well possess me with an akuma.”

“These things take time, Love.”

“A month of fighting *children*, Gabriel. *Children!* We—Something has to change. I refuse to have my dreams shattered by a brightly-colored insect and mangy, flea-ridden pest!”

“*Our* dreams.” Gabriel amends.

Émilie smiles sweetly at her husband. “Of course, Love.”

Chapter End Notes

*See: Alix Kubdel & The Awful, Disastrous, Out of Control, Magical Birthday (<https://archiveofourown.org/works/26006629>) for the whole story

kitty section

Chapter Summary

Lady Luck, as it turns out, is Karma's biggest fan.

Chapter Notes

A/N: baby rabbits/bunnies are called kits/kittens too

I haven't seen the special but I changed the bit in the last chapter where I originally mentioned Sparrow to mention Kid Mime instead. I doubt anyone would notice, even with a reread.

Mon, Oct 12th, 2020

Luka opens his eyes and finds himself looking into Karma's. Huh. He never knew there were bits of blue in her cat eyes. He might have to tell that to the luckyblog. Karma's mouth, the same vibrant green predominantly in her eyes, is moving but he can't hear anything she's saying. The only thing he hears is the persistent ringing in his ears and the throbbing of his head.

Wait a second...? What the hell happened? Luka tries moving but he finds himself unable. Karma is speaking again but he still can't hear her. Which she must realize the way her eyes keep darting around, examining his face. She puts a hand on Luka's arm, squeezing gently. Reassuringly. Right. An akuma attack is what "happened." He's been pretty good with avoiding them so far but everyone's luck runs out eventually. (Well, except for maybe Lady Luck.)

He didn't see or hear Lady Luck or Karma arrive, not really. The last thing Luka remembers is hearing Lady Luck call out for her lucky charm and seeing Karma's baton hurtling toward him at impressive speed. The akuma, "Heartache," grabbed Luka with his heart-patterned whip right out of bed (which, *rude!*), then tossed him in the air proclaiming he'll make Luka "as bruised as his heart" after the rejection. Even if there wasn't a nine year age difference between them (which was a giant blaring red flag; and honestly, the age gap could've been more given the multiple degrees the man showed off during his houseboat unveiling), the man was giving off an iffy vibe Luka's gut couldn't ignore – and damn was he ever right about the vibe.

He lost sight of Lady Luck as Karma's baton grabbed him in mid-air by the back collar of his shirt abruptly stopping his descent into either the port or the river. He could've gotten whiplash from being jerked around by "Heartache" or the baton "catching" him. He's not sure but it was painful as all hell and he currently couldn't move his head. Juleka is in his peripheral with her hands covering her face as her body shakes. She's crying. Karma is both consoling Juleka and checking him over.

Karma's hand is now brushing his hair out of his face. Her hand is soft, almost like an actual cat's paw. Damn, she's... she's really, really beautiful. One of her twintails is loose so half her long green hair is flowing past her left shoulder. She's practically illuminated by the pier mount lights. The artist in him wants to draw a portrait of her or compose a song.

The sudden blaring of a foghorn would've made him bolt upright in surprise had Karma's hands not moved to his shoulders keeping him down. (He doesn't know why he's surprised she's strong enough to hold him down without applying pressure.) "Luka?" Juleka questions. At least he can hear now.

His sister is fully in his line of sight now. "Jules..." Juleka gives him a watery smile.

"Take it easy." Karma and Juleka help him sit up then Karma runs off to where Lady Luck is. "Lady Luck took care of that asshole. The miraculous cure or miracle cure or whatever it's called should fix you right up."

Out the corner of his eye, over Juleka's shoulder, Luka sees "Heartache" fall out of the sky. Luka would feel sympathetic *but* he brought it on himself (plus, he's the reason Luka is in all this pain). Luka does, however, cringe when Lady Luck drops out of the sky, not two seconds later, on top of "Heartache's" head.

"Where's the akuma?" Lady Luck demands, taking one foot off the akuma's head.

"Heartache" *laughs*, "why should—" He hisses in pain as Lady Luck takes her other foot off him then hauls him up by his golden-brown flowing hair.

"Listen to me, very carefully, 'Heartache.' You either tell me where the akuma is hidden or I will *personally* bruise your heart looking for it."

"Heartache" looks into Lady Luck's piercing, ethereal blue eyes and whimpers, "it's in my necklace!" He sobs.

Luka watches Lady Luck rip the necklace from “Heartache’s” neck and the foghorn in Karma’s hands transforms back into Lady Luck’s yo-yo. “Jules, is it me or is Lady Luck a bit aggro today?”

“It’s five in the morning, Lu.” Juleka responds, “suffice to say, we’re *all* just a tad ‘aggro.’”

Luka watches Lady Luck scoop up the akuma with her yo-yo’s net then subsequently release it after its purified. “You’re purified now, little butterfly.” After “Heartache” reverts back into Jacob LaCroix, Lady Luck grabs him by the collar. Luka can’t hear what she’s saying given their distance but the way Jacob’s eyes widen considerably and the way his entire normally pale face flushes dark red, he can guess the gist of what she’s telling him.

The second she releases him, he runs off screaming.

Lady Luck sighs heavily then tosses the yo-yo in the air. “Miraculous cure!”

Luka holds his breath as the magical ladybugs fly around his body. Last time he got caught in the miraculous cure, it was a strange feeling he wasn’t eager to feel again. Odd. This time he doesn’t feel anything. He peers one eye open after he hears Karma say, “they’re not doing anything.”

Opening both eyes, Luka sees the magical glowing ladybugs flying away from him. Lady Luck is staring at him, arms folded over her chest, with an unreadable expression. ~~Damn, for such a tiny hero she’s hella intimidating. No wonder LaCroix ran off at warp speed.~~

Karma drops down directly in his line of sight startling him. “Nothing happened.” She looks over her shoulder at her partner, “has nothing ever happened before?”

“I think it’s possible—” Lady Luck begins, “his injuries weren’t directly caused by the akuma.”

“But if it wasn’t the aku—*oh no*.” Karma’s eyes widen, “it was me. I-I did it. I injured... a civilian. I’m the world’s worst superhero!” Karma grips him by both shoulders, “I’ll personally carry you to the hospital!” Gasping, she lets go. “U-Unless you don’t trust me not to injure you further, which I completely understand! I can’t believe I hurt you trying to keep you from getting hurt! I’m so so sorry!”

“Karma, it’s okay.” He hears Juleka beside him sniffing and Karma’s ears twitch and her

face becomes even more disheartened. It's actually fucking heartbreaking. Karma should never have such a sad look on her face. "These things happen. It's not your fault."

He tries to reach for her but she jerks back out of his reach. "How could you say that? It *is* my fault! *I'm* the dumbass that chucked a weapon at a civilian!" She gets up and Lady Luck immediately steps on her right boot. "*Sonuva—*" She hisses hopping on one foot, "what was that for?"

"Stop putting yourself down. He doesn't blame you, so stop blaming yourself." Lady Luck pulls Karma down to her eye level by the bell on her collar before Karma can open her mouth, "one mistake isn't the be all end all. You're a damn good superhero and I wouldn't want anyone else as my partner. I won't allow *anyone* to badmouth you. Yourself included. Are we clear?" Wide eyed, Karma wordlessly nods. "Good." Releasing her hold, Lady Luck's antennas begin flashing at the same time Karma's left hand does.

"Shit." Karma and Lady Luck mutter simultaneously.

"What's happening?" Juleka asks.

"Don't worry about it." Lady Luck nudges Karma then whispers something that has the cat frown as she nods. "Let's get you two to the hospital."

"Can Karma carry me?" Juleka asks then flushes slightly when everyone stares at her.

□□

Plagg is forcibly ejected from the ring and Marinette free falls onto her balcony. (At least she made it home.) Odd. Her balcony doesn't feel like anything. Marinette looks down, noticing she's hovering in mid-air right above one of Alix's folding chairs.

Underneath her, Alix is holding her arms in the air above her head. "Alix?" The pink-haired teen slowly lowers her hands and Marinette gently lands on the balcony on her feet. Alix sighs in relief then slumps to the ground. "Alix!" Marinette gets up then rushes over to her best friend. "W-Why—? Matter of fact, *how*?"

"You looked really out of it, and I wasn't about to let you hit the balcony pavement full-speed." Marinette gasps as Alix's nose starts bleeding.

“Oh no! What do I do? What do I do?!”

“Stop panicking!” Fluff and Plagg yell, each putting a paw on the bridge of Alix’s nose, tilting her head downward.

Marinette hovers behind Alix. “Is she okay?”

“She will be.” Fluff replies, “what about you?”

“Me? I’m not the one with the bleeding nose! How did she do that?”

“Fluff’s Kit can use her powers without transforming, remember? Perk of being the Avatar of Time. She stopped time around you to keep you from falling.”

“That’s amazing. Though if it gives her a nosebleed, maybe she should hold off on doing it again?”

“I need practice.” Alix mutters.

“Not at the cost of your health!”

“Oh. So it’s okay that you get to endanger yourself all the time but I don’t?”

“I—” Marinette’s jaw drops, “I’m—I’m not...”

“Like hell you’re not. You look about ready to collapse. Those assholes are coming out of the woodwork more and more. I’m practicing so I can help you out against whatever. Watch your back.”

“Alix...”

“Don’t try to talk me out of it, Marinette.”

“I-I’m not. I appreciate you looking out for me. So you know I’m just looking out for you. Your Miraculous is dangerous. It killed you multiple times. Or at the very least caused you to

die repeatedly. It's giving you nosebleeds. Who knows what else it can do to you? I know you're strong. Hell, you're the strongest person I know. That's why I-I can't lose you, Alix."

"This is really touching..." Plagg cuts in, "but there's some horrid beeping coming from inside the room."

Marinette gasps, "my alarm! Son of a bitch." Alix and Marinette help each other inside the room through the balcony then Marinette takes her alarm off. "I'm sorry, Alix. It's just... I'm super worried because I-I... I injured a civilian during the akuma attack."

"Things happen. What'd you do?"

"I threw my baton at him." Alix blinks at her. "I mean, I didn't hit him with the baton... directly. I sorta javelin threw it and it snatched him up mid-air to prevent him from falling into the port." Alix snickers. "Are you—*You are!* It's not funny!"

"You're right. It's hilarious!" The pink-haired teen cackles, "aww man. That's one for the books."

"This is serious, Alix! The miracle cure didn't heal his injuries. Lady Luck said it might be because I caused his injuries and not the akuma. Well, she didn't really *say* that but that was kind of the conclusion I drew. We had to book it to the hospital before our timers ran out. This damn exhaustion timer is killing me." She yawns. "My transformation broke while I was climbing out of the hospital room. Then Plagg and I transformed again and, as you saw, it didn't last very long before it canceled. *But* at least I made it back semi-safely. Thanks to you."

"You know..." Marinette and Alix turn to Plagg, "you and Lady Luck are both wrong, sort of. About that kid's injuries? It's not your fault. It's neither of your faults. Your Girl wasn't firing on all cylinders and the 'miraculous cure' doesn't have a 100% success rate. It's more like 92% on a regular day and 50% during fatigue or stress."

"What? Why haven't you mentioned this sooner?!"

"Would it have changed anything?"

"I—well, no." Marinette folds her arms over her chest. With a heavy sigh, she collapses face first onto her chaise. "So tired..."

“Don’t go to school today. Fake a fever or something. I can have Fluff shock you?”

“And I promise you won’t get a heart attack because of it!” The rabbit kwami chirps.

“Whoa! *No!* You’re not shocking my Kit!” Plagg hits Fluff on the head, “why didn’t you pulse your *miraculous* instead of pulsing your Kit?”

“I—” Fluff blinks, “I had to do both! Time loops take *a lot* of magic to get through.” Plagg hits Fluff on the head again.

A knock on the trap door has Fluff and Plagg hide behind Alix. Tom opens the trap door, “what are you girls in the mood for?”

“Breakfast... pizza...” Marinette sleep mumbles.

“Ooh! That sounds like a great idea, Sweet Roll!” He closes the trap door.

“Whoa, did she fall asleep?” Plagg floats over to Marinette and checks her over then flies back to Alix nodding. “That was... quick, even for Marinette. Guess I’ll go and shower. Let Marinette get a little bit of sleep. You two keep an eye on her.” Fluff and Plagg salute her.

□□

Kagami tucked herself into a roll before her transformation wore off and she managed to land awkwardly on her right shoulder and wrist. Plus, she got some bruising and cuts from hitting the rooftop. She shakily gets to her feet then climbs down the fire escape to her hotel room.

Her mother was asleep when she slipped out but there was no guarantee she was still sleeping. When Kagami slips back into the room, her mother is still laying in bed sleeping soundly. Either that or she’s one damn good actress.

The door opens and Kagami makes a dive for the bed, further aggravating her shoulder. “I have found the perfect school for Kagami!” Her grandmother proclaims closing the door behind her. “Wake up, Tomoe.” Azami puts the bags down on the table, then shakes her daughter. “Wake up.”

It's only when Tomoe stirs with a groan that Azami stops shaking her, "what is it, okāsan?" She asks in Japanese.

"I have found the perfect school for my granddaughter." She repeats, replying in Japanese now instead of French; she approaches Kagami's bed shaking her leg. "Time to get up, Hōseki." Kagami sits up slowly and yawns. Kagami can't recall the last time her grandmother called her Jewel (in any language), but she knows it was definitely before she lost her hearing. Or maybe she only calls her that when she knows she can't be heard? Speaking of hearing, she pretends to grab the hearing aids, she's already wearing because of the akuma attack, from the nightstand and makes a showing of subtly putting them in her ears. Her grandmother always looks away while she does it anyway.

Grumbling, Tomoe holds onto the wall as she trudges into the bathroom.

"You're going to *love* this school, Kagami." Azami sits on the bed, "*and* it is all-inclusive. Comes with room and board and everything! You no longer have to stay in this subpar hotel."

"That's wonderful news, bāsan."

"I bought clothing for you to change into. Whenever your mother is finished wallowing I want you to make yourself presentable. This is a very prestigious school." Patting Kagami on the head, she walks over to the bathroom door knocking on it. "Hurry up, Tomoe, there is only one bathroom."

"Then take Kagami to your room!"

"I—That's not a bad idea. Kagami, grab the bags and follow me."

With a sigh, Kagami complies. Tikki pats her on the shoulder. Kagami follows her grandmother to the elevator taking them to the penthouse suite because it's only natural Azami Tsurugi would stay in the best hotel suite and leave her daughter and granddaughter in a regular suite.

Azami all but shoves her granddaughter in the bathroom then closes the door behind her. Inside the bathroom, Kagami and Tikki exchange a glance at the peafowl face basin filler. "That... is terrifying." Tikki mutters. Kagami nods as she drags a finger along the bathtub feeling the material. Tikki mimics the motion. "It's cast iron. Haven't seen one of these in over two centuries!"

Kagami pulls one of the feathers to pour hot water into the tub. “We can take a nice relaxing bath in here.”

“Just so long as we don’t drown.”

Once the bathtub is filled, Kagami and Tikki get inside and relax. Tikki chases some of the bubbles and Kagami washes her hair, submerging herself fully into the tub. It’s just about as hot as she can take without boiling herself alive. Her whole body aches, her shoulder especially. It could be one part getting up early and transforming and one part the bruises she got when the transformation canceled due to her exhaustion.

The downside to relaxing in the bathtub was she couldn’t hear anything. But when Tikki dove under the water, Kagami knew her grandmother entered the bathroom. She has to wonder what kind of school her grandmother would give such high praise to?

Kagami slowly lifts her head above the water to see the woman approaching holding a navy sailor dress. Kagami sinks back down so the bubbles can mask her swears.

□□

Sabrina rushes up the stairs and enters the school building. She wanted to get to school a bit later than usual to talk to Alix about this new skating trick she saw on television last night, but couldn’t risk Chloé seeing her and Alix... talking, without being hostile toward each other. Chloé would bitch about it until the end of time, ~~and then some~~. She *still* complains about the time Alix punched her in the face, and that happened two years ago! Fortunately, Sabrina has managed to keep her budding secret friendship with Alix a, well, secret because they only hung out during roller derby practice or matches.

Over the course of the past two years, Sabrina generally avoided Alix due to Chloé’s (somewhat irrational) hatred of the girl. Yes, getting punched in the face by a kid nearly about fifteen centimetres shorter than you would be quite embarrassing (Sabrina’s grateful for being short), but who *hasn’t* Alix Kubdel hit? Sabrina was only saved from the same fate as Chloé because she wasn’t in striking distance (she was approaching the blonde only to see her head hilariously jerk back, in seemingly slow motion, due to the impact).

It was risky approaching Alix in school where there might be witnesses to report back to Chloé, but she really wanted to practice the techniques safely during lunch today so she can have it down for Friday’s match.

The orange-haired teen looks around the halls trying not to look too obvious.

Alix and Marinette always walk in the school together (late) with Kim.

When Sabrina sees Kim jog into the building her eyes light up, then they immediately narrow when she doesn't see Alix or even Marinette around him. (She should've suspected he was alone when he jogged in quietly.) Frowning, Sabrina heads to her locker.

"Hey, Sabrina!"

"Oh. Hey, Aurore."

"Check it out." The blonde hands Sabrina a flier, "art competition. The winner gets to meet Clara Nightingale~"

"What? I love Clara Nightingale... but why would she be meeting the winner of some art competition?"

"Have you been living under a rock the past week? She has this big piece unveiling at the Louvre! The winner of the art competition gets to see the unveiling live. I have to win!"

Sabrina snorts, "yeah. Okay. What 'art' do you do, Aurore?"

"I..." The blonde grimaces, "I gotta partner up with someone artsy." She sighs, "but this school is full of talentless hacks." She sighs again, "I'll see you in class." Grumbling to herself, the blonde shuffles off to her locker.

Sabrina chuckles then squints at the flier on her locker. "No way!" She gasps picking up the flier and holding it at arm's length to make sure she's reading it correctly, "a-a Cycle Slaughter tournament... coming soon? I may not be artsy, but *this*... I definitely can win."

"Sabrina? Thought you'd be in class already." The bespectacled teen turns around and sees Chloé approaching with a drink in each hand. "You're almost never late." The blonde eyes her suspiciously, "are you still having problems with Jan or Jen or whatever your papa's fiancée is named?"

Sabrina sighs heavily, “yeah...”

“Here, brought you a latte. That should cheer you up.”

Chloé gives the orange-haired teen the cup in her left hand. “Ooh! Thanks, Chloé.”

“Anytime. I rack up more points with each purchase. Your favorite is still the dizzy triple chip, right?” Sabrina nods eagerly taking a sip. “I don’t know how you could damage your body ingesting that sugary nonsense. It’s barely even coffee anymore with all the extra stuff they pack in it.”

“I don’t care, it’s *delicious*.” Sabrina moans appreciatively.

Fondly shaking her head, Chloé moves to go to her locker then pauses, “what’s in your hand?” Before Sabrina can reply, Chloé takes the fliers out of her hand. “An art contest and a gaming tournament?” With a hum and shrug, she puts the fliers back in Sabrina’s hands then walks to her locker.

Sabrina subtly checks the door as she gets her stuff she needs from her locker. She scowls at the door when the first bell rings and she doesn’t see Alix. With a defeated sigh, she shuffles into professeur Bustier’s classroom sipping her drink.

Sabrina heads to her seat and miserably plops down. She eyes the door watching her classmates file in, until the second bell and furrows her eyebrows as she doesn’t see any pink or blue hair.

Professeur Bustier claps her hands together, “I hope everyone had a productive weekend.” The class lowly collectively murmur their response. “Before we have our class representative tell us the announcements of the day—” The blonde smiles smugly then looks at the empty seat beside her and instantly drops her smile, “—I’m pleased to report a new student is joining our class.” The class perks up. “Please join me in welcoming Ondine Douglas.”

The door opens and the class gasps. A tall, pink-haired girl with an asymmetrical choppy pixie cut. She’s wearing a plain navy shirt and a pair of jeans. “Hi.” She greets. The class continues to gape.

“Why don’t you tell the class about yourself?”

“Oh! Um... okay. Hi everyone.” She waves. “I’m from Nice but I’ve been all over France. I’m interested in swimming so I hope there’s a swim team.” The entire class turns to Kim who does a double-take.

“Thank you, Mlle. Douglas.” The class turns back to the pink-haired girl. “Please... wait.” The redhead quickly does a headcount, “a few students are missing. Why don’t you take a seat—” Chloé frantically waves her arms, “uh... why don’t you take a seat beside Mlle. Bourgeois today?”

The pink-haired teen nods then walks over to the seat where Chloé is. Both Adrien and Sabrina sigh heavily when Chloé bats her eyelashes at the new girl. Another pretty friend for Chloé to make slash hoard. “Hi!” Chloé gushes.

“Can our class representative be so kind as to give us a moment of her time to tell us today’s announcements?” When professeur Bustier sees Chloé chatting with Ondine she clears her throat, “Mlle. Bourgeois? Mlle. Bourgeois, today’s announcements?”

“Hm? *Oh*. Right. Sure.” The blonde stands, “so... uh, I think I saw a flier or something for a gaming tournament?” Kim takes a loud deep breath bracing his hands against his desk. His deskmate is also absent. Chloé turns to him, “what the hell is your problem?”

“What? Game...?” He whispers.

“What...? Oh. *That*.” The blonde rolls her eyes. “Something slaughter?”

“‘Slaughter?’” Adrien questions, perking up. “Like *Cycle* Slaughter?”

“I don’t know, Adrikins, I wasn’t paying attention.” The blonde rolls her eyes again, “that’s not the only news and it’s hardly as important as our upcoming Halloween dance?” The class begins murmuring. “It’s two weeks away and *some people* haven’t paid class dues yet.” She glares at each student as she looks around the classroom. “It’s only 30 € and we’re already two months into the school year!” The blonde pauses briefly. “Almost two months!” She amends. “Also, we’re gonna have a school paper or something?” Alya loudly inhales. Chloé turns to the orange-haired teen fanning herself off with both hands. “Uh... sign up at the art room if you’re interested?” Alya nods enthusiastically. “Oh right. There was also an art contest, which I guess is also in the art room? Is that all?”

“Uh, yes. Thank you, Mlle. Bourgeois.” Chloé curtsies then takes a seat. “Now does anyone know where Mlle. Dupain-Cheng, Mlle. Kubdel, Mlle. Haprèle, and Mlle. Couffaine are?”

The class look among one another and everyone shakes their heads. “I see. I’ll contact their families at lunch. Let’s begin with today’s lesson.”

□□

When class ends, the students start filing out of the classroom. “Oh yeah! My papa’s the mayor. He can do *anything*.” Chloé tells Ondine as they exit the classroom together.

Kim leaves the classroom, then backtracks and walks backwards back into the class. There’s a piece of paper on the wall by the door. “It *is* a Cycle Slaughter tournament!” He exhales deeply pumping his fist in the air, “and there’s a cash prize?” He rubs his hands together, “I could use a new pair of swim goggles.” He happily signs his name on the sign-in sheet.

Adrien happily signs his name on the sheet. “I’ve never played Cycle Slaughter with friends before!”

Sabrina and Kim watch the blond happily walk out the classroom then glare at each other. “Can’t believe *you’re* signing up, Kim. I’ll stomp you into paste, like I always do.” Sabrina says signing her name on the sheet.

“I flipped my strategy, Sabrina, you’re going down.”

The orange-haired teen laughs haughtily, “yeah, we’ll see. Just remember which of us is ranked higher in the country.” She flips her hair then walks out the classroom.

Sabrina walks in professeur Blumstein’s classroom. She glances at Chloé gushing to Ondine and sits in the empty seat behind Chloé. The assistant professeur, M. Haprèle (Mylène’s papa – weird because Mylène isn’t here), is setting up the desk.

“U-Um... M. Haprèle, is Mylène alright?” Ivan asks, nervously rubbing his hands together.

The man looks up from the desk, “oh yes, she’s...” His eyes quickly dart around the classroom, “she’s alright. Just a little sick. She told me not to worry and I’m sure she’ll be feeling better in no time.” Ivan nods slowly then heads to his desk with a sigh.

“Professeur Bustier said I can bring the Cycle Slaughter tournament sign-in sheet to the next class so people can sign up!” Lila says entering the classroom. She gives the sign-in sheet to Alya who is sitting in the first desk on the left.

“Uh... thanks but no thanks. I don’t know what this is.” She passes it to Rose on her right who signs her name.

The paper goes through the whole classroom then Kim, who is seated in the last desk on the right, gets up and gives the paper back to Lila. “Thanks. I’ll give this back to professeur Bustier once class is over.”

“What is the deal with this game anyway?” Chloé asks. “Why are you all going nuts over it?”

“It’s only the most fun ever.” Kim drawls.

“I doubt that very much. Very few things in life are more fun than shopping.”

“Chloé, it’s a game of strategy.” She turns to Adrien, on her left, with an eyebrow raised. “You get to create your own cyclatar then—”

“Basically beat the shit out of everyone however you want.” Kim interrupts, “your cyclatar, depending on what mode your play, amasses friends who help with the beating.”

“Uh-huh... what else?”

“There are twelve game modes. You’d think that would be way too much but it isn’t! And the game is always adding new things. It’s amazing. It also allows crossplay so you can play it on multiple game systems and your phone and all your progress is there.”

“I’m the sixth top player in the country.”

Chloé snorts, “bullshit, Lê Chiên, I’ll believe that when I see it.”

“Then feast your eyes on my crossplay data~” Kim merrily makes his way over to Chloé’s desk and shows her his phone.

“‘KLC’ can be anyone—”

“The ava... uh ‘cyclatar’ looks just like him.” Ondine pipes in, “and the phone is showing

that's him."

"So, the tournament's in the bag for me." Sabrina scoffs and the class turns to her, "something you wanna say?"

The orange-haired teen exhales deeply without saying anything. Chloé narrows her eyes at Sabrina, "you play this game?"

"Yeah. I not only *play*, I'm the *fifth* ranked player in the country." She sticks her tongue out at Kim who returns the gesture.

Chloé grabs Sabrina's hands, "teach me to play." She whispers.

"Uh... sure?"

"I need the sign-up sheet!" She lets go of Sabrina's hands then marches over to Lila's desk and signs her name on the sheet of paper.

Kim eyes Chloé as she returns to her seat. "Since when do you play video games?"

"Since my best friend is better ranked than *you* worldwide. I don't care about playing myself, I just wanna understand what's going on so I can personally see the look on your face when you get annihilated."

"Not gonna happen. I've been working on counter strategies. Sabrina always picks a swordsman talent and even though she's scary good at it, she's not unbeatable."

"You've ranked fifth in the country on one talent alone? That's impressive." Sabrina and Kim turn to Max, behind Alya, adjusting his glasses.

Sabrina stares at Max, "I saw your name on the sheet. What talent do you play?"

"It varies. I have no 'main' talent but I specialize in a few in case a specific talent is needed."

Kim nods with a hum, "smart strategy. I specialize in close range—"

“Which is why you always get defeated.”

“Back in Naples, I was ranked in the top twenty in the country. Since I moved and switched servers I doubt my name is still there.” Lila sighs putting a hand against her cheek.

Markov beeps beside Max. Markov was registered as Max’s undisclosed classroom aide so he was allowed to remain active during class, “projecting top twenty ranked players in France.” Markov floats over to the professeur’s desk and projects an image on the blackboard with twenty three-letter names, their profilename, their cyclatars, and their chosen talent.

“*Oh!* I’m top twenty here!” Lila shouts. Everyone looks at the screen then at the brunette, “‘LVR’ is my initials. My middle name is Victorya with a y.”

“The cyclatar does have the same ridiculous hairstyle...” Chloé mutters, “it has to be her.” Lila lets out an offended gasp.

“Let’s see...” Alya gets up and walked over to the blackboard. “So we know Kim is six and Sabrina is five and Lila is twenty. Let’s see if anyone else in the class is on the list. It’s cool you all are ranked so high among the entire country.”

“We’ve been playing online together for about a year.” Sabrina says, “we met up on accident —”

“At random.” Kim interrupts. “We ended up grouped together.”

“—Whatever. And we’ve been teaming up on and off or fighting against each other ever since.”

“Sabrina, why didn’t you tell me you played Cycle Slaughter?” Adrien asks.

Sabrina shrugs, “you never asked.”

“Hey... the number three avatar looks a bit familiar.” Kim squints at the screen, “and I definitely know that profilename. Hey little robot dude, can you enhance the picture?”

“Certainly. Enhancing.” The image magnifies and the whole class is out of their seats staring

at the third avatar with the initials “MMK.”

The class stares at the avatar, then look among their classmates for about a minute.

Alya gasps, “I know who that looks like! It’s *Max*!” The class turns to the bespectacled teen who looks up from his desk. “*You’re* MMK: Max & Markov Kanté.”

“Markov & Max Kanté.” Markov corrects.

“I can sign up on my phone, right? I need to have the most utterly exceptional cyclatar available.” Chloé turns around in her seat, giving Sabrina her phone.

“*Dude...*” Sabrina says, “I-I’ve played against you.”

“You’re ruthless.” Kim finishes. He runs over to Max’s desk and crouches beside it. “Wanna partner up for the two-stack?”

“*No!*” Sabrina gets up then stands on the other side of Max’s desk, “you should partner up with *me*. I’m better than Kim!”

“*I’m* more adaptable than Sabrina. You don’t want to go into every fight with a sword, no matter how cool the weapon is!”

The orange-haired teen huffs. Lila approaches the desk from the front, “I know I’m not in the top ten but I could use a two-stack partner I know will hold their own.”

“Adrikins, where are you ranked?”

Adrien frowns taking out his phone, “as of this moment, 11,149th.”

Chloé pats him on the shoulder. “That’s respectable.”

“I-I’m flattered you all want to partner with me but I must inform you that I already have a partner for the two-stack.” Lila, Sabrina, and Kim all audibly gasp.

The professeur walks in the classroom. “Good—What’s going on?” Sabrina, Kim, and Lila

all stare at the professeur before sulkily heading to their seats. “Uh... okay then? Before we begin with today’s lesson, Principal Damocles has implemented akuma drills to the list of safety drills.” The professeur turns the pamphlet in their hands that says “Akuma Safety” on it. “The guidelines will be posted on the school’s website and you’ll get a copy in your parent’s email. Let me just read off a bit of it. In the event of an akuma attack outside the school during school hours, students are to remain in their classrooms. If they are in the hallway, they are to enter the classroom closest to them. If they are in the restroom, they are to remain in there until the principal gives the okay; informing us the attack is over. In the event of an akuma attack inside the school during school hours, students are to remain in their classrooms unless the akuma is from their class... in which they are to exit in an orderly, calm fashion. If the akuma attack is in the hall, students are to find the closest classroom and enter it. If the akuma attack has destroyed a part of the school you are close to, students are to exit that area and find the safest classroom in the area.” The professeur puts the pamphlet down. “Are there any questions?” Several hands go in the air.

□□

Alya checks the school’s website on her phone, going over the akuma safety drills. Honestly, she’s surprised Damocles came up with this. Her parents were among the many that complained to the principal about how nothing is done to protect the students during akuma attacks. She expected him to ignore it like he ignored the fire doors that aren’t up to code. Or that one exit door that doesn’t lead anywhere. *Or* the fact that all the quatrième classes have a free period because there is no foreign language professeur for them.

Info about the upcoming art contest is also on the school’s website. Before Alya can take a look at it she hears Professeur Mendelevitch yelling, “—sn’t the cafeteria!” Alya pokes her head in the doorway to see the professeur take the stammering student’s takeaway container. “You’ll get this back when class ends.”

The student stands at their desk. “But class hasn’t even begun yet!”

“That’s no excuse. The school has designated eating areas for a reason! You can bring in ants having food in the science lab then cause an infestation.” As professeur Mendelevitch walks back to her desk, the student angrily grips the edge of their desk.

Alya doesn’t see the akuma enter the classroom but she hears a student gasp screaming and pointing at their classmate, “*a-akuma!*”

Professeur Mendelevitch turns around and the student gets enveloped in the signature—*wait!* The bubbling ooze is *blue*. Not purplish-black. That’s not an akuma, it’s an amok – just like Sabrina’s carryaway container last month. “**Out!**” The professeur screams, “everyone out of the classroom!”

The students in the class don't think twice as they haul ass out of the classroom, tripping over one another. Alya sees the woman hit a button under her desk before the amok – a giant gelatin blob with random food stuck to and in their body – predictably eats her then busts through the wall slithering out of the classroom.

Alya takes a couple steps back and angles her phone so she can watch the blob make its way down the hall without getting in its way.

The loudspeakers crackle to life, “*attention students, this is principal Damocles, an akuma is loose in the school! All students and staff are to hide in their classrooms until further notice, and please avoid Professeur Mendeleiev's classroom as the akuma originated from there.*” The loudspeakers cut off.

Alya watches some students too close or too slow to get out of the way get run over by the blob or have it pass through them but they don't get ingested. They just have remnants of blob goo on their persons. Professeur Mendeleiev is banging on the blob's body holding her breath.

Before Alya could follow after the blob, Ivan comes out of nowhere, picks her up and carries her over his shoulder. “*Hey! The blob is that way!*”

“Which is precisely why we're heading *in the opposite direction!* The akuma safety drills, remember?”

“*What!?* Who's gonna record Lady Luck and Karma if I'm not out there?!”

“Markov volunteered when he told me to come find you.” Alya groans, running a hand down her face.

□□

“Tsurugi-san.” Kagami's eyebrows furrow as the person begins in Japanese. “Welcome. Oh. Apologies. We have two Tsurugi-sans. My mistake. Welcome. I'm headmaster Alexander. I'd like to personally welcome you all to *Visions*: Paris' premiere special needs school.”

“Paris’—” Tomoe gasps, “are you serious right now?” She hisses at her mother. “I should've known you were up to something like this! You actually *actively* taking an interest in Kagami's well-being? What a joke!”

“How dare you speak to me that way! I am your mother!”

“Unfortunately. This is just like when you throw me into that ‘blindness rehabilitation center’ when I was pregnant, claiming to be the best place for my ‘trauma!’ As if blindness can be cured liked like you’d treat your hangovers!”

“*Anything* can be cured with the right medicine, Tomoe, but you wouldn’t know that. Seeing as how you’d never give anything a chance being so stubborn and refusing treatment!”

“It doesn’t work that way!”

“How would you know that if you haven’t tried!?”

“Tsurugi-san—” The headmaster pauses, “Tsurugi *Tomoe*-san, we treat all our students here at—”

“Don’t you throw your sales-pitch at me! I know *exactly* how you treat your students! I’ve been in these types of schools before thanks to that woman no doubt smugly standing before you! On the surface, you look like you’re doing the Lord’s work. Your ‘inspirational’ stories about how you sacrifice your ‘normal’ lives for those who aren’t so fortunate to be in your shoes. So you bask in the praises of other ‘normal’ people who could never do what you do. In reality, you force your ways and ideals onto those who cannot fight back! Not even bothering to ask the children their wants or needs. I will not allow my daughter to solely be viewed as her disability or, worse, a burden! She is much more than that...” Tomoe frowns, “and I’ve failed to remember that. I’ve failed *her*.” Shocked, Kagami blinks turning to her mother. “I told myself I would never turn into my mother and I have.”

“You should be grateful to turn into me!”

“Like hell I should! You *still* blame me for otousan’s death!” Azami gasps. Tomoe stands, “Kagami, we’re leaving.” Kagami stands and grabs her mother’s arm. Tomoe pats Kagami’s hand then they leave the office.

“Tomoe! *Tomoe*!” Azami shouts, muffled by the door closing.

“I truly am sorry, Kagami.” Her mother switches back to French. “You are the most important person in my life and it’s been a while that I’ve voiced that, let alone shown it.”

“You’re fine, kāsān.”

“You’re far too forgiving. Which I know you did not get from me. You see the relationship I have with... that woman. I never wanted to be the heartless witch that imposed her way onto her child. I never should have let her back into my life. That’s when everything started going downhill.” Tomoe sighs heavily, “tell you what. Forget about my mother. *You* select the school you wish to enroll in, and I will support you. I have a lot of support ground to make up.”

“Thank you, kāsān.” Tikki taps Kagami on the shoulder. With all the free time she’s had, they’ve learned morse code and dozens of other nonverbal communications. Tikki taps out “a-k-u-m-a” and Kagami internally sighs. It figures when she and her mother are having a breakthrough – the first in over seven years, which, wouldn’t you know it, is when Azami reappeared – there’s be a fucking akuma to kill the moment. “I wish to enroll in François Düpont.”

“That was quick and *seriously*? The entire vibe of that—” Tomoe abruptly stops talking and Kagami looks up at her. “I’m doing it again. I apologize. It is your decision, not mine to question. Although I do really want to question. Nevertheless, if that is what you want that is where you will be enrolled. But—purely out of curiosity: *why*?”

“I—” Think Kagami, quick. She can’t exactly tell her mother a time traveler told her to enroll in that disaster of a school to always be on guard for akuma attacks, *and* to be closer to Karma. (Though the eyebrow waggle Bunnyx did when she mentioned being close to Karma made Kagami suspicious.) “I have become enamored with the superheroes.”

“Oh?” Tomoe smirks, “I suppose you are to age to begin getting ...enamored with such things. I have heard of this superhero ‘duo’ but have not heard much. You’ll have to describe them to me.” Kagami yawns, “perhaps after we both get some sleep.”

They took Azami’s automated car back to the hotel. “Mme. Tsurugi—” The receptionist calls out. Tomoe sighs before they walk over to the counter. “Welcome back. A Mme. Brüel left a message for you.”

“Brüel, you said? The real estate agent? She must’ve found a house for us.”

“Sounds like this day is getting better for us.”

“Only if that is her message. I may be down here a while. You should get some rest.”

“Are you certain, kāsān? I have no problem waiting with you.”

“I know. You’re a great kid. Go do something mindless for a bit.”

“We... do have an arcade.” The receptionist says.

“Perhaps I’ll rest a bit then check out the arcade.”

□□

“You look terrible!” Karma and Lady Luck exclaim pointing at each other as they land on François Düpont’s roof.

“I—” Lady Luck yawns, “There *is* a saying that claims no rest for the wicked. I take it neither of us has gotten any rest since this morning’s akuma attack?”

“Oh Double L, are you coherent? It’s still morning.”

“Is it!? My yo-yo doesn’t have a clock feature.”

“Let’s hope we can take this damn akuma down before our kwamis are involuntarily ejected from our miraculouses.”

“That can happen?”

“Yup. Had the unfortunate pleasure of figuring that out, first-hand, after the last attack.” Lady Luck takes out her yo-yo and pulls up the Luckyblog. “So... the yo-yo isn’t a clock but has wi-fi?” Lady Luck shrugs then scrolls down to “livestream.” They both squint at the screen watching a translucent gelatin blob climb onto the François Düpont building... *that they’re standing on*. They both gasp then turn to the blob as it climbs onto the roof.

“Give me your miraculouses!” The blob yells.

“Seriously?” The heroes deadpan.

The blob roars. “Let’s get this over with. Lucky charm!” Lady Luck throws her yo-yo in the air and the transformed item falls on her head then into her waiting arms. “I... don’t follow.” She holds the black, flat, circular object sideways up to the sunlight. “What is this?”

“Maybe it’s my sleep deprivation, but I think it’s a portal...?”

Lady Luck looks at Karma, “a portal? Why the hell—” Her eyes widen, “the Avatar of Space! But how do we—” Mid-sentence a portal appears underneath Lady Luck’s feet and she falls in. Karma gasps, trying to grab her partner but fails as the portal shrinks.

“You know, tell him he’s gotta stop doing that!” Karma yells into the portal before it completely dissolves.

□□

“I do apologize for the rather... abrupt entry, but Mme. Mite and M. Méfait do not know of our existence and we would prefer to keep it that way.” Bovine greets.

Having fallen on her ass out of the portal, Lady Luck gets to her feet and dusts herself off. “How could they know of your existence with you two hiding in the comfort of your own dimension?”

“That is not what we are doing—”

Cosmic Colt, appearing out of nowhere, puts a hand on Bovine’s shoulder. The ox squares her shoulders and Cosmic Colt approaches Lady Luck setting down the miracle Bob in front of her, “I have brought you here because you and Karma are unable to defeat the amok before you by yourselves.”

Lady Luck folds her arms over her chest. “How do you know that? You haven’t exactly given us a chance.”

“I based this decision on the amok and your powers. Now, you must pick an ally you can trust to temporarily wield the power of a miraculous.”

“I don’t trust anyone.”

Bovine purses her lips and Cosmic Colt hums, “I see. It’ll be a bit difficult working with someone you don’t trust, but you still need to select someone to wield a miraculous to assist you.”

“Wouldn’t that be *your* job? I mean, you have a box of miraculouses right? Why aren’t you out there finding someone to assist us?”

“Lady Luck—” Bovine warns.

“What? Don’t like me asking the obvious? What have you two even done beside hide in the shadows from Mite and Méfait hoping not to be detected? Oh, that’s right. Lecture Karma and I about how we’re not good enough. Yet you do nothing to assist and teach us what we’re doing wrong!” Lady Luck brackets her antennas as they begin beeping.

“That’s enough!” Bovine shouts.

“No, I’ve had enough! If I’m doing such a terrible job, take the damn miraculous back!” Lady Luck rips the earrings off her antennas immediately breaking her transformation. When Tikki shoots out of the right earring shaking her whole body, the blue-haired teen tosses the earrings at Bovine who catches them with ease. “Feel free to pass them off to the next not-good-enough thirteen-year-old you see.”

“No, the earrings are yours.” Cosmic Colt says. “*You* are the ladybug miraculous wielder and avatar of creation.”

Before Bovine could interrupt, Tikki takes the earrings from her hand. “What the hell is wrong with you two? Do you not know how tired my Intended is?”

“We didn’t expect Mme. Mite and M. Méfait to set out an akuma then an amok both on the same day—”

“I’m not fucking talking about the damn butterfly or peafowl Miraculous!” Bovine and Cosmic Colt both flinch. “I am talking about you two! And the exhaustion timer you placed on my and Plagg’s miraculouses!”

“Wait. *They* are the reason for the beeping?”

Tikki nods, “the exhaustion timer, as its name suggests, is a five-minute timer that cancels the transformation instantly during high detected levels of exhaustion, fatigue, or hunger... for either of us; or in certain scenarios the timer kicks off after the use of one’s power, in your case, calling your lucky charm.”

“Lady Luck and Karma are very young. The timer prevents them from burning out or killing themselves due to overusage.”

“It beats the olden days.” Cosmic Colt adds, “you could only stay transformed for half an hour a day before you needed recharging.”

“This isn’t the olden days! This is *now*! Do you have any idea how dangerous not to mention contradictory it is giving them these timers? You can’t throw them headfirst into the fray then devise a shoddy way of ‘keeping them safe!’ How long do you think it’ll take Mite and Méfait to stumble upon the realization they can attack and attack and attack with no resistance?”

“Magic occasionally causes physical and mental strain on the body. It could do serious, not to mention permanent damage if left unchecked. The timer stays.”

“Are you lecturing *me* on the safety of magic!? Of all the smug—” The kwami’s eyes glow white as she drops her earrings into the miracle box. “You have some raw nerve!” The miracle box on the floor begins glowing the same white of Tikki’s eyes. “I have **never** allowed my Intended to go through more than they could bear—” Her voice echoes, “—and I have no intention of changing that! If you won’t remove the timer, I’ll remove *you* from the equation.” In a brilliant red flash, The miracle box changes shape, transforming into a daruma doll that immediately flies into Kagami’s hands.

“What’s going on?”

“I’m giving you the box to watch over. That is... if you wish to continue being my chosen and wielding the ladybug miraculous. And for the record, you’re a damn good ladybug.”

Kagami holds the daruma doll closer to her body, “thank you. I-yes. I will continue wielding your miraculous, Tikki. As long as you’ll allow me.”

“What do you hope to accomplish changing ownership of the miracle box to Lady Luck?” Cosmic Colt asks. “She hardly has an understanding of her miraculous, let alone any others. You are making a mistake, Tikki.”

Tikki's eyes stop glowing. "Hardly. The only mistake I'm making is allowing you two to keep your miraculouses. Had you even thought to consider what would happen if the timer locks my Intended or Karma out of their transformation during the middle of a battle? What then?" Cosmic Colt and Bovine share an uneasy glance. "This is my only warning to you: the next time you do *anything* to jeopardize or even inconvenience my Chosen or Plagg's, you will understand first-hand why you were warned never to cross the kwami of creation."

Tikki flies over to Kagami affectionately nudging her left cheek as she apologizes. In Kagami's hands, the daruma doll opens and she looks inside. Tikki plucks the earrings from their spot and puts them back in Kagami's ears. The set-up is completely different, each Miraculous is hanging in rows, and the hooks they are suspended on are the colors of the squares of the old box. Also, the miraculouses have all changed color. "How will we deactivate the timer on Karma's miraculous?"

"The only way to do that is to have Plagg place his miraculous in the miracle box."

Kagami nods, "I'll let Karma know. Was Cosmic Colt right about Karma and my powers not being enough for this amok?"

"Yes and no. Under normal circumstances you two could, but I wouldn't risk prolonging any fights in your current state. A temporary newcomer might help."

Kagami nods then picks up the bronze panjas bracelet on the maroon hook, "the power of earth could help subdue the... gelatinous monster?"

Tikki shrugs, "it's worth a shot." Eyes narrowing, she turns to Cosmic Colt and Bovine, "you will release us from your dimension if you still intend on keeping your miraculouses."

Frowning, Cosmic Colt waves a hand and a portal appears. "Regardless of what you think, we only have their best interests at heart."

"Spare me." Tikki snaps. "Place your miracle box on the floor so it doesn't get swept up in the transformation. Once you transform, place it in your yo-yo."

Kagami nods, "understood. Spots on, Tikki." After the transformation is complete, Lady Luck picks up the daruma doll then unlatches her yo-yo. In a flash of pink the daruma doll disappears.

“I meant what I said, Lady Luck. Our methods are ...unorthodox in your kwami’s eyes but we are trying our damndest to keep you and Karma safe.”

Lady Luck spares Cosmic Colt a glance before walking into the portal.

□□

Lady Luck lands on her feet as the portal dematerializes behind her, near the school but not in front of it or on its roof. “Lady Luck!” She turns to a ~~tiny~~ pink-haired teen looking around as she approaches, “where did you just... appear from and where’s Karma?”

Lady Luck looks around, the streets are empty except for the two of them. “I left Karma on the François Düpont roof but with that creature attempting to swallow the building I don’t know where she is.” She pulls the panjas bracelet out of her yo-yo holding it toward the pink-haired teen. “As you are the only individual I see before me I require your assistance. This is the miraculous of the tiger, it grants control over the element of earth. Can I count on you to use this miraculous to help me and Karma defeat this gelatin monster?”

“Y-You...? You want *me to*—? Oh hell yes! Hell fucking yes! I’m all over it!” With a smile, Lady Luck gives the girl the bracelet.

“One more thing. Once the akuma is defeated, you must return the miraculous to me.”

“That sucks... but I get it. I do. Mite and Méfait are gonna want it too.” The pink-haired teen nods. “Alright. I swear I’ll give it back to you.” She adjusts the black hat on her head. As she puts the bracelet on her left wrist and fingers, a maroon striped tiger swirls into existence. They blink then shake their entire body.

“Okay—” They yawn loudly cutting themselves off, “*whew*. Sorry. First time out of the box in a while always leaves us sleepy and a bit sore.” The kwami clears their throat, “I—” They do a double-take at the teen in front of them then turn to Lady Luck before turning back to the teen. “*Oh*. I... hello there. I am Roaar, kwami of earth manipulation.” They incline their head and the teen does the same. “If we are to be working together, you need to say ‘Roaar, rock on’ to transform and ‘Roaar, roll out’ to end the transformation.”

“Right. Roaar, rock on!” The tiger flies into the bottom part of the bracelet.

□□

Lady Luck dropped in the portal approximately five minutes ago. Karma spent that time dodging the blob's attacks. Thankfully it was slow. She had to figure out just how to free professeur Mendeleiev from the blob. Her baton got stuck in the goo twice. The woman didn't appear to be suffocating, just... massively uncomfortable in her gelatin prison.

She was standing on a building close enough to François Dupont so she could keep track of the akuma. It kept going to the school then circling the block. Thankfully, it hadn't found Garden Terrace.

Lady Luck gracefully lands on Karma's left and the feline hero feels another presence land on her right. Karma eyes the other cat – a maroon, striped one – inclining their head toward her. Unlike herself and Lady Luck, the tiger's mask is more like a half helmet or cowl covering the entire top half of their face with a pair of giant cat (or tiger) ears on their head. "A purr-easure." They greet. "Huge fan. You can call me Scourge." Karma tilts her head to the right and "Scourge" gestures to the thorned whip rolled up over their left shoulder.

"Ah." Karma nods slowly, "a pun. I'm not awake enough for this."

"Clever." Lady Luck muses, "though most may not get it."

"Uh... where did they come from anyhow? The avatar of space?"

Lady Luck scowls, "yes and no." Karma tilts her head to the right, "it's complicated. I will fill you in once the akuma is defeated and we're rested."

"Got it."

"Wait. 'Got it?' That's it? Just like that?"

"Yeah. Why not? I totally trust you." Lady Luck pauses then her left eye twitches as she nods slowly. "So what's the game plan anyhow, Double L? Because I got nothing."

"My plan is to solidify the akuma." Karma and Scourge stare at her. "What?"

"That's not a plan, Lady Luck. That's more of a goal." Scourge says.

“Uh... alright then. Allow me to rephrase. Our objective is to solidify the akuma.” Scourge looks at Karma who shrugs. “Wait. Why did I say akuma? It’s an amok.”

“An a—*oh*.” Karma rolls her eyes, “like that damn transforming blue thing we fought at Le Grand Paris?” Lady Luck nods, “...but the blob’s not blue?”

“Perhaps, like akumas, amoks can change color as well?” Karma sighs heavily. “Scourge, you’re the only one who can solidify the akuma. You control earth... dirt, grass—things like that. I’ll get you close enough to the amok to do your thing. Karma, you stay on the ground.”

Karma nods, “understood.”

Lady Luck unlatches her yo-yo then begins spinning it, “hold on.” Nodding, Scourge grabs onto Lady Luck’s waist then they swing off.

“Don’t worry about me. I’ll catch up. Just gotta hoof it.” Karma unlatches her baton using it to get off the roof.

“What are you even doing?” The blob turns to Lady Luck and Scourge as they land on the roof. “You’re just... slithering here. Oh. *Whoa*. Uh, Lady Luck...? This thing’s got no face.”

“Right. Amoks are personifications of dispositions through inanimate objects. It wouldn’t need to imitate a person’s likeness.”

“Yeah... I—” Scourge rubs the back of her neck, ears twitching with the motion, “uh... I only understood the last bit of all that. Could you maybe use shorter words?”

“O-Oh. Sorry. I’ll try. You know how akumas fly into a thing on someones’ person afflicting... the person?” Scourge nods, “amoks are indirect. They land in something someone is holding, similar to an akuma, however amoks possess the object rather than the person holding the object. Still with me?” Scourge nods again, “usually, akumas do not increase in size. At least none that we’ve faced. Ergo, this... creature is an amok.”

“Which means we got someone nearby pulling the strings, right?”

“Right.”

The peafowl mask outline appears over where your face typically is, but just the top part of the blob, “w-what are you?!”

“You’re worst nightmare!” The panjas bracelet’s activated form is a pink gauntlet that had no match. Lady Luck just realized neither Cosmic Colt nor Bovine told them how to use the other miraculous’ abilities; they merely told them what said abilities were. Now that she has the miracle box she can find out for herself. The color scheme of the gauntlet matches the pink stripes on Scourge’s body.

The tiger miraculous user jumps at the amok before Lady Luck can stop her. Unsurprisingly, she gets stuck on the amok on contact. Lady Luck facepalms.

“Don’t worry Double L, I got this! All part of the plan. *Let there be rock!*” Scourge’s whip straightens. The thorns harden turning into miniature rocks, “*now whip it good.*” She stabs her whip into the akuma. There’s a loud gurgling noise before the amok cries out in pain and some gelatin begins leaking out of it.

“Eww.” Karma says after pole vaulting onto the roof. “I—*what the?*”

Lady Luck turns to the tiny robot hovering around them, “what the hell is that?”

“Greetings, Lady Luck.” The robot inclines its head, “greetings, Karma. I am Markov. I’m recording you live for the Luckyblog in Alya Césaire’s absence.”

“What’s wrong with her?”

“Nothing.” Markov’s screen—uh face—cuts out briefly and Alya has her arms folded over her chest glowering at the camera.

Upon seeing Lady Luck and Karma her face brightens significantly. “*Hi!*” She says waving. “*I was trying to record when someone sent their goon after me.*”

“I will not apologize for thinking of your safety.” Alya rolls her eyes.

“*I’m always safe.*”

“You were grabbed by Proteus,” Alya groans. “You got swept up in Monsieur Pigeon’s attack. You were present during Mirror Image’s attack. Then there was the very first amok attack in which you were targeted—”

“None of those were my fault! Geez, I swear you’re as bad as my sister.”

“Based on the akuma’s abilities, I figured it impossible for you to *safely* get good footage without being inside the akuma.”

“I would’ve found a way.” Alya grumbles.

“Look. Maybe you two can hash out the details later? We have an amok to—” There’s a loud drilling noise before the amok explodes.

“Holy shit!” Karma exclaims jumping off the roof.

Lady Luck almost immediately jumps after Karma and Markov follows.

Pieces of the amok are all over the school and city block. “That was awesome, right?” Scourge says doing a little dance.

Lady Luck looks around. The amok is obviously going to reconfigure around what possessed them. “Did you notice anything out of the ordinary?”

“Aside from that?” Scourge jerks a thumb backward. The purple-haired professeur gets to her feet and puts a hand on her head.

“Madame Professeur, is there anything you saw that could clue us in to what caused the amok in the first place?” Karma asks.

“I told a student of mine not to eat in class.” The professeur groans out. “The akuma must’ve merged with the cutlery.”

“Get to safety.” Scourge giggles, “I’ve always wanted to say that. But seriously, go somewhere the blob can’t fit. Oh, and it’s an amok, not an akuma.” Nodding, the professeur hobbles along.

The robot beeps beside Karma. “This is an amok. Collecting data. Air quality has decreased by 17.2%.”

“Wait, *what?*”

“The air quality decreases during akuma and amok attacks.”

Karma hums, “good to know.”

“*Lucky charm!*” Lady Luck tosses her yo-yo in the air and after the signature transformation flash, a pair of chopsticks drop into her hands, “well...” Tikki told her the Lucky Charm was incredibly unpredictable. Even she didn’t know how to fully control it. She claimed it was prophetic which was why it always seemed to give her stuff that made no sense at first (or second) glance.

“Analyzing. A pair of polkadotted chopsticks.”

The only thing her “miracle vision” is lighting up is Karma. Or, to be more accurate, Karma’s gloved hands. Lady Luck stares at the chopsticks. “Chopsticks? That’s a weird one.” Lady Luck wordlessly offers the chopsticks to her partner, “wait, you’re giving these to *me?*”

“It’s what my ‘miracle vision’ is telling me to do.”

Karma hums feeling along the chopsticks. “Can’t doubt the ‘miracle vision.’ These are an exact, well... polkadotted replica of the Bbone series Chinese chopsticks.” She expertly twirls them between her pointer and middle finger, “I can work with these.”

“You held them for two seconds. How do you know what kind of chopsticks they are?”

“I have a pair of these at home. In slightly worse condition. I’ve been using chopsticks since I was old enough to hold things.” As the amok begins reforming, Lady Luck’s miracle vision activates. A pair of chopsticks in the amok’s arm begin to glow.

“Karma, the amok is in the chopsticks along the left arm. Scourge, she’s gonna need some cover.”

“I’m all over it, Boss Lady!”

Karma tosses her baton to Lady Luck who nearly misses catching it, “you’ll need to defend yourself too.” Before Lady Luck can comment, Karma dashes off.

Scourge spins her whip along the ground as she walks, “earth style: terraforming~” Lady Luck gives her a confused stare, “what? Who says we can’t have a little fun with this gig, huh?” That... was a very Bunnyx statement. Scourge’s spinning rips up the concrete, the whips touch, then she grabs the concrete with her whip tossing them in front of her. Karma uses the distraction of the street hitting the amok, to get close enough to the amok’s unguarded left arm grabbing the chopsticks from within the goo only using the chopsticks in her hand. The amok’s severed gelatinous hand begins battling Karma for the chopsticks. No, no... not *for* the chopsticks. *With* the chopsticks. The chopsticks inside the amok and Karma’s are quickly hand-fighting.

“Wow.”

Scourge sighs lovingly, “she is such a badass.” She gushes.

“She really is.”

When Karma knocks one of the chopsticks out of the goo, the amok’s other hand grabs Karma.

“*Hey!*” Scourge yells, “that’s cheating!”

The amok fully reforms with Karma now inside it. And to make matters worse, it grabs the other chopstick before Scourge or Lady Luck can. The peafowl mask outline appears over where the blob’s face would be.

Scourge grimaces. “Uh... Lady Luck? I really hope you have a plan?”

Lady Luck smirks, “*we* do.”

Scourge takes a step back as the gelatin turns black then disintegrates. From the broken chopsticks on the floor, the blue feather floats out. Karma catches the kid that appears out of nowhere, then tosses the now yo-yo to Lady Luck who uses its net form to scoop up the

feather.

Scourge sighs, “this is exhausting. I don’t know how you two do it. Also... where did that kid come from?”

“They were in the blob. In a container!”

“My stomach...” The kid groans, “I’m so sorry. Professeur Mendeleiev was right about eating in class.” They hold up a hand, “I’ll be okay. Just... gotta get some antacid. I think being in that gelatin gave me indigestion.”

“That’s a cruel irony.” The kid nods as they walk away groaning.

“Did we just do a totally amazing good job? Because it sure feels like we did!” Scourge pulls Lady Luck and Karma in for a group hug.

“Karma, can we meet up at the Tour Montparnasse tonight, if possible?”

“Not a problem. Eight sound good?” Lady Luck nods, “I’ll bring the snacks.”

“Ooh. Snacks and a Tour Montparnasse picnic? I’m there.”

Lady Luck puts both hands on Scourge’s shoulders, “sorry, that invitation wasn’t for you.” Scourge blows a raspberry. “Let’s go. See you tonight, Karma.”

“I’m a huge fan!” Scourge shouts, “Scourge out.” Lady Luck looks at her. “I’m thinking of catchphrases?” Lady Luck shakes her head as she escorts the tiger away.

□□

Karma blinks, dumbfounded, at Lady Luck as the two of them sit on the roof of Tour Montparnasse, “you’re kwami just snapped and snatched the miracle box from Cosmic Colt and Bovine?” Lady Luck nods taking a bite of her cherry danish. The daruma doll miracle box is nestled between them, beside Karma’s bag of pâtisseries. “Wish I would’ve seen it.”

“She was fed up with their passiveness.” Lady Luck states around her mouthful, “I

apologize.” She says swallowing her food, “I was raised better than this but this... this is one of the best things I’ve ever eaten.” She takes another large bite.

“Get out. Seriously? Wow.” Karma rubs the back of her neck, “thanks. Plagg and I made it.” Lady Luck turns to her partner mid-chew, “Plagg wanted a 2:30am snack and I couldn’t sleep so we got to the kitchen. Had I known there’d be a damn 5am akuma attack I would’ve tried sleeping.”

“This is—You’re incredible!” Lady Luck says in-between bites.

“Nah. It’s nothing special. I was raised around pâtisseries, it’d be shameful if I couldn’t make my own.” Lady Luck nods finishing off the rest of her pâtisserie. “So... if you have the miracle box now, does that mean you get to choose who we work with? Did you choose Scourge?”

“Scourge was the only person in the area when I came out of Cosmic Colt’s portal.” Karma nods with a hum, “and I suppose it’ll be the two of us that do the selecting. Just because the box is in my possession doesn’t mean your input isn’t as important. Oh! Speaking of which, your kwami will need to place your miraculous into the miracle box so Tikki can cancel the exhaustion timer.”

“*Plagg—*”

“*Wait!* Don’t just drop your transformation on one of the tallest buildings in the city!”

“Not like anyone can see us.”

“We may think that then Mite and Méfait strike.”

“If they were *that* smart, or smart at all, they’d have akumas or amoks hiding in the shadows following us around so they could take our miraculouses when we’re unaware.” Lady Luck pauses then turns to Karma who shrugs with one shoulder.

“Be that as it may, we can’t take chances. Cosmic Colt and Bovine weren’t much help before and I doubt that’ll change with them no longer having the miracle box to lord over us.”

“What did your kwami do to them?”

“Nothing. They still have their miraculouses.”

“Okay. What if we need a power-up or something? We never got the ones we were supposed to get from Bovine.”

Lady Luck puts a hand on Karma’s shoulder, “it’ll be alright. Although I’d strongly advise against it, given Tikki’s warning, with their abilities they probably still could ‘portal in’ and give us power-ups should we need them.” Karma nods, “not that I know what Bovine *does*. Anyway, doesn’t matter, we’ll figure this out together.” Karma nods again, “have your kwami meet us at Hyatt Regency Paris Étoile at dawn.”

“Is that sun up or sun down?”

“Sun up.”

“Got it. About the other miraculouses...? Should we start compiling a list of prospects? We need people who can keep this a secret, right? Though if I’m being completely honest I’m not even sure how *I* managed to keep this a secret as long as I have. As you’ve probably realized, I happen to be quite the chatterbox.”

Lady Luck smiles at her, “I’d say you’re more of a conversationalist, which isn’t a bad thing, and I find your rambling quite endearing.”

Karma’s eyes widen, “y-you *do*?!” She fans herself off with her other hand, “whew! The weather channel said something about a heat wave, right? And heat rises. And we are pretty high up. Should’ve brought water or something.” Lady Luck chuckles leaning against Karma. Her partner freezes momentarily before relaxing against her... then she begins to *purr*. It’s a quiet vibration she’s certain her partner doesn’t even realize she’s doing.

Okay, she definitely needs to look up ladybug behavior patterns if the side effects are already ...in effect. The last thing she needs is to be ...doing whatever ladybugs do, out in public. *Though* this little detail only adds to how adorable Karma already is. Lady Luck feels the breeze Karma’s tail is creating by thumping against the building.

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Wed, Oct 14th, 2020

“Hey, hey my lovely luckies! It is I, your lovable local luckyblogger, Alya Césaire here with an exclusive live inter-vlog. Before I get into it, however, I have to address all the questions about just what that tiny purplish *blip* Markov managed to catch on camera during Monday’s amok attack. Unfortunately, and I’m disappointed in myself too, I have no information at this time about whatever that was. Friendly? Enemy? There wasn’t a clear shot. *But*—! Fear not luckies! You know that when Alya gets the scoop, the luckyblog gets the scoop. Now, back to today—” The orange-haired teen pans the camera out, “who am I inter-vlogging, you may be wondering? It’s this guy! Amateur sculpture-r—”

“*Sculptor*.” The teen interrupts.

“—Théo Barbero—”

“That’s *Barbeau*.” The brunet corrects as the camera pans out showing his face.

“Look dude, I’m sorry I’m getting this stuff wrong but if you keep interrupting me we won’t get to the reason why I’m interviewing you.” The brunet frowns, “anyway this is... this guy and well, what do you have for the viewers out there?”

The teen clears his throat, “a-as a sculptor and die-hard fan, I figured I’d share my talents with my fellow Parisians to show appreciation for our heroes.” He beckons Alya to follow to a large brown sheet. Taking in some of his other sculptures along the way. “Behold!” He makes his own drum roll noise then pulls the sheet off the item on top of a desk. “Ta-dah!”

Alya focuses her camera on the hardened clay sculpture of a catgirl standing, poised to attack, brandishing a pair of sticks. The orange-haired teen goes around *twice*, examining the sculpture from head to toe using the stepping stool Théo provided to get a closer look. Once she’s finished, Alya steps back with a neutral expression. “What is this?”

“W-What?! ‘What is this?’ This is Karma. I made a sculpture of Karma!”

“Truly? Are you serious?”

“W-What!? What kind of question is that? Of course, I’m serious!”

Alya laughs, “oh no. Man,” She shakes her head. “I asked because there’s no way you’re serious! As the city’s number one source of Lady Luck and Karma content—something this ‘Karmic’ blog that’s been floating around is gonna find out soon enough—” Théo’s left eye

twitches but it goes unnoticed by Alya, “—I know almost all about the duo that’s worth sharing to the public without risking anyone figuring out their identities. I gotta say flat out...” She clicks her tongue, gesturing at the sculpture, “my dude, this ain’t Karma.”

“*What!?* Are you kidding!? I’ve been working on this for three weeks! Who do you think it’s supposed to be then?!”

“That’s a good question.”

“I—”

Théo flinches as Alya holds up her left pointer finger close to his face, “you don’t get to speak. You listen. To begin with, you put *way* too much emphasis on the bust.”

“I sculpted it from memory!”

“You...” Alya pauses, “...sculpted Karma’s *bust*, from memory?” She deadpans.

Théo sputters, “I sculpted *the hero* from memory!”

“Dude! Like f-fuh—ell you did! I’ve been around Lady Luck and Karma, *and* I know bra cup sizes. Sports and regular. You deliberately made the bust of ‘Karma’ at least three full sizes bigger than it really is!”

“N—”

“And another thing! Why did you make her so short? Karma is at least 170 centimetres tall! Your statue is even shorter than Lady Luck! I-I—I just—!” Alya growls, jostling the camera in her hands. “This—This—! I swear I don’t have accurate words to describe this! You didn’t sculpt sh—*crap* from memory, man! Her ears aren’t even in the right spot! Her tail is bushy not all straight and curly like you made it! Her nails are supposed to be elongated but also curl inward, like her incisors! But you didn’t even give her fangs. Her batons also have a subtle grid dot pattern in them. Why is her catsuit zipper so low down? And where’s her bell? This—What you’ve *created* is a fantasy fanservice sculpture of how you want Karma to look! I can’t believe I wasted my damn time and phone memory on this garbage! This ‘exclusive’ inter-vlog is done!” Alya grumbles shaking her head.

“Hey! Now, wait just a damn minute—” Théo grabs one of Alya’s arms.

“You’re gonna let go of my sister if you favor keeping your limbs intact.” The brunet instantly complies as *Nora Césaire aka Anansi* stares Théo down from the doorway of the studio (and how did he not notice a professional kickboxer just casually standing in his studio!?). The kickboxer continues to stare—*glare*—at him until she and her sister leave the studio.

Théo slumps to the floor balling up his fists, “t-that *brat!*” He snarls, “first she mocks my Karma blog *then* she... she embarrasses me live and ruins my one chance to meet Karma in the flesh with the sculpture I made in her likeness!” With his eyes closed as he sighs heavily, Théo doesn’t notice the akuma fly into his sculpting tool.

“*Monsieur Misery,*” The butterfly mask outline appears over Théo’s face, “*that pesky ‘lucky’ blogger thinks she knows everything there is to know about Lady Luck and Karma? Why don’t you prove her wrong?*”

“She’s nowhere near as devoted to Karma as I am! **No one** is as devoted to Karma as I am! This city doesn’t deserve Karma and I’m going to show them why!” Théo’s eyes snap open and he lifts his head as the purple ooze overtakes his body.

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François Düpont didn’t have classes on Wednesday, and Kagami didn’t wake up early if she had no reason to so she and Tikki were enjoying some much-needed sleep when the building shakes throwing them both out of bed. “What the hell!?” Tikki exclaims flying over to the window.

As of yesterday, Kagami Tsurugi has officially enrolled in collège François Düpont. Principal Damocles, all the while shooting terrified glances at her mother, gave them the tour of the school.

Her mother didn’t seem pleased about Kagami’s choice of schooling but like she said she would, she didn’t comment on it.

Mme. Brüel happened to find them an apartment in the twenty-first arrondissement, making Kagami’s commute to school in the ten minutes or less category. There was also a park and the boulangerie pâtisserie where she and Karma took on their first akuma, nearby.

“Wait, what the hell?! ” Tikki flies back over to Kagami, tugging her arm in the window’s

direction. With a yawn, Kagami gets off the floor and approaches the window right as Lady Luck swings past.

Wait, *what*?!

“What the hell?” Kagami puts in her hearing aids Tikki hands her, “am I hallucinating or did I just see **me** go by?”

“Not unless we’re both hallucinating. That was definitely Lady Luck that swung by. Gotta be an akuma but... *why*? Why would anyone wanna be an akuma of you?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t done anything to anyone recently.”

They both look at each other, “the luckyblog!” They exclaim pointing at each other. Tikki grabs the phone then flies back over to Kagami opening the luckyblog app. Yesterday, a “magical disruption” alert was added to the app. Despite her issue with the blog’s namesake, the blogger’s heart is genuine and in the right place. The blog has become a trusted source of information when it came to pinpointing akumas and amoks, and even just petty crimes she and Karma could stop. If it wasn’t the blogger on the job her robot partner-in-detecting-crime was right there. It’s like having another two teammates to rely on.

Tikki presses play on the most recent video. “*Hey hey my lovely luckies!*” Alya begins, cheerfully enough but soon after from watching the whole broadcast her disposition becomes less and less cheerful.

“Her bust was all wrong.” Tikki stares at her and Kagami clears her throat with a cough into her fist, “not my fault they’re sort of near my eye level.” Tikki hums, unconvinced no doubt. “And... just everything about that sculpture was—” Kagami shakes her head, “off.”

“But wait a minute... if he got turned into an akuma *you*—” They gasp staring at each other.

“He wants to replace Lady Luck and work with Karma!” They exclaim. Huh. Reading one another’s thoughts was not one of the “side effects” Tikki mentioned being a possibility. Nevertheless, they need to do something about this creep.

“C’mon Tikki, we need to put a stop to this.” Tikki nods, “I just hope I don’t have to end up fighting Karma to prove I’m the real Lady Luck.”

“Trust in your partner, I’m sure she’ll be able to spot the differences.”

“We’ll see. Spots on, Tikki.”

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Alya’s in the library with her hands behind her head, leaning back in the chair when the door suddenly flies open sending her flailing backwards. Nora catches the chair with ease before Alya can hit the ground. “Good catch. Thanks.”

“It’s what I’m here for.”

People squealing and whipping out their phones has Alya leaning forward in her chair to see Lady Luck enter the library. Alya’s eyes narrow as Lady Luck looks around.

“Everyone evacuate the premises, there’s an akuma after the luckyblogger.” The people in the library quickly begin gathering their stuff with hushed whispers.

“I told you not to go around calling yourself that.” Nora growls picking Alya up and hauling her over her shoulder. “Let’s go.”

Alya flails, “wait, wait! I have to tell you something important!”

Nora exhales deeply then turns Alya around, faces her frontward and puts her on her other shoulder, “it better be good.”

“That’s not Lady Luck.” Alya whispers. Nora stares at her strangely, “trust me on this one. I have footage as proof. Lady Luck has never called me ‘*luckyblogger*,’ she—”

“—Always calls you *Mlle*. Blogger.” Nora whispers back, “she ripped you a new one for naming the blog only after her.” Nora’s eyes narrow, “we can’t let the fake know we know she’s a fake. Get your camera ready.”

Alya takes her phone out of her pocket; fortunately, she was able to reach it. “What are we gonna do?”

Nora cracks her knuckles, “relax. I got this.” Alya angles her phone slightly as they make their way over to the Lady Luck copy, “thanks for the heads up, Lady Luck!” The impostor nods, “what should we be on the lookout for?”

Before the copy could reply Alya and Nora hear the all-too-familiar whir of Lady Luck’s yo-yo and the cord wraps itself around the copy’s waist. The copy screams and is yanked toward the real Lady Luck near the library’s entrance.

“It’s the akuma!” The copy yells trying to wriggle free.

“The akuma... is Lady Luck?” A spectator asks.

“But which is which?” Asks another.

“What should we do!?”

“Mlle. Luckyblogger, which is the real Lady Luck?”

“*I* am!” Both Lady Luck’s shout.

The Lady Luck by the exit pulls the copy toward her by the yo-yo string. When the copy somehow manages to unravel themselves, the two Lady Lucks grapple each other’s shoulders. Unbeknownst to everyone, the butterfly mask outline shines on the akuma as they scramble to find purchase on each other. “You don’t deserve Karma!” They hiss lowly so only the other Lady Luck can hear then the outline disappears.

They both jump back and start spinning their yo-yos.

“You’re pathetic.” The Lady Luck further into the library says.

“Talk is cheap.”

It’s no surprise, the two Lady Lucks are evenly matched. Trading blow for blow and block for block. Alya can’t tell which is which like this. But maybe... she doesn’t need to. “Lady Luck, the akuma is that sculptor from my inter-vlog!”

One of the Lady Luck's stop and deflect the yo-yo from hitting their face, "you're certain?" Alya nods, "that confirms my suspicion. After all, he had to be so thoroughly embarrassed claiming that sculpture was Karma."

Alya gasps. "You saw the inter-vlog?"

Nora groans. "Now isn't the time to gush, Als."

"Why would the sculptor be embarrassed? Considering how proudly he defended his 'sculpture?' If there was any embarrassment, it was at being called out."

Alya points at the Lady Luck further in the library, "*that's* the real Lady Luck!" The crowd gasps.

"*Lucky charm!*" Both Lady Lucks call out simultaneously and even Alya scratches her head in confusion when they both get a polkadotted laser pointer. A cat toy. Wait, where *is* Karma? Before Alya can question it further, the Lady Lucks run at each other, chucking their laser pointers aside and fist-fighting.

There's no way Alya can tell them apart like this.

The library door bursts open and Karma barrel rolls inside chucking her baton into the floor causing the Lady Lucks to separate before it can hit them. "Time out!" Karma clutches her other baton in her hands. "*Two* Lady Lucks and not one of you communicated with me?"

"I didn't want you getting involved." The Lady Luck on the left says. Alya zooms in her camera in time to see Karma's pupils thin as she bares her fangs.

"I was on my way to call you when the impostor grabbed me."

"Really? And just how were you planning on 'communicating' with Karma?"

The impostor falters briefly before regaining their composure, "with our communicators, of course." The ~~other~~-real Lady Luck rolls her eyes.

Karma's grip on her baton tightens, "Karma, the akuma has to be the sculptor I inter-vlogged

earlier! He made a sculpture of ‘you’ that was all wrong.”

“Inter-vlog? Sculpture? I-I didn’t check the luckyblog today.” Karma shakes her head, “all I saw was the akuma alert, but I guess that’s not important. What is important is figuring out which of you is masquerading as my partner and which of you is the real deal.”

“I believe in you Karma, I know you’ll figure it out.” Both Lady Lucks exclaim.

Karma looks between the two Lady Lucks. On the surface, everything looks identical. But Karma knows her partner, at least she hopes she knows her partner. “Quiz time!” Both Lady Lucks blink at her, “pooling all my duplicate hero scenarios from television, the only way to figure this out is to ask both of you a series of questions only the real Lady Luck will know.”

The Lady Lucks look at each other. “You can’t believe that would work, do you?” The one on the right asks. “If you ask anything too personal it’ll give Mme. Mite and M. Méfait information they don’t already have and if you ask anything vague, the copy would know the answer.”

Karma nods to herself, “true, true. So I have a grey area to operate from.”

“I have a more proactive idea.” One of the Lady Lucks picks up her laser pointer and points the light on the floor in front of Karma then moves it upward toward Karma. Karma’s eyes widen and her ears start twitching.

The other Lady Luck tackles the first one, “**no!** *What are you doing? How could you attack your own partner!?*”

“‘Attack?’ With a laser pointer?” The Lady Luck on top gasps before they’re picked up by their waist and tossed off the other Lady Luck. Karma sighs helping Lady Luck up, “thanks.”

“Any time.”

“Wait!” Alya yells, “h-how did you know that was the real Lady Luck?”

“Because the duplicate would be trying too hard to act like the real thing, I knew the real Lady Luck would act in a way that would throw the copy off.”

Alya whistles, “wow. That’s genius!”

Both laser pointers return to yo-yo form. “also, Lady Luck doesn’t add the titles to Méfait and Mite’s names. Was not expecting the laser pointer though.”

“I-I’ll tell you about it later.”

The akuma gets up, swinging their yo-yo – the butterfly mask outline appearing over their mask. “I would’ve been the perfect partner for you, Karma!”

“Dream on, Dude. I got my perfect partner.”

“*Lucky charm!*” The akuma screams. Karma and Lady Luck’s jaws drop when a polkadot scythe lands in the akuma’s hands. “All I have to do is eliminate the opposition to be the only Lady Luck Paris needs!”

“With that deluded attitude?” The partners exchange a glance, “do you even think Mite would let you keep this form?”

“If I give her your miraculous, naturally.”

Lady Luck chuckles, “right. Give her *my* miraculous but not Karma’s? Allow me to show you why you’ll fail, M. Sculptor. Lucky charm!” Lady Luck tosses her yo-yo in the air and it transforms then falls into her hands, “wait... what?” Lady Luck stares at boxing gloves in her hands. She quickly looks around before putting the boxing gloves on. No rigmarole this time around? The lucky charm must be fed up with this impostor too. Lady Luck rushes at the akuma and a chain shoots out from the bottom of the scythe wrapping Karma.

“What the hell? Hey, what are you doing?”

“Keeping you safe. Unlike your so-called ‘perfect’ partner, I have no interest in harming Karma.” The akuma clutches their scythe, “you on the other hand, ‘Lady Luck.’ You, I’ll take great pleasure in harming!” They bring the scythe down vertically and Lady Luck narrowly dodges but before she can swing, the akuma brings the scythe’s stick up to block the punch.

Karma falls on her butt and starts to wriggle around in her bindings, “this is just craptacular...” She groans. Her claws aren’t near the chains so she can’t break free with her

nails. Karma gasps as she looks at the baton that's still wedged in the floor. With the akuma having their hands full, trying not to get hit by Lady Luck, Karma slowly inches over to her discarded baton. She dropped her other baton when the chains wrapped around her body.

Karma wiggles her way to the baton then presses the button to join them together, the other baton levitates off the ground and flies right into Karma, hitting her in the stomach.

When the akuma turns in Karma's direction just a bit, Lady Luck uppercuts them. Before they can recover, she grabs the akuma by the collar. "N-Not the face!" Lady Luck draws her left arm back as far as she can before punching the akuma in the face. Repeatedly.

When the Lady Luck copy loses consciousness, the akuma flies out of their right arm. The transformed object being a sculpting tool.

The boxing gloves revert back into the net just as Lady Luck drops the sculptor, then she scoops up the akuma. "Time to put an end to your corrupting, little butterfly."

The chains disappear and Karma springs to her feet. Karma makes her way over to Lady Luck. "Feel better?"

"Hm?"

"Getting knocking the hell out of that guy out of your system, I mean."

"I was trying to get the akuma out."

"Right." Karma elbows her partner with a laugh.

"I—thank you, Karma."

"What did I do?"

"I was skeptical about the entire ordeal. I felt like alerting you beforehand would do the opposite effect, and the fact that you immediately clued into what I was planning... I didn't think you would so quickly." Lady Luck sighs, "I... what I'm trying to say is I'm sorry for not trusting you."

“Don’t worry about—”

Lady Luck shakes her head, “you trusted me, implicitly, even when you had no reason to. Knew what I was planning without getting a heads-up. Meanwhile, I was waffling, hoping I didn’t have to fight you hand-to-hand to prove myself. I’m sorry it’s taken me so long to trust you.”

“Don’t sweat it, Double L. If anything, I trust too easily, you were right to be wary.”

“Such a beautiful partnership!” Alya cries, now standing next to Nora instead of on her shoulder.

“Guess I should clean up this mess. Miraculous cure!”

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Thurs, Oct 15th, 2020

Alya enters the classroom and is met with applause. She anticipated something along the lines of this.

“I can’t believe you scored the first-ever live interview with Lady Luck and Karma!” Rose squeals as Alya takes her seat, “I can’t wait to watch!”

“If you need a location you should do it at Le Grand Paris. My suite. I’ll provide refreshments.”

“That’s... sweet of you to offer, Chloé.”

“I’d do anything for Lady Luck.”

“I hope you’re not just doing this just to get in Lady Luck’s good graces.”

The blonde turns around in her seat, glaring, “something you wanna say to me, Lê Chiên?”

“What I wanna say is throw in all the ‘refreshments’ and semi-private locations you can, there’s no way Lady Luck is interested in you.”

“Oh? And I suppose she’d be more into a neanderthal like *you*?”

“You can’t even spell neanderthal!”

“Neither can you!” Chloé growls. “Lady Luck is *my* future wife so back the hell off!”

“If anyone is gonna marry Lady Luck, it’s gonna be me!” Kim argues back.

“Is that right? I can buy her whatever her heart desires, and I’m prettier than you! Therefore I am obviously the better selection. Check and mate.”

“Hey! I’m hella pretty! Aren’t I, Alix?”

The pink-haired teen rolls her eyes, “oh yeah, a regular pageant queen.”

“I know you’re being sarcastic but it was still good to hear.” Alix rolls her eyes again. “And back to you, Bourgeois, Lady Luck isn’t some doll you can throw your money at! She’s a badass and should be treated as such!”

“Statistically speaking...” Max begins, “nuptials between superheroes and civilians rarely work out.” He states.

“Less than 3% last more than three months!” Markov adds (oddly cheerful).

“Our love will defy the odds!” Kim and Chloé exclaim before glaring at each other.

“Lady Luck has held me in her wonderfully sculpted arms twice, how many times has she held you?” Kim’s right eye twitches.

“What about Karma?” Alya gasps, “whoa! Déjà vu. I... I get why she was so pissed now! You guys are talking about marrying Lady Luck, what about marrying Karma?”

“Oh. I thought you were gonna say Lady Luck and Karma ‘belong together’ or something like that. Not that they do. They strictly have a ‘work friends’ vibe going on between them.”

“What does that even mean?!” Kim exclaims.

“It means they only engage each other during akuma or amok attacks.”

Chloé points to Max nodding, “that. Karma isn’t good enough for Lady Luck and I’m too exceptional to marry someone like Karma. Someone second place to Lady Luck.”

Alix growls, “like hell Karma is second place to anyone! She’s an all-around badass! You think Lady Luck could’ve figured out a duplicate Karma as fast as Karma figured out the real Lady Luck?”

“She not only *could*, she’d do it faster! And besides, Alya figured it out faster than anyone!”

“We’re not talking about how awesome Alya was, we’re talking about Lady Luck and Karma! I want whatever you’ve been huffing to make you as damn delusional as you are, Blondie! You think you’re too good for Karma? *Ha!* Karma’s too good for you, as is Lady Luck! You got no chance with either of them – especially Lady Luck – even if you were a superhero your damn self!”

“I have a better chance with Lady Luck than anyone in this class, especially you!”

Alix snorts, “I don’t want Lady Luck.”

“You don’t—” Chloé laughs loudly, “how could you not? I want whatever *you’re* huffing to make *you* so damn delusional. *Everyone* has a superhero crush—” She pauses, “—maybe Karma’s more your speed, not that even she’d be into you. Not that anyone would lower their standards to your level.”

“Yet they’d lower theirs for *you*?”

“What’s your beef with Karma, Chloé?” Alya asks.

“I can’t stand her.” The class collectively gasps. Meanwhile, Marinette – next to Chloé –

starts coughing and Alix, behind the blue-haired teen, pats her on the back. “Do you mind, Dupain-Cheng? Sheesh!” She turns back to Alya, “so she did *one* thing okay. That’s nothing compared to all the akumas and amoks Lady Luck took out! She’s the cannon fodder.”

“They’re equal partners.” Alya points out. “Lady Luck said she wouldn’t be a superhero without Karma.”

“Lady Luck only says that to be polite. *She* purifies the akumas and amoks. *She* has those incredible biceps she protectively curled around me. All that alley cat has ever done before yesterday was brandish a couple of shiny sticks!”

“Lady Luck wouldn’t be into someone who badmouths her partner~” Kim sing-songs and Chloé glares at him. “I like Karma, so in your face!”

“If you ‘like’ Karma so much you should marry her instead!”

“Let’s not get carried away, I don’t like Karma enough to want to marry her.”

“I wouldn’t mind marrying Karma.” Someone mutters lowly. Everyone pauses then looks around the room until their eyes fall on Juleka, wide-eyed. “What? I would. I... I like Karma more than Lady Luck.”

The class gasps. “Are you serious?” Chloe rolls her eyes, “of course you are. Karma shares the whole goth vibe you got going on. Even so, it’s utterly ridiculous you’d make a claim like that. ‘Liking Karma more than Lady Luck?’ It’s ridiculous. Utterly ridiculous!”

“**Karma** saved my life, *twice*!”

“**Lady Luck** was right beside her!”

“**Karma** helped me with my family’s photo curse! Where was *Lady Luck* then?”

“**Lady Luck** has better things to do than to fix every curse that comes her way! Especially a curse doing you and the world a favor!” Juleka’s jaw drops for several seconds before she closes her mouth and narrows her eyes. “Lady Luck may not be a superhero without Karma, but there’s no way in hell Karma could do it all by herself either!”

“You don’t know that.” Juleka argues.

“Neither do you!”

“My brother and I are starting a band in honor of Karma, we’re calling it Kitty Section.”

“How cute!” Rose squeals, “ooh! Do you need a drummer? Ivan can play the drums!” Ivan blushes slinking down in his seat all-the-while glaring at Rose. “And I can sing!”

“You mean you can *yell*.” Chloé says rolling her eyes. “And what did Karma even save you from the second time?”

“A-A guy who wanted to date my brother.” The class falls silent. “He got possessed by an akuma when he was rejected and attacked us. It’s why I wasn’t in school on Monday. I was at the hospital.”

"The hospital!?"

“Hey!” Alix gets up, “show of hands. How many of you have braincells and prefer Karma to Lady Luck?”

The class looks among themselves. Alix eagerly has her hand in the air, and Juleka raises hers just as eagerly. Surprisingly, Nathaniel’s hand goes up as well. Along with Aurore and Sabrina, the latter blushes as she raises her hand. Chloé stares at the bespectacled, orange-haired teen with a look of betrayal on her face. “*Sabrina!*”

“I’m sorry! I-I know they both helped with the Pretty Princess amok but... but Karma made me feel special.” She mumbles that last bit slinking into her seat. When Mylène shyly raises her hand next, Chloé pinches the bridge of her nose.

“I have an inquiry?” Max asks, “what if you like Karma and Lady Luck equally?”

“Because of that ‘equal partners’ mess? How could you not like one more than the other?” Chloé asks.

Max shrugs, “I just do.”

“That’s impossible.” Chloe argues.

“Quite the contrary.” Max adjusts his glasses, “I’ve run multiple tests and each has stated I don’t prefer one over the other. I can have Markov compile both results when responding to each stimuli—”

“You’re using too many big words.” Kim interrupts with a groan, holding his head. Chloé also holds her head; as do several other students. “We believe you but you might be on your own.” With a shrug, Max leans back in his seat, “so that’s it then? Just the—?”

Rose raises her hand, “wait! Sorry, I totally zoned out! You were asking who likes Karma more than Lady Luck, right? That’s the last thing I remember before drifting off. I absolutely like Karma more than Lady Luck!”

“Wait... seriously?” Ivan asks.

“Really? Lavillant? I thought you’d be team Lady Luck all the way?”

“Are you kidding? How could I not love Karma? She’s just so...” The blonde shivers, “...and gorgeous! And amazing! And cheery! Super personable, you know? Whereas Lady Luck is all stoic and mysterious!” The students nod, murmuring in agreement. “Even after someone’s been possessed by Mme. Mite, Karma makes them feel safe and cared for.” The class stops murmuring, staring at the petite blonde. “None of you have seen the akuma victim testimonies and interviews from the Luckyblog?”

Several students take their phones out. Juleka rubs the back of her neck, “I saw ‘em. I was... it was cool to know I wasn’t the only one who felt that way.”

“E-Exactly.” Sabrina adds.

“Wait a second.” Chloé turns to Alya, sitting behind her, “*I* was an akuma victim. I was like *the first* akuma victim! Where’s *my* testimony?”

“You don’t remember getting interviewed?” Sabrina asks, “it’s what got me amoked.”

Chloé glances over at Sabrina before turning back to Alya who nods. “Then why isn’t it on the Luckyblog? *I’m* the reason we even have Lady Luck and Karma in the city!”

“That’s not something you should be bragging about.” Alix mutters.

“Maybe you’d think so, Kubdel.”

“No, she’s right.” Max pipes in. “While we’re all grateful they’re here, it was because you threw a tantrum at not getting a macaron you verbally berated and by all accounts did not seem interested in getting in the first place, and had to share a seat with Marinette—”

Chloé gestures to the blue-haired teen with her head down, fast asleep, “you wanna blame someone for that? Blame *this* disaster! And just last week she humiliated me in front of my maman!”

“I recall you humiliating yourself because you entered a design competition and you can’t design.” A voice mutters.

The class falls deadly silent until Alix starts laughing. “*Damn*, Nathaniel!” She whoops. “That was brutal!”

Chloé glares at the redhead then turns back to Alya. “What about my testimony?”

“I didn’t upload testimonies in order of akuma or amok attacks, and your testimony is likely on my phone’s old memory. I’ve swapped it yesterday to ‘interview’ that pervy sculptor guy. I felt so dirty I need to clean... everything. When I find yours, I’ll upload it.”

“Than—*wait!* How did I look in it? Never mind. We should redo the whole thing. A face-to-face interview after your interview with Lady Luck and Karma. We can do it Saturday. I have a hair appointment on Friday so I’ll be camera-ready this weekend.”

“You—” Alya elbows Alix. “Fine!”

“You should come with Alya, I’ll have my masseuse squeeze you in.”

“I am not saying no to a free massage.”

□□

“Greetings my lovely followers. It’s Thursday, October 15th. Are you excited? Because I’m excited! Today is a very special day. A luckyblog exclusive sort of day. The first-ever live interview with Lady Luck and Karma!” Alya screams then immediately regains her composure. Someone forcefully clears their throat. “Hm? Oh. Right. Sorry. The exact location for this interview was provided by Chloé Bourgeois.” The camera pans out showing the blonde waving enthusiastically. “A private yet secluded place not many people have access to. Oh! Here they come now!” Alya points the camera up at Lady Luck swinging toward them holding onto Karma’s waist. They both drop down on the ledge. Chloé squeals holding onto Alya’s arm, moving the camera around. “Heroes of Paris, thank you for joining us this afternoon.”

Lady Luck and Karma drop down from the ledge and take the empty seats in front of Alya.

“No sweat.” Karma says taking a seat and eyeing the plate of pâtisseries on the table.

“Ditto.” Lady Luck answers. “You were a huge help with that copy akuma yesterday. I remember you once asking for an interview and I could think of no other way to thank you for all your help.” Another camera zooms in on Alya’s delighted albeit frozen expression.

“Before we get down to the questionnaire... *I* have a question. The pâtisseries on the table? Where did you get them from?”

“Hawkforts.” Chloé responds. “they’re like *the best* pâtisserie in the city! You two deserve nothing but the absolute best.”

“Uh-huh. While I appreciate the offer...” Karma chuckles awkwardly, “I’m afraid I can’t eat these.”

One of the camera’s zooms in on Chloé. “What?! Why?”

“I’m gluten intolerant.”

“Y-You are!?” The blonde shouts jumping to her feet, clearing everything from the table with one swift swipe of her right arm. “Don’t worry. I’ll fix this.” The blonde tip-toes over the mess taking out her phone.

A technical difficulties warning screen pops up for several minutes. When the picture returns,

everyone is positioned differently in the room, now lacking a table and Chloé. “Sorry about that folks, let’s start with the questions!”

kicked our queen bee's beehive

Chapter Summary

Lila takes a stand, facing off against the self-proclaimed "queen bee" of François Düpont

Chapter Notes

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

Sat, Oct 17th, 2020

Alya hums to herself as she gets dressed for school... on a Saturday. Surprising that this is one of the more weirder things she's done since arriving in Paris last month. And that list of things includes, but is not limited to, chasing after magical creatures to obtain footage for her blog. *Speaking of her blog*, Alya rewatched the interview* with Lady Luck and Karma every free moment she had yesterday. It was **perfect**. One of the best days of her life! She needs to provide a thank you gift basket for Chloé, Markov, and Max. Would Markov and Max share one gift basket or would they need separate ones? What do you get a robot as a thank you gift?

The orange-haired teen ties her hair in a pair of twintails like Karma. Juleka's band is having their first audition slash practice at the pier this afternoon where the purple-haired teen's houseboat, Liberty, is docked.

Alya has a pretty full day ahead of her.

She makes sure to pack extra snacks in her backpack, along with her phone charger. When she opens her bedroom door Nora is on the other side folding her arms over her chest clad in her kickboxing attire minus the headgear. "I thought I heard you bustling around in here. Going somewhere?"

"To school."

"*On a Saturday?* ...When you *don't* have detention? Who are you and what have you done with my sister?"

Alya rolls her eyes, "there's some kind of gaming tournament I was asked to come watch.

Anyway, I gotta go so... what do you want?"

"I got a match tomorrow so I'm gonna hit the gym and the parentals have work; so you know what that means...?"

Alya sighs, "*I* gotta watch the twins." Beaming, Nora nods. "Fine. I'll just bring them with me." She brushes past Nora. Ella's bedroom door is wide open so Alya knocks on Etta's door. As excited as they were to get their own rooms, the twins sure do spend a lot of time in each other's rooms; mostly Etta's. After a few seconds, Etta opens the door.

"Why are you all dressed up?"

"I have to go to school and Nora just informed me—" She looks over her shoulder at Nora who is giving her a thumbs up, "—that I'm on babysitting duty."

The door opens wider revealing Ella, "we don't *need* babysitting."

"Great. Then you won't bother me when I'm with my friends. Get dressed." Ella closes the door, "and make sure you pack snacks!"

□□

Lila enters the classroom and looks around. This classroom is a lot bigger than Professeur Bustier's. After a month here, she feels like she's slowly starting to get to know a few of her classmates. Still, she feels like she could be doing better. To start, she'll have to get all of their names. It won't be difficult, unlike her last school there is no overcrowding. No thirty plus students you need to pull yourself apart in every direction to meet.

Here she just had fifteen classmates to befriend. She has sixteen classmates but it seems highly unlikely Lila will ever be friends with Chloé. The blonde has been nothing but awful, to her, since Lila's arrival, and even though Chloé has shown signs she can be a somewhat decent human being if the payout is good enough, Lila isn't holding her breath. She won't jump through hoops for anyone. Mayor's daughter or not.

The gaming console is plugged into the blackboard plug. Kim and that nasally orange-haired girl with the glasses Chloé hangs around are in the left and right plastic chairs respectively, each have a controller in their hands; both teens are scowling at the projector screen that's pulled down displaying the game for all.

There is a large group of students from multiple classes, sitting in the beanbag chairs behind the two players cheering the players on.

Lila sees Ivan slumped down in his beanbag chair so she walks over to him then sits in the beanbag chair to his left. “Good morning, Ivan~”

“O-Oh! Good morning Lila.”

“What’s been going on?”

“I really don’t understand this game, but it’s interesting to watch. I guess?” Lila hears laughter to the right and Ivan turns in that direction with a sigh.

Lila follows his line of sight and sees that rainbow-haired girl and the curly twintailed blonde sitting behind Sabrina giggling to themselves. “Ah.” Ivan turns to her tilting his head to the right, “you know, you should talk to her. In class, she looks at you every time you look away.”

“R-Really?”

Lila nods, “really. I have a good vantage point at the front of Professeur Bustier’s classroom.” She taps her chin, “you know, I’m somewhat of a matchmaker. I set up the nicest and meanest professeurs in my old school by sending them secret admirer letters.” Lila puts a hand on her chest, “I placed third overall in my grade’s amateur poetry competition so I can help write you a love letter.”

“L-Love!?” Ivan shakes his head, “n-no, no, no, no!” At his yelling, everyone turns to the black-haired teen. He slumps further in his beanbag then everyone returns their attention to the game. “I’m not in love.” He whispers.

“Love, crush. Whichever. It’s a feeling. I can help you convey those feelings in poetry form.”

“I-I appreciate the thought, b-but R-Rose and I are already coming up with a song.”

“How sweet!” Lila coos. “You *have* to let me help you!”

“*Shhh!* Okay, okay.”

Lila pumps her fist in the air. “This’ll be the best song ever.” She gasps, “between you and me? I helped Carla McRyden-O’Lyar write ‘Supervisor.’”

“*Y-You’re the Lilyana in that song?*”

Lila nods, “that’s my full name. With the y and everything.”

Ivan sits up in his beanbag. “Wow. That’s incredible. To think... I know someone who knows a famous musician.”

“*Hey everyone!*” Lila flinches as Chloé yells, kicking the door open nearly hitting the kid trying to leave the classroom. “Look who I brought~” The blonde comes into the classroom happily holding onto that tall pink-haired girl’s hand.

“Didn’t you have a hair appointment or something today?” Huh. That explains why her hair is out flowing past her shoulders and not in a ponytail for once.

“My hair appointment was *yesterday*, not that my schedule is any of your business.” She sticks her tongue out at Kim’s back. But with him playing the game, he doesn’t look back at her. “Kick his ass, Sabrina.” The orange-haired teen nods. The two girls walk behind the group. The pink-haired teen sits in a beanbag chair but Chloé does not. “What are these... *things?*” The blonde shrieks.

“Beanbag chairs.” Adrien replies, halfway sticking out of the beanbag. “You’ll like them. They’re squishy to sit in.”

“Adrikins, get out of that before you catch something.” Chloé instead goes to sit at the first joint desk.

Lila sees the shiny gold ladybug necklace around Chloé’s neck as the blonde flips her hair. “*Ah!*” Ivan turns to her. “That’s it! You know what’ll go great with the ...you know what?” She holds out her right hand shaking the thick gold bangle on her wrist, “jewelry.”

“Jewelry?”

“Yeah. Got this little number as a bridesmaid gift from my cousin for helping her find her wife.”

“Jewelry.” Ivan repeats for the second time, “you think I should get her jewelry?”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“It’s a great idea, theoretically... but I’d never be able to afford the type of jewelry she’s used to.”

Lila hums, “you could always get something costume or handmade.” She shrugs, “it’s something to think about at least.” Ivan nods slowly furrowing his eyebrows.

Alya enters the classroom all sunshines and perfection curly dark orange hair, tied *adorably* in a pair of twintails, bouncing with every step. Lila sees two tiny identical orangish-brown-haired kids in front of Alya make their way up the staircase instead of joining the group in the front. Lila turns around fully and sees Alya nudging a pink messenger bag. Marinette’s head pops up and she looks around in a daze. So the pink Lila must’ve seen was from the hat that matches the blue-haired teen’s messenger bag. *Right*. Marinette won a design competition Audrey Bourgeois created to celebrate Lady Luck. The romper was already on Audrey’s official website crediting the winner of her Lady Luck themed contest, and the website also had details of the upcoming Karma themed contest.

With a hum, Lila turns back around.

Etta and Ella place their belongings down on the bench in front of Marinette and Alya then join the crowd.

“This can’t be more comfortable than sleeping in a bed.” Alya says taking a seat next to Marinette.

“Support. Need.” The blue-haired teen sleepily mumbles putting her head back down.

“Got it.” She pats Marinette on the shoulder, “I’ll make sure all your support gets out there.” Alya takes out a notebook from her bag, unaware of the pair of green eyes watching her. Two minutes don’t even pass before the twins, evidently, get bored of watching the game. They return to the bench taking out their coloring books. ~~And they told Alya they’d be fine.~~

Alya taps her pencil to her left cheek. She still had so many questions for Lady Luck and Karma, she might as well jot them down in case she gets another chance to interview them or even just ask them a question. It's very unlikely akuma attacks are gonna stop anytime soon. When she glances up at the screen her head tilts to the left in confusion at the carnage unfolding on the projected screen, not understanding a blessed thing going on. Things are on fire, underwater, exploding, and being built simultaneously somehow all on the screen in one singular area.

(Alya *really* hopes this game comes with several seizure and sensory overload warnings.)

Nathaniel shuffles into the classroom dragging his feet and messenger bag. Rather than join the crowd, he slowly makes his way up the staircase yawning. Alya sees him do a double-take before he notices her. Alya merely waves not wanting to draw unnecessary attention to the shy teen.

He returns the wave then takes the seat behind her and Marinette. "You look rough." Alya whispers.

Nathaniel yawns, "stayed up all night putting the finishing touches on my art contest project."

"For Clara Nightingale's thing?" Nathaniel nods, "uh... I take it you didn't hear the contest got postponed because all the judges caught food poisoning yesterday?"

Nathaniel's visible eye widens, "seriously?" Alya nods with a shrug. Nathaniel rubs at his face.

"It's not all bad. At least you have it done. No reason to stress over it anymore. I don't know if you're into this game or not, but this is a perfect opportunity to catch some shut-eye."

Humming, Nathaniel glances at the bits of blue poking out of that pink messenger bag on Alya's right. *Oh*. That must be Marinette. Asleep. The redhead is pretty certain he's caught Marinette asleep more times than he's seen her awake. "Sleep..." He yawns, "sounds like a good idea. Thanks Alya."

"I'll wake you up if anything explodes, off-screen."

"I appreciate that." Nathaniel puts his arms on the desk and his head on his arms. Before he can close his eyes he hears a scream. His head snaps up and he looks at the front of the

classroom where Sabrina is standing in outrage with a controller hanging limply in her hands.

“T-That’s impossible!” She yells.

“Told ya~” Kim sing-songs with a wink. Sabrina glares down at him, “who’s next?”

Sabrina clutches the controller moving it out of reach from the kid who tried grabbing it. “This isn’t over. I’ll be back. Make my way through the... through the...”

“Loser’s bracket~” Kim waves as she angrily drops the controller into the kid’s waiting hands.

“Just keep that warm for me.” She grumbles. Chloé pulls her along putting them both at the front desk with Ondine. The seats aren’t made for three people, especially with how tall Ondine is, but Chloé will make it work; she’ll be damned if she lets Dupain-Cheng or Kubdel (neither of who she’s seen yet) grab up Ondine like they’re trying to do with Alya. And Alya has famous relatives, she’s far too interesting and important to be around those two!

“You’ll get him next time.” Chloé sticks her tongue out at Kim for good measure and he blows her a kiss in response. “I have hand warmers so your fingers don’t cramp up while you wait.” Chloé hands Sabrina the hand warmer packets and the orange-haired teen sticks her hands inside them.

“Ooh! I like these. You’re the best, Chloé.”

The blonde flips her hair over her left shoulder. “Naturally, though it does need to be said out loud more.” She gasps, “you know, you can watch him play and get a feel for his strategy then figure out the best counters for it.”

“It’s a good idea but he isn’t using a strategy.”

“Of course he is! Even not using a strategy is a strategy in itself, Sabrina. There has to be a pattern to what he’s doing. What’s that phrase again, ‘a method to one’s madness?’”

Adrien turns around eyeing Chloé suspiciously, “and just how did you get so good at a game you’ve never even heard of until a few days ago?”

“Adrikins, I am nothing if not resourceful. Maman’s still a bit...” Chloé clears her throat, “...pissed I couldn’t design my own creation so she’s having me ...study study guides.”

“You’re studying... study guides?” Adrien repeats.

“That’s right. She said it’s time for her to take a more reactive stance on... something.” Chloé shrugs. “I don’t remember. Anyway, I’m studying from five guides: Fashion 101, Stratus’ Strategy Guide For Playing Video Games, Quick Fix – How To Put In Bathroom Fixtures Without A Professional, Languages Of Asia, and lastly The Style Queen’s Beginner’s Style Guide.”

“If one of the guides is *hers*, why can’t she just guide you herself?”

“My maman is a very busy woman, Adrikins, I can’t go bothering her with every question. She’s not gonna just give me her empire, I have to earn it.” Chloé scowls, “and I’ll be damned if it gets out of my family.”

“Why are you learning about bathroom fixtures?” Sabrina asks.

Chloé sighs, “my faucet started leaking. Jean-Whositwhatever was off the clock and papa and maman were... cuddling.” Chloé shudders, “that is not something I can unsee.”

“Awww. Cuddling is cute—” Chloé gives Sabrina a deadpan stare, “I-I mean ...ewww.”

“At least you didn’t catch them having sex.” Adrien says, *unhelpfully*, then his eyes widen. “U-Unless they *were*—?”

“Adrikins, *please*! I haven’t eaten breakfast yet. I do not need to think about my parents being unclothed.”

“*Next!*” Kim calls. Gasping, Sabrina looks up at the screen. The student she handed the controller to, the kid who just got so thoroughly defeated, hangs his head in shame as he slumps into a beanbag chair against the wall with a heavy sigh.

“The hell...?”

Chloé takes her phone out of her red and black polkadotted purse. “I’m ordering breakfast, what do you three want?”

“Next~” Kim sing-songs.

“*What?*” Sabrina sees a different kid sadly plop down into a beanbag chair as they hand off the controller. The match didn’t even last a minute! “Max!” She gaps then gets up and looks around. “Where is Max!? If anyone can stop Kim, it’ll be Max.”

Chloé pulls Sabrina back down without looking. “Or someone else could just get lucky?” Adrien says with a shrug.

“...No, no. You can order both.”

“But it says it’ll charge extra for substitutions.”

Chloé pats Ondine on the shoulder, “don’t worry about that. My friends deserve nothing but the best. Uh, hello? Your orders?” Chloé holds out her phone in Sabrina’s direction.

“Huh? Oh. Right.” Sabrina takes the phone.

“*Next!*” Kim shouts.

“Again?! Somebody stop him!” Sabrina screams clutching her head, dropping Chloé’s phone in the process. Fortunately, the blonde catches it before it hits the desk.

As if on cue, the door opens. Standing in the doorway are two girls: the one on the left wearing a black and white striped off-the-shoulder sweater and a pair of black jeans has shoulder-length dark blue hair styled in a bob, the one on the right wearing a grey and white starry henley t-shirt with and a pair of light blue jeans holding a brown binder against her chest has dark brown hair plaited into a pair of shoulder-length braided twintails over her shoulders. “Are we too late? Is this the Cycle Slaughter prelims?”

Everyone stares at the duo. “N-No.” Adrien is the first to speak then he shakes his head, “I mean *yes*.” The brunette tilts her head to the left.

“What he’s trying to say...” Chloé begins, “is no you’re not too late, and yes this is that... thing you just said. Cute top. I’m Chloé.”

The brunette smiles, “thanks. I’m Jess and this is Kagami.” The blue-haired girl inclines her head. Chloé’s eyes widen. She’s so... *beautiful*! Chloé has to get to her before anyone else!

Before the blonde can get up Lila does and skips over to the newcomers. “Hello again Kagami—” Chloé actually *growls*, “I’m Lila.” She tells Jess. Everyone shakes out of their stupor then resumes focusing on the game. “Right now my classmate Kim is on a hot streak. But that’s to be expected since he’s the fourth or fifth best player in the country at this game.”

“Really?” Jess asks and Lila nods.

“I’m twentieth, which isn’t as impressive compared to Kim.”

There’s a groan from the boy hanging his head in defeat as he hands off the controller. Kim gives a frustrated sigh, “you people aren’t even competition!” He yells, “c’mon! Give me a good game!”

The door opens and Alix steps into the classroom cracking her knuckles. “Do you have any idea how many of the bathrooms this school locks on a Saturday?” With a huff, she walks toward the back of the classroom. Everyone looks at the pink-haired teen who sits down in front of Ella and Etta. “Why are you all staring at me?”

Adrien gestures to the screen, “a-aren’t you gonna play?”

Alix laughs, “hell no. I’m not into that game.”

“B-But the timing...!” The blond argues.

“What ‘timing?’ I was only gone so long because the closest open bathroom is like ten minutes away.”

“Who’s next~?” Kim asks then everyone in the beanbag chairs looks back at the screen. Another kid picks up the controller before sitting down.

“There’s plenty of space if you two want a closer look at the action—”

“Kagami!” The teen in question turns to Alix waving.

“I believe I will sit with Alix,” Kagami inclines her head, “but thank you.”

“Yeah, thanks.” Jess follows after Kagami. With a shrug, Lila sits back in her beanbag chair.

“...These are my younger sisters Ella and Etta.” Alya introduces as she gesture to each twin.

Kim cups his hands around his mouth, “next.” He says with a sigh.

“I think it’s my turn.” Lila gets up then takes the controller from the boy with unshed tears in his eyes. “Uh, are you...”

“I’m fine.” He says with a sniffle then takes a seat on the right in the middle.

Lila sits down. “Not gonna go easy on you because you’re cute.”

Lila bats her eyelashes, “you think I’m cute?”

“C’mon Lola, you can take him!” Chloé cheers.

Lila’s eyebrows furrow, “Lola?”

She turns to the left where Rose is sitting, sort of in the middle of the two competitor seats. “I think she means you. I mean...” The blonde shrugs, “it’s close enough.” Lila shakes her head then turns back around. The tiny blonde turns to Chloé, “her name is *Lila*, Chloé.”

“Same thing. She should be lucky I’m rooting for her at all.”

Lila mutters under her breath gripping her controller.

Alix sits on the desk Kagami and Jess are sitting at, “never *ever* order anything in the

cafeteria with the word stew or beef in it! Matter of fact, don't eat anything from the cafeteria except the juices! At least those are packaged. The 'fresh' fruits are all plastic. Found that one out the hard way. Aurore's family runs the butcher shop two blocks from here. If you go there then go another block in the opposite direction to Sabine & Tom Boulangerie Pâtisserie you could get all the stuff to make yourself a great sandwich."

"This is so informative. Thank you, Alix."

"Hey, I've been here most my life. And I like to have every meal be an experience."

"*Psst!* Alix!" Alix cranes her head to the left and sees someone wearing a red hood and a pair of oversize red and black sunglasses beckoning her over.

"Uh... excuse me for a bit?" She turns around then slides off the desk and walks to the doorway. The kid in the hood grabs her pulling her out of the classroom.

"Ooh." Lila snaps her fingers in disappointment, "so close."

"That was the best game I had all day!" Kim yells.

"*Like hell it was!*" Sabrina screams back.

"Do me a favor and beat her so we can have a rematch?"

Lila smiles, "I'll try my hardest." Sabrina and Chloé both glare at her as she returns to the beanbag chair next to Ivan.

"I think you kicked our queen bee's beehive." Ivan whispers to her.

Lila flips her hair, "this school's in dire need of a new 'queen bee' if Chloé Bourgeois is the best it has to offer." Ivan whistles holding his fist for a fist-bump and Lila obliges.

"Good luck."

Lila pulls out her necklace showing it to Ivan. "Thank you, but I have all the *luck* I need."

“What is that?”

“A cornicello, it’s a symbol of good luck in Italy. I’ve had it since I was a baby.”

“It kinda looks like a pepper.”

Lila laughs tucking the necklace back under her shirt. “Kinda does, doesn’t it? Cornicello means ‘little horn,’ that’s as best I can translate it in French.”

“Good luck... French...” Ivan gasps then Lila raises an eyebrow at him. “Nothing. It’s a cool necklace.” Ivan suddenly gets up then looks around. “Be right back!” Lila watches him leave the classroom then shrugs.

Kim has beat another student and he yawns. “Anyone else?”

Adrien gets up, “ooh! I think it’s my turn.”

“*Destroy him Adrikins!*” Chloé and Sabrina cheer.

Adrien happily takes the vacated seat. “Good luck, Kim.”

Kim winks at him. “You too, Sunbeam.” Adrien blushes.

□□

“Marc, what’s with the getup?” As Ivan charges out of the classroom, Marc pulls Alix aside near a closed classroom door. With a sigh, Marc slowly pulls their sunglasses off. Alix sees red as she sees the bruise and cuts near Marc’s left eye. Fluff has to pull her hair from inside her hat to keep her from screaming, and possibly getting possessed by an akuma. “Who did this to you?” She grits out.

Marc puts the sunglasses back on, “right. I tell you, then you and Kim go storming over beating up a slew of kids. Next, your papa—”

Alix holds up a hand, “that jackass is no longer in the equation as far as I’m concerned.”

“What happened?”

“You first.”

Marc sighs, “nāinai enrolled me into this new school, Mercy Valley? Ironic name, all things considered. Thought it would be good for me? It was an all-boys school. Very writing focused. Or so the catalogue said. I don’t think it was super religious or anything but it was uncomfortably heteronormative, and to no surprise, incredibly homophobic. Not the type of place that would be thrilled to have a genderfluid classmate who likes boys. She pulled me out immediately, and since I never really transferred out she brought me back here. Guess I was in the school for like two hours tops? Consider this—” They point at their face, “—a going away present. Now your turn.”

“The old man tried to poison me, I’m staying with Marinette and her family.”

Marc gasps, putting their hands to their mouth. “Why?”

“I can’t tell you. For your own safety. Who knows what he might try and do with Marinette’s parents.” Marc nods moving their hands.

“Alix, I’m so sorry. I know your papa wasn’t the kindest man in the world but he is still blood.”

“All blood is is the stuff that keeps your body warm. Who the fuck cares who you biologically or genetically share it with?”

“I get that better than most.” They sigh, “it’s why I live with nāinai. Sadder thing is, I was already feeling crappy because I lost my idea book the day before.”

“You lost it here? I’ll help you look for it. Hell, we’ll get a search party going.”

“Thanks Alix but I really don’t want people looking into what’s in the book.”

“Then I’ll only get my most trusted, privacy protecting friends to be on the lookout.” She winks at Marc, “we’ll find your book so you can fill it with more ideas!” Alix puts an arm around Marc, “let me introduce you to a couple of new people.”

□□

When Alix and Marc enter the classroom, Kim is standing up and applauding Adrien – along with the rest of the class. Ivan enters the classroom behind them, nearly knocking both Alix and Marc over. “You lost?!”

“What? No. But Damn did Sunbeam play his nonexistent ass off.”

“Adrikins has plenty of ass!”

““Sunbeam?”” Alix raises an eyebrow.

“You know...!” Kim gestures to the aforementioned blond. “Because he’s all sunny and smiling all the time!”

“I like it. I’ve never had a nickname before.” He pauses. “A-Aside from Adrikins.”

Kim claps Adrien on the back. “You vs Lila should be a good one.” He spots the blue-haired teen adjusting their sunglasses. “M!” Kim hugs them. “You came to cheer me on!”

“Y-Yeah.”

Kim holds them back at arm’s length, “or are you here to compete?”

“Just cheer. I stopped playing Cycle Slaughter, remember?”

Kim sighs, “shame too. We would’ve had ourselves one hell of a game.” He lets go of Marc. “Alright, who’s next?”

“There is no one else.” Rose says, “you beat everyone.”

“Did I? Damn. I’m better than I thought. I’m just gonna relax until the loser’s bracket ends.”

“No!” Sabrina gets up, “where’s Max? He signed up for this!”

Everyone in the classroom begins looking around. “Hey, that’s right!” Kim brings his hands together. “Where is he?”

“I can call him and ask?” Alya suggests taking out her phone.

“You have Max’s phone number?” Kim asks.

“Luckyblog.” Alya replies dialing a single number on her phone.

Half the class jumps when they hear ringing coming from the classroom. Marinette’s head snaps up, “*buzzing!*” Kagami’s eyes widen as she looks at the blue-haired teen lifting a pink messenger bag off the desk. That’s the beautiful girl Alya mentioned to h—Lady Luck during the interview. She’s even more beautiful in person, and her hat is so stylish.

There are multiple gasps as there’s a vibrating cellphone playing some unfamiliar ominous tone with the word Luckyblogger above Alya’s picture on the screen.

“If that’s Max’s phone... where’s Max?” Alya grabs the phone before Marinette puts her bag back down. The taller teen yawns and rubs the back of her neck.

“Wait a second!” Everyone turns to Chloé. “The tiny floating thing that the little nerd boy always has with him? Let’s look for that. If we find that, we’ll find the nerd attached to it.” Chloé gets up, putting both hands on the desk, “this is of dire importance! If we can’t find that kid we won’t get any more really good footage of the next akuma attack and I need a new wallpaper of Lady Luck for my new phone case!” The majority of the students in the beanbag chairs get up as well. “This is for Lady Luck!”

“We can’t fail Lady Luck!” They cheer.

Lila gets up, “*I say we split up.*” Chloé glares at the brunette. “We’ll cover more ground. All you... hyper excited people should check the two upstairs floors.” They all nod then cheer Lady Luck’s name as they leave. “The rest of us will stay downstairs and look.”

“Who the hell elected you in charge?”

Lila scoffs, “I elected *myself*. *You’re* just trying to do this for yourself. *I’m* trying to find a

fellow classmate. If you have nothing else to contribute, you should just stay here until we get back. Come on everyone. We have lots of ground to cover.”

“*Nobody! Move!*” Chloé holds both her arms out in front of her. When everyone stares at her, she stomps over to Lila. “*Just who the fuck do you think you are?*”

“I *know* I’m Lilyana Victorya Rossi! I also *know* your reign of terror is coming to an end, Chloé Bourgeois. Consider yourself warned. Let’s go people.”

“You don’t want to dance with me, Green-Eyes.”

“Oh but I do, Blondie, and you should know that I’m an excellent dancer. Let’s go, everyone.” She flips her hair before walking out of the classroom.

Chloé runs after Lila but Sabrina runs after Chloé grabbing the blonde by the waist, holding her at the doorway “Chloé, Chloé? *Think* about this!”

“*The only thing I’m thinking about is knocking that smug smile off her ugly face!*” Chloé screams. “*No one talks to me like that!*”

“I believe we should prepare ourselves.” Chloé’s head snaps up and she turns around. Kagami’s sitting on the desk, “your level of anger is likely going to attract an akuma, and soon.” Sabrina pries Chloé from the doorway.

“*Everyone run!*” She yells. The classroom empties quickly and without complaint. “Chloé, you need to calm down. You don’t want to fight Lady Luck.”

“*All I want is to get that bitch then Lady Luck can take the akuma from me!*”

“You’re not making any sense, Chloé! How do you know Mite and Méfait don’t get stronger with every akuma attack?”

Chloé grabs Sabrina by the shoulders, “*of course I’m not making any sense! That’s how pissed I am! I will ruin that girl’s life for even thinking she can talk to me at all, let alone like that!*”

Alya peers out from the doorway with her phone watching Chloé and Sabrina pace around

the classroom, “huh. No akuma. Weird. How long has it been?”

Kim, Ivan, and Adrien all poke their heads into the classroom looking around. “About five minutes now. I don’t get it.” Adrien says, “akumas are fast. One would’ve been here by now. Especially with how many have come from the school. Maybe someone can’t be infected twice?”

Mylène’s head pops under Adrien’s, “it’s possible. I mean Chloé was just furious a few weeks back when she...” She pauses, “something happened and Chloé was furious yet no akuma came.”

“Must’ve realized Chloé with superpowers is a dangerous combination yet not really an effective one.” Everyone looks at Kim. “Come on, I can’t be the only one who realized that? Do you have *any* idea the damage Chloé—sorry, ‘Queen Idol’s’—knights could’ve done to the school? To the city? They were just *patrolling* for Marinette. And none of them found her! Hell, they even captured Marinette’s parents and did *nothing* to them! I know Mite and Méfait are dumbasses squared but even *they* had to realize hitting Chloé again will give them more of the same.”

“Kim, I don’t think we *want* competent bad guys.” Ivan mutters, “and we definitely don’t wanna give them any pointers.” He nudges the other boy with a knowing look and Kim rolls his eyes.

“*T-That means an akuma is already here... looking for someone else!*” Mylène squeaks. The group gasps looking around.

“*Look!*” Alya screams. “Chloé! Sabrina!” Both girls stop walking and look over at the doorway then toward the window and huddle together screaming as an akuma flies through the opened window and into Chloé’s pendant.

“Guess they hadn’t realized it?” Mylène whispers.

“Maybe Mme. Mite took a bathroom break?” Ivan shrugs.

Instead of the signature butterfly mask of Mite appearing around Chloé’s face one appears over both of their faces.

“W-What’s happening?!” Adrien gasps.

“There was only one butterfly, right!? How did it get both of them!?” Ivan screams. He grabs Kim, “*they must’ve been listening to you!*” He shakes the other boy.

“They were holding onto each other!” Alya yells. “The akuma went into Chloé’s chain and since she and Sabrina were holding onto each other... it spread to both of them!” The others gasp.

“No big, Mme. Mite. But first thing’s first.” Chloé and Sabrina chorus as the ooze overtakes both of their bodies at the same time.

“Bad news luckies, Mite can possess multiple people... if they are all holding onto the same afflicted object.” Alya whispers. “Uh... more details to come.”

When the ooze dissipates, two identically dressed figure skaters with red skin and black hair tied in buns, wearing red and black polkadotted leotards with all red skirts, a red tail, and red cat ears with black insides are left standing. The skater on the right spins the skater on the left causing the ground below them to turn to ice, then the right skater dips the left. “In harmony.” The right skater proclaims.

“As always.” The left skater finishes.

When they’re both standing up straight, the butterfly mask appears over both of their faces. “Lila Rossi is done for!”

“We’re fucked.” Kim dusts his hands off pushing himself off the doorway.

The skaters skate out of the classroom leaving a trail of ice in their wake.

Everyone in the doorway moved back as they saw the skaters approaching. Adrien kneels down and taps the ice. Kim takes a step on the ice and immediately slips falling on his ass. “It’s real, alright.”

Mylène gasps, “Alya’s gone!”

“Of course she is.” Kim and Ivan mutter. The latter helps the former up.

□□

“Max?” Lila calls out. “Max, where are you?”

Alix puts her hands behind her head, “you’re awfully calm for someone who’s gonna be an akuma target.” She points out.

“*Please.*” The brunette scoffs, “*me* be in danger from *Chloé*? We all saw ‘Queen Idol.’ *She was utterly useless.*” She says imitating Chloé and Alix laughs. “How did you guys just... *let* Chloé get away with all that shit she’s gotten away with?”

“*We* didn’t really *let* her do anything.” Rose replies with a sigh, “it was more like the staff stopped us from stopping her. It was like the staff were all under this spell of doing whatever Chloé said because her papa is the mayor and if we disagreed we were sent to Principal Damocles’ office.” The blonde frowns, “I also had this... philosophy. I figured people act bratty when they want attention. Chloé has two famous, super busy parents. Like I said, her papa is mayor. Her maman is *The Queen of Fashion*; an internationally famous fashion columnist or something. I don’t know. I just know it involves fashion and writing. Anyway, maybe because her parents weren’t around much she didn’t get enough attention from them? So she had to get attention from where she could?” Rose’s frown deepens, “only... giving Chloé attention didn’t stop her from acting bratty, and ignoring her didn’t work either! Like Majestia, I believed there is good in *everyone*! Deep, *deep* down.” The blonde balls up her fists, “but Majestia was wrong! Not everyone has good in them. There truly is no good in that selfish... *brat*! The only reason she even mentioned trying to find Markov – not Max – was for her to get better pictures of Lady Luck! *Everything* ‘nice’ Chloé has ever done was for her own benefit! She has ridiculed and mocked us for two straight years and I’m sick of it! I’m sick of *her*! *Her and her stupid ponytail!*”

Lila rubs at Rose’s shoulders, “doesn’t it feel better getting that all out?” Taking a deep breath, Rose nods, “wonder how long you had that all pent up? And this isn’t all on you, you know. Optimism like yours is hard to come by nowadays. But you’re right when you say there is no good in a piece of work like Chloé. There’s always one at every school.”

Rose sighs heavily, “I feel for Mylène though...”

“Hey everyone!” Marinette calls out. Everyone runs over to the tall, blue-haired teen who is standing in front of the open supply closet. The group gasps as they see Max on the floor unconscious.

“We’re in the shit now.” Alix proclaims as she helps Marinette carry Max out of the supply

closet and into the hallway. The ten of them hover over the unconscious boy. “Once the smart kid is offed, the rest of us morons will get picked off one-by-one.”

Rose screams, “oh no!”

“*Please* tell me we’re not involved in some Scooby Doo type of mystery...?” Kagami asks with a frown, folding her arms over her chest.

“*Oh no!*” Rose screams again, grabbing her face.

“Get a hold of yourself.” Jess grabs the blonde by the shoulders, “the last thing we need is to lose our composure. That’s when the cartoonish shenanigans begin.” She lets go of Rose who immediately latches onto Alix. “Does anyone have any perfume bottles or anything of the like on them? We can make smelling salts to wake him up.”

“That’s a weirdly specific request and skillset...” Nathaniel mutters looking at Jess who looks back at him.

The brunette raises an eyebrow, “and just what is so weirdly specific about it...?”

Marinette is the only one in the group with a bag on her. She looks through the messenger bag around her shoulder then shakes her head. “I have this rose salve but it’s not very perfumy.” Marinette takes the red tube out of her bag then hands it to Jess. The brunette takes a tentative sniff of the tube then hands it back to Marinette shaking her head.

“No, it isn’t... perfumy enough. We’ll have to try other ways of waking your friend up.”

“Ooh!” Alya’s little sisters raise their hands. “We can do that!” The one on the left, wearing the black hoodie, says. “I’m good at waking people up.”

“It’s true. Etta’s the best.” Says the one wearing the green hoodie. Etta cracks her knuckles then kneels on the floor next to Max. She gently takes off his glasses and hands them to her twin. “You all *might* wanna take a step back.”

After exchanging glances, everyone looks down at Ella before taking one huge step backward. Etta gets up then falls on Max’s body knocking the wind out of him.

“Effective...” Kagami says with a hum.

When Max wakes up coughing, Ella hands him his glasses. “H-Huh? What happened?”

“We were hoping you could tell us that. I’m Etta by the way. Alya’s my big sister. I love the Luckyblog. I wanna be like Karma someday.”

Alix clasps her hands together, “*awww*.”

“I wanna be like Karma too! I’m Ella!” They both help Max up.

“You both...? But what about Lady Luck?” Jess asks.

The twins scoff, “cats are better than ladybugs.” They reply simultaneously.

“I like these two.” Alix beams, putting an arm around both of them.

“We’re the club presidents of the Karma club in our school.” Ella says nodding. “We have more members than the Lady Luck club.”

“I like how you two think.” Alix says with a nod. “We gotta get a Karma club doing here.”

“Max, do you know what happened to you?” Lila asks, “how you ended up in a supply closet?”

“A supply closet?” He rubs his head, “Markov and I were in the classroom computing any last-minute possibilities in the Cycle Slaughter tournament. I arrived at 7:15am, fifteen minutes earlier than the leaflet instructed.”

“Fifteen...? Max, the Cycle Slaughter tournament started at *nine*!” Rose says finally releasing her grip on Alix.

“What? The leaflet I have said 7:30. I must’ve been given false information deliberately to throw me off my rhythm.” Adjusting his glasses, Max hums. “The last thing I remember was opening my locker. Markov was glitching and—” He gasps, “*Markov*!” Max looks around, “where is Markov? He was right beside me.”

“Didn’t see him in the supply closet but I’ll look again.” Alix and Marc both head into the supply closet.

“You must’ve been rendered unconscious when your back was turned at your locker.” Kagami deduces, “such a cowardly tactic.”

“Then Markov was taken.” Max agrees. “With him glitching there would be no way of forewarning.”

There’s rattling then a large clattering noise before both Alix and Marc jump out of the closet, with mops and brooms falling behind them. “No Markov.” They both say.

“There are *a lot* of cleaning supplies in there.” Marc says dusting himself off.

“Chloé got the janitor fired, remember? Not that anyone was cleaning this school before.” Alix locks her hands behind her head, “anywhere else you went to before you lost Markov?”

Max shakes his head, “I entered the building at 7:15am, then I entered the classroom the tournament was being held at 7:16am. As I was comparing strategies, Markov began to glitch. I went to my locker at approximately 7:22am... and then—” He looks at the watch on his hand, “several minutes before 10:43am.”

“Needless to say, someone wanted you out of the tournament.” Jess says, “let’s head to your locker. We might find more clues.”

When the group gets to Max’s locker they gasp as they see the locker is open and all of its contents are on the floor in disarray. “W-Who could’ve done this?” Marinette asks as everyone begins helping Max pick up his stuff.

“The art contest!” Nathaniel gasps, “the art contest where the winner gets to spend a day with Clara Nightingale? That’s enough motivation for someone to—” His eyes widen, “*my art project!* I-I left everything in the classroom!”

Kagami gets up, “come. We will see if anything of yours is missing.” Nathaniel nods then gets up.

“Be careful you two.” Lila says. They both nod before running off toward the classroom.

“You know... I overheard that blonde girl – the finalist for the weather contest earlier in the month? and another girl... the one always with Chloé? I heard the two of them mentioning how they *needed* to find a way to see Clara Nightingale. What if they’re responsible for all this?”

“Weather contest...? You mean Aurore?” Rose shakes her head, “Sabrina *can* be as nasty as Chloé but Aurore wouldn’t do something like this. No matter how much she loves Clara Nightingale.” Rose frowns turning to Alix, “I thought you said having Sabrina on your roller derby team was making her sorta bearable?”

“I did. She’s one hell of a teammate, but school is another matter entirely.”

“Then let’s check her locker.” The twins suggest.

“I got a great lock-picking technique.” Alix says tipping the top of her cap down.

The others watch Alix press her head against the locker as she jiggled the lock of Sabrina’s locker then when she bangs her fist against the locker it pops open. “That was amazing!” Lila exclaims, “how did you do that?”

“Sorry. Can’t give away my secrets.” Markov drops out of Sabrina’s locker and everyone gasps.

“Markov!” Max picks up the robot, cradling him in his arms, “he’s been deactivated. The glitching must’ve worn out his battery. Does anyone have a hairpin?” Everyone takes a hairpin out from their hair and holds it toward Max. “Uh... *wow*. Thank you.” He takes Rose’s hairpin as it’s the closest to him. Max injects the hairpin into the top of Markov’s head just above his face screen. The screen lights up blue and words and symbols rapidly appear on the screen.

Everyone watches as words and symbols keep appearing until the screen goes grey. The screen suddenly turns red. “Error 2404!” The robot exclaims then the screen blacks out.

“Error 2404...?” Alix asks. “What does that mean?”

“Not sure, but if it’s anything like Error 404, it can’t be good.” Jess replies frowning.

Marinette puts a hand on the bespectacled teen’s shoulder, “don’t worry, Max. We’ll make

this right.”

“And we’ll start off by trashing Sabrina’s locker!” Alix suggests.

“On it!” The twins exclaim.

“*Wait!*” Max yells, “that won’t make me feel better. And I don’t think Sabrina is responsible for stealing Markov. Markov fell from the top of the locker. Sabrina is not tall enough to reach the top of her locker—”

“Oh.” Alix’s eyes widen as she points at Max. “You’re right! *Chloé* always stashes *her* stuff at the top of Sabrina’s locker so she can have more space in her locker.”

Lila taps her chin. “But who else has access to Sabrina’s locker?”

“Someone’s here.” The group turns to Marinette. “I heard footsteps from around the corner.”

Jess tosses one of Max’s books at the corner and someone screams then falls so they’re visible. “Aww nuts.”

“*François?*” Alix exclaims.

The brunette picks herself up off the floor. “I just wanted to see what you losers were doing. Skulking around the halls and whatnot.”

“You!” Alix storms over to the girl who stops in the middle of the hall, “what did you do to Markov?”

“I didn’t *do* anything. Don’t pin the blame on me for being model height when you’re still as small as a gradeschool—” The brunette hisses in pain as Alix kicks her in the shin, “you puny little bitch!”

Alix grabs her by the hair when she doubled over in pain, “I’m losing my patience *Double E Aimée.*”

“Alright! Alright! I stuffed the stupid thing in Raincomprix’s locker! Now let go of my hair!

It took me two hours to get it this wavy!” Alix yanks at her hair again before letting go.

Alix's eyes narrow. “How’d you even get in Sabrina’s locker?”

“It was open. Besides, with our parents dating we have to ‘play nice.’” The brunette bats her eyelashes. “Anyway,” She dusts herself off. “Lemon Uppercut is gonna destroy you losers next match. You’d better believe that.” She runs a hand through her hair and growls, “my hair! You’ll pay for this pipsqueak!”

Alix rolls her eyes. “Come up with new material, I’ve heard every short joke in the book.”

“Well of course you have, there’s such a small amount.”

“Where did you find Markov?”

The brunette huffs, “since when did you speak *loser*, Keynes? Associating yourself with the freaks from the akuma summoning class? You think I’m a terror? I’m not even on the same level as the mayor’s brat.”

Jess frowns. “That doesn’t matter. Answer the question.”

Aimée rolls her eyes, “*fine*. Whatever. The thing was just in the hall. I heard this loud bang and I saw—him—” She points at Max, “fall out of the closet and everything fall out on top of him. I didn’t put him in there I only laughed when I saw him fall. When I realized he was out cold, I ran.” The girl throws her arms in the air, “anyway, I’m bored. So I’m gonna go back to the tournament. Oh wait!” She mock gasps. “That’s right, I can’t! Chloé got possessed by an akuma *again*. And she took her toady with her this time.”

“Wait, what did you say?”

“I guess I can’t expect the hearing to be all that good down there.”

“Your lanky limbs make your body extra easy to tip over on skates.” Alix growls.

The brunette flinches, “I-I said Chloé and Chloé-Orange are both possessed by an akuma. Don’t you follow the luckyblog? She’s posting live.” Aimée squints at her phone, “oh shit!

They're approaching this hallway!" She screams then runs down the opposite end of the hall a red and black blur passes by her and she freezes mid-step.

Everyone gasps. "Jinkies!" Marinette whispers.

"Yoo-hoo~" A pair of identically dressed skaters skate over to the group then skate in a circle surrounding them in a ring of ice. "Hand over Rossi and no one gets iced." They speak in unison. One of the skaters is holding onto Alya who is encased in ice with the exception of her hands and head; the orange-haired teen shivers as she holds onto her phone.

"Alya!" Rose screams.

"Oh don't worry about her!" The skater holding Alya says flippantly, "we just wanted the luckyblogger—"

"—To record our momentous introduction!" The other finishes.

"It's like they share one brain. That's Chloé and Sabrina alright." Alix snickers and behind her, Marinette laughs.

"Oh great!" Lila rolls her eyes putting her hands on her hips, "we don't need this right now. What's the matter? Am I too much for *Big Bad Chloé Bourgeois* to handle on her own so she calls for backup from her toady and Mme. Mite? You're pathetic, Chloé!"

One of the skaters stops in front of Lila sneering, "you wanna say that again?"

"You're. Pathetic." Lila enunciates. "I don't need to stoop to Mme. Mite's level to take you down." The butterfly mask outline appears over both skaters' faces. "And whatever you do to me will be undone by the Miraculous Cure. So go ahead and do your worst. I'm right here!"

"You think yourself noble?" The skater screams, "you aren't worth turning into a sculpture, not without suffering first!" The other skater skates over to Lila and pokes her in the chest. The spot touched pulses blue then Lila breaks out into a full-body shiver and she clutches her chest and drops to her knees gasping for air.

"Oh no! I-I think she's freezing Lila's organs." Marc shrugs off their jacket and as they throw it over Lila's body, the skater touches the jacket freezing it and Marc.

“Oh no, you don’t!” The skater tsks, “how dumb are you trying to protect that pathetic wannabe? You think she’d do the same for you, Pretty Boy?”

“You know something?” The skaters skate over to each other leaning on each other, “I think they *all* need a lesson in messing with Perfect Pair.”

“Couldn’t’ve said it better myself.”

“Run!” Jess grabs the twins’ hands making a break for it.

“*Good!* Run! Make it fun for us!” The skaters taunt, “we’re on skates! You can’t get away! You’re just fodder until Lady Luck shows up!” Jess and the twins dive for the ground narrowly avoiding behind touched by the skaters. They growl then turn around and charge toward them again. Before they can touch Jess, Rose slides in front of the skaters putting her arms out.

“Couldn’t wait your turn, hm? Well, we’ll be happy to oblige.”

The blonde *beams* then ducks, Alix jumps over Rose’s body then tackles both skaters to the ground. Alix then somersaults off their bodies then manages to land on her rollerblades. She skates on the ice backwards, “come on chumps, you think you can outskate *me!*?”

“After her!” They get to their feet then skate after Alix.

“*Go Alix!*” Rose cheers. She runs over to the twins helping them both up.

“That was soooo cool! *She’s* so cool!” The twins gush.

Rose giggles then helps Jess. “Was she rollerskating on ice?” Rose nods, “should we... *can we* even help her?”

“Alix can take care of herself.” Rose waves Jess off, “twice when we were in cinquième last year she fought and won against some boys in their third year of lycée!” Jess’ jaw drops. “Alix is pretty strong. And she’s like almost unstoppable on skates.” The blonde shrugs, “it wouldn’t surprise me if she took out the akumas before Lady Luck and Karma arrived.” Rose blinks. Huh. It wouldn’t be surprising if Alix turned out to *be* Lady Luck either. They are about the same height and Rose has never seen the two in the same place. If there was anyone

in the world that had inexplicable luck, it was Alix Kubdel. “Come on, Max and Marinette went in opposite directions. Let’s see if we can catch up to them. Marinette is pretty good on skates too but I don’t know how she is on ice.”

□□

Alix had elected to distract the akuma duo so Marinette could get away and transform. “You gotta love Hops, huh? Fearless one she is. I admire her bravery.” Plagg claps his paws together. “You ready?”

“Ready. Claws out, Plagg.” *As Marinette transforms*, one of Cosmic Colt’s portals sucks her in.

Karma manages to land on her feet. Beside her is Lady Luck with her arms folded over her chest, “this better be good.” She grits out.

Bovine holds out two boxes toward each of them then the damn blackout curtains drop themselves over their bodies after they accept the boxes. “It took longer than expected but these are the power-up treats for your kwamis. I also put the recipes inside the box lids. “You may not think we are on your side but we are, and we will continue to help you two fight against Mme. Mite and M. Méfait.”

Cosmic Colt sighs, “the reason we cannot reveal ourselves is because our civilian forms losing the Miraculouses will put you two at a huge disadvantage.”

“Claws in, Plagg.”

Lady Luck turns to the left and can barely make out Karma’s civilian silhouette. Damn curtains. *Wait*, why is she curious now? “Spots off, Tikki.” Tikki floats out of Lady Luck’s right antenna then floats down to the bento box. Kagami lifts the lid and looks at the eight colorful cookies in the box. She checks the lid and sees, written in kanji, are the instructions to create treats. The instructions also state there is a hidden compartment in the bento box that’ll give her access to the tubes for the power-ups. “I take it, with skaters, we’ll need the ice power-up.” Tikki picks up the ice blue square cookie with the snowflake symbol on it from the bento box and takes a tentative sniff.

“The ice power-up always left a minty aftertaste, right Sugarcube?”

Tikki giggles, “I nearly forgot.” Kagami briefly met with Plagg to take the exhaustion lock

off Karma's Miraculous. During that time, Tikki and Plagg spent some time talking to each other. Plagg gushed about how amazing his Chosen was. Karma *is* amazing so it's good her kwami thinks so.

Tikki takes a bite of the cookie and then she blows out ice as she exhales. "Karma, I have a suggestion."

"I'm all ears."

Kagami stifles her laugh. "As I have the Miracle Box, I feel it's only fitting you be in possession of the power-ups."

"You sure?"

"So you told her?" Bovine asks.

"Told her and took the exhaustion lock off my Miraculous. By the way, thanks for that. I do so love being dead in the water."

"As I've said, you may recall, it was for your Intended's protection that we placed the lock on the Miraculouses. And remember, it wasn't just you two but the two of us and Mme. Mite and M. Méfait's Miraculouses as well."

"The exhaustion lock doesn't seem to be hindering Mite or Méfait or the two of you."

"We are just better at hiding it." Cosmic Colt sighs out. "There is more. There is a book of instructions for Miraculouses—"

"And let me guess... those winged pains in our asses are in possession of said book?" She hears Karma ask.

"It is possible." Bovine answers.

"Why are you only bringing this to our attention *now*?" Kagami hisses.

"Because the book has multiple copies." Cosmic Colt sighs again. "There is a lot about the

Miraculouses you two do not know.”

“Says the pot to the kettle,” Kagami mutters. “I’ve heard enough. Spots on Tikki. Power-up ice.”

“Bye Plagg!”

“Later Sugarcube!”

“Claws out, Plagg. Power-up ice.” When the curtains draw back instead of float above them like last time, Karma is admiring her... leg. Her ankles and feet are covered in bright green skates with black blades. There’s a flowy bright green skirt over her waist. She’s wearing mittens rather than her usual gloves. And she has *earmuffs* over her ears. It’s... It’s so... *cute* !

Lady Luck takes the opportunity to look at her ice-themed changes and is disappointed when she can’t see any notable ones. Her skates are polkadotted, like the suit, and her blades are red. *Some* “Creativity” Avatar she turned out to be. Maybe Bunnyx got their Miraculouses wrong when she “reset” this world?

“Hold your arms out.” Cosmic Colt instructs.

Lady Luck does so apprehensively and sees there is black cloth attached to her sleeves. “It’s nice...” Karma says inspecting it, “but what do they *do* ?”

“I am uncertain. They may just be there for the ice aesthetic.”

Lady Luck shakes her head, “can you let us out now? We have two akumas to stop.”

“Thanks for the power-ups.” Karma nudges Lady Luck.

“Yes, *we* appreciate your assistance.” She says through grit teeth.

With a nod, Cosmic Colt waves his hand aimlessly and a portal appears. Lady Luck and Karma walk out of the portal and land on the icy floors of François Düpont.

“I have a confession...” Lady Luck says.

“Can’t skate? I can roller skate but never tried ice skating. Should be the same principle, right?”

“Theoretically?”

“Let’s practice a bit before we take on those akumas and embarrass ourselves.” Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your perspective, the floors are frozen solid providing plenty of room to practice. “By the way...” Karma has a more mischievous than usual look on her grinning face, “I have a bit of an idea? Just a little something for fun. We *are* supposed to be having fun with this gig, right?”

“I trust you, remember?” Karma’s grin widens.

□□

“Great. We can’t find Kubdel, we can’t find *anyone*! We’re being recorded looking like jackasses!”

“You’re not the one holding onto Alya, and why are you complaining? I’m following you!”

The lights cut out. Alya drops out of the akuma’s hands with an audible thud. “What the—!?” They exclaim simultaneously.

“*Prepare for trouble...*” A voice calls out.

“*...And make that double...*” Says another voice.

“You can’t be serious.” The skaters deadpan.

“*...To protect Paris from akuma possessions...*”

“*...To combine our powers against your transgressions...*”

“*...Denouncing the evils of the peafowl and butterfly...*”

“...We gotta come up with some kind of battle cry...”

“...Lady Luck...”

“...Karma!”

“I am the ladybug with the powers of creation...”

“...And I’m the black cat empowered by devastation...”

“...We’re on skates and don’t mean to be crude...”

“...But with these ice outfits, you akumas are screwed.”

“As impressive as that was, no duo is more in sync than Perfect Pair!” The skaters' chorus.

“Is that...”

“...A fact?”

The lights turn on and Lady Luck and Karma skate in front of the akumas in harmony. They both point at the akumas, “we challenge you to a skate-off. Loser gives up their powers.” They say in unison.

“*What!?*” Alya shrieks.

“You’ve got yourself a deal!” Perfect Pair say laughing. The butterfly mask outlines appear over their faces and they abruptly stop laughing, “we’ll get the Miraculouses when we win!” Then the outlines disappear.

“A skate-off?” Alix skates over to the four of them on her rollerblades, “cool. I’ll judge.”

“You’ll just cheat!” The skaters yell.

Alix shrugs, “so? So will you.”

“Hmm... true. We’ll allow it. You’ll need all the advantages you can get. Too bad Kubdel isn’t skating for you.” The akumas laugh.

“Rules are simple.” Alix declares. “Two laps around the frozen schoolgrounds. Where I’m standing is the start and stop line. Whichever *pair of skaters* – that means both of you – get back to me first wins. Simple as that. Oh! But you’re gonna have to leave Alya. Or don’t. I mean, the extra ice will only slow you down.”

The akumas then Lady Luck and Karma all line up. “Guess that’s that. Racers to your mark!” Alix looks around, “set? Skate!” She waves her hand then they all take off.

“Alix, are you sure this is a good idea?” Alya asks.

“Yup! A good old-fashioned skate-off. Who says we have to *fight* akumas all the time?”

“I agree, fighting akumas is getting old...” Alya watches Alix skate over to her, “but what if Lady Luck and Karma *lose*?”

“I know Chloé is a lot of things but she’s also a fan of Lady Luck. Like a hardcore superfan of Lady Luck. Even mindmelded with the bad guy, she’s on Lady Luck’s team.” Alix lifts her leg then slams her rollerblade down onto the block of ice and it shatters, freeing Alya.

“Holy shit!” Alya holds onto Alix as she gets to her feet, “h-how—*how*!? I-I didn’t even catch it all on tape!” Four blurs speed by. “W-Wha—?” Alya looks around.

“Final lap!” Alix calls out. “C’mon, we gotta be on the other side to call the winners.” She hums to herself skating across the hall.

Alya takes off her sneakers then slides across the hall to Alix. When she sits on the ice, she puts her sneakers back on.

Meanwhile, Perfect Pair were skating backwards looking at Lady Luck and Karma gaining speed behind them. “Isn’t this just so droll? Let’s make this skate a bit more fun!” The akumas spread their arms out and the whole hallway begins freezing.

Lady Luck, who had been using the wall to help her turn, flails a bit before moving her hand before it gets turned to ice.

The akumas gasp, “Lady Luck!” When Lady Luck manages to secure her footing, the akumas sigh in relief.

“*Cataclysm!*” The skaters’ eyes widen as Karma’s glowing right hand slams into the floor behind them; or in front of them as they are skating backwards. The akumas gasp holding onto each other as the floor begins to crumble and the crumbling spreads in their direction. Screaming, they flail backward as they continue skating; trying to outskate the crumbling floor.

Karma expertly skates over the spreading cracks in the crumbling floor over to Lady Luck and picks her up, “sorry, Boss! Hope you know what the ‘fastball special’ is?”

“No, but I can guess!”

“Hug your knees against your chest!” Lady Luck curls into herself as Karma throws her forward.

Perfect Pair scream and Lady Luck lands on the one on the right causing her to fall backwards, then she trips the other skater. Laughing, Lady Luck crosses the finish line. Perfect Pair stop a *millimetre* in front of Alix’s rollerblade then Karma skates past them. “Winner! Lady Luck and Karma!” Alya whistles making crowd cheering noises.

“That... was exhilarating!” Lady Luck skates back over to Perfect Pair still facedown on the ice, “we made a deal, Perfect Pair.”

They both lift their heads, “can we have an autograph?”

Lady Luck loses her balance then falls on her butt, “...” The akumas stare at her and she stares back. “How about *after* we release the akuma from its corruption?”

“Oh hey. Sure thing. Right ...here.” The akuma unclasps the ladybug collar from around her neck and an akuma begins to climb out of it.

Lady Luck unlatches her yo-yo and it turns into a net, then she uses the net to scoop up the

akuma. Once it's purified, she releases it. "And that's... that. No more corrupting, little butterfly." She tosses the yo-yo in the air, "*miraculous cure!*" The magical ladybugs burst from the yo-yo. They cover the duo from head to toe reverting them both to Sabrina and Chloé who are sitting on the floor holding onto each other. Then the ladybugs begin unfreezing the hallway and everything else.

Karma helps Lady Luck up. "And we're still in the skates. Didn't we transform back last time?" Chloé jumps up.

"Lady Luck!" She gasps hugging the hero.

Lady Luck holds Chloé back at arm's length and narrows her eyes, "did you deliberately cause an akuma?"

"*What?! Eww! No! Of course not! I would never do anything like that! Some idiotic jealous classmate of mine thought it was smart to mouth off at me. She'll be dealt with. Later. Let's deal with now~*" Chloé lifts up her necklace and screams. "*M-My necklace!!*" When Lady Luck lets go of Chloé, the blonde holds her necklace out toward Lady Luck. "I-I had this specially made to show you. I-It's all broken!"

"The necklace had to be broken so that the akuma would be released." Karma states.

"I-I thought *magic* got the akumas out of whatever they were in!?" Sabrina asks.

"Nope. It's good old brute force." Karma replies with a toothy grin. Chloé glares at her. "Anyway, I'm gonna book. You can take care of this, right?" Karma doesn't wait for a reply before she uses her baton as a pole vault out the window of the classroom they were standing in front of.

"Karma!" Lady Luck blinks as Karma leaves. "Odd."

"Who cares about *her*? Alya get a picture of me and Lady Luck together!"

Alix slides her phone in Alya's pocket. "That's my phone. It's gonna cost you 1000 euros for each snap." She nudges Alya who nods.

Chloé groans, "*fine! Whatever! Just do it!*"

“Wait! Wait!” As Chloé puts her hand around Lady Luck’s shoulder, Sabrina squeezes in the photo and falls in the first picture.

“Sabrina!” Chloé gasps, she picks the orange-haired teen up. “Go stand on Lady Luck’s other side.” Nodding, Sabrina complies then they take more pictures.

“Enough!” Lady Luck ducks under Chloe’s arm causing Chloé and Sabrina to fall against each other, “consider this your autograph.” Her shoes are still skates so she carefully manages to walk out an exit.

□□

Since the akuma attack happened before the loser’s bracket was to begin, the bracket matches were postponed which also postponed the next round.

Kitty Section is having its first tryout slash practice at two.

The akuma attack managed to last until just a little after noon which gave Rose plenty of time to make the bus she needed to get downtown to the pier. And since Ivan is a gentleman who’d *never* allow Rose to take public transportation or join a band with a *really* cute guitarist by her lonesome, he tagged along.

Alix also showed an interest in joining the band, so she tagged along as well. As did Marinette, Max, Markov, Nathaniel, Marc, Kim, Jess, Kagami, Alya, Etta, Ella, and Lila. Oh! And Adrien was also with them. ...Oddly enough.

Rose runs up to the last boat docked on the pier. “We’re here!” She yells out of breath.

“Arr! There be landlubbers afoot!” Rose skids to a stop then falls backward into Ivan as the grey-haired bespectacled woman in full-on pirate garb holding a pirate telescope walks onto the plankboard attached to the dock.

Ivan helps the blonde to her feet. “Um, hello?” Rose waves. “W-We’re here for tryouts?”

Juleka climbs up from the netting onto the deck. When she sees the group, she walks over to the grey-haired woman. “Maman—I mean *Captain*, these are my friends.” She says.

“Oh?” Juleka nods, “hope you mateys have your sealegs handy.” The captain takes a bow. “Captain Anarka Couffaine and this be Liberty.” She gestures to the boat, “ye know me boatswain and gunner.” She jerks a thumb at Juleka. “Introduce yerselves.” Everyone salutes the captain then states their name as they board the ship.

“Welcome aboard! Pirates need music as they need the sea! The instruments be in the lower deck.”

“Adrikins!” Adrien pauses as he steps on the boat. Chloé’s town car stops close to the pier and the blonde runs out of the car. Adrien walks off the plank as Chloé runs over to him then puts her hands on her legs to catch her breath.

“Chloé, what are you doing here?”

The blonde takes a deep breath before standing up straight, “that would be my question. What are *you* doing *here*? Wasting a Saturday with a bunch of losers? You should come shopping with me, Sabrina, and Mylène! I need to replace the ladybug necklace the akuma broke.”

“Well, have fun—”

Chloé grabs him by the arm, “‘have fun?’ That’s it?”

“I want to tryout for Juleka’s band.”

“Who?” Chloé waves him off, “doesn’t matter. If you want a music career I’ll tell papa and he’ll get Bob Roth to sponsor you! You don’t even need to know how to sing!”

Adrien pulls his arm free from Chloé’s grip. “I’m not trying to launch a music career. I just want to play music with friends. Like any other teen.”

Chloé rolls her eyes, “I think Tante Émilie and Oncle Gabriel kept you cooped up in the manor a tad too long. I fear it’s made you delusional.” She taps him on the forehead, “hello? Is Adrien Agreste speaking? You don’t want to be like ‘any other teen.’ You are Adrien Agreste! ‘Every other teen’ wants to be like *you*!”

Adrien scoffs, “right. If people knew just *how* ‘Adrien Agreste’ lived, I doubt they’d still

want his life.”

“The life of someone rich, famous, and popular? Oh gee.” Chloé folds her arms over her chest and rolls her eyes, “who *wouldn't* want that?”

“I have the life of someone alone and fake. I have to put on a big smile for the camera despite how bad I feel inside. I can't even remember the last time I was in the same room as my parents! You don't get it. You could leave Le Grand Paris as you pleased. You were allowed to enter public school. I wasn't so lucky. You said it yourself. I'm cooped up in the manor. I'm no better than a glass doll in a cabinet who only gets dusted off and taken from the cabinet when they need to show it off. And I'm not popular. I don't have any friends.”

“*I'm* your friend.”

“I sometimes wonder about that. You won't let me even talk to the other kids in school.”

“Why would you want to? I went to public school, Adrikins, I know how they operate. I'm saving you from dealing with phonies who only want to rub elbows among other bodyparts with a celebrity.”

“I'm not just a celebrity!”

“Adrikins, your life will never be that of anything other than a mega-star. The ‘friends’ you want to make are the type of ‘friends’ that aren't at your standard. They're gonna just wanna be around you to make themselves look good. Stop trying to muck things up. We're classes and classes above the common folk. And FYI? I didn't *want* to attend *public schooling*. Our parents have different senses of humor.”

“Whatever. I'm going on the boat.”

“What if you catch something?”

“Don't be ridiculous.”

“You're telling *me* not to be ridiculous? Me? What about you? You are being *astronomically ridiculous!*”

“Then *leave*. Go shopping with Sabrina and Mylène.”

“And when your parents ask me where you are? What then?”

“I don’t care! Come to think of it, I doubt they’d care!”

“Uh, what’s going on here?” They both gasp as a (hot) blue-haired guy holding a bunch of trashbags walks off the boat.

They both continue to gape until realization hits Adrien. “Wait a minute! I’ve seen you before.” The guy dumps the trashbags into the dumpster then turns back to the blonds. “You were at blackberry clobber’s last match.”

“I go to all the matches from every team. My younger sister is on the blackberry clobber roster.”

Chloé steps in front of Adrien, “oh? My best friend Sabrina is on that team too.” She holds her hand out, “I’m Chloé. Chloé Bourgeois. The pleasure’s all yours.”

“You got my sister possessed by an akuma during picture day.” Adrien puts Chloé’s arm down. The guy turns around then walks back on the boat.

Chloé huffs taking her arm back, “*rude*. Cute or not, I’m too good for him anyhow. He dresses like he shops in that dumpster. Come along, Adrikins.”

“I told you I’m not going with you, Chloé.”

Chloé raises an eyebrow, “is that so? Well, then by all means—” She gestures toward the boat, “*go*.” Adrien stares at her skeptically, “they all know you in class as my friend. Seeing as how they never include me or Sabrina in these little... ‘get-togethers’ no one is gonna be all that willing to include *you*. So like I said. The friends you’re trying to make? Don’t want to be friends with you.” Adrien frowns, “go, if you want. I’ll be waiting right here when you get kicked out.”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence, Chloé.”

“Consider me your voice of reason. The sooner you wisen up, the better off you’ll be.”

Adrien takes a deep breath before walking over the plank and onto the boat. He didn’t see where the guy disappeared to, so he knocks on the only door he sees. “*Enter!*” Someone booms. The blond gulps then opens the door sticking his head inside. He ducks when a dart goes sailing over his head. The gray-haired woman slams down her tankard, “who disturbs The Captain during a drinking break?”

“A-Adrien! Captain!”

“Aye. The Pretty Boy. What troubles ya, Lad?”

“The music? I—”

“*Speak up, Adrien!*”

“Music! W-Where is the music... practice? Captain?”

“The instruments are being brought from the lower decks. Don’t just collect the sunlight Lad, go down there and lend those lanky limbs!”

Adrien salutes, “aye Captain! Thank you.” The woman waves him off and Adrien bows his head then closes the door. True to her word, Chloé is now leaning on the pier. She taps her wrists. “You might as well go! Even if I do get kicked out, I’m not going shopping with you.”

“Oh, Adrien. Wonderful, *naïve* Adrien.” Chloé shakes her head, “so full of foolish optimism.” She casually walks over the plank and gets on the boat just as everyone else shows up carrying something.

“What’s *she* doing here?” Alix asks.

Chloé curtsies, “I’m here for Adrien!” She puts her arm on his shoulder, “he wants to try out for the band! I’m his support! Go Adrien go!”

“Oh yeah?” Juleka’s brother steps up to the two of them with his arms folded over his chest. Adrien notices his nails are painted shimmery black. Adrien stares wide eyed at them and all

the rings and bracelets adorning his hands, “and just what do you *play*, Adrien?” Even his ears are pierced.

“He plays piano!” Chloé replies for him, squeezing his shoulders with a smile. “He’s *really* good! His parents rented out concert halls just for him to play!”

“No, they haven’t.” He turns to Chloé, “I know what you’re doing and it’s not gonna work.” He whispers.

“Keep telling yourself that.” She whispers back. “He’s also learning the bass guitar in music class!” She says to the group while nodding to herself, “plus... he’s Adrien Agreste! Who wouldn’t want him in their little homemade band? Think of all the exposure his name alone could bring you!”

He elbows Chloé, “look. All I want is a fair shot at trying out. Not because of my name. J-Just because I like music. I like playing music. I’ve always wanted to play music with other people. I-I only know how to play classical songs on the piano, b-but I’m a quick study.”

The siblings share a glance.

Chloé sucks in a breath, “such a shame! I don’t think they’re interested. Adrikins is real sorry for wasting your time and interrupting this little get-together.” She grabs Adrien by the arm, “the band has no openings. Time to go.”

“Wait.” Juleka says. Chloé’s eyes widen then narrow at the taller teen, “he wants to tryout? We’ll let him tryout.”

“You sure, Jules?”

Juleka *smiles* and Chloé scowls, “yeah. I’m sure. We don’t have a fancy classical grand piano or anything but we have a regular keyboard. We also have a keytar, if you’re feeling particularly adventurous.”

The blond gasps excitedly, “I’ve always wanted to try playing on a keytar.” He whispers.

“Let’s get these instruments set up!” Juleka’s brother cheers making a circling gesture in the air.

“If you’re here to ‘support’ Adrien, you’d might as well help out with getting the instruments set up,” Juleka says to Chloé who glares at the purple-haired teen’s retreating form.

Epecially as how Adrien slipped from her grip the second he heard the word keytar.

Grumbling, Chloé walks over to the drumset and picks up a pair of drumsticks, and holds it as far away from her body as she could without dropping them. The blonde makes a mental note to sanitize her entire arm then soak her whole body in a bubblebath when she gets home.

~~Stupid cute music goth family.~~

Once everything is set up, Chloé stands by the boat plank with her arms folded over her chest.

Hot Goth Girl and her hot brother, only slightly less hotter than her, are each holding a guitar. The big guy with the absurd and blatant crush on Mylène is on the drums. Someone made the mistake of giving Lavillant a microphone. Kubdel is holding some instrument Chloé is unfamiliar with. Lastly, Adrien is holding the “keytar” clumsily in his hands. Maybe if he breaks it, they’ll kick him out?

Chloé rolls her eyes. This is utterly ridiculous! She’s missing *shopping* for this shit? Subjecting her ears to listening to a couple of amateurs obnoxiously bang on their musical instruments and passing it off as real music?

Kim whistles loudly and Marinette elbows him. “What? I know they haven’t started yet but I’m excited to hear some music!”

“Everyone know how to read a music sheet?” The blue-haired teen asks.

“Let’s... just ...for the sake of—” Alix clears her throat, “—*conversation* say we *don’t*?”

“That’s cool. We’ll learn as we go. We’re just gonna play the opening chord to *Happy Anniversary Away From You*.”

Chloé gasps coming closer to the “stage” they set up, “you’re an XY fan?”

“What? *Hell. No.* I don’t want XY’s ‘version,’ I want the original.” The now frowning blonde plops down next to that tall shifty-eyed redhead. He and the goth girl must visit the same tacky hairstylist.

“The one that goes boop-boop-high-boop?” Kim asks raising a hand.

“Yeah.” The blue-haired guy points at Kim. “That’s the one. Let’s see if we know what we’re doing. Wanna start us off, Keytar?”

Blushing slightly, Adrien nods then begins playing the beat on the keytar. Chloé isn’t familiar with it at first but she soon recognizes it.

“Wow, he *is* good.” Ivan whispers.

After a few seconds, he stops playing. Now full-on blushing. “S-Sorry. I-I’ve never tried playing that song before. Guess I got too into it.”

“If you’re not ‘too’ into it, why bother playing?” Adrien’s whole face is red as he nods at Juleka’s brother.

“**YOU WERE AMAZING!!**” Everyone covers their ears as Rose screams into the microphone. “**Oops! Sorry!**”

“Rose, *move* from the mic!” Alix yells.

The blonde puts her hand over the microphone, “sorry! You were great, Adrien!”

There’s a loud whistle then everyone turns to Alix, “yeah, that was *great*.” The pink-haired teen slow claps. “Maybe a bit showy though. Think you can play without upstaging your bandmates, M. Solo Star? I mean, it’ll only work if we’re all harmonized.” Alix raises an eyebrow at him.

“R-Right. Sorry.”

“Okay. I’m Luka. I’m a bass guitarist. We’re, hopefully, gonna be playing a song my sister Juleka and I wrote about Karma.” Marinette’s jaw drops, though it goes unnoticed. “We got the lyrics down. Just ...not the melody. I was hoping forming a band will help with that.”

Sabrina stumbles nearly missing the plank completely but Mylène grabs her before she can fall, “thanks.” Mylène smiles at her then the two of them sit down behind Chloe. “What the

hell are you doing?” The blonde wordlessly points at Adrien holding the keytar, “what the hell is *he* doing?”

“We should start it off with some Alix Kubdel on the sax!” Alix starts playing masterfully on the saxophone and the crowd starts cheering.

Kim does a double-take, “uh... did you know Alix could play the saxophone?” He whispers to Marinette who shakes her head.

“Alix has never even *held* a saxophone before!”

Nathaniel hums taking out his sketchbook.

“Hey! Can I record your first session? I promise not to post anything without every member’s consent.”

“That would be great if you could record us. Maybe help us with what we’re missing.” Alya gives Luka a thumbs up.

Sabrina sighs in content, “it’s Juleka’s hot older brother.”

Chloé scoffs, “somebody told him I was responsible for his sister being an akuma. Can you believe that? Like that wallflower has any sort of presence *I’d* remember. He even turned his nose up at me. *Me!* I’m a catch and by the time he realizes that, I’ll be swept away by Lady Luck.”

“Speaking of that...” Sabrina rubs her arms up and down, “why didn’t you tell me it felt like that? I thought being amoked out was horrifying.”

“I... had a whole day to feel horrible about it. I’m just grateful you didn’t see how horrible I looked before I could get cleaned up.” Chloé shivers. She moves back a seat and wraps her arms around Sabrina. “We’ll keep each other warm. And if you hear Mme. Mite calling out to you, try to ignore her. Okay?”

“I’m going to *hear her?*”

“Just echoes of what she was telling us earlier. It’s why I wanted to go shopping. To distract

us.”

Adrien glances up at Chloé and Sabrina huddled together whispering to each other.

Once the music stops, the crowd chants Alix’s name as she takes a bow. Marinette stands, “Alix, you rock!” She whistles. Alix blows a kiss at Marinette.

“If you’re gonna work the crowd—” She glances at Adrien, “—you gotta make it worthwhile.” Adrien gulps.

“Luka, you should be singing this song.” Rose takes a step back from the microphone. “I wanna try the tambourine!” She runs over to the aforementioned instrument and picks it up, shaking it.

“Now or never, Lu.” Juleka whispers. “Think of Karma.”

Luka takes a deep breath and strangely enough locking eyes with Marinette seems to calm him down. She smiles encouragingly at him. The blue-haired teen just has this calming presence. Her beautiful grey eyes. Her—*Whoa!* Wait a minute. He can only write a song about one beautiful girl at a time. He looks down at his guitar. “This is for you, Karma!” He taps the microphone before he strums his guitar.

“Wow.” Marinette jumps slightly when someone takes the empty seat to her left. Kim has his phone’s flashlight on and waves it from side to side on Marinette’s right. “A song about Karma. *For Karma?* That’s so wonderful.”

“O-Oh? You think so?”

The girl looks up at Marinette with a smile. “I do. I check the luckyblog frequently. Karma doesn’t get the recognition she deserves. People thinking she’s Lady Luck’s *sidekick*.” The girl sneers, “everything she does for the city and they just overlook her because of a pair of polkadots.”

“You must not like Lady Luck very much.”

“I like Lady Luck just fine. I hate what people believe her to be. She isn’t some perfect icon. An unmovable force that just *puts up* with Karma.” The girl sighs, “in any event, I think starting a band in Karma’s honor is incredible.”

Marinette rubs the back of her neck, “so you think Lady Luck is getting hyped up too much and Karma not enough?” The girl nods. “Wow. That’s not something you hear... *ever*.”

“That’s the problem, isn’t it? It’s not like Lady Luck showed up and started calling the shots. They both appeared together. Karma is one-half of the team.” The girl rubs the back of her neck, “sorry. I’ve been told I’m... passionate about Karma.”

“I’ll say.” Marinette laughs, “I’m Marinette. My best friend Alix is a huge Karma fan too.”

“Alix Kubdel? Yes, I know. It’s one of the many things we bonded over. My name is Kagami. I just begun attending François Dupont. Which class are you in?”

“Bustier, unfortunately. I hope you’re luckier than me.”

Kagami chuckles and Marinette gets this weird *twinge* in her gut, “I am. I’m in Professeur Mendeleiev’s class. I’ve heard questionable things about Professeur Bustier. She isn’t a professeur we have.”

“Consider yourself twice as lucky for that.”

“Alix has mentioned you quite a bit. I’m grateful to be meeting you for myself.” Marinette smiles shyly then turns to Alix glaring at the pink-haired teen who winks at her.

Chapter End Notes

*<https://archiveofourown.org/works/29520345> (The Interview To End All Interviews)

ice cream for all

Chapter Summary

love is in the air... for Halloween? The rapidly approaching Halloween dance takes on a romantic theme when a matchmaking ice cream vendor surfaces; not everyone is smitten with the idea, however

Chapter Notes

Warning: I have been watching magical girl anime while writing; I've put most of the magical girl elements in another story called "Time To Suit Up," but that's neither here nor there. Anyway, I am quite taken with the original PreCure's premise where the partners have to be on the same wavelength to be at full strength. They won't need to hold hands, but I think I may make that part of Lady Luck and Karma's indomitable will and teamwork.

A/N: How the hell did I get through six chapters without once mentioning Nino?!?!?! Who is one of my absolute favorite characters ever! I have rectified this and given a half-assed but really the only reason I could for disrespecting my boy like I have.

The miraculous ladybug wiki told me Marc is actually taller than Nathaniel and that Nathaniel isn't really tall, at all. I'm keeping Nathaniel's height, but I will make Marc taller than Nathaniel. Though probably not by much. As it stands – no pun intended, the students in accordance to height are: Kim, Ivan, Marinette, Ondine, Juleka, Marc, Fei, Nathaniel, Wayhem, Félix, Adrien, Lila, Chloé, Nino, Aurore, Mirelle, Jessica, Alya, Ali, Fran, Sabrina, Mylène, Rose, Kagami, Max, Alix

I started rewatching the origin episode and I hadn't realized the boulangerie pâtisserie had their logo on their food. I mean, why wouldn't they? (the logo is the same but naturally because I flipped the names, it's ST rather than TS)

Last thing is... this story's Félix is not related to Adrien, so he doesn't look exactly like Adrien with slicked-back hair but he could still be mistaken for Adrien from afar. Same with Wayhem, I suppose?

Mon, Oct 26th, 2020

Marc frowns at his laptop. Something is missing, but *what?* “—Anciel!” The blue-haired teen

in question gasps, trying to make a grab for the laptop Professeur Mendeleiev lifts from his shared table. “What is this...?” The purple-haired woman skims the screen then frowns, “these are *not* chemistry notes.” As the class giggles, Marc slinks down in his seat. “I’m going to save your ...work.” Marc watches the professeur wait until his writing is saved before she folds the laptop closed, “you’ll get this back at the end of class. And just a reminder, there is a quiz on this entire chapter tomorrow. If you don’t receive at least seventy percent, I will be calling your grandmother *again*. Is that clear?”

The class continues to giggle. “Y-Yes, Professeur.”

Marc sighs as Professeur Mendeleiev walks to the front of the classroom with his laptop, then puts it on her desk when she turns to the chalkboard. Ali nudges Marc, “are you alright?” He whispers. Blushing slightly, Marc nods. He could not have picked a worse time to get inspiration for writing. And as for *what* he was writing...? He was certain the professeur would’ve called him out on it, but fortunately she didn’t. (Writing fanfiction about Lady Luck and Karma taking on a chemistry-based villain and needing *his* help?)

Alix managed to find Marc’s lost idea notebook on Friday, but a few pages were ripped out and there were footprints all over a few of the remaining pages. Marc is honestly surprised he didn’t get possessed by an akuma with how angry he got upon getting his notebook back. Actually, now that he’s thinking about it, he’s more surprised Alix’s anger hadn’t summoned an akuma, or a group of them (*Can* more than one akuma appear at a time?) Given Alix’s temper, it’s amazing she hasn’t been possessed by an akuma already? Oh no! Did he just speak it into existence?!

The intercom screeches on. “*Attention students! Clara Nightingale here with news that’s prudent~*” Most students gape up at the intercom; Marc sees his deskmate, however, look up in confusion. “*With the end of my contest, I selected the art piece I deemed the best! I was so moved by this piece, I had to see who wrote with such expertise! The winner of my contest will accompany me to the Louvre on Wednesday as I unveil my art for all to see! I know you are all bubbling with anticipation to hear about who made this wondrous creation! The winner with all the pizzazz is Mlle. Sabrina Raincomprix from Professeur Bustier’s class!*” The class collectively gasps in surprise. Sabrina? Raincomprix? “*Mlle. Raincomprix submitted art that made my heart sing! A poem titled ‘Butterfly Wings.’*”

Marc’s eyes widen. What? His phone buzzes half a second later and he takes it out of his hoodie pocket slightly to see a text from Alix: ‘*!?!?!?!?! ARE YOU FUCK— thatfuckingassholesstoleyourpoem!!!!!!*’

Marc may not remember every piece of writing ever written in the notebook, but he distinctively remembers writing that particular poem about all the akuma attacks back in September. Unfortunately, other than his initials on every page – the notebook was

monogrammed, a gift from Alix – that could easily be ripped from the page, there is no way for him to prove the poem is actually his. *Plus*, she could've just rewritten the damn thing somewhere else. Furthermore, Sabrina's father is the police chief who will be inclined to believe his daughter over some random kid. Even though he *knows* Sabrina is incapable of writing contest-winning poetry. Everyone who was in the same class as her last year knows she's incapable of writing poetry at all.

Marc's phone buzzes with another text several seconds later, this time from Kim: *'aww no, aww fuck no. no way SABRINA is capable of writing poetry. not at ur level. remember this shit she came up with last year?!?! we gotta find a way to prove the work is urs, M! Alix looks pissed enough to sommon a roomful of akumas'*

Marc quickly texts Kim back telling him to make sure Alix doesn't do anything to get suspended, again. (Fortunately, she hasn't been suspended yet this school year. It's probably a record.)

As he's texting Kim, Marinette is next to send a text which is merely a series of angry emojis.

Marc isn't expecting a ton of texts; it's not like he has a whole bunch of friends.

Nino is the next person to send him a text, and that's not surprising considering they're best friends and he's the only person who actually *read* the poem; not only did he read it throughout Marc's creation but he helped Marc finish: *'seriously dude!?!? thats so messed up! she's not getting away with this'*

He can't see Nino from all the way in the back of the classroom and they decided not to sit near each other this year so they could make new friends. So far it's been working out. Marc got to sit next to then subsequently become friends with Ali and Professeur Mendeleiev put Kagami next to Nino. (Marc's... not sure how things are going on Nino's end. Marc hasn't had much interaction with Kagami himself.)

The next text comes from ...Math? (Wha—? Wh—Oh. Damn auto-correct.) Marc changes the contact to *Nath*, then has to change it back two more times before it sticks: *'srry bout ur poem getting stolen. If u get posessed by an akuma over it I'm sure lady luck & karma will understand'*

Right. That is another reason he doesn't want to become possessed by an akuma: having to fight Lady Luck and Karma? Yeah, he'd rather not.

The principal walks into the classroom a bit out of breath, "new student for you, Professeur

Mendeleiev.” The class watches the dark-skinned teen with the red and dark brown dreadlocks tied in a pair of low twintails walk into the classroom after the principal motions for them to enter. “Everyone, this is Francine—”

“Actually, Principal Damocles, it’s Frankie.”

“—*Oh*. My apologies.” Damocles clears his throat, “class, this is Frankie Hill. Coming to us from New York in North America.” The teen waves as they approach the professeur’s desk. “Why not tell your new classmates about yourself, Frankie?”

The teen nods, “certainly. As I stated, my name is Frankie but you may also call me Fran. I am agender. My pronouns are they slash them. I came to Paris from the city of Brooklyn in the state of New York to live with a relative for a new change of pace.”

“Any questions?” Before anyone can say anything the principal claps his hands together, “no? Wonderful. M—*Uh*... you can—”

Professeur Mendeleiev rolls her eyes, “I got this. Mx. Hill, you can take the empty seat next to Mlle. Wǔ in the back. Mlle. Wǔ, can you raise your hand please?” The aforementioned teen in the desk across from Marc and Ali raises her hand. Nodding, Frankie walks over to the desk.

“B-Before I go...” The principal clears his throat, “this is a reminder that your grade-wide Halloween dance is this Saturday, which happens to *be* Halloween. And the last day to submit class dues for it is Thursday. Please use this time to discuss... things, as I speak with your professeur. Tomorrow, all the quatrième class representatives will come together and decide on an overall theme for the dance.”

“Cutting it kinda close, isn’t it?” Ari asks raising her hand.

Jessica also raises her hand, “where will the dance take place, Principal Damocles?”

“Yes, and right here in the school.” Both girls lower their hands.

While the principal and professeur talk, Marc replies to the rest of his texts.

As Professeur Blake dismisses the class, Chloé enters the classroom and looks around. “Who is the representative for this class?” A few fingers point at the blue-haired girl wearing the red sundress in the front row gathering her stuff together as they pass the blonde. Mireille stares blankly at Chloé when the blonde points at her, “*you*, you’re eating lunch with me today. Let’s go.” The blonde turns to leave.

“But, wait a minute—”

Chloé groans, “what?”

“Why am I eating lunch with you?”

“Caquet, Caquet, Caquet.” Chloé tsks turning back around, “use your brain. Why else would *I* want to eat lunch with another class representative? We’re gonna discuss the theme for the dance. I won’t wait until tomorrow, it needs to be taken care of *now*. The difference a mere twenty-four hours could make is crucial. The other representatives are heading toward my town car as we speak. Let’s get a move on, shall we?”

“O-Okay.” Mireille quickly finishes gathering her belongings then follows after the blonde who already left the classroom. The blue-haired teen adjusts the strap of her bag as she hustles out of the building, passing by the students who stop and stare as she rushes by. Shielding her eyes from the sun as she exits the school, Mireille recognizes some of the other quatrième class representative either inside or getting inside the town car before she gets in herself.

Inside, Mireille sits next to Mylène and greets the shy teen who returns the greeting. *Wait*, Mylène isn’t a class representative. Oh, right. She almost always eats lunch with Chloé. Poor girl. Mireille got lucky this year not having to be in the same classroom as the blonde. Chloé gets in the town car after Mireille and the last to enter is Sabrina. “Aren’t we waiting for Adrien?” The orange-haired teen when the door closes behind her.

Chloé purses her lips, “no.” Sabrina eyes the blonde who puts her purse on her lap. “Jean-Rouge, take us to the hotel.”

“Right away, Mlle. Bourgeois.”

“What did Adrien—”

“We’re not here to discuss *Adrien*, Sabrina, we’re here to talk about the dance.” The orange-haired teen opens her mouth then promptly closes it, sitting back. “Now, let’s come up with some ideas, people. I’m treating you all to lunch but if you don’t get ideas you don’t eat. Simple. As. That.” The other representatives look among themselves worriedly.

“I-It’s a Halloween dance, right?” Jean, the representative from Professeur Clark’s class, begins, “let’s do something spooky.”

Chloé sits back with a huff as she makes a buzzer noise, “yeah, that’s gonna be a *no* . Hard pass.” The brunet does a double-take at her. “We’re not doing that sad, tired, done over and over again idea. I want this to be *the* best dance in François Düpont history! Something no one would expect. Something Clarissa Auclair would put her stamp of approval on! *That’s* why we’re having this meeting.”

“I’m surprised you’re actually trying to *do* anything, Chloé.” The representative from Professeur Blake’s class, Murphy, says frowning. “You weren’t all that willing to help with last year’s after New Years’ dance.”

The blonde rolls her eyes, “stay stuck in the past if you want, Jones, but we’re talking about *this year’s dance*.” The black-haired teen huffs.

“Clarissa Auclair is *the* premiere party planner. Why would she bother with something like a school dance?” Mireille asks.

“Because it’ll be *the* school dance to top all school dances, that’s why. And a premiere party planner won’t want to miss a premiere party in the happening.” The blonde snaps her fingers, “so let’s come up with ideas. Remember, your lunches are on the line.”

Over the course of the next few minutes, Chloé becomes increasingly frustrated with the lack of usable ideas these other representatives are giving. If this is the best, she’s doomed. No wonder she’s never cared about any event before! These representatives are all worthless! Utterly worthless! And how damn long is this ride?!? When the town car door mercifully, Chloé gets out first and stretches. Maybe a change of scenery will help? Here’s hoping. Sabrina stumbles out behind her and Chloé catches the girl before she faceplants onto the sidewalk. “Thanks.” Her head snaps up and she does a double-take. “*Hey, wait a second!* What’s an ice cream vendor doing in front of the hotel...? In late October?”

Once Sabrina is standing on her own two feet without risk of falling, Chloé turns to the cheery vendor standing behind some ancient, beat-up looking, old school ice cream cart. It’s utterly... unkempt. *And in front of her hotel too?* Utterly unacceptable!

The other representatives get out of the towncar then start murmuring about how ice cream may help them think.

Chloé rolls her eyes, “utterly ridiculous...” She mutters, “*shut up!*” They all turn to the blonde, wide-eyed. “Ice cream *in October?* How utterly ridiculous are you lot?”

“Come on, Chloé, what’s the harm? A little dessert never stopped anyone’s thinking process.”

Chloé shakes her head, “I don’t know what I expected from Beauréal’s best friend.” Mireille scoffs, “listen, I’m in a generous mood today. I’ll see if the tacky, extremely sketchy vendor takes credit cards, I don’t carry cash around like a poor person. If he doesn’t, you’ll be paying for your ice cream yourselves. And if this doesn’t help you come up with ideas, I will make this school year nightmare worthy.” Everyone gulps. The blonde puts on her fashionista-paparazzi smile as she walks over to the vendor, “*hey,*” The man turns to her, “they want ice cream.” *Sabrina* pointedly clears her throat and Chloé glances at the girl. Her eyes dart to the man and it takes a second for Chloé to get it but when she does, she sighs, “*please.*” She smiles, “do you accept credit cards? Or maybe cheques? I don’t have any notes. Sabrina, do you have cash?” The orange-haired teen shakes her head. “Do you have lowfat ice cream? Or lactose free?”

The man chuckles, “isn’t this particular group lucky? For you see, today my ice cream is free!” The group cheers, “and I have all the ice cream flavors your life will need, you’ll find that none before you have disagreed.”

“I—” Chloé shakes her head, “back up. Did you say this ice cream is *free*?” The blonde huffs a laugh, “what’s wrong with it? Is it expired?”

The vendor laughs heartily and Chloé’s right eyebrow twitches, “my flavors cannot be beaten, and I assure you this ice cream can be eaten!” As the others cheer again, Chloé sighs heavily, “I am André, the matchmaking ice cream vendor! I fill hearts and stomachs with splendor!”

Sabrina groans, “he is really nudging it with these rhymes.”

“Has to make a living somehow, I suppose.” Chloé utters.

“Not giving away free ice cream.”

“Maybe it’s like a sample or a special or something?” Sabrina agrees with a shrug. “Listen, you ‘filling hearts with splendor,’” She air-quotes, “from *ice cream* is the most utterly ridiculous thing I have ever heard!” Chloé laughs, “this is one hell of a gimmick, I’ll give you that.”

“I can tell by your steely gaze, the heaviness your heart weighs.”

The blonde immediately stops laughing, “*excuse me?*”

“You think this is a lie? Why not give my ice cream a try? If you have a particular love in your heart, step forward and I shall tell you if you will be together or apart! My ice cream is meant, to represent the love your life will advent!”

“I hate rhyming. It’s giving me a headache.” Sabrina grumbles, “hey, I’ll step up if you stop rhyming.”

“Think of it as a limerick, after all rhyming is my... gimmick.” Chloé’s eyes narrow when André raises an eyebrow at her.

“Whatever. Just—” Sabrina wiggles her fingers, “get to the analyzing or whatever? We don’t have all lunch break. We have a dance theme to come up with.”

André nods with a smile, “very well, Mademoiselle. This love entrances you like the finest spell! Gather around to see this love abound!” The other representatives skeptically and curiously surround the vendor’s cart. André opens one compartment and picks up a reddish brown ice cream cone then closes that compartment to open another. “This love you have is tricky, because it will define or divide your loyalty.” Sabrina suspiciously stares at the cone then at the man holding it. “Hmm... selecting the perfect color is a difficult task, it’s something you cannot hide with a mask. To test your mettle, rose is the flavor on which I will settle.” André scoops a pinkish-red spoonful of ice cream onto the cone. “Next? Let’s see... *see!* Ah! You do not always see with your eyes. Have a bit of blue raspberry, reminiscent of the twinkling skies.” Everyone watches him scoop some light blue ice cream onto the pinkish-red. Then he puts a bright pink spoon into the ice cream cone. “Is this truly the ice cream for you, you wonder? But you know your feelings are growing stronger, the longer you ponder.”

A wide-eyed Sabrina wordlessly accepts the ice cream cone handed to her. “Who is next? Put your love to the test!” Sabrina continues to stare at her ice cream.

“Sabrina!” The bespectacled teen snaps out of her stupor and stares up at Chloé folding her arms over her chest sneering, “why are you staring at it like that? Like it’s holding all of life’s answers or something! For God sake, it’s just ice cream! You don’t really believe his shit, do you?” Sabrina blinks, looking at Chloé then back at her ice cream. “*No*, Sabrina! The answer is **no**!”

“Y-Yeah, I-I know.” Sabrina sputters, “I-I don’t...” She scoffs, “it’s all rhyming headache-inducing nonsense.” She eyes the cone again, “b-but it’s also free ice cream. Makes no sense to waste it?”

“I suppose.”

“Want just a bit? I know you don’t eat dessert before lunch but I don’t think it’ll make it to the penthouse.”

“I’ll pass but thank you.” Shrugging, Sabrina scoops some of the rose and blue raspberry together with the spoon and takes a bite. It’s not terrible—ah hell, what is she saying? It’s *delicious*! This might be the best ice cream she’s ever eaten! Chloé watches on as André gestures wildly as he hands out another ice cream cone.

When the blonde checks the time on her phone, Sabrina frowns at her ice cream mid-bite. This ice cream is supposed to resemble someone, isn’t it? What was with all that shit about metal and loyalty? None of those have anything to do with ice cream flavors. Wouldn’t metal be silver or grey? And her feelings growing longer as she ponders? Why is her brain choosing *now* to draw blanks?

Sabrina angrily eats the rest of her infuriatingly delicious, confusing ice cream as she tries and fails to think about who it could be. The colors *almost* look like—*Lady Luck*! The bespectacled orange-haired teen gasps. She may not like Lady Luck as much as Karma, but she’ll take it! Who’d disagree with having a superhero love interest? *Chloé* may not appreciate *Sabrina* being “fated” to the love of her life though.

“Ah wait! I see there is someone I missed! Do you not want to see if you too are awaited bliss?” Gulping, Mylène tentatively steps toward the cart. Everyone else has their ice cream already and are eating. “I will tell you what’s in store, for I am honored to witness feelings so pure!” André happily picks up a cone, “to begin? Pistachio, for the kindness within! These feelings you have are shared! Why not top off your ice cream with a little pear?” André drops two different greenish scoops of ice cream onto the cone.

“*Pear and pistachio!*?” Chloé shouts startling Mylène, “you’re not seriously going to eat that,

are you Mylène?”

“I-I don’t want to waste ice cream.”

The blonde growls in frustration, “you are all so... ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous! You have your damn ice cream, and if you are all finished wasting time we can go inside to—”

André tsks, “not so fast, your time has come at last.”

The other representatives nervously watch the exchange. “*My?*” Chloé laughs harshly, “that’s cute. Oh no, no, no. I don’t think so, Monsieur. I was fine watching you fool these brainless dolts but don’t think you’ll do the same to me. See. My heart? It’s already filled with love, thank you very much. Love for Lady Luck. *Naturally*, anyone as exceptional as her could only have the true love of someone as exceptional as me. It’s just common sense. So I already know my true love. No reason to waste time with your ‘heart splendoring’ nonsense, unless your ice cream comes in red and black polkadots. So thank you, but I’m not interested. Besides, I was raised to never eat dessert before a meal.”

“Of course. That’s ideal, it helps to sweeten the meal.” The vendor gives Chloé a cryptic smile that makes her eyes narrow. “However, Mademoiselle, I fear the love you desire is not the love your heart requires.”

“What?”

“For one who appears thick skinned,” He continues without missing a beat, “true happiness stems from within.” André picks up a black ice cream cone. “You feel putting up this illusion is your only solution. Lavender, a flavor not easy to pair; it needs something *bold*. Something with flair! Lemon can be seen as sour. Like lavender, it often has a tendency to overpower.” André scoops up a bluish-purple spoonful of ice cream then drops a yellow one on top of it. “You are rightfully suspicious, but you’ll see this flavor combination is quite delicious! You’ll see so true that this flavor is uniquely you.”

“Uniquely...? *Of course I’m unique!*” Chloé screams. “I don’t need **ice cream** to tell me that I’m unique! I’m Fucking Charmainé Cloris Bourgeois! And I’m not taking your bullshit garbage ice cream!” She loudly claps her hands together startling everyone, “in the hotel! **Now!**” The other representatives all but run inside the building.

While Chloé is distracted, Sabrina walks over to André. “Excuse me? I’ll, uh, take it.” She whispers, “what flavors did you say these were? I didn’t hear.”

“Lemon and lavender. Sounds like a strange combination but getting the flavors just right creates such a marvelous sensation!”

“*Shhhh!*”

“Sabrina?” The girl in question flinches, “what? Are? You? Doing?”

Sabrina slowly turns to the blonde narrowing her eyes. “I-I know *you* don’t want it, b-but it sounds like something *I’d* wanna try?”

Chloé rolls her eyes, “uh-huh. You’re hopeless, you know what right? Utterly hopeless. Swayed by the words of a crazed rhyming lunatic giving out free sweetened frozen dairy. You should cut your sugar intake, Sabrina. It’s clearly messing with your brain.” Chloé jerks her head toward the building, “let’s go. You’re just lucky I’m willing to entertain your delusion and not throw that sugary nonsense into the garbage where it belongs.” Nodding, Sabrina begins walking toward the hotel entrance. Shaking her head, Chloé begins walking as well.

“Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery yes, but to continue to act like *her* it’s only *yourself* you suppress.”

Chloé and Sabrina both freeze then turn to André slowly, “...what did you just say?” The former hisses.

“Remember, not all is as it may seem! Keep that in mind as you enjoy your ice cream!”

Sabrina stares at the smiling ice cream vendor then Chloé as her face slowly begins to turn red. Sabrina uses her free hand to pull the blonde along inside the hotel and toward the elevator. Everyone gives them wide berth as they walk past.

Continue to act like *her*? *Her* who? *Oh!* Of course! It’s gotta be Audrey! Duh. Who else could it be? (Her brain must still not be working.) Inside the elevator, Sabrina looks down at the ice cream in her hands. The colors... they sorta represent *Chloé*. Sabrina looks up at the blonde who has her palms against her eyes. Eyes. The purplish blue is Chloé’s eyes. Then the yellow’s gotta be for her hair. But why the black cone? No one else got a black cone.

Sabrina’s eyes widen in realization. If she’s understanding this correctly... and if the ice cream guy isn’t just blowing spoonfuls of frozen dairy out of his ass, Chloé’s ice cream is about loving *herself*! Loving herself instead of loving ~~and hating~~ the miniature Audrey she’s

become. Sabrina remembers a time Chloé was much happier just being herself and not trying to impress slash emulate her mother. It was so long ago though! As Audrey's brand got bigger and bigger, Chloé tried harder and harder to get herself involved with it, by whatever means necessary. Not that Sabrina was much help trying to sway her not to. She also changed to be acceptable in Audrey's eyes. Even if Audrey never remembers her name. And now that Audrey just *loves* Marinette, things are even more difficult. (If Chloé didn't already hate Marinette, she'd hate her just by all the praise Audrey gives her.)

If Chloé's ice cream is about self-love, Sabrina has to wonder if hers is truly Lady Luck? Then again, why couldn't it be? She's just as capable of getting Lady Luck's love as anyone else. Nah. There's no way Lady Luck is Sabrina Raincomprix's true love. But who else is pinkish-red and blue? Guess, she'll have to start searching.

□□

Clara Nightingale visited Professeur Bustier's class and Nathaniel told them Sabrina had the fucking *gall* to blatantly lie about Marc's stolen poem and made up some bullshit, nonsensical reason behind her writing it. Alix had to be escorted out of the classroom by Marinette and Ivan *the second* Clara begin gushing.

Nino *knows* Marc wrote that poem because of the onslaught of akuma attacks over the course of the past month. He said they should call her out, but Marc said without physical proof Sabrina – a known liar and thief with absolutely no poetry writing skills (last year was a cringe worthy embarrassment Nino does not want to even attempt reminiscing about) – could *and would* spin the tale in her favor simply by phoning her police chief papa. Who'd simply be inclined to believe her based on their familial relationship.

Nathaniel sent them a text of Chloé's surprised face both when the announcement was made and when Clara Nightingale *hugged* Sabrina. Judging by her expression, the blonde had no idea about the poem. Chloé was not a good actress. She didn't need to be, all she had to do was call her papa whenever something didn't go her way. If Chloé knew ahead of time she would've *over* acted. They've all seen it happen. Still, it's not often Sabrina and Chloé leave the other out of their scheming.

Nino saw Mireille leave the school with Sabrina, Chloé, and a bunch of other semi-familiar kids – the representatives of the other seven quatrième classes. Chloé was loudly grumbling something about not having enough time for this damn dance. And why all the grades had their own private dances was something Nino always wondered. Didn't matter though. He wasn't going, never did.

Professeur Blake held Marc back in class because he was, once again, writing instead of doing schoolwork and he got a(nother) lecture because of it.

Nino's waiting by the entrance with his bag when Marc runs over to him. "'Sup, Dude!'" Nino greets. Marc adjusts his bag strap then takes a big gulp of air. "I told you, you didn't have to run."

"I know but I'm starving. I don't think I can go far."

Nino laughs, "then let's go see Mme. C. at the boulangerie pâtisserie. Think you can walk that far?"

Marc groans dramatically, "I hope so."

Nino laughs then they exit the building seeing a blond sitting on top of the steps staring at his phone. From afar he kinda looks like Félix, but when they get closer they see it's someone else. "Are you alright?" Nino asks.

The blond flinches then squints up at Nino and Marc. "Hm? O-Oh, y-yeah. I'm good. Just deciding on what I want to eat." He pauses, "...I have to decide on what I want to eat." He whispers. Nino and Marc exchange a questioning glance over the blond's head. The blond turns back to them. "Sorry. I-I'm Adrien."

"Marc," He jerks his head back, "that's Nino." The bespectacled teen waves. "You know, we're about to get a bite from the boulangerie pâtisserie across the street? Wanna join us?"

Nino watches the blond's green eyes widen considerably. "Y-Yes!" He jumps to his feet, "I'd love to! Thank you so m—" He clears his throat, "I mean, thank you. You really saved me. I was starting to get a little overwhelmed with so many choices." He chuckles awkwardly. The blond fidgets a bit when he and Marc greet with a cheek kiss, then again when he and Nino greet each other.

The three of them make their way to Sabine & Tom Boulangerie Pâtisserie. It's not a far walk so they just walk there in silence. Fortunately, it's not an awkward silence. Adrien's had one too many of those in his lifetime.

When they enter Sabine & Tom Boulangerie Pâtisserie, a blue-haired woman who looks *exactly* like Marinette, just shorter... and wearing her shorter hair in a bob rather than twintails slash buns that Marinette alternates, talking to a redhead. "Welcome to Sabine & Tom Boulangerie Pâtisserie!" The woman greets as she hears the chime overhead, "I'm Sabine, I'll be with you in just a second!"

“It’s just us, Mme. C., don’t worry about it.” Nino announces.

The redhead turns around and Adrien realizes he’s never seen that kid’s entire face before as his left side is covered by his bright red hair. “H-Hello.” The redhead’s visible eye narrows then he turns back around.

“Dude...” Nino whispers in awe, “never seen Nath look so pissed. What did you do to him?”

“W-What? I-I did? Nothing! I-I’ve never even spoken to him before!”

Humming, Nino walks over to the redhead nudging him in the side, “what’s up?”

Nathaniel frowns at Nino, “why are you hanging out with *him*?” He grumbles. Nino blinks at the redhead which makes his frown deepen, “Nino... you don’t know who that is?”

“Should I?”

Nathaniel sighs, “well, no wonder you brought him here. You never would’ve otherwise.” The redhead turns around, staring at Adrien. “He’s one of Chloé’s *'buddies.'*” The blond flinches.

Marc stares at the blond with a neutral expression. Adrien tries to shrink in on himself. Helps that he’s shorter than both Nathaniel and Marc. “If you’re a close friend of Chloé,” Adrien slowly looks at him with a wince, “why are you here now? Why didn’t you leave and eat lunch with her? She’s always bragging about going back to her fabulous hotel for lunch with her ‘important’ friends.”

Adrien rubs the back of his neck, “Chlo—é is a bit... mad at me.” Nathaniel folds his arms over his chest and Nino nods along. “I-Well, the other day? Um, during the gaming tournament? Where Sabrina and Chloé became those figure skating akumas? Afterwards, I wanted to tryout for Juleka’s band—I mean Kitty Section—because I’ve always wanted to play music with other people... with friends. But Chloé didn’t want me to tryout. She didn’t want me to get involved. She claimed it wouldn’t be worth my time. B-But I—even if I didn’t get in, I wanted to tryout anyway. A-Anyway, after the tournament I went to Juleka’s houseboat and Chloé met me there to give me one more chance to back out but I didn’t. Then she came on the boat with me I guess trying to convince everyone not to let me in while looking like she was on my side. I-I don’t know *why* but they let me join Kitty Section as their pianist.” The blond blushes, “t-they even said they’ll help making my outfit during All Saints’ break next week.” Adrien’s blush darkens, “s-sorry, I-I’m just *really* excited about this

opportunity.” Pausing, Adrien gasps, “*oh no!* I just realized my parents will be *furious* if they ever found out!” He puts both hands on his face, “m-my heart. It’s *pounding*.” He starts hyperventilating.

“I-It could be an anxiety attack?” Marc rushes over to Adrien rubbing circles into his back, “deep breaths.”

“I think you’re just running on adrenaline.” Sabine says calmly, “sounds to me like this is the first time you’ve ever, well, deliberately defied your parents. It’s both terrifying and exciting, right? That’s the feeling you have now?” Adrien nods, “your first instance of rebelling can get a tad... overwhelming. Like Marc said, take deep breaths. I’m not openly advising you to disobey your parents or anything but it will get easier the longer you go at it.”

Nathaniel narrows his eye, “this could all be a ploy.” He mutters.

“How can this face be sinister?” Marc puts his fingers on the side of the blond’s mouth pushing them up to make him smile, though it comes out more like a grimace, “it has *dimples* and dimples are never evil.”

Nathaniel rolls his right eye before turning back to the counter. “*Dude*,” Nino hisses elbowing him, “he’s having an anxiety attack. I thought you of all people would be sympathetic.”

Nathaniel scowls, “I empathize, I do. I just can’t... *help* someone who openly befriends one of my tormentors.”

“Dude, that’ll make you above and beyond them if you do.”

Nathaniel turns back to Adrien who has his breathing under control now. With a sigh, he walks over to the blond. “Stretching helps with my anxiety attacks.” The blond looks up at him, wide-eyed. “Or drawing. It’s what got me into drawing. You just need to do something distracting.” Adrien continues to stare, “that’s all the help I’m giving you.” Then he walks past Nino back to the counter.

Marc puts a hand on Adrien’s shoulder startling him, “feeling better?”

“Y-Yeah, thanks. That was kinda scary.”

“Let’s get some food into you.”

Sabine smiles as Adrien approaches the counter with Marc. Nathaniel is leaning against the wall staring at them. “Hello there. What would you like to order?”

“Order...?” Adrien looks up at the menu in awe. So many things.

“My daughter Marinette has celiac disease. She can’t ingest gluten so everything we make in house is gluten free.” Sabine continues to smile at the wide-eyed blond, no doubt overwhelmed by the selections, “...if I may make a suggestion?” Adrien looks down at her. “Why not try a free sample? Today’s special is a red bean paste eclair. You... don’t have any food allergies, do you?” Adrien shakes his head. “Okay. If it turns out you are, we have epipens on standby.” The blond watches the blue-haired woman take a pâtisserie from under the crystal cloche with a napkin with “ST” beautifully written on it, then hands it to him. “Enjoy.”

Adrien gently accepts the eclair from her, holding it by the napkin liner on the bottom. The eclair itself also has the same symbol, like, etched into it. That’s amazing. “T-This is free?” Sabine nods. “T-Thank you.”

“Don’t tell me you’ve never had a free sample before?” Nino asks.

“No, never. My parents tell me repeatedly nothing in life is free.”

“Come on, Dude.” Nino grabs Adrien by the shoulders steering him toward the table in the corner of the boulangerie pâtisserie. Once they sit down, Adrien stares at the eclair in his hands. Nino shakes his head, “it’s not gonna bite. You’re the one that has to do the biting.” Adrien looks up from the eclair at Nino, then looks back down at the pâtisserie before taking a hesitant bite. His eyes widen, the moment his mouth makes contact. Nino gapes when tears run down Adrien’s face. “Uh... Adrien?”

Sniffling, the blond wipes his eyes with his shirt sleeve, “s-sorry, I don’t know what came over me. It’s just...” He sniffles again. “This is the best thing I’ve ever eaten in my life.” He takes another bite, this time much larger.

“This is heartbreaking.” Marc whispers to Nathaniel who sighs, “still think it’s a ploy?”

The redhead scoffs. “Even *Émilie Graham de Vasily* is not *that* good of an actor.” He grumbles as they walk toward the table.

Sabine walks over to the table and hands Adrien another éclair. “Here. On the house.” The door chimes and Sabine breathes a sigh of relief. “Marinette!” She runs over to her daughter, grabbing her by the arm and taking her to behind the counter. “I am very worried about that boy.” She whispers as she gestures to Adrien.

“Māmā,” Marinette sighs, “for the thousandth time, you can’t adopt Nino.”

“Bullshit. I adopted Alix, didn’t I?”

“...True.”

“I’m going to keep trying. His stepmother *will* slip up sooner or later, and I’ll be ready with the adoption papers. But I wasn’t talking about Nino this time. I’m talking about the blond.”

“*Him?*” Sabine puts a finger to her lips, “*why?*” Marinette whispers.

“He *cried* eating an éclair! Is he getting abused at home?”

“Doubtful.” Sabine gives her *that look*, and Marinette groans, “māmā, I don’t know! I don’t know the kid. And I doubt you’d be able to adopt him even if he was getting abused at home.” Marinette rolls her eyes, “but like I said, it’s doubtful. He’s one of Chloé’s friends.”

“So I’ve heard. Need I remind you that you are on a roller derby team with ‘one of Chloé’s friends?’”

“Not by choice.” Marinette mutters.

“Marinette Lei Dupain-Cheng, I *know* Tom and I raised you better than this!” Marinette flinches then she frowns. “Need I also remind you, Chloé does not have the most stable of living environments or a great parental support system; if she has a support system at all. Chloé is horrible, yes. All of Paris knows that. But everyone always blames the *child* for their behavior but behavior like hers is ingrained. Taught. From her parents and those around them. I’ve spoken to both of that girl’s parents and I am *completely* blaming them for raising her they way they have or whoever they paid to raise her. But that’s not the point. This has nothing to do with Chloé. I don’t care who that boy is or isn’t ‘friends’ with. This has nothing to do with that. It’s about that boy and only that boy. And that boy?” Marinette glances at Adrien taking a huge bite of an éclair, “is *clearly* unhappy with his home life. And to be honest, I don’t even know if it’s all that safe. He had a full-blown anxiety attack at the mere

thought of disobeying his parents.” Marinette folds her arms over her chest, as Sabine gathers a bag full of eclairs and walks over to Adrien.

The blond blushes, “o-oh no, I-I couldn’t possibly—”

“Please do. I insist. I’m happy you enjoy them so much.” Adrien nods slowly. Sabine pats him on the shoulder then heads back to behind the counter, giving her frowning daughter a knowing look.

Marinette puts her hands up in defense, “sorry māmā, I’m not getting involved. You should talk to Kim. He already fawns all over him. I’m sure he’d be more than willing to dig into the kid’s personal history.” Sabine frowns as Marinette walks up the steps. She can’t truly fault Marinette’s callousness; excluding that poor Mylène girl – who is another one Sabine is looking into adopting – people with a connection to Chloé Bourgeois haven’t been all that nice to her daughter or any of her daughter’s friends. The only odd exception is Audrey Bourgeois. But that’s another story. Sabine sighs. She suppose she’ll have to do the “digging” herself.

With a decisive nod, Sabine prepares some beverages for the boys at the table.

“...You’ve never had an eclair before?” Nathaniel asks watching the blond tear through the bag Sabine gave him.

Adrien shakes his head, “my parents... oh man.” He begins chuckling somewhat hysterically, “my parents are gonna lose their minds! They might even get possessed by an akuma.” His hysterical laughter has the other occupants of the table eyeing one another uneasily. The blond wipes his eyes, “they plan all my meals out for me, in advance. I’ve never done anything like this before. My first real act of ‘rebellious’ was running out of the house and running all the way to school like I did last month.”

“Why did you run out of your house?” Marc asks.

Adrien sighs, “my parents promised me they’d look into schools for me. It’s something they’ve ‘promised’ since I was nine. After I saw Chloé and Sabrina all dressed up in their uniforms. I thought I could ‘live a normal life’ where I’d make real friends and make my own decisions...” He sighs again, “but they reneged at the last second. Like they always do. Claiming to be ‘too busy’ and that they’ll try again next year.”

“They must hope you’d stop asking if you keep getting denied.” Marc reasons.

“I did think about giving up when I saw an old man hobbling outside the gate and I didn’t even think, I just ran to him before the gate could close. I helped him pick up his cane and walked him across the street. My parents’ personal assistant, Nathalie, called out for me but... I ran. And I kept running until I saw François Düpont. I’ve only seen the school when my town car drove by it that one time. It... was a bit of a farther walk than I thought it would be.”

“It’s a miracle they let you keep going to school.” Marc says in awe. “I mean... you *technically* didn’t disobey them by going since they never said you couldn’t go... just that they were too busy to enroll you.”

“Yeah, that was... unusual. Still trying to figure it out, to be honest.”

“How did you even get enrolled?” Nino asks.

“Chloé was going to forge my maman’s signature but she didn’t have to! Nathalie filed all the paperwork and had my parents both e-sign. I’m grateful for them giving me this shot but they have all these stipulations attached, and I’m sure if I mess up even one I’ll be pulled from François Düpont!”

“But aren’t your parents like mega celebrities?” Nathaniel asks.

“Y-Yes... but they’re also agoraphobic. Papa especially. He has his whole design studio in the basement. And everything he could ever need is in the house, and if it isn’t he just has Nathalie get it. Maman leaves the house when I have photoshoots, or when she has to shoot a movie. She never seems very happy about it though.”

“Dude...” Nino hums, “your life sounds like a villain origin story.”

Adrien barks out a laugh, “I can see that happening.” He clears his throat, “his parents kept the leash around him too tight so he knew he had to break free.” Nino and Marc laugh, especially as the blond uses a movie trailer announcer voice.

“Nathaniel can even make you a villain costume.” Nino suggests. The redhead makes a seesawing motion with one hand as he eats the rest of his macaron with the other.

Adrien chuckles, “I’d appreciate that.” He takes a deep breath, “I never told anyone all this. Chloé and Sabrina already know how my parents are so I’ve never had to speak about them.

This feels... cathartic to get it all off my chest. And all it took was an anxiety attack to get it going.”

Nino pats him on the back, “just let it all out then. We still got time before we have to head back.”

“Okay.” Adrien nods, “I hate modeling!” Nino, Marc, and Nathaniel stare at the blond. “I mean, I *used to* like it but my parents sucked all the fun out of it when maman had to ‘approve’ every photoshoot location and that I could only wear my papa’s clothing. And I hate my papa’s fashion sense! Why is he so *obsessed* with insects? The *Agreste*® symbol kind of looks like a pair of butterfly wings. And I don’t know why maman does silent films! And now they want to get me into acting! I-I just don’t know what I—”

Adrien startles when Sabine sets out mugs in front of all of them. “Ooh, is this what I think it is?” Nino rubs his hands together. “You’re the best, Mme. C! I really don’t tell you that enough.” Sabine chuckles. Nino, Nathaniel, and Marc eagerly thank the blue-haired woman before drinking.

“Thank you for all of this, Mme. Cheng.”

“It’s my pleasure.” She walks back to the counter humming.

Adrien wraps both hands around the mug, embracing the warmth, as he takes a sip. It’s like everything she puts her hands on ends up delicious! He has to find a way to pay her for all her kindness. Looking around the shop, Adrien notices the tip jar on the counter by the chalkboard with the “sweet treat of the day” on it.

Marinette trots down the stairs with a duffel bag in her hands. “Yo Marinette! Off to hide a body?” Nino asks.

Adrien watches the girl smile with a wink then exit the shop. “Can I ask you all a question? Why do Chloé and Marinette hate each other?” They all suck in a breath.

After a few seconds in which none of them move, Nino sighs heavily allowing the other two to exhale. “Alright. *I’ll* tell you.” He shoots Nathaniel and Marc dirty looks before sighing again. “Sixième.” Adrien tilts his head to the left, “I was there. We all were. First day of sixième, Marinette had on this blue dress with little red and white dragonflies all over it. Made it herself. Alix helped with the sticking bits. Alix and Marinette have been best friends since any of us have met them. If someone has a problem with one of them, they usually have a problem with both. Anyway, when all of us arrived – the three of us plus Marinette and

Alix, Kim was running late, everyone was complimenting Marinette on her clothes and her little winged socks asking her where she got them. Across the courtyard, a certain *someone* didn't like all the attention she was losing so she stomped over to Marinette and made some comment about insects being *dirty* then she dumped her drink all over Marinette's dress. Of course, before she could laugh, Alix immediately punched her in the face."

Adrien winces. "Since then, she's hated both of them." Nathaniel finishes with a shrug. "The only reason Alix didn't get expelled was because school technically didn't start and Chloé was too embarrassed to admit she got beaten up by anyone, let alone someone so small and with just one punch."

"Wait, beat up?"

"Maybe 'beat up' isn't the best term but Chloé did get knocked out *flat*. Hit the ground immediately. Even before Alix pulled her fist back. A one-hit K.O.; it was like One-Punch Man! And I doubt Alix was using half her full strength." Nino says before taking another sip from his mug then frowns when he doesn't get anything. He lowers his mug to look into it and sees that it's empty. "Anyway," He puts his mug down, "Chloé wore an oversized pair of sunglasses to school every day until the bruises faded and no professeur asked her any questions or made her take the sunglasses off."

"I heard Alix actually broke Chloé's nose." Marc muses.

Nino whistles, "really? Damn."

"And as for why Marinette and Alix hate Chloé, well maybe not *hate*, probably just... dislike immensely?" Adrien grimaces but nods, "she always seemed to go above and beyond just to make their lives miserable!" Marc sighs, "and by extension, the rest of ours."

□□

Lila walks in the artroom and looks around. There are various projects strewn around all over. Alya is rolling over a blackboard with pictures of Lady Luck, Karma, an akuma, and an amok feather. There are multiple newspaper headlines cut out, along with different colored lines attached to ...things. "Feels like I walked into a murder mystery!" She greets cheerfully.

"There is mystery no doubt," Max replies, "no murders yet though."

Lila hums then walks over to Alya as the slightly shorter teen writes on the blackboard, "how

does one obtain superpowers?” Lila reads aloud. “Kind of a vague question, isn’t it? I mean, there are so many ways.”

The chalk in Alya’s hand snaps in two. Sighing, she puts down one half and presses the other against the blackboard. “I’m well aware of that. I’m also aware that it’s been almost two months since Mite and Méfait first appeared, bitching about nabbing Lady Luck and Karma’s miraculouses, *yet* according to all the akuma victims videos and testimonies *nobody* who got possessed by an akuma seems to know what the miraculouses **are**! They’re *obviously* what give the four of them their respective powers but you’d *think* Mite would *explain* what she’s actually looking for!” The orange-haired teen grumbles to herself, thumping her head against the blackboard.

“Maybe that’s why she’s been unsuccessful?” Max guesses. “Her one-track mind of gathering the miraculouses has eluded her to the most basic facts.”

“It’s really bothering you, isn’t it?” Lila pats Alya on the back, “don’t worry about it. I’ll help you.” Alya slowly turns her head toward Lila, “I know what the miraculouses ar—”

Eyes widening, Alya puts both hands over Lila’s mouth muffling the rest of the brunette’s sentence. “Markov!”

“Aye aye. Beginning scan.” Lila’s eyes widen as a green light emits from Markov’s face while he does a complete scan of the classroom. “Room secure. No bugs found.”

Alya sighs in relief removing her hands, “you can’t just blurt something like that out!”

“Paranoid, much?” Lila giggles, “*relax*. We’re safe, I promise.” The brunette pulls her necklace out from under her shirt, “see this cornicello? It was passed down in my family for generations of generations! Cornicellos are symbols of good luck in Italy. That’s because ancient luck spirits used to live within the cornicellos. Of course, there’s no spirit in my necklace. Not anymore. But when my bisnonna had the cornicello, she used it to be a superhero! She used to tell me all the time about her heroic tales.”

Alya’s eyes light up, “whoa! That’s incredible!”

“Y-Yes... but irrelevant.” Max adds. “unless you’re saying the miraculouses are also ancient, magical jewelry?”

“That is *exactly* what I am saying, Max! My bisnonna was the original Lady Luck. She

wasn't calling herself that though. And this was in Italy. Way before pictures and internet and stuff. But there are ancient depictions of her throughout Italy's history. Miraculouses are world jewels. There are... about one-hundred in total! And they change with each holder!" Lila puts her necklace back in her shirt. "I could tell you more. Maybe over the luckyblog?"

"No."

"Cool, we—" Lila does a double-take, "*no*?"

"No." Alya repeats shaking her head. "Girl, have you lost it? Why would we put this on the luckyblog? The luckyblog was created, first and foremost, to *help* Lady Luck and Karma. Whether it be to let the city see how incredibly awesome and badass they are and how much we appreciate them, or to just let them know where an akuma or amok is. Having you confirm what the miraculouses are isn't gonna help them. *They* already know what the miraculouses are, civilians don't. What if there are Mite and Méfait sympathizers who view the luckyblog? What if Mite and Méfait themselves were looking in their civilian forms? I'm trying to Lois Lane this blog, help however I can. And if my comic book knowledge is sound, even when Lois knew Superman's identity she never once posted anything about it! I don't have magic, this is about all I can do to help. I have to do my part, protecting my girls from some butterfly-obsessed drama queen and her feather-flicking lackey!"

"Wow! That's so *loyal*, Alya! And *fearless*! But aren't you worried this will make you a target for Mme. Mite?"

"I'm not worried."

"Alya does seem to have a rather... absurd amount of luck regarding akuma attacks." Max muses, "perhaps some of Lady Luck's magic has rubbed off on you? Protecting you in some way?"

Lila tsks, "it doesn't work that way. You can't just pass off magic to someone else."

Max raises an eyebrow, "Mme. Mite does it."

"Through her miraculous. And it's only temporary. *If*, and I mean *if* Lady Luck did 'pass off' her luck onto Alya it would've faded when Lady Luck reversed her transformation." The brunette hums. "You know, I just so happen to have bisnonna's book on ancient magic. I can bring it to school tomorrow, if you'd like?"

“That’s... not such a good idea right now, Lila. People’s shit is getting torn up and stolen. We can’t let a book on magic fall into the wrong hands. The last thing we need is more chaos unleashed in the city.”

“Yeah, good point. Ooh! I know! You three can come over to my place tomorrow after school and see the book!”

“Three?” Markov does a headcount then stares at Lila.

“Well, I was including you as well, Markov.”

The robot chirps happily. “Thank you, Lila.” The brunette smiles as she nods.

The door opens as Kim, Alix, Juleka, and Aurore all enter the artroom. “Alya!” Alix greets walking over to the bespectacled teen, “wanna try out for our roller derby team?”

“I don’t know anything about roller derby.”

“You should come see us practice on Wednesday. It’ll give you some insight to the sport.” Aurore says. “The teams have been switched up so much in just the past two weeks!”

“Not to mention we’re about to have an opening.”

“About to?” Lila repeats.

Alix *smiles* and a chill goes down Lila’s spine. She makes a mental note not to fuck with Alix Kubdel. The pink-haired teen rubs her hands together. “Markov, any news?”

The robot beeps sadly. Lila will never understand how Markov just emotes the way *he* does. But she’s too afraid of the electronic apocalypse to understand AIs. “The DNA found on Marc Anciel’s monogrammed ‘idea’ notebook belongs to several people; unfortunately, none of them is a match for the DNA of Sabrina Raincomprix.”

“Son of a bitch.” Alix mutters, “probably just got lucky. What about Nathaniel’s shit?”

“Oddly enough, the only DNA found on the sketchbook of Nathaniel Kurtzberg was that of Professeur Caline Bustier.”

“*Bustier!?*” The group exclaims.

Markov nods. “The nail polish I examined came from one of the fingertips of the professeur. This morning in class I noticed her nails were painted the same shade of the blue we discovered, but there were no chips or cracks or even any smudges.”

“Must’ve redid her nails, but I don’t remember seeing Bustier at the tournament.” Kim scratches his head.

“Professeur Bustier was present in the building when Max and I first arrived. She did not stay very long then we did not see her again.”

“You know...” Aurore taps her chin, “I *did* see the professeur skulking around in the hallways when I first arrived, but I didn’t pay much attention to her.” The blonde frowns, “what now? We can’t kick Sabrina off the team without proof, right? She’ll just tell her papa we’re looking for reasons to get rid of her.”

“Why do you want Sabrina off the team?” Lila asks.

“She stole my friend Marc’s poem and had the raw nerve to enter it into Clara Nightingale’s art contest as her own piece.” Lila gasps, “like Aurore said, without proof we’re up a creek.” Alix sighs, “alright. We’re on All Saints’ break after Halloween. Time off might do us some good. Time to think. Besides, we can’t kick her out of the team without a replacement. We wouldn’t have enough players.”

“Then I’ll join.” Alya says, “if you need her gone after what she did, I’ll help. Like Majestia always says: ‘all that’s necessary for the triumph of evil is that good people do nothing.’ I can’t stand by and just let her get away with plagiarism.”

“But what about the luckyblog?” Lila asks, “you’re the primary content creator.”

“It’s really Max’s website, he just put me on the face of it.”

“It was your idea.” Max argues, “I just had the website available. I never would have thought

of doing half of what you thought of. You're amazing. Markov and I can do our part and fill in for you while you're roller derby-ing."

Alya rubs the back of her neck, "thanks. Um, guess I'd better look up roller derby."

"Roller derby is just the greatest." Lila says with a content sigh, "such an exciting sport! Therapeutic too. Really doesn't get the recognition it deserves. I was on a roller derby team back in Naples. wasn't quite as big as the league Paris has, but we got around. Met some interesting people at some of our bouts. I even met Austin August—"

"No. Fucking. Way!" Alix walks over to Lila holding her hands, eyes sparkling, "you met *the* skating legend Austin 'Double A' August *in person*?"

Lila nods, "they said I had serious potential..." She sighs letting go of Alix's hands, "unfortunately, my achilles tendonitis made me have to ease up on roller derby, and all the other contact sports I used to participate in."

"Achilles...?" Kim scratches his head, "why does that sound familiar? Oh! Hey Alix, didn't you get treated for some achilles something last year?"

"Maybe?" She shrugs, "doesn't matter, nothing is gonna stop me from skating."

"You should be careful, Alix. Achilles tendonitis can worsen if untreated. Have you ever had x-rays done? American Football players' careers have ended because of ruptures to their achilles tendons. It's not something to scoff at. My uncle injured his achilles tendon during practice then—" The brunette makes a throat cutting gesture, "—they cut him from the team before he ever got to play professionally."

Kim whistles, "that sucks. You know, Alix skated with a broken ankle before."

The pink-haired teen rolls her eyes, "it wasn't *broken*, Kim, it was sprained. Don't be so dramatic."

Kim gives Alix a deadpan stare, "'sprained?' Right. My mistake. Must not have realized the bone poking out of your foot is a 'sprain.'" He shakes his head.

Aurore looks at Alix, "how do you still even have ankles?"

“You must have some serious pain tolerance to deal with something like that. Anyway, I’m just glad you’re fine to skate. There’s no worse feeling than no longer being able to do something you love.”

“If you love roller derby so much, you could join our team too? They have ankle bans and shit. Or you could just watch us play?” Alix pauses, “unless it’s too painful.”

“That’s so sweet of you to be concerned over me. I *do* miss team activities. It’s how I met some of my best friends back home. I guess I get so homesick sometimes. Maybe doing something that reminds me home will help with the homesickness.”

“You’ll never know unless you try.” Aurore says. “Wednesday, we have practice at Skater Lake.”

Alix rubs her hands together chuckling lightly, “everything is coming together nicely.” Kagami walks into the artroom with Jessica. “You’re here!”

“Sorry. It’s my fault Kagami’s late. Got lost along the way.” Jess rubs the back of her neck, “for some reason I thought the artroom was on the other side of the school. They should really label the classrooms.”

“What was it that you wanted to ask me, Alix?” Kagami asks.

Alix smiles brightly at the blue-haired teen. “How do you feel about roller derby?”

□□

Tues, Oct 27th, 2020

Professeur Bustier gets up from her desk, “...thank you for the morning announcements, Mlle. Bourgeois.” Curtsying, Chloé takes her seat. “I thought we’d start class today by reassigning seats.” Marinette cheers then gathers her stuff. “Wait a minute. No, no, Mlle. Dupain-Cheng,” The blue-haired teen pauses, “you and Mlle. Bourgeois still have not worked out your issues. Your seats will remain.”

“What?!” The aforementioned girls question.

“Can everyone else please come to the front of the classroom with your belongings?”

“This is bullshit.” Marinette grumbles, flopping back in her seat.

Chloé rolls her eyes with a snort. “As if *I’m* satisfied with this arrangement.”

“Then say something to her! She’s clearly not listening to me.”

Chloé glares but raises her hand, “Professeur Bustier? I think changing our seats—” She gestures between herself and Marinette, “is a good idea. Hell, a great one. I’d dare say it’s even exceptional. It’ll fit into the whole *fang* shey—”

“*Feng shui*.” Marinette corrects rubbing her forehead.

“—Sure, *that*. Whatever. Anyway, what I’m saying is, you should move us—preferably *her*.” Marinette mumbles something as she shakes her head.

“I’m sorry Mlle. Bourgeois, but I believe you two continuing to sit near each other will help.”

““Help?”” They echo, “*help with what?*”

“Girls, *please*! I have seats to assign.”

“Did she just blow me off?” Chloé asks, outraged, “how dare she just blow me off like... like some *commoner*!” Marinette slumps down in her seat with a groan, “This is all *your* fault, Dupain-Cheng.”

Marinette snorts, “my fault? Whatever. Go get possessed by another akuma.” Chloé gasps as she puts a hand over her chest.

Lila raises her hand, “professeur? I’m terribly embarrassed to ask, but may I remain in the front? I have a bit of trouble seeing the board from too far away.”

“Oh! I’m so sorry, Mlle. Rossi! I had no idea! I’ll make sure to keep your seat somewhere in

the front.”

Chloé rolls her eyes, “oh brother. She thinks she can talk back to *me*, then suddenly her voice is all we hear? Give me a break.” The blonde cups her hands around her mouth, “*get glasses* if you can’t see far away!” The class looks at Chloé then at the brunette.

“It’s just me and my mamma at home. And mamma is *so* busy with her diplomatic duties at the embassy she simply doesn’t have the time to take off work and make me an eye appointment.”

Diplomat? Chloé hums. Her papa would know every diplomat staying in the city. The blonde makes a little note in her phone. “How terrible!” Chloé gasps dramatically, “I had no idea! Though I suppose knowing this confirms something for me. Your poor eyesight explains your horrible sense of fashion.” Lila’s jaw drops then she begins whimpering.

A few classmates glare at Chloé as they comfort the brunette. The blonde rolls her eyes. “*Wow*, Chloé. Petty much?”

The blonde scoffs, “don’t *you* start, Dupain-Cheng. You’re a ‘fashion designer’ are you not? Her ‘hobo-chic’ look missed the *chic* mark.” Chloé sighs, watching her classmates continue to crowd around the brunette. “I had no idea I was surrounded by such... *morons*! They can’t truly feel sorry for her. Anyone with half a functioning braincell can see that girl is full of shit.”

Marinette hums, “being so full of shit yourself, I suppose you’d know better than anyone.” Chloé glares at the girl who takes out her sketchbook and flips through a few pages, “but it sounds to me like you’re just jealous.”

“**Jealous**?! Me? That’s absurd! Utterly absurd! Chloé Bourgeois has never been jealous of anything or anyone! *I* have no reason to be *jealous*! People are jealous of *me*! That’s the way it works! That’s the way it *always* works!” Marinette rolls her eyes, flipping through more pages. “Besides, what could I *possibly* be jealous of? Those thrift store rags? Did you forget my maman is *The Queen of Fashion*? That girl is a walking amalgam of how not to dress.”

“I’m surprised you know what the word amalgam *is* let alone how to use it correctly.” Chloé’s eyes narrow, “and Lila’s style is Lila’s style. It suits her. Plus, I doubt she cares what you think.”

“She *should* care. My fashion voice is an echo of my maman’s! You think my maman would ever let me leave the hotel looking so tragic?” The blonde’s wearing a plain red t-shirt and a

black a-line skirt. Ever since her second akuma possession, Chloé's wardrobe has been predominantly red and black as opposed to the gold and yellow she used to wear. Yellow, gold and black: The colors Audrey Bourgeois is known for wearing. Audrey always says every look could use a little gold. The only gold on Chloé is her ladybug chain. (She had another one custom-made after her first one was destroyed by the akuma.) She even swapped her usual white and gold sunglasses for red ones.

"Not everyone follows your maman's fashion advice, Chloé. Audrey Bourgeois is not the sole voice in fashion."

Chloé huffs, "she might as well be. Very few styles compare to Audrey Bourgeois'!"

"Okay, everyone. I'm ready with the seating arrangements. We'll start from the front. Lila, you can go back to your previous seat."

"Grazie, Professeur." Chloé rolls her eyes watching the brunette take the seat across from her. Great, she's still stuck looking at the brunette's dumb face and clunky hairstyle. And she's seated by herself since the class has an uneven amount of students.

When all is said and done, Professeur Bustier hauled Adrien to the back of the class where Chloé can't keep an eye on him. She turned around to see the tall goth being seated next to Adrien, and Chloé knows Adrien well enough to know he's more than happy about the seating change. She'll have to ask him what it was like sitting next to Lila for a whole month. ~~No doubt it was a nightmare.~~

Sabrina – who actually *has* eyesight problems, hence her prescription glasses – was also banished to the back of the classroom. As were Alya, Ondine, and Mylène. The only people in this classroom Chloé actually gave a damn about.

Chloé groans. Not only is she stuck between to Thrift Store and Dupain-Cheng, but *Kim* was given Alya's previous seat behind Chloé. Thank goodness, Bustier put Kubdel in the back as well.

This whole seating arrangement is a *mess*. Then again, Chloé did not pay attention to the seating arrangements Bustier made before this one.

There are seventeen students in Professeur Bustier's class. Ivan has to wonder if it's good luck or bad luck that the professeur seated him in a shared desk with his crush. No doubt it's bad luck, they looked at each other for all of three seconds before they both looked away.

Great, she's so repulsed by his presence she can't even look in his direction. He sighs heavily as he props his fist against his cheek.

"Down in front!" Alix yells. Beside her, Aurore laughs.

"Dude, they're starting the Cycle Slaughter tournament loser's bracket tournament on Saturday. Are you gonna be there? Uh... here?"

Max adjusts his glasses, "considering what went on during the last gaming tournament, I will have to respectfully decline."

"What? But you don't get a fair shot to compete! You shouldn't even be in the loser bracket, you would've wiped the floor with me!"

Professeur Bustier pointedly clears her throat, "I'm beginning today's lesson, M. Lê Chiên." Kim nods hunching forward at his desk.

"You gotta come." Kim whispers, "you got screwed."

"Yes, I was... screwed out of my shot at the tournament but that's alright. There will be other tournaments. In fact, there's a Legendary tournament next month."

"That game's too smart for me."

"Actually, Cycle Slaughter requires more thought than Legendary. Legendary's entire basis —"

Chloé gags, "can you two be *nerds* somewhere out of my hearing range?" She hisses.

"Or maybe you could shut up? There's an option." Chloé flips Kim off before turning back around.

Adrien's new deskmate is Juleka, and he has a lot of mixed feelings about it. On the one hand, he's happy: Juleka is so beautiful and talented; on the other hand, he's nervous: Juleka is so beautiful and talented. For the most part, since Professeur Bustier put them to sit next to each other, the purple-haired teen ignored Adrien's existence. A far cry from sitting next to

Lila, who'd tell him all the wonderful stories about her life. She's so interesting. Adrien steals a glance at Juleka who blows a bubble with her gum then pops it.

Looking to his left, Adrien sees Alix and Aurore next to each other hunched forward at their desk whispering to each other, with a playbook in front of them. Right. They're on the same roller derby team. The same one Sabrina's on.

Oh! Juleka is also on the team. Maybe she'll want to sit closer to the two of them? He takes another glance at the purple-haired teen just tapping her fingers against the desk. Adrien takes a deep breath then clears his throat, "s-so...? W-When is Kitty Section having their next practice?"

Juleka stills then slowly turns to him. They stare at each other for a few seconds before Juleka blows another bubble then pops it. "Tomorrow." Juleka hums, "that reminds me. I probably need your number to text you, and I'll give it to Luka too. As you're part of the band too."

"R-Right." Adrien nods, then takes his phone out of his pocket.

The intercom shrieks to life and the feedback has the students cringe and shudder as always. "*Attention quatrième students, this is Principal Damocles. Yesterday afternoon, your class representatives came together with the theme of your dance that Mayor Bourgeois was kind enough to pay for.*" The class looks at Chloé who smiles smugly when she turns to them. "*This morning that theme was submitted to me. The theme for your Halloween dance is romance.*"

Chloé's jaw drops and everyone gasps. "*What?!*" The blonde stands, "that's not what I decided on! I told them to submit *elegance*! Utter... dumbasses. What the fuck does that have to do with **romance**?"

"They kinda rhyme?"

She turns to Kim. "*Zip it.*" The blonde turns back around. "Damocles, what the hell?!"

"*Sabine & Tom Boulangerie Pâtisserie have been hired to cater the dance along with Le Grand Paris' chef de cuisine Marlène Césaire.*"

Chloé screams, "elegance! *Elegance!*"

“I-I hear you, Mlle. Bourgeois. There must’ve been a miscommunication on your end. ‘Romance’ is the theme that was submitted to me this morning.”

“Who submitted it?”

“I did.” The class (dramatically) gasps and Chloé slowly turns to Sabrina who is standing at her desk. “Romance can be elegant.”

Chloé’s eyes narrow, “is that a fact? You changed the theme because of that ice cream bullshit, didn’t you? Come on Sabrina, you’re the smartest person I know! You can’t buy into something so... so... *outrageous!*”

“There’s nothing outrageous about it!” The orange-haired teen pauses, “okay, it *is* outrageous but that doesn’t mean it’s not possible!”

Chloé huffs then turns around and sits down, “*whatever.*”

Sabrina frowns as she sits back down, “...what ‘ice cream thing’ are you two talking about?” Rose asks, turning to Sabrina.

□□

“Alright Rose, why are we all bunched up in the cafeteria?” Ivan asks. “And why are you standing on the table?”

“She wants to see what it feels like to be tall.” Kim laughs, “Al—” Kim groans as an apple is thrown at his head. (Alix wipes her hands on her shirt nonchalantly.)

The cafeteria is empty today so Rose sent out a mass text to everyone, asking if they could come to the cafeteria for lunch. “Sabrina told me there is an ice cream vendor that tells you who your true love is!” The blonde squeals, “isn’t that just romantic? That’s why our dance has a romance theme. Sabrina got her love ice cream. She didn’t tell me who it was, though. Oh! And there’s more! The ice cream vendor has agreed to make an appearance at the dance to tell us who our true loves are!” The blonde sighs contently as she twirls around.

Alya waves a hand carelessly, “*pass*, I got a lactose allergy.”

Gasping, Rose jumps from the table onto the floor in front of Alya, “I’m lactose intolerant too. But knowing who your true love is, isn’t that worth a stomachache?”

Alya blinks at the blonde, “was that a serious question?” Kagami asks. Rose gapes at the blue-haired teen. “You’d risk your health... for the most preposterous, sketchy-sounding gimmick I may’ve ever heard?”

“I-It’s not sketchy sounding! It’s romantic.”

“What it *is*, is ridiculous. Willingly risking your physical and mental health just for the *prospect* of romance is beyond foolish.” Kagami states. Alix whistles and claps.

“You’re just not a romantic.” Lila tsks, “it’s not about risking your health; it’s about taking risks. Love isn’t easy. It’s like a maze you try to get through.”

“I hate mazes. They serve no purpose beyond aggravation. If something isn’t straightforward, it...” She pauses, furrowing her eyebrows, “wow. So that just happened. Kaasan was right. It *does* come out of nowhere.” She clears her throat. “I apologize. That was my obaasan speaking through me.” Kagami takes a deep breath, “okay. Let me start over. I would like to know this man’s credentials. How does he *know* who you are let alone who your ‘true love’ is?”

Lila sighs, “Kagami, we live in a world where we have animal-themed superheroes and supervillains! If we have an ice cream man who says he can find your true love with his ice cream, I’m inclined to believe he can truly do that.”

“You are free to believe what you choose, Lila, but don’t expect everyone to share your opinion. Despite my objections, I am not trying to dissuade anyone from believing in the ‘magical love harboring ice cream man.’ I am merely saying you should be careful not to get too invested, in case it turns out to be a gimmick.”

The blue-haired girl with the heart-shaped sunglasses on her head sighs in content, “well, the ice cream guy did his job. He just showed me my true love without even giving me ice cream.” The table watches the blue-haired girl gets up from her seat and walk around the table to take the empty seat next to Kagami then puts her head on the shorter girl’s shoulder. “You are amazing.”

Kagami chuckles. “thank you, Fei. You are amazing too.”

Fei lifts her head, “I’ve had it with the unrealistic expectations of love and romance and all that bullshit. I mean, wasn’t chocolate enough? Now they have to ruin *ice cream* by throwing love into it?” She shakes her head then puts it back on Kagami’s shoulder.

“I bet this will be no different than those fake psychics who give you generic ‘readings’ that you link to something coinciding with your life.” The table turns to Jessica sitting at the end of the table, “sorry. My godmother was scammed by a fake romance hotline the other day.”

“Even if this dude *is* legit, why does it matter? We’re just kids. I’m sure as shit not looking for any ‘love’ at fourteen.” Alix scoffs, then flicks a chip into Kim’s open mouth from across the table.

“Guys, you’re ruining this for Rose!” Marc says patting the blonde on the shoulder. “I may not believe in the ice cream love guy either, but it does sound like a cute little thing to do with your friends. You may get each other’s ice cream flavors.”

Nathaniel promptly starts choking on his almond milk. Juleka pats the redhead on the back.

“Not that I have anyone aside from Lady Luck that I love but I am curious. Rose, did Sabrina say *how* this thing is supposed to work?” Kim asks, before flicking a chip into Alix’s open mouth.

The blonde nods, “she said the ice cream man says a bunch of rhymes then mixes up some flavors that compliment those rhymes and the flavors he rhymes about are supposed to physically represent your love.”

“Yeah, nope. I’m out.” Alya puts both her hands in the air, “I do not fuck with rhymes. At. All. That is a personal motto of mine. I think I’m gonna stick with eating things that won’t make me nauseous. Like inhaling a plate of extra stacked cheese fries.”

Marinette’s eyebrows furrow, “but you can’t eat cheese fries if you’re lactose intolerant.”

Alya shakes her head. “They don’t use real cheese in the extra stacked cheese fries.”
Marinette cringes.

Juleka pats her stomach, “stacked cheese fries sound *so good* right about now. With real cheese, though. Hey, I got it! Let’s blow off the dance? We can hang out and watch horror films.”

“Hell yes!” Fei hugs Juleka from her seat while still leaning on Kagami. “I’m in.”

“*Dude*, I am so there!” Alya leans over the table to high-five Juleka. Kagami and Jessica nod in agreement.

“But this is all of your first dance at François Düpont! You’re gonna miss it?” They all nod. Marinette sighs, “fine. Guess I can’t make you all go if you don’t want to.”

“I’ve never been to a school dance before.” Alya begins with a shrug, “usually was never around long enough to get the hype with my family moving around so often. Plus, I don’t do dresses and I don’t dance so why would I go to a dance?”

“You could always wear pants.” Alix argues, “but I agree. School dances are not what they’re cracked up to be. I’m only going because Marinette’s gonna give me *that look* if I don’t. And, honestly, I wanna hear the ice cream guy’s bullshit for myself.” Kim leans forward to fist bump Alix.

“I wasn’t gonna give you any *look*.” Marinette denies. “If you don’t wanna go, Alix, you don’t have to.” Alix stares deadpan at Marinette. “W-What?”

“I have never been to a school dance either.” Kagami says, “I have been at schools for the entire time a dance was scheduled to its date and I have always failed to see the appeal.”

“I’ve only been to one school dance. At the school I was in before my maman and I moved here. It was fun. And that was only because all my friends and I made it fun. After that we’d —” Jessica snaps her fingers, “we could have a sleepover on Halloween!”

“On Liberty? I can ask my maman.”

“What’s ‘Liberty?’” Fei asks Kagami.

“Juleka’s houseboat.” Fei hums with a nod.

“Hey, can I come to the sleepover too?” Nino asks, “I’ll have to bring my baby brother though.”

“Sure. Your brother can hang with Luka if the movies are too scary for him.” Juleka punches Nathaniel in the arm, “you’re coming too. I *know* you’re not gonna go to the dance.” Nathaniel mutters something to Juleka which makes her snort.

“Your maman will be okay with having *boys* at your sleepover?” Lila gasps. “My maman would *never* allow that!”

Aurore barks out a laugh then Alix stomps on her foot and the blonde lurches forward slamming her head on the table. “My maman is a pirate who owns her own pirate ship equipped with its own cannon and brews her own ale. She’s cool with more than just multi-gendered sleepovers. Luka has them all the time.”

“A-And she’s not... *concerned*?”

“‘Concerned?’ Concerned about—”

“Oh my God!” Fei slams her hands down on the table startling everyone. “That’s enough! What is it that you don’t understand? She *just said* her maman is cool with it. Drop it.”

Everyone else at the table looks from Fei to Lila, “I-I was only asking.”

They look back at Fei who frowns. “Asking the same question more than once will result in the same answer more than once. Your maman doesn’t let you have boys over? So what? Sucks to be you. Juleka’s *does*. That’s it. End of the subject.”

They look back at Lila. “A-Alright. I was merely curious that—”

Fei growls, “you’re doing it again!”

“Okay! I won’t say anything else.” Lila shifts in her seat, looking down at the table.

Speaking of the table...? “Uh... is Aurore okay?” Kim asks. The blonde in question gives a thumbs up without lifting her head.

“O-Oh?” Everyone at the table looks up at Adrien awkwardly hovering behind Aurore who still has her head down. “W-What are you all doing here?”

“We’re talking about the dance!” Rose chirps, “are you going?”

Adrien nods, “absolutely! Or rather I’d absolutely love to!” He pauses, “this’ll be my first school dance ever. I... I just don’t know if my parents will allow me to attend.”

“Dude...” Nino says morosely.

With a sigh, Adrien nods in agreement.

Lila hums tapping her cheek, “I have the perfect solution.” Everyone turns to her. “Your papa the illustrious Gabriel Agreste, right?” Adrien nods. “Tell him this will be a promising, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to show off for Agreste® in a public setting among your highly impressionable peers.”

Adrien’s eyes widen, “that’s brilliant, Lila! Thank you so much! I’m-I’m gonna call my papa right now! Excuse me.” The blond runs off.

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Wed, Oct 28th, 2020

Lila walks into the skating arena and looks around in awe. She has to do a double-take when she sees there’s a girl even taller than Marinette skate past. The brunette spots her classmates by the snackbar and makes her way over. “Good morning all!” She greets.

The group greets her back. “Glad you’re here.” Alix tells her. “Mme. Hombee says if you’re willing to try, she’ll let you on the team if you want. Not just you but everyone who came.”

“I’ll give it my best shot. Might be a little rusty though.”

“Oh don’t worry about that. You’re fine. Your skill level isn’t what’s most important. It’s the teamwork. We’re teaching both Kagami and Alya how to skate.” Lila sees Kagami holding onto Juleka’s as they skate around the rink. “What size shoe do you wear?”

“Don’t worry about me, Alix. I’ll get my shoes. I wanna look around. Embrace the sport before throwing myself back into it, you know?”

“I get it. Let me know if you need any help.” Lila nods with a smile. Most of the girls are tying or buckling up their skates making their way to the rink from the snackbar.

When Alya told her parents about the roller derby tryouts and her reasons for joining, her mother was excited and wanted to watch. Nora invited herself and the twins along as well. None of them can join the league due to the age restrictions but came anyway. Alya isn’t really sure *why* the three of them showed up when none of them know how to skate. But she learned her mother not only can skate her ass off and did not pass that talent onto any of her children but knows the entraîneur of the team.

Alya laces up her rollerblades. She didn’t even know there was a difference between *rollerblades* and *rollerskates*, but both were acceptable to use in roller derby. First, she was gonna try the rollerblades then the rollerskates to see which is a better fit for her. The orange-haired teen shakily gets to her feet and congratulates herself for not immediately falling onto the floor.

Aurore expertly skates past Kagami and Juleka.

“Come on! You’ll love roller derby!” Lila looks over her shoulder seeing that Fei girl with her hands folded behind her head walking with Jessica. “Kagami’s joining.”

“Damn my one weakness of badass cute girls.” Fei grumbles. Today, the tall blue-haired teen has star-shaped sunglasses on her head. Lila doesn’t trust that girl. Those weird red streaks in her hair. Her overall attitude. Her large assortment of sunglasses and hats. Lila’s gonna have to keep a close eye on her.

“Hi! It’s Lila, right?” The brunette turns to the redhead now standing beside her. “I’m Adélaïde Abraham,” She greets, “it’s totally cool you’re in the same school as Alix. Isn’t she simply amazing?” The redhead swoons. *Oh*. Well, that was... unexpected.

“Oh yes. Alix is great. The other day she took on a pair of akumas. It was... riveting.”

“I know!” Adélaïde squeals, “I heard! Wish I would’ve seen it in person.”

“I was there.” Adélaïde gasps excitedly. Lila thanks the man for her shoes, “Alix and I are in the same class.” Adélaïde’s eyes sparkle. “The whole akuma thing started with this girl named Chloé...” She begins as they start walking.

Marinette has her hair tied in a bun on the top of her head as she skates over to Alya bracing herself against the wall. “Ready?” The orange-haired teen nods then takes Marinette’s hands. “We’ll go slow.”

“Slow. Slow is good.” Alya wobbles as she gets one rollerbladed foot onto the rink, “*oh fuck!*”

“Don’t worry, Alya! I got you!” Grimacing, Alya looks up into Marinette’s grey eyes as she puts her other foot onto the rink. Nodding, she holds onto Marinette’s hands tight. There is just *something* about Marinette’s eyes that make Alya trust her implicitly. When Marinette smiles, Alya sees her freckles more prominently. *Damn*, she really is beautiful! Oh great! Thanks a lot, Lady Luck! She never would’ve noticed if it weren’t for that damn interview. Alya feels her heartbeat speeding up. She’s getting a crush on Marinette. Okay. She can do this. She can hold Marinette’s hand no problem. It’s just her first ever crush. Whatever. No biggie. Nothing super important or consequential or anything!

Marinette is holding onto Alya’s hands skating backwards as Alya *tries* skating forward. “Nope. Fuck this. I’m out. This was a terrible idea.”

Marinette laughs, “Alya, you’re doing great.”

“Wait, did I say that out loud? Shit.” Alya keeps her eyes focused on her footing then on Marinette’s beautiful face then back to the floor. She’s gonna get serious vertigo if this keeps up.

“Alya, focus on one thing to look at. It’ll keep you from getting dizzy.” Alya nods then keeps her eyes firmly onto the skating rink floor.

Alix was leaning on the wall talking to Ari when her vision whites out for a second. She sees Kagami’s arm slipping from Juleka’s grasp. The blue-haired teen backpedals flailing as she falls backwards. Alix slows time briefly and skates over to Kagami to catch her before she can slam her skull onto the hardwood floor then resumes time normally.

“Alix?! *Whoa!*” Juleka puts her hands on her knees, bending forward. “Where did you—that was fast! I barely saw you skate over!” The purple-haired teen exclaims. She holds up a hand for each of them and they both grab one and stand up.

“Alix, are you alright?”

“Me? I wasn’t the one who nearly painted the floor with your brain matter.”

“I doubt the injury would’ve been that severe,” Kagami says with a smile, “but thank you for saving me all the same.”

“It’s...” Alix sways a bit and Juleka catches her, “guess that was too fast for me.”

“Come on, you should sit down.” Juleka helps Alix off the rink. Kagami stands completely still on the rink. Her eyes keep shifting from side to side as people skate around her.

“Do you need help?” Kagami looks up at the beautiful somewhat familiar looking woman she’s certain she’s never met before.

“Yes, thank you.” She offers her hand and Kagami takes it and immediately flails backwards but the woman grabs her other hand steadying her. “Perhaps I am not cut out for this.”

“You’ll get the hang of it.” The woman tells her with a smile, “and even if you don’t, at least you’re spending time with your friends. That has to count for something, right?” Kagami blinks at her then nods. “Oh...” She shakes her dark orange hair with a laugh in a very familiar manner, “look at me ‘mothering everyone.’ I’m sorry.”

“I-It’s fine.”

Dammit! Marinette *feels* something is off with Alix. She watches the pink-haired teen and Juleka walk over to the benches and Alix takes a seat and holds her head scowling at the floor. Marinette can’t just leave Alya in the middle of the rink to skate over to Alix. Not when Alya is struggling to stand upright. *Huh*. When was the last time someone had to hold onto *Marinette* to keep themselves balanced? Is this what Kim feels when they walk together?

Alya grabs onto Marinette’s forearms snapping the blue-haired girl out of her reverie. “Alya, I got you.”

“Yeah, but *I* don’t got me, Marinette!”

Huh. It sounds odd hearing her name from Alya. Marinette’s spent more time around Alya as *Karma* than she has as Marinette. Come to think of it, this might be the first time they’ve ever been talking one-on-one. Hmm. That is something Marinette will definitely try to remedy.

The bespectacled orange-haired teen is expression is pained as she holds onto Marinette. Marinette tries not to frown, she's used to seeing a smile or look of awe on Alya's beautiful face. Pained doesn't suit her. Huh? How did Marinette not realize how damn pretty Alya was before? "Are you sure about the dance?"

"What? *Dance*? What—" Alya full-on scowls, "I don't think I can talk and try to skate at the same time."

"I'm trying to distract you from tensing up. *Relax*, Alya." Alya looks up at Marinette, still scowling. "Relax. Everyone except Alix starts off shakily. I was a *mess* when I first started skating. Huh. Still kinda am but I'm clumsy." Alya bites her bottom lip adorably. "And even if you do fall, we'll get you back up on your skates. We're your team Alya, we're here for you. On the skates or on your ass."

"I—" Alya stumbles getting her left foot caught between Marinette's. Marinette flails backwards falling on her back and Alya falls on top of her.

"Marinette!" Alix gets up then immediately sits back down when the room starts spinning rapidly.

"Alya!" The woman takes Kagami's hand and they both skate over to Alya and Marinette along with everyone else. "Alya, are you alright?"

"*Me*? What about Marinette?" The woman helps up Alya *while still holding onto Kagami's hand*. "Marinette, are you okay?"

"Yup." Juleka helps Marinette up. The blue-haired teen stretches then winces when something cracks.

Alya frowns then looks up at the woman. "Ma, I told you I shouldn't've tried this!"

"Don't give up just because you fell once, Alya."

Kagami does a double-take. "*Ma*?!" Everyone exclaims looking between the two of them. "Y-You're Alya's maman?!"

Aurore's jaw drops, "w-we thought you were one of her sisters!"

The woman chuckles, “well, that’s flattering. Sorry to disappoint you all, but I’m Alya, Nora, Ella, and Etta’s maman Marlana.”

“The super chef!” Marinette shouts then flails backwards bringing Juleka down with her.

Chuckling, Marlana puts Alya’s hand in Kagami’s then helps Marinette up with both hands. “This is coming from the daughter of the bread masters? I’m in honor of meeting you.” She helps Juleka up next.

“Bread...” Marinette’s eyes widen, “*that’s right!* You were on that episode of Bleu Battle Chef with my parents! How could I have forgotten that!?”

“Boo *what?*” Fei asks.

“Bleu Battle Chef.” Alya repeats, “it was this short mini-series about up and coming chefs and pâtisseries in the early 2000’s. Wait, actually it was exactly the year 2000.” Marlana confirms with a nod. “How did I not even realize those were Marinette’s parents!?” She facepalms with her free hand then realizes she’s holding Kagami’s hand.

“Neither of us are falling.” Kagami comments in wonder.

“All you need on a team is trust and confidence. If you have one the other will come shortly.” Marlana says with a smile and all the girls swoon.

Camilla skates over, “everyone alright?” Everyone, still in awe, look over at the woman. She puts a hand to her head. “*Not again!* Marlana? What did you do to my team?”

“All I did was talk to them.”

“If it were physically possible to project heart-eyes, they all would be. I mean just look at them!” Marlana chuckles looking at everyone starry-eyed looking at her.

She chuckles, “I’m sorry.”

“No you’re not.” Camilla claps her hands together, startling everyone. “Alright. We can all

scream about Marlana once this exercise is over. Dupain-Cheng, take a breather.” Marinette nods, “everyone else? Head to the edge of the rink, we’re working on multitasking.”

“Oh Lord.” Alya groans, “can I confess that I do not have that ability?”

“Thank you for your honesty. If you’d like, we can work on that?” With a grimace, Alya looks over in the direction Marinette is skating then turns back to the entraîneur with a nod. “Good. To the edge, ladies.”

Marinette takes a seat next to Alix and puts a hand on her back, “I know you stopped time.” She whispers.

“Slowed down, didn’t stop.” Alix whispers back.

“Dammit, Alix.”

Alix moves her hands looking up at Marinette, “what was I supposed to do? Watch Kagami get hurt? It’s like I saw what was gonna happen before it happened. The speed she was falling? She would’ve been seriously hurt.”

“And what about how hurt you are right now? You know your powers are dangerous.”

“Marinette, I have to keep using them if I’m gonna fight alongside you.”

“Every time you use your powers you get nosebleeds, headaches, nausea, dizziness, and muscle aches. You couldn’t even move over the weekend when you tried to stop time for thirty seconds. Alix, I don’t want you getting hurt further. You *died* repeatedly getting this stupid thing to give you these powers. How do you know it’s not still killing you?”

“I wouldn’t be in the time prism if I was dead.”

“You don’t know that. And that isn’t *you*, you. It’s a different you. Not my Alix.”

“Look, I’m getting stronger Marinette. I feel it. I didn’t get a nosebleed this—” Alix groans when a drop of blood falls from her nose, “fucking timing.” She wipes her nose with her sleeve before anyone from the team could notice.

“Alix, stop using your powers or I’ll tell Lady Luck to take that damn kill watch.”

Alix folds her arms over her chest, “stop being a hypocrite.”

“My miraculous is not killing me.”

“*You* don’t know that.”

Marinette sighs, “stop being so damn stubborn. You think I’d be harassing you so much if I didn’t care? I love you, Alix. We both know you’re gonna crush using this miraculous but... maybe don’t try forcing it? You always said time enjoyed making you its bitch.”

Alix groans, “it *does*.”

“*Time* is telling you it’s not time for you to master Bunnyx’s powers now.”

Alix sighs heavily, “you’re right. I’ll stop during All Saints’ break but then I’ll pick it up again. Once a week then gradually work my way up to more days.”

“Thank you, Alix.”

“Yeah, yeah. I get it. I love you too. If it hurts me when you’re in pain, you feel pain when I’m hurting too.” Marinette hugs her.

□□

Thurs, Oct 29th, 2020

“...And then I broke it.” Jess looks at Fei a bit bewildered, and a little in awe. “Look I—what the hell is that?” Jess looks over at the... ice cream cart and even more suspicious was the *jovial* large man purveying the cart.

“Oh hell no. Something like this was on that serial killer special my maman had on last night.” Fei takes out a collapsible baton from ...somewhere, “*put that thing back where you*

took it out from!” Jessica hisses. “No one should be able to walk around with as many weapons as you!”

“It’s a talent.” Jessica shakes her head, “hey, you don’t think *this* is the ice cream love guy, do you?”

“He looks suspicious enough for me to say he only could be.”

“I’ll keep a hand on the baton.”

They nod to each other before cautiously approaching the ice cream cart. “Well, isn’t this pleasant! You both seemed so hesitant!” Fei turns around to walk away but Jessica grabs her by her hood.

“Just a piece of advice? How about you *not* lurk on the street of a collège selling ice cream? Not sending the message you want to send.”

“You are very kind. I will keep your advice in mind.” Fei groans out loud. “Have you come to see my craft? Discovering your true love path?”

“Yes.” Fei turns to Jessica wide-eyed. “But how do you do... what you do?”

“It is a secret I cannot tell, lest it breaks the spell! I shall begin with you, my dear, your love is easy to see. Clear.” Jessica lets go of Fei’s hood and the taller teen turns around with her arms folded over her chest. “I see murkiness in your future, you cannot stem your pain with sutures.” The ice cream man pulls out a pale blonde ice cream cone from one of his many compartments. “There is no flavor that represents silver but french vanilla will be least likely to cause a shiver.” The girls exchange a brief glance. “And top that off with a scoop of butter pecan. This flavor is for the friend you will make, the friend filled with love and a grand plan.”

“Uh, thank you?” Jessica hesitantly accepts the offered ice cream staring at it skeptically.

“And how about you, Mademoiselle? Shall I speak of your love as well?”

“Please don’t.”

“Ah yes, you must be waiting for the dance to have your chance.”

“Yeah, *sure*. Well, we’re gonna be late for class. How much do we owe you?”

“There is no fee, André’s ice cream is free.”

“Okay then. Bye!” Fei pushes Jessica along as they enter the school.

“Why did I get such boring flavors?” Jessica laments, staring at her ice cream. “And nothing he said sounded like it had anything to do with love.”

“I know cons. His wouldn’t be a very good one. He’s somehow on the level with the suspiciousness and bullshit.” Fei clicks her tongue. “All the more reason to skip the dance.”

“Not the greatest ice cream I have ever eaten but it is very good. Want some?” Fei shrugs as Jessica scoops up a bit from both flavors of her ice cream and feeds it to Fei.

“Hmmm. Not bad. But I’d rather buy my ice cream without getting free and confusing rhymes attached.”

“Agreed.”

□□

Kagami arrives at François Düpont to see a huge crowd in the courtyard.

“How utterly ridiculous.” Kagami hears. She sees Chloé leaning on the staircase shaking her head. When Chloé spots Kagami, she waves her over. Kagami curiously makes her way over to the blonde. Kagami hasn’t had any interaction with the girl as herself. At least, none that she can remember. “You’re Kagami, right? Kagami Tsurugi in Professeur Mendeleiev’s class?” Kagami nods slowly. “I make it my business to know all the important people who enroll in François Düpont. I’m Chloé Bourgeois, but I’m sure you already knew that.”

“What makes you think I’m important?”

“How modest! You’re Tomoe Tsurugi’s daughter. I do my homework from time to time. Everyone in Europe knows she’s the best damn self-defense entraîneur *ever*! My papa is *still* on her waiting list. More importantly, Azami Tsurugi and my maman, The Queen of Fashion: Audrey Bourgeois, do business together! We should continue that trend and eat lunch together today.”

“I can’t today, I’m eating lunch with my roller derby teammates to discuss tomorrow’s match.”

“Roller derby? *Oh no!* Kubdel got to you too?” Chloé sighs, “that wretched troll.” She grumbles. The blonde takes a deep breath, “what about tomorrow then? Or better yet...! I’m going to that match tomorrow to cheer on my best friend Sabrina. We could get together later and eat?”

“That sounds good.”

“Wonderful! I’ll tell the staff to prepare a meal befitting of your importance.”

“You don’t need to go through any trouble.”

“Nonsense! Friends of Chloé Bourgeois deserve nothing but the absolute best!”

“In that case, thank you.” Chloé nods. “Uh, do you know the reason for this crowd?”

Chloé groans, “it’s because this school is low on cognitive thinking. They’re all bewitched by frozen dairy and sugar. It’s corrupting their senses. I’d say it’s a ‘brain freeze’ but they’d need brains for that, They all think that guy is gonna show them their true love.” Chloé rolls her eyes, “as if! If you get *told* about your true love it isn’t true! You have to discover them yourself. Like me and Lady Luck!”

Kagami blinks at the blonde, “huh?”

“You don’t know about Lady Luck? She’s our very own superhero! She showed up on the first day of school and stole my heart.” Chloé swoons. “I’d do *anything* for Lady Luck. She’s my soulmate.”

“D-Did the ice cream man tell you that?”

Chloé scowls, “no, he said some rhyming bullshit that made my head hurt. I know in my heart that Lady Luck and I are meant to be. We’re both perfect and perfect for each other. Those are just facts. Best of all is, I have so much empty space in the penthouse suite that Lady Luck can have her own private room to break her transformation and just relax as herself without getting hounded.” Kagami nods slowly. “Lady Luck needs someone who will support her all the way. And I’d never do anything to hurt her.”

Kagami watches Sabrina rush up the staircase, “Chloé!” She says out of breath.

With a huff, the blonde folds her arms over her chest. “Well, well. I’m surprised you’re not swooning over the ice cream man again. Or is it because you’re still trying to figure out what your ‘love’ is from the colors he gave you?”

“Actually, I wanted to talk about your ice cream.”

Chloé’s eyes narrow. “Forget. It. Sabrina. There is nothing to talk about. I don’t believe in that bullshit and I don’t want you to try and explain it to me. It’s not gonna happen. Understand?”

“Chloé—”

“*Understand!?*” Sabrina flinches then nods. “Good. Honestly Sabrina, just let it go. Come on. I’ll buy you a milkshake at lunch. A sugar-free one. I’m personally making sure your sugar intake is halved before the end of the month.” Sabrina groans following after Chloé. “See you, Kagami!” Kagami waves as the blonde walks into the building.

□□

“You brought this upon yourself you know.” Marinette says picking up her schoolbag.

Alix groans, laying on the bed unable to move. “I don’t need the lecture, Marinette.”

“Girls, you’re gonna be late!” Sabine calls from downstairs.

“I’ll go tell papai and māmā you won’t be going to school today. Just... take it easy for the day?”

“Yeah, I will. Doubt I couldn’t if I tried.”

Marinette walks downstairs and Tom looks around, “morning Sugar Roll, where’s Alix?”

“In bed. She hurt her back saving one of our new teammates from falling at skate practice yesterday.”

“*What?!* I’ll get the heating pad!” Marinette winces as her father runs straight into the opened overhead drawer. He rubs his head then keeps walking toward the closet.

There’s a loud crash and Sabine walks into the kitchen, “what on earth is that man doing? Gir—*oh. You’re* here. Where is Alix?”

“Alix is hold up in bed. She hurt herself at practice yesterday. Papai is getting the heating pad.”

“Alix is hurt?” Sabine takes Marinette’s hands, “we’ll take good care of her. Nurse her back to one-hundred percent.” Marinette blinks at her mother. “What I’m trying to say is, you can go to school Marinette. Alix will be fine.”

“I know, māmā. You two are the best caretakers in Paris.” There’s another loud crash, “but you may be on your own today.”

Sabine tiptoes and Marinette leans down so her mother can kiss her on her forehead, “come on. Let’s help your father before he’s unable to help me with Alix.”

□□

Sat, Oct 31st, 2020

“Ice cream! Ice cream! Ice cream for all! Summer, spring, winter, fall!”

Rose excitedly makes her way over to the booth decorated with heart-shaped balloons of every color. “Hi! I-I was wondering if you’d give me my true love ice cream please?”

The man manning the booth laughs heartily, “such excitement makes my heart sing! You wish to know your true love? I have just the thing! You stare and stare and the flavor of raspberry can only compare!” Rose furrows her eyebrows as the ice cream man scoops a dollop of red ice cream onto the cone pale yellow cone with chocolate and rainbow sprinkles on the top, “next...? Hm? You seem confused, but I have not finished. I would hate to see your excitement diminished! Let me see. Where was I? Ah yes! I shall open the hatch to find your match! It would not seem contrary to add some strawberry.” Rose watches him scoop a dollop of pink ice cream onto the red. “A gift for you, for a love that’s true!”

Rose thanks the vendor as she takes her ice cream then stares wide-eyed at it as she walks away. *Pink and red?* Just who is that supposed to represent? The blonde sighs. She was hoping she’d get Juleka. Hanging out during Kitty Section’s practices only made Rose’s crush on her new bandmate deepen. After taking a quick picture, Rose squints at her ice cream. Hmmm. *Is there* purple ice cream?

Before Rose can dig up some of her ice cream with her red spoon, she hears someone call her name. Looking up, Rose sees Lila waving as she approaches wearing an all-black princess gown. Rose’s eyes widen. “*Ooh!* Lila, I love your dress!”

“Thanks!” The brunette twirls. “Had to call in a favor to get it done last minute over the weekend. Where did that ice cream come from?”

Rose points at the booth with all the heart balloons. Lila nods with a hum, “this is my true love.” The blonde says with a shrug. “Pink on red.”

“You seem sad. Did you not get who you were hoping?”

Rose nearly drops her ice cream as she frantically shakes her head, “I-I wasn’t hoping for anyone in particular. I’m just... confused by the colors.”

Lila clasps her hands together. “I wonder who my true love is? Maybe I should find out before a line forms. W-Will you come with me? I’m a little nervous.” Rose nods taking a spoonful of her ice cream as she follows Lila to the booth.

“Stop. That.”

Sabrina looks up at Chloé, “stop *what?*”

“Don’t play dumb. You’re scanning the room looking for your ‘match.’ I told you, Sabrina. It’s all bullshit. Utter bullshit. Just give it up and save yourself the embarrassment of looking around the gymnasium like an idiot.”

“You wouldn’t believe that if you got Lady Luck.” Sabrina mumbles.

“What was that?”

“I said I’m getting some punch.” Chloé’s eyes narrow as Sabrina gets up from the chair and makes her way over to the dessert table. Chloé shakes her head. Unbelievable.

Chloé had on a custom-made Lady Luck inspired princess dress made specifically for the dance. While she’s not hoping for an akuma to ruin her night, or her dress, she does want Lady Luck to see her wearing it in person. The black polkadots of Chloé’s dress were hearts rather than circles to incorporate the bullshit “romance” theme.

This dress was not meant to be sat in for so long, so Chloé gets up. The music they’re playing is terribly dull and most of the students are conversing rather than dancing. Frowning, the blonde determinedly makes her way over to the DJ booth.

Adrien was only allowed to attend the dance if Émilie chaperoned. That was a *huge* yikes. They arrived together then Chloé and Sabrina separated from the Agrestes upon walking into the gymnasium. Chloé saw Adrien trying to get away periodically, but Émilie was not letting him out of her sight. Chloé will do something about that once she fixes the overall dreary mood.

“Hey there.” The DJ looks up at Chloé. There is something familiar about them but that’s not important, “is there any chance you can liven this dance up? I mean, no one is dancing. Just look around! That’s the purpose of a dance, right? For people to dance. ‘Romance’ doesn’t have to equal boring.” The DJ looks around then back to Chloé. “You know what everyone will love? You should play one of XY’s songs!” The blonde gasps, “one of his older hits.”

The DJ adjusts their glasses, “‘older hits,’ hm? XY’s only been making music three years.”

Chloé folds her arms over her chest. “*Look*, you’re not getting paid to be a smartass. Just play something that’ll get people on their feet.”

The DJ salutes her with a smile, “aye aye, Mademoiselle.” Chloé frowns as the DJ begins

moving things around the booth. “Hey Y’all!” They say into the microphone, “here’s a special request from Mlle. Chloé Bourgeois. XY’s first number-one single: ‘love me if you dare.’ Enjoy!”

The crowd begins to applaud as the music comes on. People immediately start pairing up and dancing. Seeing the opportunity, Chloé runs – as good as she’s able with her dress – over to Adrien. “Let’s dance!” They say to each other at the same time then laugh. They both look up at Émilie who nods. Chloé waves at the woman while taking Adrien away.

Adrien sighs, “not having fun, Adrikins?”

He sighs again. “I would’ve had more fun staying at home playing video games. But... I’ve never been to a dance before.”

“Night’s still young, Hun. The dance won’t be a total waste.”

“I hope you’re right.” Chloé puts both hands on Adrien’s hips and he puts his hands around her shoulders. “When did you get taller than me?”

“I’m wearing heels, Adrikins.”

The two blonds lapse into a comfortable quiet, humming along to the music as they dance. “Chlo, can I ask you a question?”

“Always.”

“D-Do you have a crush on anyone?”

“Oh Lord. Did Sabrina entice you with the ice cream bullshit?”

Adrien shakes his head, “no. I was just curious. We used to talk about this stuff all the time.”

“You’re busy trying to make nice with the peasants, Adrikins, of course we haven’t been spending a lot of time together.” Adrien frowns, “but to answer your question: no, I do not have a crush. What I have is an immense, madly, with all of my heart love for Lady Luck. It’s not some silly starstruck ‘crush’ or anything ridiculous like that.”

“B-But you barely know anything about Lady Luck! And it’s not like you two could ever have a real relationship; it’ll compromise her identity. Plus, you don’t even know if Lady Luck likes girls.”

Chloé tsks, “poor, sweet, *naïve* Adrien.” Chloé fondly shakes her head, “I am perfectly aware and would never do anything to ever jeopardize what makes Lady Luck her exceptional self. When we get together, we’ll have secret meeting spots so no one will see and be jealous of our undying love.” Adrien nods slowly. “And even if Lady Luck doesn’t like girls, plural. There’s no way she can resist my excellence. Why the sudden question? Are you vying for Lady Luck too? I don’t wanna be in competition with you, Adrikins, Lady Luck is my true love.”

“D-Don’t worry about that, Chlo. I don’t have anything more than a ‘silly starstruck heroic love’ for Lady Luck.”

“Then who is it? Karma?” Adrien shakes his head. “Clara Nightingale? That country music singer? XY?”

“It—XY?”

Chloé shrugs. “He’s hot.”

Adrien shakes his head again, “it’s not a famous person. It... It’s someone from school.”

Chloé laughs loudly then stops abruptly when Adrien frowns, “you’re serious! *Ewww!* Adrikins *why?*! You are so much better than that! **No one** in François Düpont is even *remotely* good enough for you!” She pauses, “okay there might be a handful who slipped through the cracks but overall? Why on earth would you lower your standards?”

Adrien blushes, “I-I’m *not*. If you hung around—”

Chloé makes a buzzer noise, “*nope*. What do they have to offer me, Adrikins? A waste of my time, that’s what.” The blue-eyed blonde scoffs, “like maman says: ‘surround yourself only with people who have something to offer.’”

“What do I have to offer?”

“What?”

“Tante Audrey says to surround yourself with people who only have something to offer. What do *I* have to offer?”

Chloé rolls her eyes, “Adrikins, seriously?” He nods. “Fine. I’ll humor you. You have *lots* to offer. Your friendship is invaluable to me. Happy now?”

“I was just curious.”

“Speaking of curious, who is this lucky person Adrien Agreste has his eye on? This’ll definitely be the highlight of their no doubt dull and miserable life. Want my advice, Adrikins? Just go up to them and tell them Adrien Agreste wants to date you. Easy peasy. You’ll get them in no time. And maybe a couple other hundred or so suitors along the way.”

Adrien’s face turns a bit red, “I’m *not* gonna do that, Chlo.”

“Fine, don’t. That’s just my opinion, that *you* asked for.”

“I—*never mind*. I’m gonna get my ice cream.” Chloé scowls at him, grip tightening around his waist. “Chlo, I don’t know if I believe the guy knows who your true love is,” Chloé’s scowl deepens, “but I wanna try it out. I think it can be a fun thing to do with friends. Compare and try each other’s ice cream flavors?” Chloé loosens her grip.

“It would’ve been fun if a certain friend wasn’t obsessing herself over it. Sabrina keeps looking for her ‘match.’ It’s ridiculous! Utterly... ridiculous. She’s way too smart to actually believe that guy. But I suppose even smart people can be hooked in with little promises made by a silver tongue claiming they know the secrets to help them find their ‘true love’ who turns out to be a total loser!”

“I take it that means you’re not gonna get your love ice cream?”

“Adrikins, I would rather try that new dietary fad that involves live rattlesnakes.”

□□

Kagami was surprised her mother laughed when she asked if it was alright to attend a sleepover. The laugh wasn't even derisive or dismissive; Tomoe was honest-to-goodness **happy** about the request. She even suggested they go shopping for sleepover items. Kagami would think her mother's behavior as of late uncharacteristic, but Tomoe Tsurugi was genuinely happy ever since she stopped talking to Azami. Just yesterday, Kagami heard her mother *humming*. Kagami has to wonder how much of her mother was really her mother with her grandmother's looming influence?

The kwamis vowed to keep an eye on Tomoe should anything happen. Although Tikki said it would be best to keep the earrings off her ears during the sleepover; the kwami was comfortably nestled in Kagami's sleepover duffel bag holding onto her miraculous should she be needed. "Mme." Mite has not been terribly consistent with her akumas so Tikki figures it's best to be prepared.

The automated car drops Kagami off at the pier then drives back to the apartment building.

Kagami walks the plank and boards Liberty with her sleepover bag. She makes her first stop at the captain's quarters knocking on the door. "Up here, Lass!" Kagami looks up at the grey-haired bespectacled woman leaning on the wheel waving.

"Permission to access the lower deck, Captain?" Kagami asks with a salute.

"Permission granted, Eagle Eye! Have fun!"

Kagami nods then climbs down the netted makeshift ladder to the lower deck. Juleka's bedroom door is wide open and Kagami hears laughter coming from inside.

"It's Kagami, right?" She turns toward Juleka's older brother, "saw you at blackberry clobber's match yesterday. You're a new recruit, hm?"

"Yes. You are Luka, correct?" He nods, "I was told roller derby was very therapeutic and could help with akuma possession prevention."

Luka hums, "awesome. I'm all for anything that makes life easier for Karma and Lady Luck."

"Are you working on another song about Karma?"

Luka blushes rubbing the back of his neck. “Oh yeah. I got Karma on my brain nonstop. I-I was in the hospital after an akuma attack and visited me. Made sure I was alright. I mean, that just stoked the flames you know? I don’t know if it’s love or anything but I’m definitely in serious crush with her.”

The netting rattles and Jess climbs down entering the lower deck. “Ahoy!” She greets.

Juleka comes out of the bedroom soaking wet. Luka does a double-take, “what the hell happened to you?”

“Exploding soda.” She mutters walking around the trio marching toward the bathroom.

Kagami and Jessica, mindful of the wet spots, carefully walk into Juleka’s bedroom leaning against the doorway. There are two empty bottles of soda turned on their side on the floor. Alya is on the floor – completely dry – laughing hysterically with tears coming down her face. Fei, who is also completely dry, isn’t doing a much better job of holding in her laughter. Nathaniel is dry for the most part but he’s just sitting there stunned.

Kagami takes in the bedroom. Last time she was there, everyone stuck to the upper deck for the band’s first performance. Juleka’s bedroom is far less monochromatic as one may think just looking at the purple-haired teen’s usual aesthetic. Kagami hasn’t known Juleka for long, but there hasn’t been a day that went on that Juleka wasn’t mostly clad in dark blue or black.

“What happened?” Jess asks.

“*She...!*” Alya hiccups while laughing. It brings out a fit of raucous laughter that Fei joins in on this time.

Luka begins mopping up the floor in front of the bathroom then mops up the puddles of soda inside the bedroom. Juleka returns a few minutes later wearing a completely different outfit and has a towel over her damp hair.

Before Juleka’s return, everyone tried to put the room back as it was before the explosion. They all helped Luka remove the rug so that it could be washed. Even though Fei pointed out the floor will probably get dirty before the weekend is over.

With a sigh, Juleka flops down onto her chaise. “Never thought the soda would just *erupt* like that.” Alya and Fei start up chuckling again.

“What even happened?” Jessica asks.

“We were doing that whole mint into diet soda myth. Spoiler alert? It’s not just a myth.”

“It’s a miracle your entire room wasn’t covered in soda.” Jessica takes a seat on one of the cushions on the floor. Kagami had taken a seat on the bed next to Nathaniel.

“I was standing over the soda bottle so it kinda exploded on me.” Juleka laughs, “doubt the dance would’ve been this interesting.” The others laugh.

“Ooh. I say we try the bunny clip experiment next.” Fei suggests.

Juleka waves her hands in front of her, “absolutely not!”

“Oh come on! There’s no risk of explosion.” Alya chimes in leaning into Fei who nods.

“But there is a risk of sinking the houseboat.”

Alya and Fei exchange a glance, “I can’t swim.” The former says. The latter taps her chin in thought. “There’s gotta be other sleepover party games and favors.” The orange-haired teen turns to Nathaniel on the bed, “Nathaniel, do you know of any party games?”

The redhead rubs the back of his neck, “no, I don’t get invited to many parties.” They all look around the room at one another.

“Then we can make some up!” Alya says standing, “sleepovers are unpredictable.” She picks up a pillow, “*like an impromptu pillow fight!*” Juleka gasps as Alya throws a pillow at her face knocking her off the chaise. Everyone else grabs a pillow then start wailing on one another.

□□

Lila stares at her disappointing ice cream skeptically. Mocha and mint? Why did she get such boring flavors? And about happiness stemming *within*? Is that hack trying to say she’s unhappy? Lila Rossi is **very** happy! Especially from within! The brunette slowly scoops up

ice cream with her brown spoon and takes a bite. Huh. The flavors don't even *taste* interesting! What a fucking waste. She's contemplating tossing the whole damn thing out.

The brunette scans the area. The only classmates she has not seen yet are the ones who said they had no interest in attending: Alya, Juleka, and Nathaniel. Being here, Lila can't help thinking they all had the right idea in skipping. She also hasn't seen Marinette or Alix yet but she's... almost certain the two of them are here.

Aurore takes a seat in one of the chairs lined up against the wall staring skeptically at her ice cream. Lila makes her way over. "Hi, Aurore! Is that your love ice cream?"

The blonde nods without taking her eyes off the ice cream, "it's blueberry and dandelion."

"*Dandelion*? Dandelion is an ice cream flavor?"

"Evidently." The blonde shrugs, "why does it look like it could represent *me*? What a cop-out."

"It could also be Rose?"

Aurore pauses, "*true*. Rose is cute. Way too energetic for me though."

"It could also be Chloé."

Aurore frowns, "I really hope not. As hot as she is, I wouldn't want her as true love."

"You think Chloé is *hot*?"

"Duh! I have eyes. I don't have to *like* Chloé to appreciate she's pretty." Lila just stares at her. "Anyway, there's no shortage of white blue-eyed blonds at François Düpont. Unless my true love isn't from the school."

"Were you hoping for a particular person to be your true love?"

"*Adrien*~" Aurore sighs out, "he's *sooo* cute! How did you sit next to him for a whole month without losing your mind?"

Lila smiles, “he really is the perfect gentleman. I was internally swooning!” Lila fans herself off with her free hand. “I’d have to psych myself up in the morning every day before class so I could keep myself in check.”

Aurore’s eyes widen, “wow. And now he’s sitting next to Juleka,” The blonde scoffs, “doubt she even realizes he’s there. She’s so lucky.”

“You’re kidding, right? He’s a model. And so beautiful! Anyone with eyes would be ogling him.” Aurore stares at Lila with an expression Lila doesn’t recognize, “why are you staring at me like that?”

Aurore keeps staring at her then shakes her head, “...you’ll find out eventually. Anyway,” Aurore balls up her fists. “I shouldn’t rely on *ice cream* to confess my feelings for Adrien! I should tell him tonight. Maybe get the opportunity to dance with him!”

“I think you should eat your ice cream before it melts.”

□□

Without Gabriel and Duusu, Émilie could not get a “feel” for the room. Sure, the atmosphere was *notably* tense but there was no way she could pinpoint anything to send an akuma toward. She should’ve just taken Duusu too dammit!

Nevertheless, Émilie spent the evening surveying her surroundings. Adrien wanted to dance, so Émilie let him. With Chloé. She really was the only suitable partner for him to dance with at such a function. *Then again*, she had to let Adrien “branch out” if he were to show off his outfit to as many people as he could. Adrien danced, Adrien ate; if Adrien was not having a good time that was in no way her fault.

Émilie takes a sip of her drink as she looks around. Maybe she should’ve gotten André or Audrey to show up as well. At least she wouldn’t be just standing around looking for an akuma target.

Despite having the book in their possession, they’re still somehow at a disadvantage. They knew the guardian or someone guardian-like was helping the bratty duo obtain specific situation outfits; like the aqua and ice variants to their suits. The downside to having the book was the book had volume *two* on it, meaning there was at least one other book full of miraculous secrets not in their possession. There is still so much about the miraculouses that

they do not know. Plus, they had no idea who was handing out power-ups like they were free samples or how?

The page that explained the kwami power-ups had been torn from the book; right where it begins to explain the process. What irony.

Émilie hears a pair of professeurs who were stuck with chaperoning duty argue loudly at a nearby table. She inches a bit closer with the pretense of refilling her glass. Perhaps *something* will come of this night after all?

Adrien sees his mother looking around (suspiciously), then shrugs and returns his attention to the dessert table. Marinette's mother smiles kindly at him and he returns the gesture. He came back to the boulangerie pâtisserie for lunch – again without his parents' knowledge – and actually made a purchase. Well, he *tried to*. Sabine refused to take his money so he had to slip enough money for his food from that and his previous visit in the "tip jar."

"Enjoying yourself, Adrien?"

The blond nods, "kinda. How about you, Mme. Cheng?"

Sabine's smile widens, "I am, surprisingly. Tom and I danced together." She giggles, "we haven't danced like that since Wednesday." Adrien's own smile widens. He hasn't met Marinette's papa yet but it makes him smile to hear just much Sabine loves her husband every time she mentions him; same with her daughter. It also makes Adrien wonder if this is the "relationship goal, normal couple behavior" Sabrina mentioned to him rather than his or Chloé's parents?

Adrien takes a few blueberry macarons from the table then thanks Sabine before leaving. "Sup, Sunbeam!" Kim greets. Adrien chokes on one of his macarons and the brunet pats him on the back, "sorry, man! Didn't mean to startle you. Just asking if you got your love ice cream yet?" The blond manages to swallow his food then looks down at the dark brown and bright blue ice cream scoops on Kim's dark brown ice cream cone. "Mocha and blueberry. Sounds disgusting, don't it? Tastes pretty alright though. Want some?" When Adrien nods, Kim scoops up a spoonful with his green spoon making sure both flavors are there then guides the spoon into Adrien's open mouth. After Adrien pulls the ice cream off with his tongue, the spoon leaves his mouth. Kim dips the spoon back into the ice cream and scoops some up for himself. Adrien blinks at the spoon in Kim's mouth. Isn't that...? Isn't that an indirect kiss? Oh but it's the other way around. The only way he'd get the indirect kiss is if Kim took a spoonful before offering Adrien some.

Despite Kim's less than positive feelings regarding Chloé and all that she has done to both of

his oldest friends and himself, Kim was the first person to openly welcome Adrien to François Düpont.

How could Adrien *not* develop his first-ever crush on Kim?

“Where do I get the ice cream?”

“Dude’s over there by all the heart balloons.” Adrien looks over where Kim is pointing and sees the line. “Ivan’s been mulling around whether he should get the ice cream or not. I told him to just get it over with. Even if it’s not ‘prolific’ or whatever, it’s still free ice cream.”

“T-True.”

“Ooh! Are those macarons from S&T? Gotta get me some. See ya! Let’s dance later!” Adrien waves watching the tall brunet eagerly head to the dessert table. Squaring his shoulders, he stuffs the rest of the macarons in his mouth then gets on the ice cream line.

□□

Ivan saw Mylène chatting with Sabrina while he was on line for his ice cream. Ice cream. His cotton candy, bubblegum ice cream. From a subjective standpoint, he *could* say the flavors represent Mylène physically. Her hair was very colorful and she was... *bubbly*?

Who was he kidding? There was no way his ice cream is Mylène, and even if it was there is no way she’d ever be interested in someone like him. Like Chloé said, he was a worthless nobody not worthy of sharing the same air as someone as incredible as—“Mylène!”

The tiny teen startles, “h-hi!”

“Hi, Ivan. Bye, Ivan.” Mireille says patting Mylène on the back and walking away. Ivan waves at the blue-haired teen leaving the two of them just awkwardly standing there in front of each other. After a few seconds, Mylène adorably scrunches up her nose and takes a deep breath. “D-Did you get your—” She pauses mid-sentence to stare at the half-eaten ice cream in his hand. “Oh. You got your ice cream.”

“D-Did you?”

“Yeah.” They go back to awkwardly standing in front of each other before Mylène holds out her hand, “want to dance?”

Ivan does a double-take at the outstretched hand, “absolutely!” Mylène smiles taking his empty hand as they walk toward the floor. Ivan puts his ice cream down on a nearby chair, not even caring if it was secure, before taking Mylene’s other hand. “Sorry.” He apologizes, flushing. “My hand’s a little sticky.”

Mylène giggles, “it’s alright.” This has to be a dream. There is no way Ivan Brüel he is dancing with Mylène Haprèle!

Ondine gasps, looking across the makeshift dancefloor. “Chloé, *look!*” She gushes, gesturing to Mylène and Ivan, “they look so cute together!”

Chloé leans to the side then groans, “*ugh*. Give me a break. What are you doing, Mylène? You can do so much better than *him*.”

“I think Mylène really likes him.”

“It’s not about who Mylène likes, it’s about who is worthy of her. She’s far too important to have someone of his low standings be a boyfriend.”

Ondine stumbles nearly stepping on Chloé’s foot, “s-sorry, Chloé. Like I said, I’m not great at dancing.”

“You’re doing fine, Ondine, I’m an excellent enseignant. You’ll be dancing circles around these fools before you know it.”

Ondine chuckles, “did you dance with anyone else?”

“Just Adrikins. So few partners worthy of my dancing prowess. I’d dance with Sabrina but she’s being utterly ridiculous.” Chloé lets out a long, suffering sigh, “*catastrophically* ridiculous. Believing in this ‘love’ bullshit.” The blonde looks up at Ondine, “*please* tell me you don’t believe in the magical love ice cream man?”

“I’m lactose intolerant.” Chloé sighs in relief. “But... I say, if they believe in it then let them. It’s not hurting anyone.”

“It’s hurting *me*! Hurting *me* to see Sabrina look so foolish then get heartbroken when she realizes her ‘match’ isn’t who she wanted or thought they were.”

“It’s easy to see you care a lot about your friends.”

Chloé blushes, “w-well, I—of course! Sabrina would be utterly lost without me! Adrikins too. I only surround myself with the best people I can find so it’s only natural I’d care a great deal about them.” The blonde nods to herself, “and you are officially one of my closest friends now.”

“Wow! Thank you, Chloé. I feel the same way about you. You’ve been so nice to me since I arrived.”

“From the moment I saw you I knew we were going to get along great.”

□□

“I’m surprised you aren’t at the sleepover with Alya.” Marlina says to Marinette who miserably piles some food onto her plate.

“I’m starting to think that would’ve been the better option.” She mutters and Marlina chuckles. “No one wants to dance with me! Every time I looked around, people would look away from me. I don’t know whether it’s because I’m a well-known klutz or if it’s because I’m now taller than every other quatrième boy other than Kim.”

“Marinette, if boys are intimidated by your *height* they aren’t worth the stress. I had a ...similar issue growing up. I grew up with only my papa and my five brothers, all older. And most of us were close enough in age that we attended the same school, and my oldest brother became a school-wide terror, so by the time we were old enough to attend the same collège everyone was terrified of all of us just because of him! I saw girls doing the whole cutesy needing help act in television and in real life, and I just couldn’t subject myself to it. If boys didn’t want me, I didn’t want boys.” She shrugs, “simple as that. Would you believe my husband was the only boy I ever went out with? I’d say he was my bisexual awakening but he’s the only man I’ve ever been interested in. I guess I’m trying to say you’ll find the right dance partner, their gender is inconsequential.”

“You really believe so?”

“Absolutely! I tell my girls all the time to never settle.”

“Marlena! I got the love ice cream all the kids are raving about! I got orange and chocolate!” Marlinette and Marlena turn to the bald man holding a brown ice cream cone with an orange scoop on top of a brown one. “Oh? Am I interrupting something?”

Marlena chuckles, “no. Marlinette, this is my husband Otis. Otis, this is one of Alya’s friends, classmates, and roller derby teammates Marlinette.”

“Pleasure to meet you, Mlle. Marlinette.”

“What ‘ice cream’ are you talking about?”

“You didn’t hear about the ‘love ice cream?’ I kept overhearing students talking about it so I decided to check it out for myself. Evidently, the flavors are supposed to physically represent your true love.” Marlena raises an eyebrow, “look! Orange and chocolate represent you. Orange hair and chocolate for your eyes.”

“Honey, I don’t mean to sound... crude but that sounds like bullshit.” Marlinette stifles her laugh, “*ice cream* representing your true love? We’ve been married twenty-three years and have four daughters. I’m fairly certain we’re each other’s true love. I mean, even if we weren’t does it even matter? I’ve never loved anyone the way I love you.”

Otis chuckles, “you have a point. Orange and chocolate are a great flavor combination though.”

Fondly rolling her eyes, Marlena kisses Otis on the cheek. “You’re lucky you’re cute.”

□□

“Adrien? Do you want to dance?” The blond nods then takes Lila’s hand and they walk onto the makeshift dance floor. Adrien puts his right hand in Lila’s and his left hand on the small of the brunette’s back while Lila rests her left hand on Adrien’s shoulder. “I’m glad you were able to come.”

“Yeah. Thanks to you. My parents agreed it was a good way to showcase formal wear.”

“Think nothing of it. We’re friends, aren’t we?” Chuckling, Adrien nods. “Did you get your ‘love’ ice cream? Mine was mocha and mint.”

“I got chocolate and mango.”

Lila makes a face. “*Ewww*.”

“Yeah, wasn’t crazy about the combination either but it surprisingly tasted good. I just finished a couple minutes ago.”

Lila hums, “who do you think your ice cream represents? Or who do you *want* it to represent? I’m thinking my ice cream might be Clara Nightingale. Her hair is naturally brown and her eyes are green.”

“I don’t know who my ice cream could be but I am hoping it’s my crush.”

Lila smirks, “crush, hm? Anyone I know?” Blushing, Adrien nods. “Ooh. Should we try to get closer to them? I doubt they’d turn down the opportunity to date Adrien Agreste.”

“I-I don’t want them to date me just because of my name.”

“Truly? Most people would jump at the chance to date you just because of your looks, you being famous is just a bonus perk.” Adrien’s blush darkens.

□□

“Ah! True love abound, how sweet the sound!” Sabine jumps, putting a hand on her chest, “I do apologize for the fright, I was entranced by a sight.”

“Wha—?”

“Your love calls like a beacon! I had to see it in person!”

“Wait a minute.” Sabine frowns, lowering her hand, “are you that nutjob promising *children* you’ll find their true love just by rhyming and handing out ice cream? You know that these

children are thirteen, fourteen-years-old tops, don't you? Why should they worry about their true loves now?"

"You disagree with my methods, and that is alright. I did not come to you for a fight."

Sabine rolls her eyes, "listen *you*, I had my share of horrible rhymes with Tom when we first started dating and that is an incident I do not wish to repeat." The blue-haired woman suppresses a shudder. That was a dark time. "Do you have any idea how *impressionable* teenagers are at this stage of their lives? And you getting their hopes up with some fairy tale bullshit isn't healthy!"

"That is not what my ice cream can do! It merely shows them a love that's true."

"I've heard enough. If you've come looking to rope me into your madness you're going to be disappointed. I married the love of my life. I don't need ice cream telling me what I already know."

"I—"

"*No!* Don't. Say. Anything." The man mimes closing his mouth as he walks away. Sabine sighs heavily then shakes her head. She heard Marlena Césaire was also catering this event and it's been far too long since they've seen each other.

□□

Max walks over to one of the dessert tables when he sees Alix sitting in a chair swinging her legs. Curious, he heads toward her. "This dance isn't much of a dance if you're not doing any dancing."

"I can say the same for you."

"To be honest, I am not certain why I am here. I am interested in learning about the 'ice cream man' and his methods, but not so much interested in having *my* 'true love' pointed out to me."

Alix shrugs, "same. Wanna dance? It'll kill some time."

“Sure. No doubt my maman will ask questions and at least I can tell her I danced with a friend.”

“That’s the spirit!” Alix gets up from her seat then they stand in front of each other, “now what?”

“Now? Now we are supposed to put our hands on each other’s bodies. It’s a good thing you’re my first-ever dance partner. I don’t know how I’d do this with someone taller.” Alix puts her hands on Max’s shoulders then Max puts his hands on Alix’s waist. “Please let me know if I’m making you uncomfortable?”

“Such a gentleman.” Alix teases, “you know that goes for you too, right? I’d hate for my first dance to be with someone taller too.” She sticks her tongue out at Max who laughs.

“I don’t feel uncomfortable, just... self-conscious.” They both look around the makeshift dance floor at all the other (taller) pairs dancing.

“You two aren’t really dancing being so far apart from each other.” They both glare up at the blond who gives a one-shoulder shrug. “Just saying. Slow dancing is about intimacy. Being closer—”

“You say one more thing, Wayhem, and your ass is gonna get *intimate* with my flats.” The blond gulps then slinks away. With a sigh, they both turn back to each other, “wanna forget this dancing shit and eat?”

“Y-Yeah. Let’s do that. I-I’m sorry, Alix.”

“Don’t be.” They both move their hands and Alix puts a hand on Max’s shoulder, “dancing isn’t for everyone. Not much of a fan of it myself.”

“Don’t you and Marinette do everything together?”

“Marinette and Kim danced together once, for her parents’ vow renewal party; Nathaniel and I watched and laughed.”

“I...I *do* want to learn how to dance, eventually. Just... probably not around so many other

people.” Max sighs, “Markov usually assists me with this sort of thing but he refused to accompany me tonight. Said it would be ‘good’ for me to have a ‘me’ day.”

“You coded your robot with too much intelligence.”

“And a bit too much sass.” They reach the punch table and each pour themselves a glass of the murky dark green liquid. “I’m curious.” Alix glances at him, “did you happen to speak with the love ice cream guy?”

“Nah. I will.” The pink-haired teen pauses, “I *might*. Don’t know yet. You?”

“I don’t have a crush on anyone. The whole concept is unfamiliar to me. That’s why I’m curious about it. I mean, I get the hero worship and adoration for Lady Luck and Karma – I have it to – but I have to admit I am a bit lost on everyone’s interest going beyond that; such as wanting to date or marry them.”

Alix pats him on the back, “you’re not alone in that.”

“I’m not?” He stare at Alix, “you too?” She nods. “You don’t know how much of a relief that is. I thought I would have to experiment on myself responding to certain stimuli to see what was wrong.”

“Dude, there is no right way to fix the mess of what you just said.” Max chuckles, nearly dropping his cup of punch.

□□

“Behold! The ultimate ice cream sundae! Free of all rhymes and love expectations!” The group applaud the blue-haired teen who takes a bow. “Just call me Fei, the ice queen.” Alya takes a picture of the ice cream sundae they concocted. Liberty had a deep freezer Anarka stocked with every flavor of ice cream she could get her hands on once Juleka told her about the “ice cream love guru.” She even got some lactose-free flavors.

They all put the ice cream together then Fei started to add every ice cream topping Anarka also picked up, then she started adding fruit and other foods to it.

Alya wanted no part of that, just sticking with her lactose-free ice cream. Nathaniel was also

lactose intolerant, and he also had a peanut allergy so he stuck to the lactose-free ice cream as well.

“It’s only fitting our host take the first bite.” Fei holds out the spoon to Juleka who nods and takes it.

Juleka packs her spoon with as many different flavors as she can before taking a bite. She moans appreciatively as she eats.

“Success!” Nino crows. Luka hands everyone a spoon before sitting by Chris then they all dig into the ice cream in front of them.

“Question: How many bathrooms does Liberty have?” Alya asks. Everyone pauses, spoons mid-air, turning to Alya laying on the chaise with Nathaniel eating their ice cream.

□□

Alix sighs as she looks down at her phone. She should’ve went to the damn sleepover. Juleka’s phone accidentally sent her a picture of everyone dogpiled on Juleka laughing.

Max went to the restroom, too much punch, so she was just waiting for him when her phone pinged with a notification.

“You seem troubled. Let’s see if we can pop this depression bubble.”

Alix squints up at the man, “oh no. You’re that ice cream nutjob getting kid’s hopes up with unrealistic and unattainable expectations of romance.”

The man tsks. “I never tell how the romance will begin, simply which direction to go in.” Alix rolls her eyes. “I see you are not a believer. A hostile. You see this ordeal as an obstacle. I find that good as I enjoy a challenge and will make this worthwhile!”

“Dude, your words aren’t exactly rhyming.”

“Yes, these rhymes are not exact because some words do not have the perfect match. You, my dear, see love as equal to fear. You never understood physical attraction; you view it confusing – never able to have the ‘correct’ reaction. You have love in your heart, I can see it

clear as day, but it is not the love seen as romantic in any way. The love for your best friend, the loss of love from your family. You wonder if you can ever truly be happy.”

“Loss of...?” Alix eyes widen as she stares at the vendor.

“Orange has no rhyme, but this love of yours is friendship and it will take time. Licorice can be hit or miss due to its unique flavor, but I have the distinct feeling this is a flavor you will savor.”

“Never tried licorice before.”

“Then have no fear, you can try it now!” Alix looks at the ice cream the man scoops into a pink cup, “don’t worry about trivialities like how!”

“Whatever. I’ll humor you.” Alix takes the ice cream. “Thanks, I guess.” The man nods at her then rolls his ice cream cart away. “Did it sound like he knew what happened to me?”

Fluff pokes their head out from Alix’s jacket pocket, “it absolutely did sound like that. But unless he has time magic of his own, he shouldn’t understand the splits in the universe.”

“Splits? What splits?”

“Uh... hey, why not try your ice cream?”

Alix takes a spoonful of the ice cream then immediately recoils, “oh,” She gags, “that’s gross.”

“Let me try.” She lowers her ice cream near her jacket pocket and Fluff pops their head out and licks it. “I like it.”

“It’s all yours. I’ll pretend I’m eating it if anyone comes along.” The pink-haired teen sighs heavily. “Not only do I get bullshit but I get gross ice cream. Next year I’m definitely skipping with Nathaniel.”

“Alix!” Fluff sticks their head back into Alix’s pocket and Alix looks up to see Kim and Marc running toward her. “Alix, I’m so glad you’re here!” The latter exclaims.

“Marinette wanted me to come...” She trails off with a shrug. Not that she’s *seen* Marinette since they split up.

Marc folds his arms over his chest, “kinda sucks Nathaniel didn’t wanna come. I just hope he’s having fun at the sleepover.”

Alix raises an eyebrow at Marc, “why are you disappointed? Nathaniel never comes to these dances.”

“I, maybe, thought he’d wanna come this time – for once – so we could dance?” Alix blinks at him. “He’s so cute when flustered.”

Kim shakes his head, “dude, this game of chicken you’re playing... just ask him out!”

“I can’t! My brain melts when I get too close to him. Plus, he smells so good: like ink and charcoal. Every time I get too close I lose my train of thought.”

“Anyway, I danced with Adrien. He’s damn graceful and cute. And so *pale*. He almost turned all the way red when he blushed. Never saw that before.”

“Yeah, that’s... cute. Adrien’s not as cute as Nathaniel though.”

Kim laughs, “I don’t see Nathaniel’s face all over billboards throughout the city.”

“I’d never be able to concentrate.” Marc mumbles. “I danced with Adrien too. And he was plenty red when we danced.”

“Wait, when did you dance with Adrien?”

“I don’t know. After the DJ told everyone they’re gonna slow things down?”

“I danced with him right before that! Ha! Adrien dancing with two hotties back-to-back definitely had to make his night. No wonder he was red. Especially since I saw him dancing with Chloé earlier. We’re much hotter than Chloé.” Marc nods in agreement.

Alix rolls her eyes. “Alix, you should—” Marc looks down seeing the ice cream in Alix’s hand, “*is that your true love ice cream?!*” Kim glances at Marc then at the ice cream Alix is holding.

“Holy shit! You got it?”

“Yup. If this shit is legit I am happy to report my love is not romantic according to the ‘all seeing’ ice cream psychic or whatever.”

“O-Oh.” Marc rubs the back of his neck, “that’s... huh. There *are* other types of love after all.” Alix stares at him. “W-What? I didn’t mean anything. A-All forms of love are pure... and... cool. It’s...” He bites his lip, “it’s just...”

“It’s just...?” Alix prompts.

“I was hoping you *would* get a romantic love ice cream.”

“You were hoping I’d get romance?”

Marc blushes, “m-maybe if it were true, he could help you.”

Alix’s eyes narrow. “Help me with *what?*”

“With...” Marc shakes his head, “n-never mind, Alix. Forget it.”

“Oh no. You’re not getting out of this. What do I need *help* with, Marc? Spit it out.”

Marc sighs, “I-I just thought that if you were told you had a true love it would point you in the right direction. It would... fix you.” He finishes barely above a whisper.

“‘Fix me?’ I’m not *broken*. I don’t need to be *fixed*. Is this—This is because I don’t get ‘*feelings*,’ isn’t it? That’s what needs to be ‘fixed?’ I’m sorry I don’t believe there’s no point to life if not for having romantic feelings for every ‘cute’ boy who smiles at me.”

“That’s not what he meant and you know it, Alix.”

“Oh? Then by all means, tell me what he meant.” Kim frowns, “no? Nothing? Give me a break. You’re just a fickle with your feelings as Marc. Today it’s Adrien, tomorrow will be somebody else.”

“At least we *have* feelings!” Marc’s eyes widen then he puts both hands over his mouth in shock. Alix stares at him wide-eyed before her expression turns blank. Backpedaling, Marc lowers his hands. “I-I didn’t mean that the way it sounded.”

“Yes you did. How long did you have that bottled up? That tiny unfeeling *freak* has some gall mocking us for being normal. Only some kind of robot wouldn’t get crushes every five seconds!”

“Come on Alix, you gotta admit... it’s a bit weird you’ve never had a crush. At our age? Everyone’s had at least two crushes by the time they turn ten.”

Alix lets out a bitter laugh, “weird.” She repeats, “very fitting. This isn’t the first time you two have done something like this. Looked at me sideways because I don’t engage in your petty who is cuter than who arguments or take sides when you talk about how hot whoever is. Nice to know how you two really feel. But then again, I have no feelings so it’s whatever. You know what? I’m done. Fuck this.” Alix throws her ice cream on the floor and the cup shatters, “why should Alix Has No Feelings Kubdel get anything feelings related, right? You know what else? It fucking tasted terrible!” She gets up from the chair and brushes past both of them storming off.

“Alix, *wait!*”

“Fuck off!” She flips them both off as she continues walking. “The only *feeling* Alix Kubdel experiences is pissed off!”

They both sigh heavily, “we screwed up, big time.” Kim says sadly.

“Oh yeah. I should’ve kept my mouth shut.”

“It’s not your fault. It would’ve come out eventually. She may not think it’s weird but I still do.”

“M-Maybe give her a day to cool off before apologizing?”

“As pissed as she was? We’ll give her two days.”

□□

“...Love you too.” Émilie smiles hanging up the phone, “Nooroo, wings rise.”

□□

Angry tears well up in Alix’s eyes as she sits on the staircase. “...Weird. Fucking... fuck.” She mumbles. Hearing Alix sniffle, Fluff consolingly pats her leg through her jacket pocket. Just as Fluff was about to emerge from the pocket to talk to Alix, they see an akuma float down to the ribbon on Alix’s head. Fluff gasps, shuddering as they feel the dark energy and evil intent coating their and Alix’s bodies.

Alix’s eyes flash white briefly before she lifts her head up and the butterfly outline appears over her face. *“Good evening, Marionettist. I am Mme. Mite and I am terribly sorry about how your evening is going. I can empathize. It’s difficult being unique. Misunderstood. I have a proposition for you. They say you’re a freak? Think you’re some kind of doll since you can’t feel love? Well, what if you called the shots? What if you made them the unfeeling, unnatural dolls they make you out to be? All you have to do is get me the cat and ladybug miraculouses, do we have a deal?”*

“N-No!” Alix grips her head, “I-I won’t help you!” Mme. Mite’s laugh echoes in her head and her saccharine voice asking her what’s the point of fighting it, but she also hears Fluff’s voice pleading with her to resist; reminding her she’ll have to fight her best friend if she gets possessed.

There is no power in the multiverse that will make Alix Lei Kubdel fight Marinette Lei Dupain-Cheng!

Alix tries to figure out where the akuma could be through all the haze. If she were to stop time now, she doesn’t know how that would affect the akuma or Mite. She hadn’t seen it or heard it and she isn’t wearing any accessories other than—*it has to be in her ribbon!* Alix rips the ribbon out of her hair tearing off a few strands in the process. The mask outline shatters and she grips her chest, panting, staring at the akuma making its way out of her ribbon.

Alix dizzily looks up as the akuma flies off phasing through the ceiling, then her eyes roll back and she passes out.

□□

Mme. Mite's eyes snap open, "she... *resisted* an akuma? I didn't think that was possible. Just who was that girl?"

□□

Blue eyes flutter open and Alix looks into Sabine's grey eyes, "oh! Thank goodness you're awake. Marinette! Alix is awake."

Alix looks over Sabine's head at the boulangerie pâtisserie ceiling. "What happened?" Marinette asks rushing over to Alix's side gripping her hand.

"I-I was angry and I went to get some air then... then I guess I blacked out?"

"Are you in any pain?" Tom asks, nervously hovering over Alix on the other side. Alix shakes her head then slowly sits up.

"Did you guys leave the dance?"

Tom nods. "That cute little Max boy said when he returned from the restroom he found you unconscious by the staircase." Tom replies. "On our way out, we bumped into Kim and Marc who just started breaking down crying profusely and apologizing. Though they never did say *why* they were apologizing. You know you can tell us any and everything, right? We're your parents, Alix. All we want is for you and Marinette to be happy."

Alix smiles weakly, "I know. Thanks for caring. You two are great. I'm... I'm not ready to talk about it yet. Is that okay?" After they slowly help Alix up, Sabine and Tom hug her from each side.

"There's no time limit, Alix." Sabine replies. Whenever you're ready to talk just let us know. We'll always be ready to lend our ears." They both kiss Alix on the forehead before letting her go. Tom pats Marinette on the shoulder as they walk off.

"I'm not giving you that get out of jail free card, Alix Kubdel, tell me what happened!"

“Marinette, I—” Alix frowns, “I promise I’ll tell you. I-I just don’t... I can’t now. It’s too raw. Just thinking on it makes me mad all over again.”

“There were dried tears on your face, Alix.” Sighing, Marinette hugs Alix. “I won’t pressure you. I’m sorry for yelling. I’m just worried is all.” Marinette tightens her hold on Alix. “I haven’t seen you cry since...” Alix tightens her hold. “I’m sorry.” Marinette murmurs.

“Don’t apologize. Your only problem is you care too much.” Alix sighs, “I just need to lay down right now.”

“Yeah, sure. Let’s get you upstairs. Tomorrow is Shopping Day so you can relax.” They both walk up the stairs.

resolve

Chapter Summary

akumas and amoks aren't the only things our heroes need to contend with; they are collège students after all

Chapter Notes

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

Thurs, Nov 12th, 2020

“*Burrow.*” Bunnyx jumps out of the time prism then looks around the bedroom. Her eyes land on the alarm clock by the bed that reads 12:02am. Then, she glances at Alix and Marinette snuggled together in bed; Alix wearing the coiled red bangle on her right wrist. Bunnyx smiles then sighs in relief. “Maybe I should get some shut-eye myself.” She yawns. “Counterclockwise, Fluff.”

Alix wakes up to a poke in the face. She swings into the air then glares up at mini-her and Marinette huddled together with mini-her brandishing a broom. “This is the literal definition of a rude awakening.”

“Just what in the hell are you even doing here?”

“Duh! *My job?* I’m the sole protector of the multiverse? Here to make sure said multiverse is still intact? Sound familiar? I mean, I’m just *one* of the sole protectors of the multiverse as we’re all the same person but you get what I mean. Anyway, as you may recall... a certain dumbass flitted through several universes trying *and failing* to find different ways of taking the rabbit miraculous from you by stealing the snake miraculous from Bovine and Cosmic Colt before Minibug and Kittynette were given their miraculouses?” The two fourteen-year-olds exchange an all too familiar glance Alix shares with her Marinette. “Look. Let’s just say the aforementioned dumbass left... I’ll call ’em ‘crumbs’ throughout the multiverse and I had to vacuum ’em up. Naturally, I needed a quick bunny nap after that.”

“Speaking of Jalil, what the hell am I supposed to do with *this?*” Alix shakes her wrist with the snake miraculous on it.

“Unfortunately, that is one of the great mysteries throughout the multiverse. The avatar of

resolve is **never** the same person. It's not like the situation with Minibug and Maricat, the avatar of resolve is different in *every. Single. Universe*, and the last rabbit miraculous wielder never said anything about just *how* I am supposed to find out their identity! I've had to just pass out the miraculous to who the fuck ever. I don't possess the ability to flat out know or find out who avatars *are*. I guess it would make my job a hell of a lot easier..."

"How many universes did Jalil try to steal the snake miraculous in?"

"Just about all of them. Though I have absolutely no idea *how* he goes about doing so! I think he just uses his 'time powers' to visit himself in other universes, like the arrogant prick he is, and gives himself a 'pep talk' allowing him to come up with a half-assed 'plan' to steal the snake miraculous." The eighteen-year-old gasps, "wait a second! Son of a bitch! I *know* why I can't find out who the avatar is! Jalil takes the miraculous from the guardian prior to Minibug getting the miracle box. Whether that be before our birthday or before the... whatever day Minibug takes over, so Minibug has no idea who the rightful owner of the snake miraculous *is* and she doesn't have the training to find out! We're either just gonna bump into them at random or hand off the miraculous to whoever we need at the moment."

"So as guardians, Cosmic Colt and Bovine know who the avatar of resolve is?" Fourteen-year-old Alix asks.

"Yeah..." The eighteen-year-old rubs the back of her neck, "um, *well* in most universes they don't even know. And in the ones they *do*, they don't share. Even in the universes in which the guardian is someone else, they're not very... forthcoming with the avatar of resolve's identity. Assholes are probably acting all high and mighty and may not even know!"

"Then that's one more thing we'll need to find out. I'll talk to Double L next time we go on patrol."

□□

Tues, Nov 17th, 2020

"Miraculous cure!" Lady Luck shouts tossing the yo-yo into the air. The pink aura flashes from the yo-yo then purifies everything previously affected by the akuma. As the city is reforming itself, the heroes briefly hug each other. "That was quick thinking, Karma."

"Can't take all the credit, Mlle. Luck."

“‘Mlle. Luck?’”

Karma scratches the left side of her face adorably. “Another little nickname I came up with. I was gonna go with ‘Mlle. Lady,’ but that’s kind of redundant.”

Lady Luck sighs sadly, “how am I the ‘avatar of creativity’ when I can’t even think of one nickname for my partner?”

“I didn’t exactly make things easy with my hero name being ‘Karma.’” She chuckles, “I can’t even think of a good nickname for me. Nevertheless, I believe in you, Lady Luck. The perfect nickname you’re seeking will just come to you. Don’t try and force it. Anyway, should we patrol for any loose ends?”

Lady Luck nods lassooing her yo-yo. “Until next time.”

□□

“Professeur Bustier?”

The redhead puts her book down and looks up at the orange-haired teen lingering in the doorway. “Good morning, Mlle. Raincomprix! You’re a bit early. How has All Saints’ Break treated you?”

“Let’s skip the preamble.” The bespectacled teen says entering the classroom. “You gotta change Chloé and Marinette’s seats.” The smile slips off the professeur’s face, “...*something* happened at Adrien’s birthday party* Sunday. There...” Sabrina frowns, “There’s gonna— There *might*... I-I don’t know! I feel like something’s gonna give and soon. Or was it gotta give? Doesn’t matter. You need to change their seats.”

Bustier frowns, “I just changed around everyone’s seats before we went on break—”

“You didn’t change Chloé and Marinette’s seats.”

“—Be that as it may, you aren’t giving me a reason to change their seats.”

“What? I just told—”

“Unless you can give me a legitimate reason to rearrange everyone’s seats *again*, I am not inclined to do so. Especially so soon.”

Sabrina has to take her glasses off and put them on her head so she can run both hands down her face. After screaming into her hands for a few seconds, she takes a deep breath then puts her glasses back on. “Look, professeur. Whatever ‘plan’ you had to get Chloé and Marinette to stop hating each other by having them sit together has. Not. Worked! Nothing between them has changed. They still hate each other. Hell, now that I think about it your interfering might’ve just made things *worse*! Nevertheless, Chloé did something Sunday that made Marinette *snap*—”

“Professeur Bustier!” Adrien runs into the classroom stopping at the professeur’s desk, “professeur, you *need* to change Chloé’s seat!”

“Oh honestly!” The redhead huffs, “I think you two are being a tad overdramatic.” Sabrina and Adrien gape at her. “M. Agreste, humor me, just *why* must I change Mlle. Bourgeois’ seat? Your classmate, Mlle. Raincomprix here, has made the same request but failed to give me a reason. I will not change seats without a legitimate reason. I have students seated where they are seated to foster positivity for the entire class.”

“Did Chloé tell you anything?” Sabrina whispers to Adrien who shakes his head, “Tante Audrey?” He shakes his head again. “I got nothing either.”

Adrien opens his mouth to speak but the professeur holds up a hand, “enough of this. Without a reason, I will not fulfill your request. And shame on both of you! You two are supposed to be the closest **friends** of Mlle. Bourgeois. Why are you requesting a punishment for her?” They both do a double-take, “now, both of you, please take your seats. Class begins in five minutes.”

“*But—!*”

“*Seats*, please.” She repeats. With twin defeated sighs, Adrien and Sabrina go to their seats.

Within the next four minutes, the rest of the students start making their way inside the classroom to their seats. Chloé is one of the last students to arrive and she makes a hesitant move toward her desk before changing direction and heading to the professeur’s desk.

Bustier looks up with a smile, “good morning, Mlle. Bourgeois! How has All Saints’ Break treated you?”

“Terribly. Listen, Professeur, I’m gonna need you to move Dupain-Cheng. She attacked me on Sunday and I don’t feel safe with her sharing the same desk as me. I don’t even feel safe with her in the same class. The same school! The same city! I’d have her expelled, but it happened at the Agreste manor over the weekend. I am, however, working on pressing charges.”

Eyes widening, the redhead puts her hands over her mouth briefly before shaking her head and lowering her hands. “I am so, so sorry that happened to you. And—I—*oh no!* This must’ve been what Mlle. Raincomprix and M. Agreste were trying to tell me but I wouldn’t listen! I thought they weren’t looking out for you but I see I was mistaken.” Bustier takes a deep breath, “I will work on a seating arrangement right away that will benefit everyone.”

Chloé nods, “good. Glad you remember papa stuck his neck out to recommend you after that... *fiasco* at your old school.”

The redhead forces a smile. “That was an ...unfortunate misunderstanding out of my control.” Chloé looks the redhead up and down with a raised eyebrow. Bustier stands behind her desk clapping her hands together, “everyone? Please gather your belongings and exit the classroom.”

Everyone murmurs as they hesitantly and questionably comply with the sudden demand.

Other students from other classes stare as they head to their respective classrooms.

Professeur Mendeleiev’s classroom is right next to Bustier’s so Kagami and Fei observe the line as they make their way to class. “I swear if it’s another akuma, I just might snap.” Kagami mutters.

“It did seem like there was an akuma almost every day during All Saints’ Break.” Fei muses. “Wouldn’t there be screaming or some sort of general disorder if there was an akuma though? Looks more like there’s a non-akuma related problem with the classroom. But then again, evidently, with Professeur Bustier’s class one never knows.”

Before the girls can enter their classroom, their professeur comes into the hallway, “what the hell is going on out here?”

“The professeur told us to grab our stuff and wait outside.” Rose answers nervously, “she didn’t say why.”

With a sigh, the purple-haired professeur walks into Bustier's classroom. "Bustier? Bustier, what are you doing having your class wait outside?" Professeur Mendelevitch stops at the redhead's desk as the woman furiously writes on a piece of paper. "*Bustier!*"

"One second!" Students peer into the classroom through the doorway. Professeur Mendelevitch recognizes that some of her students left the classroom and are also looking inside. She can't exactly find fault in sating their curiosity when she's curious herself. Bustier's always been an odd one, and that's putting it mildly. But they probably can't hear from their distance anyhow. After a few seconds, Bustier looks up from her desk. "All done. Good morning, Professeur Mendelevitch! How has—"

"Why are you students waiting outside the classroom? They're peering into my classroom and making noise. Should this continue, they'll disrupt my lesson."

"Oh! Oh goodness, I'm so sorry. I'll bring them right in. I was just rearranging seats."

"And you needed them to be outside the classroom for that?"

Bustier frowns, "yes." She taps her fingers along her desk, "Professeur Mendelevitch, may I... ask you a question? Professeur to professeur?" Raising an eyebrow and folding her arms over her chest, the bespectacled purple-haired professeur nods. Bustier hesitantly glances at the door then looks at her fellow quatrième professeur, "is Marinette Dupain-Cheng a problem in your class?"

Mendelevitch barks out a laugh, "is that a serious question?" The redhead nods with a frown, "it can't be! Have you been speaking to Clark? Whatever he says is bullshit." Mendelevitch shakes her head. "Of course, she isn't a problem. Occasionally, I catch her doodling... science-inspired outfits in class but she's one of the best students I have ever taught in my entire twelve-year career."

"That's odd. Not the doodling part but the rest. Perhaps I should ask around with the other professeurs who have her? That girl... she's a downright *terror* in my classroom! She has a tendency to instigate rebellions and question *everything!* Plus... *Plus*, she even *assaulted* another student off school grounds." Mendelevitch laughs until she begins wheezing. "I can't believe you find this funny!"

"I don't even believe you're thinking!" Bustier gasps in disbelief. "What I *know* from having Marinette Dupain-Cheng in my class this year is that if she 'assaulted' another student, it is because it was well-deserved and they 'assaulted' her first. And to be honest, if she did retaliate I would not hold it against her."

“Y-You’d condone that?”

“I’d condone that and much more. You aren’t even remotely subtle, Bustier. The entire school knows you’re one of the mayor’s handpicked goons brought here to give his daughter a free ride.” The redhead does a double-take, “as for your ‘problem’ with Marinette Dupain-Cheng? A student who actually *enjoys* learning? A student who asks questions because she’s passionate? Someone who ‘insights rebellions’ because someone is behaving unjustly or a certain someone is enabling terrible behaviors?” Professeur Mendeleiev clicks her tongue. “You know what? You’re not gonna get it. Give me a transfer request slip for Marinette Dupain-Cheng. You can’t deal with one excellent student? I will gladly take her off your hands. I’m grateful my students do not have you as a professeur.”

“Professeur—”

“I’m doing you a *favor*, Bustier. Just write the damn request slip so I can start my lesson. Unlike you, I welcome questions in my classroom.” Scowling, Bustier takes out the transfer request paper and hastily scrawls on it before lifting it toward Mendeleiev. “Thank you.” The redhead’s scowl deepens as Mendeleiev leaves the classroom. “Students, listen up.” The purple-haired woman begins when she steps into the hallway, “I have requested Marinette Dupain-Cheng’s transfer from Bustier’s homeroom to mine.” Everyone gasps, “I have the slip right here.”

“What? Why? What did Marinette *do*?” Kim asks, “she isn’t even here yet!”

“Marinette didn’t do anything wrong! This is all *Chloé’s* fault!” Lila yells pointing at the aforementioned blonde who growls in response as she glares at the brunette. “*She* is the reason for this, I guarantee it! Hell, she’s the reason for *every* mess that befalls François Düpont! The akumas? The idiotic school ‘policies’ that only benefit *her*? Why can you have *her* put in another class? Or better yet, another school?”

“I’m getting real sick of you, Sausage Links.”

Lila scoffs, “that’s the best you got? My hairdo is all the rage in Italy, not that *you’d* know anything about style. *And at least I don’t look like some cheap plastic store mannequin wearing makeup that doesn’t suit my skintone one bit!*” The students in the hallway collectively gasp and Chloé’s jaw drops. “How could you be related to Audrey Bourgeois and *deliberately* dress the way you do? No wonder she thinks so lowly of you.”

When the blonde gets over her initial shock, her face starts turning red, “you’re gonna pay for this.”

“Send me the bill. **No one** wants you here, Chloé? Don’t you get it? Why don’t you do us *all* a favor and get home-schooled?” Face turning redder and redder, Chloé grits her teeth. Everyone surrounding the two classrooms take a collective step away from the blonde. Lila turns to the purple-haired woman. “Professeur Mendelev, is there any way you’d change your mind about having Marinette transfer? I was just getting to know her. I mean, I guess I still could talk to her outside of class—”

Bustier comes out of the classroom before Mendelev can reply, “**no!** Marinette Dupain-Cheng is a bully and disruptive influence on this school. Just *look* at what she is causing *just being mentioned!* Do none of you see this? If *any* student should leave this school, it should be *her!*”

“You called Marinette a bully when that fake blonde bitch has harassed her classmates for the past two years without reprimanding?! *I told you* Chloé was bullying me and you defended her! What kind of professeur are you? You’re supposed to guide and help your students, not pass us off to the next professeur like... like... dammit what is the word? *Immondizia!* Non posso crederci, cazzo.” She grumbles, “dovremmo rimuovere voi, Professore! Penso che tu sia più un problema che una soluzione!”

Everyone in the hall stares at Lila confused. “Wait, what did you just say?” Kim asks.

“Hm? *Oh!* Oh goodness! Did I say all that in Italian? Sorry. That usually happens when I’m angry.” Lila chuckles then clears her throat. “I was saying Professeur Bustier should be removed, if anything.”

The students from both classes look among one another before cheering for the brunette.

“*Yeah!*”

“*Lila’s right!*”

“*You’re not being fair to Marinette!*”

“*Marinette, a bully? Yeah, right!*”

“*How could you take Chloé’s side? Do you even know what she did? That’s a serious question, because I don’t know what she did.*”

“Marinette would never bully anyone, even Chloé.”

“Chloé is the one who attacked Marinette at Adrien’s birthday party the other day!”

“If you think Marinette Dupain-Cheng is a bully you need to see a dictionary immediately!”

“Don’t you teach literature? How do you not know what the definition of a bully is?”

“Stop it! *Stop it!*” Bustier screams holding her head, “that is enough! I will not allow disruptions in my class!”

“Too late for that!” Lila yells and everyone yells in agreement. “This is a *disruption* of your making, Professeur. Why don’t *you* transfer out of the class then?”

“Justice for Marinette!” Kim shouts. The crowd begins chanting Marinette’s name.

“*Stop!*” Bustier screams falling to her knees.

“This is definitely going to bring about an akuma.” Kagami says with a sigh. Fei nods leaning on the shorter teen.

Some students in the hallway look around, watching for an akuma while chanting for Marinette. There may not be an akuma now but the last akuma to come from the school took a bit more than five minutes to arrive. (Markov clocked it.) At approximately six minutes into Professeur Bustier’s breakdown, the akuma arrives. The students take out their phones as they back up a safe-ish enough distance from the akuma.

Before the akuma can reach the pencil in Bustier’s hand, “cataclysm” is heard. A glowing gloved hand taps the akuma and it instantly disintegrates. Everyone gasps looking up at Karma hanging upside down from the door.

“Karma!” Rose cheers. The students cheer the hero’s name.

“So much for a peaceful morning patrol,” Karma says with a sigh. “Think I borrowed some of Double L’s luck showing up when I did.”

With her makeup running down her face, the teary-eyed professeur looks up at Karma. “Y-You saved me.”

Karma gestures to the students, “I did it for *them*.” The professeur flinches at the hero’s icy tone. Karma flips down from the doorway onto the floor in front the classroom then walks past the awed crowd. “Gotta book! Stay in school kids!”

The crowd cheers for the hero.

□□

“That is **not** what we agreed on!” Audrey yells into her phone. She moves the phone to her right ear when the penthouse door slams open then shut. “What the hell? Hold on.” The blonde lowers the phone. “André?”

“I’m on it!” He yells. panting.

Shrugging, the blonde puts the phone back to her ear. “Hello? Yeah. *What?* How much money am I paying you?” She groans. “What do you mean the cheque bounced? That’s ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous! I’ve never had a cheque bounce in my entire life! Do you have any idea who I am? And what I can do to your little...” The blonde pauses, “*what?*” She balls up her fists, “oh he *did*, did he? Uh-huh. Yes, well, thank you for letting me know. No, no. I will take care of it. I will speak to my husband on the matter. Expect another call from me shortly.” Audrey hangs up her phone. “**André!**” When she doesn’t hear a response, Audrey huffs. “*André!*”

“I’m a little busy!” He yells back.

“Too busy for me? Ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous!” The woman huffs then gets up from her desk, exiting the room and looking around. “Where are you?”

“In Chloé’s room!”

Audrey sighs then walks into Chloé’s bedroom, “this better be important. I have things to discuss with your papa.” Chloé glares at Audrey who looks taken aback. “W-Why are you staring at *me* like that?”

“As if you care!” Chloé folds her arms over her chest.

“I wouldn’t be here if I didn’t care.”

“Fine. I’ll humor you. Why don’t we start with you siding with *Marinette Dupain-Cheng* of all people!?”

Audrey rolls her eyes. “You’re *still* going on about that? Honestly, Charmainé Cloris, just let it go. You spat in the poor girl’s face, which resulted in *me* getting possessed by an akuma. Do you—” Audrey hums, “well, I suppose you’d know the feeling better than anyone,” Chloé scowls. “And how could you say I don’t care when I prevented Marinette from busting open that pretty face of yours?”

“You don’t think I can take her in a fight? Thanks a lot.”

“We didn’t groom you for physical endurance, Charmainé Cloris. You were groomed for etiquette. Which you clearly forgot! Besides, not even including the *obvious* height difference, that girl has a lithe almost boxer-like frame. In short: you would have gotten your ass kicked.” Chloé snorts, “in any event, I plan on making Marinette Dupain-Cheng *the* next household fashion name! Have you *seen* her design for the Karma contest? I’m not even going to bother holding another contest. I’m simply going to commission Marinette to design something for me.”

“I don’t even know why I’m surprised you care more about some clumsy pseudo designer than your own damn daughter!”

“That’s not true and you know it! I care about you, Charmainé Cloris, but by God do you make it difficult.”

“Maybe if you actually were *around* more, I’d be easier to get along with!”

“Don’t turn this around on me! I have **obligations**! I created *With Style* magazine with my own two hands and not much else! I’m not some 1950s housewife waiting for my caveman husband to bring in his kill! I’m paving the way for *you*, you fucking ingrate!”

“Bullshit!” Chloé screams, “you don’t care about *me*! And I don’t care anymore, just get out!”

“What?”

“**Get! Out!**”

Chloé starts crying, ruining her makeup. Audrey flinches, she looks at André who looks down frowning. “*Fine*. I’ll leave. André, come speak to me when you’re ...finished.” André nods then walks in the room and closes the door behind him. Audrey waits half a second before leaning against the door.

“—end, Pumpkin?”

Chloé sniffles, “I was *humiliated* in school today! Humiliated! Some utterly ridiculous phony wearing *jeggings*!” Audrey cringes. Jeggings? What a disaster. “...didn’t do anything but nearly get possessed by an akuma!” Audrey hears her daughter laugh bitterly, “it’s because she *thinks* Dupain-Cheng gives a rat’s ass about her. She may be clumsy and an all-around disaster but she has common sense. *Please*, she’s pathetic. I know a leech when I see one. What? No! This has nothing to do with Dupain-Cheng. She’s irrelevant. Utterly irrelevant!” André mumbles something Audrey can’t hear. “What’s the point of you being mayor if you can allow people to speak to me however they want? No!” Audrey rolls her eyes again. “I want—no... I *need* this girl removed from François Düpont! I-I don’t care *how*!” Audrey frowns as she tries to hear more.

The door opens suddenly and Audrey tries to appear nonchalant as she leans against the doorway pretending to check her phone. André sighs shaking his head then closes the door. He glances over at Audrey, “how much did you hear?”

“Couldn’t hear anything. What happened?”

“I’d tell you... but I think you’d better hear for yourself. I have several phone calls to make. Excuse me.”

Audrey grabs André by his collar, “oh no! *This* is far more important than Charmainé Cloris’ latest tantrum. Tri-National called me claiming they did not get their monthly cheque. Care to explain that to me, Husband Dear?”

“I should think it was obvious? We are no longer in need of their services.”

“I beg your fucking pardon? You don’t get to decide that! That isn’t a *we* decision, André. I

handle those transactions! Who the fuck do you think you are? Going behind my back and ___”

“Funny you should use that particular phrase.” Audrey glares folding her arms over her chest. “Audrey, I love you. But like you told Chloé, by God, you make it difficult.”

“What do you want from me, André?”

“I want you to stay in Paris!”

“I! *Can’t*! What part of that do you not understand?! My magazine can’t run itself! I’ve been here for two months with you constantly guilting me into staying! And you wonder why our marriage is failing!?”

“*I* am not the reason our marriage is failing, Audrey! *I* am trying!”

“You’re part of the reason!” André scoffs. “*I’m* trying too! I am here, aren’t I? I can’t keep being pigeonholed for fuck’s sake!”

“*Will you two argue somewhere else!?*”

□□

Damocles massages his temples. He’s been searching for six months for a foreign language professeur and has come up empty. He’s had to give students an extra free period because of it. And that’s not gonna look good on the annual revenue meeting. Frowning, the man checks the school’s budget. The foreign language professeur has to be dirt cheap for him to keep some of the clubs functioning. As their last art professeur went and died when the school year began, it would’ve been a perfect opportunity to close that club and end all art classes in general, but the new professeur he hired seemed to win the favor of the students almost immediately. And all the little art stuff the professeur was paying out of their own pocket so Damocles wasn’t about to stop that from occurring.

Damocles grumbles, trying to make the most of his lunch. There’s a knock on the door and the man pauses – fork dangling mid-air – as he looks at the door that slowly opens. There’s an old Asian man wearing a bright pink and white gingham button-up shirt walking into the office with the assistance of a thick wooden cane. “...Can I help you, Monsieur?”

The man smiles adjusting his glasses, “I believe that would be *my* question, Principal Damocles.” Damocles sits up straight, putting his fork down, “I spoke with your receptionist,” Damocles looks over the shorter man’s head at the receptionist shrugging with a smile behind his desk. “you require a foreign language professeur, do you not? I speak Mandarin and Wu. I would be more than willing to teach what I know. I can give you all my credentials, if you need them?”

“No credentials necessary! I mean—I will need to see them eventually but first...” Damocles leans forward in his seat, pushing his lunch tray to the side, “please, have a seat.” Nodding the man complies, “Mandarin and Wu, is what you said?” The man nods. “We could certainly use a Mandarin professeur, Professeur...?”

“Fù. Fù Wáng.”

□□

Thurs, Nov 19th, 2020

“You two are actually ...*early*.” Sabine looks on in awe as Marinette and Alix trot down the stairs. “Has something happened?”

“I’ve been transferred to a different class because of Chloé,” Marinette grumbles. “It happened on Tuesday and I didn’t even get the chance to defend myself.” Marinette sighs, “probably for the best, though. I don’t think I could handle sitting next to Chloé any longer.”

“I’ve just about had it with that girl! She terrorizes you and you’re the one who gets punished for it?” She puts her rag down, “That does it. Tom? Tom! I’m going to the school—”

“Māmā, no!” Marinette blocks Sabine’s path, “this might be a good thing. The school year isn’t even a third of the way in and I’m not in a class with Chloé.”

Sabine frowns, “...there’s that. I still don’t like them tossing you out because of that girl. Especially when you weren’t even there! The next time I see her I can’t be held responsible for the things I will say. Your former professeur too.” Sabine picks up her rag then angrily starts wiping the counter.

“Bye, māmā,” Marinette kisses Sabine on the cheek, “papai, we’re going to school now!”

“Have—” There’s a loud thud then Tom groans, “have fun, Sweet Pea! You too, Bunny Logs.”

“Bunny!? What bunny? What about a—” Marinette elbows Alix, “uh, thanks? I’ll try!”

Sabine kisses Alix on the cheek, “try to have fun in a way that won’t get you suspended?” Sabine raises an eyebrow at the pink-haired teen, “you’ve managed to do well so far.”

Alix puts a hand on her chest. “On Marinette’s honor, I will not start any fights but I guarantee I will finish them if given the chance.”

Sabine sighs, “not what I wanted to hear, but I’ll take it.”

As they exit the boulangerie pâtisserie, Alix sees Kagami exiting the park making her way to the crosswalk. “Well, I’ll be damned. Didn’t know Kagami lived so close by.”

“We probably would’ve known if we were ever on time for school.”

“That... is a good point.”

They both wave Kagami over as she crosses the street to get to them, then they all cross that street to get to the school. “Good morning.”

“Morning. Where’d you come from?”

Kagami points past the park, “the new apartment buildings that just opened up. I’ve been living there a few weeks now.”

A white and purple limousine pulls up on the curb beside them. Alix protectively puts herself in front of Marinette as the door opens. Marinette told her Chloé nearly hit her with her town car on the first day of school. (Technically twice as she had to relive the same day.) “Mlle. Marinette Dupain-Cheng?” XY of all people gets out of the limousine putting his sunglasses on his head. “You know who I am.” He grins, “I’m here to talk about *you*.”

“Who are you?”

The blond gapes at Kagami, “y-you don’t know who I am?!” He sputters, pointing at the chain around his neck, “I’m XY! The number one solo artist of Paris~” He waggles his eyebrows, “no~of France! Probably throughout Europe.”

“What are you doing *here*? And why are you yelling the name of an underage girl?”

“H-Hey, hey! I’m only sixteen, which makes me underage too, so let’s get that straightened out! And secondly, Audrey Bourgeois gave my papa – international millionaire mogul Bob Roth, owner and founder of Roth Records – Mlle. Dupain-Cheng’s information.” XY takes out his phone and turns it to the three girls. There’s a screenshot of a conversation between the phone’s owner (This Bob Roth character) and someone labeled “A.B.” A.B. sent the text: Marinette Dupain Cheng; a talented designer still in quatrième. There’s another immediate reply underneath, however, that says: leave the damn girl the hell alone, you creep.

XY takes his phone back. “Mme. Bourgeois really should’ve said how cute you were.” Marinette rubs the back of her neck. “I have a request for such a talented, awesome designer. There’s this game coming out called *Crystal Knight* that is using me as their avatar.” Alix and Kagami share a look behind Marinette. “My next album has all the songs used in the game so you should check that out. Anyway, I need an outfit befitting a chosen hero. Since you did those Lady Luck and Karma inspired looks, I was wondering if I could commission you to do a heroic look for me?”

“S-Sure. I’ll need to take measurements and we’ll have to jot down all the things you want in your outfit.”

“Awesome. Is tomorrow good? When does school get out? Around 5 work?”

“No, sorry. It doesn’t. Tomorrow, I have a roller derby match. Maybe Saturday?”

XY’s eyes widen, “roller derby? I wanna watch! Then afterwards we can talk shop or talk... fabrics or whatever.”

“S-Sure. Okay then.”

“Cool.” The blond points finger guns at Marinette, “see you tomorrow, Superstar! Thanks for everything!” Whistling, XY gets in the limo then closes the door behind him and the limousine drives off.

“That was an interesting way to start the morning.” Kagami muses.

When they reach the school, there is a crowd around the staircase of the courtyard. Alix groans, “now what?” Marinette gestures to the news van by the curb.

“This is Clara Contrad with an exclusive interview! Several nights ago mega superstar model and budding actor Adrien Graham de Vanyly Agreste celebrated his fourteenth birthday in a true Graham de Vanyly fashion. The elite of Paris were in attendance. An akuma even showed up! Probably without an invite too! It was *the* place to be. And our sources failed us, completely. Not only about the party no news crew was invited to but the fact that such a celebrity attends a plain, ordinary, not very interesting other than the number of akumas that seem to originate from it, collège! We’re here live with Mme. Graham de Vanyly and François Düpont’s principal Arthur Damocles.”

“This ...*crowd* is disrupting classes, Mme. Contrad.”

“Be that as it may, the news won’t miss this exclusive scoop a second time around! Mme. Graham de Vanyly, *why* did you enroll your son into François Düpont?”

“My son simply wanted to attend a collège in peace. Be a regular student, as it were. This decision was made obviously *before* the onslaught of akumas arriving.” The other news channel reporters try to push one another out the way so they can hold their microphones closer to the blonde. “He also wanted to throw a regular party for his schoolmates, but I’ll admit I got a bit carried away when I looked over the finished invite list. And I value my son’s privacy so I didn’t allow any paparazzi or recording devices. My son himself recorded the footage regarding the akuma for this ‘luckyblog.’”

“Why was your son allowed to record but no one else?”

“Because it was *his* birthday. And if an akuma wanted to ruin it, he may as well have been able to record them!”

“Do you have any idea who the akuma was?”

“No.”

“Speaking of luckyblog footage, there appears to be new heroes on the horizon from what was shown?”

“There wasn’t very good footage to confirm or deny this claim. Perhaps we will get the answers in the upcoming weeks? I do hope you will all value my son’s wish to pursue a life of teenage normalcy. This is his first time in the public education system and I hope he enjoys it to the fullest.”

“Adrien? Adrien, over here!”

Coming out of the towncar, the blond has on a pair of Chloé’s oversized sunglasses. And speaking of Chloé, she exits the towncar stepping in front of Adrien. “Get back, you vultures! Adrikins is having a bad day!” She hisses. Chloé grabs Adrien’s hand pulling him toward the school, walking past all the camera shutters being pointed in their direction. Then the cameras follow the blonds up the staircase and into the building.

“Oh no, you don’t!” Damocles shouts running after them.

“Guess it’s safe to head inside then.” Alix says folding her hands behind her head.

“I must head to my locker before class, I will see you two around.”

“Actually, you’ll see *me* in class, Kagami.”

“Right. I had forgotten about the transfer.” She nods, “I will see you in class, Marinette. Alix, I will see you later.”

Alix waves and Marinette nods watching Kagami walk into the building, “Kagami is.... she sure is something, isn’t she?” Marinette sighs contently, “so graceful and... and... and I don’t even know what else but whatever it is, it’s like I’m enraptured.”

“Yeah, I get it. Kagami is as badass as they come.” Alix shudders, “holy shit, she’d be a terrifying akuma!”

“Then we’d better make sure nothing pisses her off.”

“Kagami’s got passion. She reminds me of you.”

Marinette scoffs, “I *wish* I could be *half* as badass as Kagami.”

Alix elbows her, “you are, trust me. I only surround myself with the most badass. You, Kagami, Fei, Jess, Rose, Juleka, Alya, Max, Nathaniel, Kim – though I’d never tell him that, Marc, Fran, Nino? The crème de la crème.”

“Alix!” Sabrina steps out of the towncar and runs over to the pink-haired teen panting. “Good morning!” She straightens up then stretches, “morning, Marinette.”

“Morning, Sabrina.”

“Yeah, morning.”

The orange-haired teen blushes, “c-can I walk with you two to class?”

“You know I still haven’t forgiven you yet, right?” Sabrina nods fervently. Alix sighs, “*fine*. Let’s go.” The bespectacled teen pumps her fist in the air as she walks on Alix’s left with a chuckling Marinette on Alix’s right. “I fail to see the humor in this.”

“It’s *cute*. Sabrina, I just have to ask you... what gave you a crush on Alix?”

Blushing, Sabrina gestures to Alix, “she’s so amazing! I guess I sorta kinda always had a crush on her? Kinda? The first time we actually spoke to each other she was riding on a skateboard. I was in *awe*! I was about to ask her to teach me but then Chloé dragged me away. Then I ‘hated’ her because I was obligated to as Chloé’s best friend so I guess joining blackberry clobber is what renewed my crush on Alix. But like I said, she’s so amazing! Oh! By the way, I’m sorry Marinette. I haven’t been all that great to you either these past few years.”

“Apology accepted, Sabrina. You’re trying to start over. Improve yourself. I get that. I believe in you.” Marinette cracks her knuckles with a smile, “but you aren’t completely off the hook for all the shit you’ve done. And you’ve done *a lot* of shit.” Sabrina nods with a gulp.

When they reach Mendeleiev’s classroom, Alix holds onto Marinette preventing the blue-haired teen from entering the classroom. “Mlle. Kubdel, I did not sign for you in my class.”

“I can cut you a deal? Two for the price of one?” The professeur shakes her head with a sigh. “We’re quite the pair. I hardly take up any space. You’ll barely notice me at all.”

“Alix, I’m one classroom away!”

“For now! What about later when we’re like the whole school apart?”

“We live together!”

“No! Don’t leave me! Who’s gonna be your impulse control? Who’s gonna be *my* impulse control!?”

Fei wraps her arms around Marinette’s waist, “we’ll take great care of Marinette, Alix. Blackberry clobber honor.”

Alix nods then reluctantly releases Marinette, “I’ll see you after class, Marinette.” Marinette waves walking into one classroom as Alix miserably walks into the other.

“Okay. I’m sure you all know Mlle. Dupain-Cheng has been transferred into my class because we’re all questioning Professeur Bustier’s credentials and sanity. Mlle. Dupain-Cheng, sit wherever is available.”

Marinette nods then walks to the back of the classroom and takes the empty seat next to Fran. “Hello again, Marinette.” They greet.

“Hi. Guess I should’ve asked beforehand if it was alright to sit here, huh?”

Fran shakes their head, “not at all. There is no seating arrangement. People switch seats almost daily. I have made many friends with people coming to sit next to me in different classes.”

“I can tell I’m already gonna like being in this class more than with Professeur Bustier.” Marinette takes a deep breath. Not a shrill voice within her hearing range. She will miss her old classmates though. Well, some of them.

“Alright, let’s have our class representative go through the morning announcements.” Professeur Mendeleviev says.

Nodding, Mireille gets up from her chair. “Hello, all. I want to be the first to welcome

Marinette to our class. Marinette, you're in good hands here. First order of business..."

The intercom shrieks on and the class look to the ceiling in confusion. *"Good morning, François Düpont. It's your principal with two important pieces of news. First, we have a foreign language professeur who will be teaching Mandarin to all grades. This will start on Monday. Second, we have the locations of every grade-wide trip this school year. As you are all no doubt aware, the end of November is when we begin taking our class trips until the second week of December to accommodate each grade. This year, the sixième students will be heading to Fontainebleau. This trip will be on Monday. Then the following week, cinquième students will be heading to Brussels. After that, our quatrième students will be heading to Kven. And lastly, the troisième students will be heading to Luxembourg."*

"One of those things is not like the others..." Marinette murmurs.

"Wait just one second!" Nino yells springing from his seat, "Damocles could barely afford to keep the art club open at the end of last school year, just *how* the hell is he paying for us to go to Africa?!"

"...If there are any questions, please feel free to ask them during lunch today. Have a pleasant morning." Then the intercom shuts off.

"I think he may have heard you." Fran states.

"Good, because I have so many questions."

The class hears cheering from Bustier's classroom followed by the professeur telling them to settle down. "Ali, aren't you from Kven?" The brunet flinches then nods at Jessica. "Must be exciting to go back to your home country." She sighs, "I'd give *anything* to visit New York again. Even briefly."

"How long do these class trips usually last?" Fei asks.

"About a week or so," Marinette replies. Fei whistles. "But I'm with Nino, Damocles made a huge fuss over the art club, and then he pulls something like this?"

"Maybe that's why he was trying to shut down the art club? François Düpont doesn't have a lot of clubs or extracurriculars because it's 'student choice.'" Félix says with a shrug, "he's probably trying to 'broaden our horizons' or some bull."

“I have to admit, I’m also curious.” Professeur Mendeleiev muses. “Tell you all what, let’s discuss the possible reasons Damocles has put his foot in his mouth and somehow got the probably less than reputable funds to pay for the quatrième trip.”

□□

“My passport arrived~” Marinette looks over Alix’s shoulder as the pink-haired teen opens the letter in her hands revealing her passport. Alix is smiling brightly with bandages all over her face. She’s not wearing her signature hat and her hair isn’t in an asymmetrical ponytail but instead spiked upward.

“Please don’t tell me you took that photo after a match?” Alix smiles sheepishly at Marinette, “I’m surprised they even let you take it. They could claim abuse.”

“It was shortly after I got adopted so claiming abuse wouldn’t be too far off. After our first match? The helmet hair was something awful so I had to fix it up.”

Marinette hums, “wait a sec, ‘dual nationality?’ Place of birth – Pearl City, Honolulu?”

Alix squints at the passport, “what? Huh. Whoa. That can’t be right. Can it?” Marinette shrugs. “Where’s my birth certificate?” Alix hands the passport to Marinette then dives into Marinette’s closet and pulls out a rollerblade shoebox that has *Alix’s Important Junk* written on it in Marinette’s handwriting. Alix searches through the shoebox and pulls out a folded-up piece of paper then unfolds it. Marinette walks over to Alix then sits on the floor beside her. “Check it out, my birth certificate says Nantes. Weird.”

Marinette picks up another piece of folded-up paper and unfolds it, “Alix, look. Another birth certificate.” She shows Alix, “this one says Pearl City.”

“Why on earth would the old man have two birth certificates for me? Unless I have a secret twin or clone, I couldn’t be born in two places.”

Marinette nods in agreement, “unless it’s not *your* birth certificate.” The girls stare at the two birth certificates, holding them side by side, “there’s gotta be a clue or something to tell which is legit.”

“I got it. Look, the Nantes birth certificate doesn’t have a watermark.” Marinette stares at the birth certificate in question then gasps.

“You’re right. Maybe he needed it for the dual nationality?”

“I don’t think so. That asshole is too shifty for that. We’ll have to ask maman, he went with her to get my passport.” Marinette turns to Alix and blinks owlishly at her. “What’s his angle? A fake birth certificate is all types of fucked... up...? Uh? Why are you staring at me like that?”

“Y-You just called māmā, maman!”

Alix blushes, “w-what? Did I?” Squealing, Marinette hugs her.

□□

“Damocles was tight-lipped about the funds but he told me we’re celebrating Kven’s royal week-long holiday *in the royal palace* in the kingdom of Achu, that ends with the crowning of their prince on his fourteenth birthday.” Nino grumbles, then shovels some food into his mouth.

Nino, Rose, Juleka, Nathaniel, Kim, Lila, Adrien, and Marc were at the cafeteria sitting at a round table. Rose coos, “we’re staying in a palace? Achu’s palace? I’ve heard all about the kingdom of Achu and how they help out sick and underprivileged kids all over Kven~”

“I heard about that too!” Adrien gushes, “I can’t wait to visit!”

“You can go?” Juleka asks then slaps Nathaniel’s hand away from her sandwich.

Adrien nods enthusiastically, “my maman’s only stipulation this time around is that she has to chaperone and a palace is a great place to not always be crowded by her.”

“Kickass!” Kim holds up his hand and Adrien hesitantly high-fives him.

“You all have your passports?” Lila asks.

“Yeah, had them since sixième. They don’t expire for another two years. I mean, you came from Italy so you’ve gotta have your passport, right?” Lila nods, “and J just got here too so she should have her passport. I think we should all be good.” Kim pumps his fist in the air,

“kickass! Can’t wait to see some cute Kven-ites? Kven-ies? Kven-ers? Kven-ians...? People from the country.”

“Hey, everyone!” The table looks up at Sabrina with her arm hooked around Ondine’s elbow. “Chloé had a mani-pedi emergency so I brought Ondine to eat lunch with me when I saw you all sitting at the table.”

Marc slides over and Sabrina thanks them before taking the seat next to them then Ondine takes the empty seat on Sabrina’s other side, “Dude...” Nino gives Marc a knowing look.

“I’ve already forgiven Sabrina.” The orange-haired teen rubs the back of her neck. “She’s spent part of All Saints’ Break trying to make it up to me. She even got me a lunchdate with Clara Nightingale.”

“So we can call off the hit?” Nathaniel asks, narrowing his visible eye at Sabrina. “Fei will be disappointed.” Sabrina laughs nervously.

“Kim!”

“*Fuck!*” Kim dives under the table right as Mortimer runs by screaming his name.

“That guy again?” Nino asks with a sigh. “How many times do you have to beat him for him to stop challenging you?”

“He said to be the best, he has to beat the best, and if he can’t beat me what kind of champion is he?” Kim groans.

“I don’t think that floor is clean.” Ondine says, “and I have a solution to your problem.” Before Kim can question her, the pink-haired teen gets up from the table. Everyone watches her make her way over to Mortimer. “It’s Mortimer, right?” He turns to Ondine then does a double-take as he looks up at her, “I challenge you to a swim-off.”

“Y-You? Challenge? Me?!” He laughs, “I *never* turn down a challenge! After school. Today. At the school’s pool.” Ondine nods then walks back to the table.

Kim springs from underneath the table, “you...” He tries to hug Ondine but Sabrina steps in front of Ondine and pushes Kim back.

“You were just laying on the floor!”

□□

“Ugh. Pool water is so... unhygienic.” Chloé sticks her tongue out in disgust. She ties her hair into a bun. The less hair she has exposed to this chemical-infested sludge, the less times she has to wash her hair thoroughly. Chloé takes a deep breath. She’s doing this for Ondine. It seems as though she can’t leave any of her friends alone without her supervision. Chloé’s gonna need to have an intervention once this mess is dealt with.

“I appreciate you coming to watch the swim-off, Chloé.”

“It’s the least I could do. You’re gonna do great.” Chloé pats her on the arm before walking out of the locker room. Resigning herself to her fate, Chloé joins the rest of her classmates on the bleachers. She takes a seat next to Sabrina who surprisingly is sitting next to Kubdel of all people. “Did I miss something?”

Sabrina turns to her, “huh?”

Chloé points at Alix who is leaning into Juleka whispering something, “were there no other seats available?”

“I *wanted* to sit here.”

“Really?” Chloé purses her lips, “and just when did that happen?”

“When did *what* happen?”

Chloé rolls her eyes, “forget it, Sabrina. Let’s just focus on cheering Ondine on.”

Both Ondine and Mortimer come out of their respective locker rooms then meet by the pool and shake hands. Next, the two of them get to stretching.

“You got this, Ondine!” Kim cheers. When Mortimer looks up at the sound of Kim’s voice, the brunet dives behind Nathaniel who sighs.

Alya and Nino both begin recording on their phones.

“Alright,” Félix clears his throat, “my name is Félix Charles and I will be your compère this afternoon. We’re all here to witness this impromptu, unsanctioned, swim-off match request made by one Mlle. Ondine Douglas of Professeur Bustier’s class in quatrième to our swim champ and team captain M. Achelous Mortimer of Professeur Burke’s class in troisième. This match will consist of ten laps to the opposite edge of the pool and back. Whoever finishes first is the winner. Swimmers, to your mark.” Nodding at one another, Ondine and Mortimer get in their pre-diving stances. “Get set? Go!” They both dive into the water and start swimming. The crowd cheers, though more people are cheering for Ondine.

“I’m Phoebe Burke, no relation to Professeur Burke – *thankfully*, head of the school website and digital paper. That’s right, we’re not wasting any trees at François Düpont! I’ll be providing our audience with the swim-off play-by-play. Félix, what do you think prompted this match?”

“Good question. Let’s ask our audience.” Both students are sitting at the edge of the bleachers and they look up.

“Why is this match happening?” The brunette looks around then spots Kim. “*Ah! I know* you know what’s going on, M. Lê Chiên.”

With a sigh, Kim runs down the bleachers and takes a seat on Phoebe’s right. “I don’t know *exactly* why Ondine challenged him but anyone who gets that whackjob outta my face even for a millisecond is a-okay in my book. Plus, Ondine is crazy hot.”

“Uh-huh.” The brunette turns back around, “and damn this pool is big. We’re only on lap four here folks. Mortimer is just millimetres ahead of Ondine from the look of things.”

Chloé yawns. She glances to her left. Sabrina is cheering holding onto the letter E. Chloé leans forward and sees Kubdel holding an N, Goth Queen has an I, Dupain-Cheng is holding the letter D, Kagami has the letter N, and lastly some ~~ente~~ girl Chloé doesn’t recognize is holding the O. The six of them are cheering the loudest standing up. Wait... when did they make those letters?

Sabrina better get over this gross little crush on *Alix* “*I Don’t Even Like People Who Aren’t Dupain-Cheng*” *L. Kubdel* and **soon**. The way she’s trying so desperately to garner the girl’s attention is just sad. And speaking of desperate attention grabbers, Chloé sees that brunette rat walking up the bleachers. She sees Chloé then *smiles* and makes her way over and sits on Chloé’s right.

“Just what gives you the God-given right to sit next to me?”

Lila *laughs*, “you’re cute when you’re angry. I’m here to cheer for Ondine, like everyone else.”

“I don’t buy it. In fact,” Chloé pokes Lila in the shoulder, “I don’t buy into *anything* that comes out of your pitiful, lying, attention-whoring mouth. And mark my words, Bitch, you’re gonna regret accompanying your maman here.”

“Oh yeah?”

Chloé leans in closer to Lila with a smile, “you telling everyone within an earshot that your maman is an ‘Italian diplomat’ may be a lie of omission but what do you think your groupies will say when they find out Marisol Rossi is merely the *envoy of Italy’s personal assistant* who commits fraud almost daily by signing in her own name since she happens to share the same surname and first initial as the real Italian ambassador to France?” The brunette bristles, “but I guess lying is hereditary, hm?” Lila’s nostrils flair, “you wanna start a war with me? You’d better come prepared. I’ll do more than ruin your life. Just try me.”

“This isn’t over.”

“The writing’s all over the walls, Dumbass,” Chloé flips her hair, “but whatever, I’m done wasting energy on the likes of you. I have *important things* to worry about.”

Lila balls up her fists as she turns to the front.

Chloé pulls Sabrina down to sit next to her, “we have to talk.” Sabrina blinks at her. “I don’t know *what* kind of spell Kubdel put you under skating with her but as your best friend who loves you dearly I have to say, you’re embarrassing yourself chasing after her. Everyone knows she doesn’t like... people.”

“I-I know.”

“And yet you’re still trying to...?”

“C-Chloé, I’m not trying to do *anything*. I just want to be Alix’s friend.”

“Lie to yourself all you want but don’t lie to me. I know you, Sabrina, better than Kubdel ever will. You *know* all I want is for you to be happy, but I don’t think pursuing Kubdel is a smart or safe idea.” Alix looks down at them glaring. “See that look of pure hatred?” Sabrina gulps. “Wasn’t just directed at me.” Chloé pats her on the back then leans away. Sabrina shakily gets to her feet again and holds up the E but doesn’t begin cheering again.

□□

Fri, Nov 20th, 2020

“O-Ondine, d-do you think we could practice swimming together Monday?” Mortimer asks with a blush.

“Sure.” The black-haired teen pumps his fists in the air walking off whooping.

Kim and Ondine watch Mortimer leave. “Unfuckingbelievable. I beat the guy *once*, he hounds me endlessly for rematch after rematch for two months! You beat him *once*, and now he’s all docile.” Kim puts his hands behind his head, “but he’s not harassing me anymore. Can’t complain. How do you feel, Swim Captain?”

Ondine rubs the back of her neck with a nervous laugh, “I wasn’t expecting him to just hand over the swim captain position to me. Or for him to drop to his knees and ask me out.”

“You should’ve seen him with Lady Luck and Karma when he was possessed by an akuma.” Kim hums, “he has a thing for badass women.” Ondine chuckles.

“You should join the swim team. You can be co-captain?”

“Nah. I can’t beat you. I’d be unworthy of being co-captain.”

Ondine playfully punches Kim in the arm, “come on. I believe in you.”

“Swimming is a hobby for me. It’s... freeing. I don’t know. Doing it as a club thing kinda makes it something I *need* to do rather than something I *want* to do. You know?”

“Uh... honestly? No. but I don’t wanna pressure you. I just think it’ll be fun to swim

together.” She bumps shoulders with him. “I heard you tell the entire school that I was, and I quote ‘crazy hot?’” Kim stops walking and stares wide-eyed at Ondine, “No, no, I’m not making fun! I-I was flattered, actually. I think you’re ...crazy hot too.”

“Y-You *do*!?” Ondine nods. “W-Wow. B-But... I gotta be completely honest with you. I... I *kinda* have a thing for someone already.” Kim’s eyebrows furrow, “someone *else* already.”

Ondine gasps, leaning closer. “Who is it?”

“*Kubdel!*” Damocles screams. Alix skates past on a skateboard with Nathaniel behind her. Ondine and Kim watch the principal try and fail to run after them as they turn the corner.

“*Ordinarily*, the person you’re talking or thinking about would just ...show up in this scenario but thank God that didn’t happen just now.” Kim sighs in relief, “even if Alix wasn’t ignoring my existence now, I never thought of her that way knowing she doesn’t think of people in any ‘way.’” Sighing again, he whispers in Ondine’s ear. The pink-haired teen squeals then shakes Kim’s shoulders excitedly.

“You’d make such a cute couple!” She screams, “let’s ask him out together!”

“W-What?!”

□□

Marc thumps their head against their locker. Nino hums reading Marc’s notebook, “I like it, Dude. *A lot* different than your usual stuff but still good.” The blue-haired teen mumbles something incoherent, “nah. I think that added a nice touch. Like I said, different. Didn’t think you did horror stuff. I mean after Halloween 2017?” Marc shudders. “Yeah. Nightmare stuff.”

Marc turns to Nino, “do you think I can write something... romantic?”

“Why wouldn’t you be able to?”

Marc bites their lip, “I... I want to make a romantic-comedy story but with... artwork.” Marc looks down frowning. “B-But I don’t want to be too... forward.”

“Huh?”

“Look, the last time I misunderstood someone’s feelings I ended up getting possessed by an akuma and Alix still doesn’t even look at me. I don’t get it. Sabrina stole and plagiarized my poem then asked me to forgive her and I did. I—”

“Dude, don’t even. I agree with Alix. What you and Kim did was *beyond* fucked up. Alix doesn’t ever have to talk to either of you ever again. Especially since you still think you didn’t do anything wrong.”

“T-That’s not true! I don’t think thinking the way I feel is wrong. I just think it was wrong to say it.”

Nino sighs, “*exactly*. Alix is under no obligation to forgive you, Dude, *ever*. Just because you want her to forgive you doesn’t mean she should or will. And if you still feel like she’s the odd one for being aromantic then that’s your issue, not hers. I’m your best friend and ordinarily, I’d be on your side but you royally fucked up. I can’t side with you on this, Marc.”

□□

Nathaniel hops off the skateboard then braces himself on the locker as his legs continue to shake. Alix nonchalantly puts her skateboard in her locker then starts taking out some books. “Alix, I need a favor.” Alix hums her response. “I need you to be honest with me. Did... Did something *happen* on Jalil’s birthday?” Alix pauses then looks over at the redhead. “My head’s been feeling funny since the eleventh. Like it did a few days after your birthday. I’m... seeing things that aren’t there. Or maybe they are there? Something happened, didn’t it?”

Frowning, Alix nods. “I can’t tell you. At least, not here.” Nathaniel nods. “I’ll...” Alix sighs, “look, just come over during lunch, alright?”

“That bad, huh?” Nathaniel sighs, “alright. I’m assuming Marinette already knows?”

“She does... but not all of it.” Nathaniel’s jaw drops. “It’s not something I can even talk about talking about.”

“Good morning, Mlle. Kubdel.” Markov greets flying over to Max’s locker opening it.

“Hey, Markov.” The robot preens when Alix pets him, “uh... where’s Max?”

“Principal Damocles stopped him then shooed me away.” Alix turns around looking for any sign of Max. “Max reluctantly sent me ahead to retrieve items from his locker.”

“Something doesn’t feel right.” Alix claps Nathaniel on the shoulder, “lunch, okay?” He nods. Alix closes her locker. “Come on, Markov, I think I may need to hear what’s going on.” Alix heads to the office and the receptionist waves at her and she returns the wave approaching the desk. “I don’t suppose you know what’s going on in there?” She jerks her thumb toward Damocles’ closed door.

“Principal Damocles is asking for M. Kanté’s assistance with a, um, mathematical equation.” Alix tilts her head to the left. The receptionist beckons Alix closer, “he *may have* mucked up the school budget numbers with this out-of-the-blue-quatrième-wide-trip-to-Kven. And he needs someone much smarter than him to make sure he’ll still have a collège to return to once the trip is over. You know, I heard this whole trip was orchestrated by Kven’s government. Evidently, we have a student from there with supposed connections to the royal family! I looked in the database and only two students originated from Kven. Two! Both in quatrième. There are hundreds of students here with impressive connections but none connected to royalty.” The receptionist gasps, “what if one of them *is* royalty!? D-Do we bow?”

“What we do, is not jump to conclusions.”

He sighs, “I suppose you’re right.” He sighs again, “wish I was allowed on school trips.”

□□

“Kim, this is just sad. Why don’t you apologize to Alix already?”

“I have! In every form imaginable! I sent balloons. I bought her a cake! I wrote her apology poems. Sent her apology texts and emails. I got an apology bouquet with all the flowers and everything! I even sent her this really funny ‘sorry’ gif!” Kim runs his hands through his hair. “I don’t know what else to do! My sister told me I’m scum of the earth only slightly better than Mme. Mite and M. Méfait.” Ondine hums. “Alix is the badass *among badasses*. She’s even more badass than Lady Luck and Karma! I-I guess I *forgot* she has feelings sometimes. Sounds weird to say out loud but nothing ever seems to bother Alix. Unless someone is bothering Marinette.” Kim stands up. “You know what? I’m gonna do it!” Before Ondine can stop him he walks over to Alix’s desk. “Alix Lei Kubdel, I’m here to apologize to you.” Kim clears his throat, “I’m sorry for being a cold, ignorant, jackass about you not feeling any

feelings for other people.” Alix looks up at Kim in confusion and beside her Nathaniel facepalms. “Oh no. I screwed up worse didn’t I?”

“She doesn’t ‘not have feelings,’ dipshit, she just doesn’t feel anything romantic. Huge difference.” Aurore says glaring.

Kim grimaces, “o-oh. I-I’m sorry either way, Alix.”

“What *are* you sorry for?” Aurore asks. Kim looks between the blonde and the pink-haired teen who folds her arms over her chest.

Marinette suddenly bursts into the classroom, “**who’s messing with my Alix?!**” Kim flinches as Marinette stomps over to him. “What are you doing?”

“Trying to apologize! But I’m just making things worse! I-I don’t know what to do and whenever I don’t know what to do I go to you or Alix for help and I presently can’t do that since I pissed you both off. And Nathaniel is also off the table.” He sighs heavily.

“This school is in desperate need of an LGBTQ+ club and I’m taking it to Damocles.” Aurore says standing up. She glares at Kim one more time before leaving the classroom.

“Tell you what, Kim.” Marinette attempts to put an arm on his shoulder but thinks against it. “Why don’t you brush up on all the LGBTQ+ identities *then* try and sincerely apologize to Alix. Don’t just apologize because you’re making sad puppy eyes across the classroom. I’m not even in the class anymore and I sense them.”

Kim frowns, “Marin—”

“Nope. That is all the help you’re getting out of me you inconsiderate jackass. Just put yourself in Alix’s shoes. Maybe that’ll help you understand how you made her feel. I gotta get to class before it starts.” Then she walks out the classroom.

Kim doesn’t register anything that goes on during class but by the time the bell for lunch rings, Damocles is on the intercom again. “*This is Principal Damocles. It has been brought to my attention that François Dupont is lacking in a club that is a safe haven for students identifying with any of the letters in the LGBTQIA+ acronym. This club will be created on Monday after school under the leadership of a quatrième student Mlle. Aurore Beauréal of Professeur Bustier’s class, so make sure to check it out. It will be in Professeur Stanton’s classroom, which is the classroom across from the art room.*” Students in the halls cheer.

“Aurore, you’re the best!” Rose says hugging the twintailed blonde.

“Thanks, Rose.” Rose releases Aurore. “Alix? Juleka? If it’s alright with you two...? Wanna be the co-leaders of the club with me?” Juleka puts some strands of hair behind her ear and nods. Alix gives the blonde a thumbs up. “Awesome! We have so much to do! Ooh! Maybe we can start working on it after tonight’s match.”

□□

Nathaniel enters the boulangerie pâtisserie. “Oh! Hello, Nathaniel.” Tom greets. “What can I get for you?”

“I’m, um, actually here to see Alix?”

“Well, she’s not here yet but you can head upstairs to Marinette and Alix’s room if you’d like or you can wait in the living room?”

“I’ll wait in the living room. Thanks, M. Dupain.” Nathaniel takes his shoes off once he reaches the staircase then heads to the living room.

Sabine comes down the stairs and walks into the living room. “Hello, Nathaniel. How are you?”

“I’m good, Mme. Cheng. What about you?”

“I’m alright. Are you here to see Alix?” The redhead nods, “I’m sure she’s on her way. Do you want anything to eat while you wait?”

“Thank you, but I’m fine.” Sabine nods then heads to the front of the boulangerie pâtisserie. A sudden sharp pain shoots through Nathaniel’s head. Hopefully, Alix can explain these headaches and hallucinations he’s been having recently.

“Alix!” Nathaniel hears Tom yell. “No Marinette?”

“Coming through!” Marinette yells opening the door. Nathaniel sees Marinette holding onto Juleka then the two of them take their shoes off before carefully walking up the stairs.

“Is-Is everything alright?” Tom asks.

“Y-Yeah...” Alix rubs the back of her neck.

“Hm. Well, let me know if you need anything? Nathaniel is in the living room.”

“Awesome. Thanks, Papa.” Tom blinks then gapes at the pink-haired teen as she walks into the living room. “Yo!” Alix heads over to him then plops on the couch beside him.

“I’m guessing you can’t tell me now with Juleka upstairs?”

Alix puts her hands behind her head and leans back, “do you remember anything from my birthday?”

“I remember the cake was delicious.” Alix punches him in the arm, “oww! I know it was a disaster but I’m guessing it’s not yet at the point where we can laugh about it?” Alix shakes her head with a scowl, “right.” Nathaniel takes a deep breath, “sorry. On your birthday, you got some trinket from your papa... but he tried to kill you because of it? You told me that when we met up at the library.” Nathaniel rubs his arm, “was there more?”

“No. Yes. Wait. Nothing more happened on my birthday but shit happened on *his*,” Nathaniel grimaces. “In addition to help fuck up the early afternoon of my birthday, that dickheaded rat-bastard stole a miraculous in order to steal my birthday gift from me on his birthday.” Nathaniel whistles, “but as dumb as I am, I have smart friends. We foiled his nefarious plans with the power of friendship.”

“Okay, so I get we’re awesome and more than capable of taking down Jalil and all... it’s just —” Nathaniel makes a seesawing motion with his hands, “how do you know it’s a miraculous? I mean, I kinda figured more than four existed but how do you know you have one?”

“Because I was told it’s a miraculous. And my birthday gift? Also, a miraculous.” Alix sits up and holds out her right arm, shaking her right wrist. “This is the miraculous of the snake. It employs the powers of revision and resolve.”

“I-It’s a sn-snake?” Nathaniel gulps scooting away from Alix.

“Not a real snake.” The redhead still shivers. “I’m no hero, though. Not yet. I need to train to use my miraculous. But... you can hold onto this one?” She shakes her wrist and waggles her eyebrows.

“A-Alix, I don’t want a snake anything. I was almost eaten alive by one!”

Alix waves him off. “At most, it would’ve tore off your left leg. Don’t be so dramatic!” She grabs him by the collar, “I need to help—*Marinette!*”

“Hey? What are you two doing?”

“Showing Nathaniel, my belated birthday present.” Nathaniel looks up at Marinette’s blank expression.

“I need you upstairs, Alix.” She turns then pauses and looks at Nathaniel, “actually, I may need both of your help.”

□□

Mon, Nov 23rd, 2020

Marinette gapes as their new Mandarin professeur enters the classroom. That’s... That’s the man she helped walk across the street on the first day of school! Twice, technically as she remembers bits of the alternate reset timeline. She had no idea he was a professeur. Then again, she also didn’t get his name and she didn’t give him hers.

Today, against her better judgment, she allowed Fei to decide where she was going to sit and Fei sat her next to Kagami with an exaggerated wink then dashed off to sit next to Nino.

Why was she so nervous around Kagami? Marinette glances at the shorter teen out the corner of her eye. Even the way she’s sitting is so graceful! No, wait a minute, she looks pensive. Against her better judgment, for the second time in the span of ten minutes, Marinette taps Kagami’s shoulder. “What’s wrong?”

She turns to Marinette, “nothing is *wrong*, per se.” She whispers, “I’ve seen that man before.”

“I have too. On the first day of school, he was heading toward the boulangerie pâtisserie when Chloé’s town car nearly hit us.”

“Deliberately?”

“I don’t think so?”

The new professeur introduces himself as Fù Wáng, and tells the class some basics to Mandarin. The foreign language class, because Damocles is cheap, puts two classes together in the auditorium. Professeur Bustier’s and Professeur Mendeleiev’s classes share a foreign language class, which put Marinette in the same class as all her old classmates. But, she still decided to sit with a new—current—classmate.

Alix resists the urge to scratch her head. Fluff has been restlessly pacing around in her hat, and it’s not like she can ask the kwami *why*. “Are you okay?” Nathaniel whispers.

“I’m getting a headache. My—” Alix frowns. Right. She never got around to telling Nathaniel about the kwamis. Marinette was eyeing her suspiciously all weekend. “I’ll tell you after school.” As if on cue, Marinette turns around and stares at them from across the classroom. Damn cat hearing. But... if that’s the case Alix should be able to hear from far away too. Rabbits have bigger ears than cats, and ...right, she hasn’t used her miraculous yet. How fucked up is it getting side effects without fully using the product?

□□

“...?” Nathaniel stares at the two creatures staring back at him; one is a white rabbit with curious big blue eyes and the other is a greenish snake with suspicious yellow eyes. They called themselves “kwamis” and said they were responsible for making the miracles work, *meaning* Mme. Mite and M. Méfait have kwamis of their own granting them their powers.

Nathaniel was also told the whole story behind the rabbit miraculous and Alix’s birthday. Admittedly, this is *a lot* to take in in just one day. Not to mention the implications of Alix trusting him enough to tell him crucial information.

“...you used your miraculous on Jalil’s birthday and your birthday but you also sorta *didn’t* use your miraculous?”

With a sigh, Alix nods. “In this present timeline, I have yet to transform with any miraculous. I mean, there was that time Lady Luck picked me to wield the tiger miraculous but I haven’t wielded either of these.”

“That purplish blur all over the luckyblog? That was you?”

Alix nods smiling brightly, “yup.”

“How do you remember all the timelines?”

“I don’t. Future-Parallel Me comes in and—”

There’s a blinding grey flash that has Alix and Nathaniel shielding their eyes. Someone tumbles out of the portal that created the flash of lights then the portal closes behind them. “I... gotta stick the landing. You two can look now.” Alix and Nathaniel slowly lower their hands then gasp at the pink-haired woman standing in front of them. “Hey there, Minis.”

“Y-You... don’t look like the regular eighteen-year-old Alix.”

This Alix giggles. Her hair is in the same asymmetrical ponytail as the present Alix but she has dark pink highlights in her hair; she also has two ear piercings side by side on her earlobe, “I’m full-on future you, Mini-Me, five years into the future~” She wiggles her hands, “the time paradox is messy. Had *I* interfered with anything like the usual Bunnyx did, I wouldn’t exist.”

“Then what are you doing here *now*?” Nathaniel asks.

“Helping to save four years of hassles. Don’t worry, I worked the numbers and this isn’t something that’ll cause a dent or a flake or crisp or whatever I call ‘em in other universes. In fact, this is a core timeline moment. You’re welcome.” The pink-haired teen makes her own drumroll stomping her feet. “May I present, the avatar of resolve~” She gestures to Nathaniel.

“What!?” Fourteen-year-old Alix exclaims. “Y-You—! The other *us* said sh—we never find out who the avatar of resolve is!”

“Yeah, I remember that conversation.” The nineteen-year-old rubs the back of her neck, “telling you *how* we figured it out will screw with the timeline, but I *can* tell you we finally

figured out it's Nathaniel and that it's always been Nathaniel." A pause, "well, maybe not *always*. Other than Jalil's jackassery, the snake miraculous doesn't get used very often throughout the multiverse and that makes it difficult to find out who is the only person in the multiverse who can use it to its full potential."

Alix takes the bangle off her wrist and holds it toward the wide-eyed redhead, "Nathaniel Kurtzberg," He looks up at the older Alix, "this is the miraculous of the snake. It harnesses the power of anticipation and getting shit done. Will you accept this miraculous and help Lady Luck, Karma, and Bunnyx... whenever she makes her debut?" She winks at the younger Alix.

"I-If you're A-Alix, y-you should know—"

"You're afraid of snakes, I know. The irony is not lost on me. Sass?"

The snake kwami cautiously floats over to Nathaniel. "I assure you, I mean you no harm. I am only here to assist." The kwami says – well, hisses.

Can't help trembling, Nathaniel gulps then looks at the Alixs nodding at him. "Alright." He carefully picks up the bangle and it changes to a rainbow beaded bangle.

"Whoa. It looks completely different from the miraculous. Okay, well, you don't remember what it looked like activated. Ooh. Check this out," Alix holds out her pocket watch toward Nathaniel, "hold this and see what happens."

With a shrug, Nathaniel puts the bangle on his right wrist then holds Alix's pocket watch; it changes from a dark blue-grey to rose gold in his hand. "This is incredible." When he gives it back to Alix, it returns to a blue-grey color. "How is that happening?"

"The miraculouses change with each holder but *look at this!* It doesn't even look like an ouroboros. It's *beaded* for crying out loud!"

"It is what my wielder envisioned," Sass says nodding. "You have a very dangerous power if put in the wrong hands. We've already experienced it when Jalil Kubdel attempted to wield me and failed because of his shortsightedness. You need to view everything in perspective, Wielder, it's the best way to use the miraculous carefully." Nathaniel hesitantly nods. "To transform, you say 'scales slither,' and you 'scales recede' to break transformation."

Chapter End Notes

*see "That Obligatory Kwami Swap Chapter/Story"
(<https://archiveofourown.org/works/30013755>) for the details

that's karma for you

Chapter Summary

When Kagami unintentionally causes an akuma, she finds herself unable to transform into Lady Luck and ironically finds herself being protected rather than being the protector.

Wed, Nov 25th, 2020

Lazarus Kubdel walks into his daughter's empty bedroom with a scowl. There's not an ounce of magic in the area. Then again, he can't sense anything within Alix. Taking a deep breath, he walks over to the closet and presses both hands on the door. A black wraith floats out of the closet door. "Bring my daughter home." Laughing, the wraith flies out of the bedroom window.

□□

Rose walks onto the stage with her winter Kitty Section gear on. It wasn't winter yet, but the days were getting colder. Marinette and Nathaniel definitely got rich off of them (i.e. Adrien since he insisted on paying for everything) for creating two outfits for all seven members.

The blonde is wearing a neon pink and black diagonally striped domino mask, a black and neon pink diagonally striped hoodie with little cat ears that matched the mask's design, a pair of black cat paw gloves, a glittery neon pink tutu with black spikes on the bottom with a black tail attached to the back, a pair of black tights, a pair of neon pink thigh-high boots, and black shoulder pads with pink spikes. The band's logo – a KS made from claw marks – is on the front of the hoodie and on Rose's tights. If one were to look closer at Rose, they'd notice the "spikes" throughout the blonde's outfit aren't spikes at all but tambourine zills. "Before we get started, I wanted to let you all know Kitty Section is taking in new members!" The blonde yells into the microphone, "so don't be shy!"

With no school on Wednesdays, Juleka called the band together for practice.

When the band members arrived, Luka informed them they needed another member. Everyone looked around confused wondering what position they were missing but Luka

didn't offer any answers. Just cryptically said: "all will be revealed in due time." Juleka was used to Luka's bullshit, but the other members weren't.

Once the band was together and dressed, Juleka invited her roller derby team to watch them play. She wasn't used to a large audience yet, or any audience at all truth be told, but these were her friends. The very same people she came out to *days* after joining the team. All it took was one practice share session for everyone to become as close as they are. There's no group of people Juleka trusts more than her roller derby team; it also helps that half of her teammates are also her classmates.

"What are you even looking for in a member?" Alya asks.

"We, uh, what *are* we looking for, Luka?"

"The spark." The blue-haired teen replies quietly. "I can't help feel that we're missing the key component of a band." He strums on his guitar, "it's like trying to find the perfect note to your lyrics."

"That sounds ridiculous. Utterly ridiculous."

Alix snorts. "Says *you*, and what do you even know about music? Hell, what do you know about *anything*? And, follow up question, what the hell are you even doing here because you sure as hell wasn't invited!"

"*Sabrina* invited me." Chloé sticks her tongue out at Alix then drapes an arm over Sabrina's left shoulder. Sabrina sighs pinching the bridge of her nose, moving her glasses up. "I'm doing you a favor here, Sabrina, you could at least look grateful."

"I'm not asking you to do me any favors." The bespectacled teen mutters.

Chloé sighs poking Sabrina in the head, "you're not gonna thank me *now* but you will." Sabrina sighs again. Hearing her future self pleading with her not to become possessed by an akuma is the only thing keeping her from snapping. "I mean, what's even interesting about these losers anyhow? You'd waste a perfectly good day out of school to hang around people you see in school? It's ridiculous, Sabrina. Utterly ridiculous."

"What do we get if we join the band?" Lila asks.

Luka taps his chin, “well, you get to make your own song and play an instrument slash sing with us.”

“You all made your own songs?” Alya asks and most of the band nods, “that’s incredible.”

“Ooh! I wanna try out!” Aurore jumps to her feet. “What instrument should I play? Or should I sing?” There’s a collective loud *no!* coming from blackberry clobber that has the twintailed blonde pout and put her hands on her hips.

“Try the glockenspiel.” Alix says putting the aforementioned instrument in Aurore’s hands, “I’m terrible at it. So back to the sax I go~”

Aurore looks at the pink-haired teen suspiciously, “you weren’t terrible on purpose, were you? Just so you could go back to playing the saxophone?”

“No,” Alix sighs, “I’m really bad with the timing—” Nathaniel, the only person Juleka invited who isn’t a member of her roller derby team, proceeds to start choking loudly. Juleka places her instrument on the table then pats Nathaniel on the back.

“That looks like a xylophone.” Jessica comments, “what did you call it?”

“A glockenspiel, not to be confused with a glock which is a type of pistol. This dumb thing is a metal xylophone or metallophone. I tried all the percussion instruments but this one sucked the most.” Alix scoffs, “who plays a *xylophone* anyway?”

“You can’t be terrible at everything you try, Kubdel, keep working at it~” Alix flips off the laughing blonde.

“You know what I *just* noticed? Rose has those tambourine bell things all over her outfit! Rose, what’s going on with those bells?”

“They’re called zills, they make noise when I move!” The short blonde proceeds to shake wildly then Fei gets up and starts dancing on stage with her. “Marinette added them when I said I wanted to play an instrument while singing.” Fei spins a laughing Rose around.

“That damn girl is incredible... but also not here. I mean, what gives?”

“Sometimes waking up Marinette is *impossible*.” Alix says before blowing sadly on her saxophone.

“Kagami isn’t here yet either.” Ivan muses.

“Marinette is understandable, she’s notorious for being late but Kagami is scary punctual.” Fei spins Rose some more, “I set my watches to her. Then again, we weren’t given a specific time for being here. Maybe Kagami’s still asleep? She doesn’t get up early if she has no reason to. I respect that. What time is it anyway?”

Jessica checks her phone, “almost 10am.”

□□

“Miraculous cure.” Lady Luck says unenthusiastically as she tosses the yo-yo into the air and watches the magic ladybugs take care of everything.

Karma drops down beside her with a sly smile, “uh-oh. I know *that* look. The next akuma’s gonna get stomped into paste.”

“I have civilian plans and that damn akuma is ruining them.” The former akuma stares wide-eyed at Lady Luck before running away in the opposite direction.

Karma laughs heartily, clutching her side. The infectious joy simmers down Lady Luck’s anger but only slightly. “That is so *you*, Lady Luck.” She shakes her head fondly, “see you?” She holds up her hand for a fist-bump and Lady Luck obliges.

“See you.” After Karma pole vaults away, Lady Luck tosses her yo-yo toward her apartment complex. Although it’s an early Wednesday morning, Lady Luck still makes sure the coast is absolutely clear before landing to the side of her building in the biggest tree in the park. “Spots off.” Tikki shoots out of the left earring and Kagami catches her before she can hit something.

Kagami gently puts the tired kwami into her fanny pack – she’s not a purse-carrying girl and no reason for a schoolbag on a Wednesday. She was already dressed and raring to go when the akuma alert interrupted her morning meditations. Her mother, surprisingly, had a date and a wry smile when she left around 7am. She left so early, Kagami had to do morning

meditations alone. Or *tried to do*; damn akuma. She'll have to do some meditations later to make up for missing the morning.

Making sure nothing is out of place, Kagami nonchalantly drops down from a branch onto the ground. Once she's safely on the ground, she brushes the leaves off her. A yellow blur speeds past her. *Great*. Those damn magical nuisances are still in the city. She sighs. Focus on the positives. Like her friends and—shit! The Kitty Section practice!

Kagami runs across the street and collides bodily into Marinette as she's exiting the boulangerie pâtisserie causing both girls to fall on their backs onto the sidewalk. Marinette sits up slowly rubbing her back, "oww, my—Kagami?!" She sees the other teen sprawled out onto the floor trying to gather her bearings. Marinette scrambles to her feet and holds out her hand for Kagami who accepts it without thought. "Sorry."

"No, no. It was my fault."

"Really? You sure? I'm usually the one who bumps into people. Hey, are you late to the practice too?" Kagami nods, rubbing her head. What part of Marinette did she run into? "I overslept." She adorably sticks out her tongue, "such a Marinette thing to do." She says self-deprecatingly. "I need one of those alarms that shocks you awake. Come on, we hopefully haven't missed much." Kagami nods walking alongside Marinette. The twintailed teen is... tall, for lack of a better term, and beautiful. Kagami realized that the first time she saw the girl as Lady Luck during her interview with Alya Césaire. She hasn't seen her much as Lady Luck though, must be one of the more sane citizens that *runs away* during an akuma attack instead of staying slash *running toward* the attack and trying to catch a glimpse of the heroes.

When they arrive at the pier, they see the band setting up then sigh in relief. "Marinette!" Alix's eyes light up and she runs over to her best friend as she boards Liberty and picks her up spinning her in the air. (Eyes widening, Sabrina blushes watching Alix spin Marinette then set her down on the boat.)

Marinette chuckles. "Yeah, I was half asleep, but I'm pretty sure we saw each other this morning."

"Yeah, well—Kagami!" Alix runs over to her then hugs her. "How'd you end up with Marinette?"

"I literally ran into her."

Alix looks up at Marinette who shrugs adorably then back at Kagami who nods. "Ah. Well,

either way. I'm glad you two made it."

"Prior to running into Marinette, I was... held up. I apologize for not arriving sooner."

Alix moves from hugging Kagami to putting an arm around her shoulder. "Don't sweat it. Luka said we're looking for another member. Interested?"

"I'll apologetically have to decline, Alix. I'm all for trying out new mediums but I am presently occupied with learning to rollerskate slash rollerblade better."

Chloé stands up, "you know something? *I'm* interested in trying out."

"What the hell is *she* doing here?"

"I was *invited*, Dupain-Cheng, by my best friend who was also invited. In any event, I am *very* interested in this band." Marinette's eyes narrow as Chloé walks past them. "Hand me the microphone—"

"Oh no. No, no, no. Not gonna happen." Alix steps up to Chloé, "no one wants to hear you caterwauling."

"Sorry, Alix, but if Chloé wants to try out we should let her try out."

Everyone turns to Luka. "*What!?*"

"Are you shitting me?" Alix asks, "do you know who this is?"

"Yes, I do, and any superfan of Lady Luck can't be completely terrible."

Aurore scoffs. "She can be terrible enough!"

"She's *Chloé*, she's plenty terrible!" Alix argues.

"You don't go to school with her!" Rose yells.

“Your logic is skewed.” Juleka mutters to her brother.

“I-I don’t know about this, Luka.” Ivan says.

“Silence, peons! Rock Boy has spoken!” Luka scratches his head in confusion. Chloé takes the microphone from Rose, pushing her aside. “You all know me as Chloé but my stage name will be CC. Sounds more professional rockstar! Someone think of a song for me to sing!” She yells into the microphone.

““You’re not welcome here!”” Alix yells back.

“Cute.” Chloé flips Alix off. “I’ll sing one of Clara Nightingale’s hits to perfection then you’ll all *beg* me to join your little homemade band.”

“Not likely.” Alix says with a smile making Chloé narrow her eyes.

“Chloé, what are you doing?”

“Hush, Adrikins, I’m performing~” Adrien shakes his head, uncovering the piano keys. “Nothing? Seriously?” Everyone stares at her. “None of you can think of a Clara Nightingale song name? You’re all useless! Utterly useless! I’ll think of one myself!” She pauses and frowns, “ah! I have one and appropriately so, it suits me *perfectly*. You all know the tune to ‘Star’ so start playing it.” Alix gestures to Chloé and Luka shakes his head picking up his guitar. With a sigh, Alix picks up her saxophone and everyone else gets their instrument ready.

“We already got those sprites around the city, what if they unleash some sort of crazy bizarre dimension where Chloé ends up being what they need?”

Jessica pinches the bridge of her nose, “*please* don’t joke like that, Fei.” With a sigh, she heads on stage.

“Do you know anything about those so-called sprites?” Mylène asks.

“Only that the mayor is a complete jackass for not only harboring them but releasing them into the city to ‘deal with’ Mme. Mite and M. Méfait.” Fei sighs, “magical creatures don’t take kindly to being locked up. Especially by morons that abuse the magic.”

“Then the same must be true if some sort of magical creature is responsible for Mite and Méfait?” Mylène gasps, “a-and if a magical creature is responsible for Mite and Méfait, then it stands to reason magical creatures are also responsible for Lady Luck and Karma!”

“That’s exactly right.” Fei, Fran, and Mylène turn to Lila just as the band starts up their instruments, “but don’t forget Mme. Mite, M. Méfait, Lady Luck, and Karma all get their magic from their miraculouses. *Those* are the magical creatures.”

Fran and Mylène nod along but Fei stares at the brunette dubiously, “oh yeah? Are you some kind of magic expert?”

Lila smiles, “as a matter of fact, yes.” She pulls her cornicello out from underneath her shirt, “my bisnonna, that’s my great-grandma, used this very same cornicello to be a superhero. She told me all about her heroics throughout Italy.” She inches closer to the other girls who instinctively inch closer as well, “it used to be a miraculous.” She whispers. Fran and Mylène gasp. “Yup. Back when the spirit lived inside it.”

“How is something a *former* miraculous?” Fran asks.

“The magic got drained from it. Now it’s just a fashionable accessory. *But*, if another entity ever showed up it’ll give the cornicello magic again.”

Fei narrows her eyes. “How?”

“By undergoing a magic contract. *All* spirit-wielded magical artifacts have this.” The brunette nods to herself putting the cornicello back under her shirt. “I mean, the sprites are no different. They’re all connected magically.” While Fran and Mylène whisper excitedly to themselves, Fei contemplatively taps her chin.

“What is taking you losers so long?” Chloé turns to the band stomping her foot, “you’re supposed to be a band! Don’t you know how to play your instruments? I’m offering to share my talents with you and you’re just waffling around?!” Alix takes a step forward but Ivan grabs her by her shoulders halting her movement.

“We’re testing our instruments trying to incorporate them all into the song, Chloé, just be a little patient.”

Chloé folds her arms over her chest, “fine. I want to sound my absolute best so the music

accompanying me better be perfect, Rock Boy.”

“It’s like Luka is the bitch whisperer.” Alix whispers to Ivan who laughs, letting go of her.

□□

Thurs, Nov 26th, 2020

“Alix!” Kim runs over to her panting. “Alix Lei Kubdel—”

“Nix the middle name, Lê Chiên?”

“Fine.” He stands up straight, “Alix, I’ve spent the last week looking up all the LGBTQ... I don’t remember the rest but I looked up all the letters encompassed under the umbrella of awesome.” He takes a deep breath, “you’re one of the best friends I’ve ever made and I’m in physical pain not being able to hang out and talk to you but this isn’t about me. It’s about you, and how I wronged you. When I told you I was bi, you patted me on the back and said ‘if that’s what you’re into, it’s what you’re into.’ When Nathaniel and Marc and Nino, hell *everyone* comes to you for help and advice and safety but no one does the same for you! And for that, I’m truly sorry. Not only did I not have your back, but I didn’t respect your identity and I didn’t respect you. Alix, I wish I could take it all back but I also don’t because I never would’ve learned this lesson. So, Alix L. Kubdel, I am infinitely sorry for hurting you and disrespecting your sexuality and slash or romantic identity. If people are not what you’re into, it’s what you’re not into.’ Wait, did I say that right?”

Alix shakes her head then punches Kim in the arm, “I get what you mean, and apology accepted.” Kim nods tears welling up in his eyes.

Marc watches the scene from his locker then sighs closing his locker and walking away. Kim has known Alix longer, but still...

“Friends again!” Nino jumps on Kim’s back cheering.

The small audience they gathered in the hallway cheers.

“Alix, what about Marc?” Kim whispers, “I-I don’t know. We talked but Marc didn’t seem as broken as I felt. I think it’s more like they still don’t understand? I did all the research alone so I could focus. Maybe I could—”

Alix shakes her head, “no, don’t bother. Marc just needs more time. Contrary to popular belief, I’m a patient person.”

Nino jumps off Kim’s back, “I don’t think we want Marc being an akuma for the second time because of feeling left out.”

“I will kick Marc’s ass myself if they get possessed by an akuma again.”

□□

Lila enters the classroom and something shiny catches her eye. Gasping excitedly, she makes her way up the stairs to Nathaniel’s desk then puts her hands on his desk startling him, “Nathaniel, that bracelet!” She coos, “it’s gorgeous! Where’d you get it?”

The redhead resists the urge to draw his arm back toward his body, “a-a gift, from Alix.”

“Just ‘a gift?’ For no reason?” Nathaniel nods, “hmm... you don’t strike me as the jewelry type. Especially with something this extravagant.”

“Maybe, but Alix gave it to me. I’ll wear it with pride.”

Lila sighs in content, “it’s wonderful how much you all mean to one another. I’ve never been that close to anyone. It’s because of all the moving with mamma’s job. Visiting fancy places is nice but I don’t stick around long enough to make those lifelong friends that just give you gifts just to give you gifts.” She pauses, then sits down next to Nathaniel, “did I show you my cornicello?”

“Your... what?”

Principal Damocles claps his hands together as he enters the classroom. “Professeur Bustier is out today and I will be filling in for her.” The class collectively groans and Damocles scowls at them. “Please *quietly* study among yourselves or in a small group.” Then he takes a seat at Bustier’s desk.

There’s a brief period where everyone is just looking around at one another before students begin moving around the classroom. It takes about a minute for everyone to be perfectly situated.

“This is much better.” Chloé says with a content sigh, “I missed sitting next to you, Adrikins.” She puts her head on his shoulder, “you too, Sabrina.” Sabrina smiles as she looks back at Chloé then frowns when she turns back around.

“A-Are you alright, Sabrina?”

“No, I’m not.” She mutters angrily, “sorry, it isn’t you. It’s just...” She takes a deep breath. “I feel like Chloé’s become even more obnoxious ever since I said I like Alix and wanted to hang out with her. Every time I hang out with Alix, Chloé invites herself along. Whenever I *mention* Alix, she changes the subject. It’s...” Sabrina balls up her fists but takes a deep breath. She can’t get possessed by an akuma. She cannot get possessed by an akuma. “Whatever. I just won’t tell her when I’m hanging out with Alix. Simple solution. I...” She turns to Mylène staring at her, “maybe the two of us will hang out together?”

“W-We will?”

“Yeah. The two of us haven’t really hung out together, without Chloé huh?” Mylène shakes her head. “Let’s change that. We’re friends, and not because of Chloé, we should be hanging out together. We’ll start hanging out together this weekend. And Alix’s friends are great, i-if Alix and I just do something together you can hang out with the rest of them.” Sabrina slyly elbows Mylène, “especially during Kitty Section practice?” Mylène feels her face heat up. “By the way, you’re not on the roller derby team... how did you get invited to yesterday’s practice?”

“Lila invited me.”

“Lila?”

“Oh, right! Lila knows a bit about magic and the miraculouses.” Mylène whispers, “she told us at the practice.”

“Where do you think you’re going, Mlle. Kubdel?”

The class watches Alix pause mid-step by the door, “bathroom.”

“Oh no. I am not falling for that again. Who is the class representative? You need to accompany her.”

“Eww! I am *not* accompanying Kubdel to the bathroom. No way!”

“Then delegate someone else to do it, Mlle. Bourgeois.”

The blonde scowls, “Lavillant, go with her.” Rose nods then gets up and walks over to Alix. Alix shrugs then the two of them leave the classroom.

When everyone was moving around the classroom, Alya elected to sit in the back by herself. There was a lot of content needed to be looked through then subsequently added to the luckyblog. With damn near daily akuma attacks all throughout All Saints’ break, there wasn’t a lot of time to add things to the luckyblog without missing something else to add.

To make matters worse, there was also no time to gather any testimonies from akuma victims. She also had to keep track of all the akuma victims. Or try to.

“Alya?” Markov floats over to the orange-haired teen on her phone. “I noticed you were updating the luckyblog and came to see if you needed assistance.”

“Thanks, Markov. I could use some help.” The robot preens when Alya pets his head. “I think the blog may’ve been hacked.”

Markov curiously looks at the page on Alya’s phone depicting “KarLuck” slash “LadyKar” that has pictures of Lady Luck and Karma from all angles fist-bumping, hugging, standing side by side, readying their weapons, laughing, groaning, dancing with M. Pigeon, and smiling at each other. “Oh! That is not a hack. *I* created this page due to the influx of queries regarding the romantic relationship between Lady Luck and Karma.”

Alya blinks at the robot, “r-romantic—? *What* romantic relationship?”

“Here. Look at this. There have been many entries depicting the closeness of the heroes and many wonder whether they ‘are’ or ‘are not.’ The majority of the fans who post content ‘ship’ the heroes together. There is a debate on their name being ‘KarLuck’ or ‘LadyKar,’ so far it is tied. I—” Alya massages her forehead, “—I wanted to convey this on the luckyblog. Give fans a place to come together and theorize. Was that not what I was supposed to do?”

“I don’t even have an answer for you, man.”

Max, noticing Markov was no longer listening... or even around him, looks around the classroom and sees the robot floating beside Alya. Markov has taken a liking to both Alya and Alix in equal measure. Max can't blame him, they've also been the two people he's been closest to since joining this class. Curious, Max makes his way over to Alya. "Hello, Alya. What are you doing?"

"I've been neglecting the luckyblog lately. I'm trying to fix that. I can't be a journalist if I don't keep track of things."

Max shakes his head as he sits down, "you haven't been neglecting the blog. Mme. Mite threw out akuma after akuma with no respite, not even Markov was able to keep up with the onslaught." The robot in question nods in agreement.

"It has been draining my battery reservoirs attempting to piece together all the footage."

"'Piece together?' Piece together what?"

"Footage from November 1st. I have been unsuccessful in getting everything to post onto the luckyblog."

"*Every ...* Markov, there was like *a million* little lights in the sky."

"There were approximately 1,429,768 magical entities released into the city." Alya gives Markov a deadpan stare and the robot chuckles, "I apologize. I couldn't resist. People have reported these 'light entities' had facial features but most reports just state 'yellow lights.'"

"Maybe it's magic related?" Alya scratches her head with a stylus, "I'm still trying to figure out the miraculouses then *this* shit gets tossed into the fray." She sighs, "they could be related, although I doubt that. Oh, and by the way? Markov evidently 'ships' Lady Luck and Karma."

Max stares at the robot. "I am not the only one! There are hundreds of people in agreement with me. You must admit, they are an adorable pair."

Max shakes his head, "I won't even touch that subject."

Damocles narrows his eyes when he sees Alix and Rose return to the classroom then

subsequently their seats.

□□

At lunch, Marinette and Alix meet up at Marinette's locker. The sudden class change did not change her locker. Surprisingly.

As Marinette opens her locker someone loudly clears their throat behind them and both girls turn around in surprise seeing Chloé standing there. She holds up a hand, "before you say anything, hear me out." Alix folds her arms over her chest and Marinette gestures for her to speak. "Alright. Thanks." She takes a deep breath. "I am here to apologize for my utterly—" She pauses then shakes her head, "—I am here to apologize for my horrific behavior several weeks back, Dupain-Cheng. I behaved like some kind of wild animal instead of the poised, polished individual I am known to be." Marinette and Alix share a brief, dubious glance. "Look, I'm not asking for forgiveness. Hell, if I were you I wouldn't forgive me."

"Then why bother apologizing? Trying to ease your guilty conscious?"

Chloé scoffs, "I'm incapable of feeling guilt."

Marinette rubs the back of her neck, "I'm not sure if that's something to boast about?"

"For *you*, maybe. Look, I'm not here to suddenly proclaim I'm gonna be nicer to either of you or anything. I still hate you both with every nerve ending in my entire body." Chloé frowns, "if you truly *must* know my reasoning... a giant rabbit burst into my suite last night and told me if I didn't sincerely apologize to Dupain-Cheng before the weekend, I'd wake up December 1st bald. Bald! Can you believe it? I mean, I'm cute enough to wear a pixie cut and still ooze perfection but complete baldness? I'm not so sure. Well, I mean... *maybe*. No." She shakes her head, "I won't risk it. And wigs are so itchy. Anyway, I *was* way out of line ...accosting you like I have. I was disgusted with myself as I thought back on that day. And I was surprised you hadn't told anyone what I did because no one – other than Kubdel – is giving me dirty looks or retaliating. But even if you didn't tell her, that's pretty much the norm. Why didn't you tell anyone?"

"What difference does it make?"

"I've always known you were a better person than me." Chloé mumbles low enough for someone who does not have enhanced hearing to miss. Unfortunately, Marinette's hearing has drastically increased thanks to working with Plagg, and she hears what the blonde mumbles. "You're right," Chloé answers with her usual amount of haughtiness. "It *doesn't*

matter.” The blonde sighs. “I can’t believe I snapped because you got my maman’s attention. Not like she would’ve freely given me her attention without any drama.” Alix and Marinette share a worrying glance Chloé misses. “Whatever. It no longer matters either. Maman went back to North America this morning before I woke up for school. Thank you, for hearing me out. Now, I am going to my towncar for lunch. Goodbye.” Then she turns around and leaves.

Marinette watches the blonde go before frowning at Alix, ““a giant rabbit bursting into her suite?” That is a *serious* abuse of power, Alix.”

The pink-haired teen puts her hands behind her head, “not a *serious* abuse.” Marinette gives her a flat look, “hey, don’t give me that look. It’s not like *I* personally did it. Although I would’ve loved to see her face.” She chuckles. “Besides, every Alix Kubdel in the multiverse has a couple of cardinal rules and the most important is: you fuck with Marinette Dupain-Cheng and you forfeit all rights to living a peaceful life, resulting in any number of Alixs appearing at any given time to make your life hell.” Groaning, Marinette buries her face in her hands. “Some of the Alixs though...? They thought Chloé wasn’t worth tormenting. Thought she wasn’t completely awful. Insane, right? Wanna hear something even more insane? In some universe, we’re *friends* with Chloé. Like, sharing inside jokes and *sleepovers*, friends!”

Marinette lifts her head. “That’s some knowledge throughout the multiverse I was better off not knowing.”

“If I gotta live with knowing one or two situations handled differently – including our whole first interaction with one another – could result in us not being at each other’s throats, then so do you.”

“Can we like look into those universes and see how it happens?”

“Yeah. I can arrange something. That’s not the issue though. I mean... as bad as Chloé is, her maman is a monster. And she makes money off being a total bitch to people! Plus, as a woman in the fashion industry she has to be thrice as bitchy as any dude would just to get recognition! All of that is something else entirely, but Chloé is always at her absolute worst whenever her maman is around.” Marinette scowls realizing just how right Alix is. Audrey Bourgeois seems to bring out the worst in someone who is already bad by normal standards. *But* Kagami, Alya, and Ondine are good judges of character – at least Marinette would like to think so – and if they can converse with Chloé without the overwhelming need to throw a shoe in her face, then Marinette is inclined to believe Chloé can be a decent-enough individual in the right company. Hell, she’s scarily patient and helpful around Lady Luck. (Ah. There’s the pattern. Chloé is only tolerable around people she likes. They should’ve known.)

“Damn...” Marinette shakes her head with a sigh, “if Chloé is *deliberately* trying to emulate that ...witch just to get her attention, that girl needs help in multiple areas.”

“Agreed, but don’t start thinking **we’re** gonna be the people to detoxify Chloé Bourgeois.”

“Why not us? We’re superheroes after all.” Marinette winks at Alix then closes her locker.

“Marinette, *no!*”

“Marinette, *yes.*” Marinette beams. “just hear me out! This’ll be the most heroic undertaking in our fourteen years of life!” Marinette spreads her arms out wide. “It’s not completely Chloé’s fault she is the way she is. Chloé is a product of her environment. Which happens to be an environment filled with snobby, bitchy assholes who throw money at their problems. Her maman’s bitchiness is legendary and Chloé is constantly exposed to it. And truthfully, we don’t know *what* the mayor does about Chloé... if he does anything at all. I mean, he only tried getting involved in stopping akumas when we insulted how poor a job he was doing as mayor. Now my point is, cue the drumroll, if Chloé is surrounded by less bitchy people she’ll see she doesn’t need to be bitchy anymore! Helping her helps us, Alix! Don’t you see? We may be able to *enjoy* the schoolyear. No more constant headaches. No more snarky ex tempore comments.”

“Alright, alright. You twisted my arm. Goddammit! We’re gonna need a serious caffeine boost. This’ll be a multi-dayer to try and figure out.”

Before leaving the building, Chloé spots Kagami and Alya on the floor surrounded by papers. “What are you two doing?! Who knows how often this floor gets cleaned!”

“Just picking up the papers I dropped.” Alya replies.

Out the corner of her eye, Chloé sees movement then turns around holding her arm out, “stop!” The student in question stops walking when they bump into Chloé’s outstretched hand and stare at her wide-eyed. “Were you *seriously* just gonna walk right over them? You have some gall.” Other students in the hall near the entrance look over at the commotion, “...either you help or find another exit.” The student immediately begins helping pick up all the scattered papers in the hall, then several other students make their way over to help.

Lila pokes her head around the corner and taps her mouth in thought, “if only she used that bitchiness for good more often.” With a heavy sigh, she turns around then walks down the opposite end of the hall.

Once everyone is finished, they neatly stack the papers in three piles giving one to Chloé, one to Kagami, and the last to Alya. The girls exit François Dupont, walking down the staircase. “Thanks, Chloé.”

“Why do you even have so much paper anyway? I didn’t even know people still used paper like that.”

“It’s all old recycled papers for a papier-mâché sculpture.”

“You’re making a papier-mâché sculpture?” Kagami asks. “I’ve been meaning to ask what the papers were for.”

“May as well. At least I know there won’t be a fucking akuma because of it.” She grumbles.

“You two should eat lunch with me. If you need old papers or whatever, I’m sure I can find some at the hotel.”

“Sure. Let’s drop these off at the boulangerie pâtisserie first.”

“Ugh, why?”

“Marinette said she was gonna help me make the sculpture and to bring all the papers I gather to her place.” Chloé groans then stops walking when she sees *him* at the edge of the staircase.

“You’ve got to be kidding.” Alya and Kagami both stop walking then follow Chloé’s line of sight to the ice cream man at his cart parked at the bottom of the staircase. Chloé shakes her head, “Dupain-Cheng’s is more bearable than this.” Doesn’t matter today’s temperature is a record low of -3°C, the witless sheep excitedly crowd around the tiny cart as they get their diabetic-inducing goop. “Hey, dumba—”

Sabrina appears out of nowhere latching onto Chloé’s shoulders. “I’ve been looking *everywhere* for you, I’m starving!”

“What’re you doing, Sabrina?”

“What was it you said to me yesterday? ‘You’re not gonna thank me, *now*?’” Chloé’s left eye

twitches as she lets Sabrina hold onto her back as they walk down the stairs in the direction of the boulangerie pâtisserie.

As André is handing out ice cream to the patrons surrounding the cart, he spots a few newcomers exiting the school leaving in the other direction. He hurries along finishing distributing everyone's ice cream before he rolls the cart down the street. "Afternoon, mesdemoiselles!" Sabrina groans loudly thumping her head on Chloé's back. "You are in need of a sweet treat, I can tell!" They stop immediately.

The first to turn around is the angry blonde, "that's gonna be a hard pass, Ice Cream Man. Now go away. Shoo. Shoo."

Next to turn around is a brown-skinned, bespectacled teen with curly orange and brown hair who adjusts the papers in her hands and wordlessly raises an eyebrow at him.

The last teen to turn has short dark blue almost black hair and prominent freckles on her nose and cheeks who takes a deep breath then purses her lips. "How about a deal? Add a bit of sweetness to your meal."

"Rhymes..." The bespectacled teen mutters.

"No, thank you." The blue-haired teen responds curtly.

André is taken aback by the tone, even moreso when the girls begin walking again – walking away. The blonde *smirks* at him then haughtily walks off. *She* must've said something to them. How disappointed to see such jaded youth. "Is there no whimsy? No curiosity? Do you have no interest in—"

"No." The blue-haired teen makes an about-face then walks back to André. "No means no." André gulps. There is something truly terrifying about this child. "I have zero interest in whatever you're selling, Monsieur."

"Stars above! You mean you have no interest in love? I—"

"No, I do not." She interrupts, "why should I? I am only fourteen-years-old and the only thing I am presently *interested in* is spending time with my friends."

"B-But—"

“I think you should take the hint.” The blonde says batting her eyelashes. “Come on. Let’s go.” André watches the four of them go. When he turns back to the crowd, many of them are staring at their ice cream with indecipherable expressions. Could they be *doubting* his methods and sincerity? Could they be doubting *him*? No! Surely not! André clears his throat, rolling the cart back to the staircase.

“W-Was there anyone I missed? They’ve waited patiently for their chance at bliss!”

A brunet approaches the cart, “can I just have a vanilla ice cream?” André blinks at him and he rubs the back of his neck as he chuckles, “I’m already in love with someone.” He lets out a content sigh, “Karma.”

The crowd collectively groans. “You don’t even go to this school, Barbecue!” Someone yells.

The brunet turns around, “it’s **Barbeau!**” He growls. “I’m here because Karma always visits thanks to you yokels causing akumas every five minutes. Also... I saw the ice cream cart and wanted some ice cream.” He turns back around. “Can I have my ice cream now?”

André frowns. “Karma cannot be your true love, you see. For a relationship with a civilian will compromise her identity.”

The brunet gasps, “you know Karma’s identity?”

“Is that what you heard? Do not be absurd. Secret identities are secret for a reason. The—”

The brunet scoffs waving him off, “whatever. I’m not here for the rhymes. If you can’t give me just a plain vanilla ice cream, I’ll go somewhere else.” André wordlessly drops two scoops of vanilla onto a plain waffle cone. “Thank you.”

André sighs resting his ice cream scooper down as the brunet walks off. André’s head snaps up when he hears a loud gasp, “*this* is the ice cream you’ve all been raving about? It’s disgusting!” André’s eyes widen as he watches the ice cream get dropped into the garbage can. “I’ll grab lunch somewhere else.” The brunet walks off with a huff.

“Akuma!” Someone screams. André tries to shield himself from the akuma with his ice cream scooper but both an akuma and an amok fly into it. He gasps as the akuma-amok hybrid mask forms over his eyes.

“Tsk, tsk. Monsieur Icemaker. Kids today, am I right? First, your methods are mocked then your ice cream is called disgusting. It’s obvious these kids don’t respect your craft. I’ll give you the power to fill hearts either with frozen treats or frozen shards. Their choice, really.”

“N-No one will be harmed?”

“I give you my vow, no one with love in their heart will be harmed. All I ask in return is Lady Luck and Karma’s miraculouses. After all, those two absolutely have no love in their hearts.”

“All right. It shall be done, Mme. Mite.” Students in the courtyard scream after the ooze rapidly covers André’s body then disappears just as quick leaving a giant multicolored two-headed snowman holding an obnoxiously large scooper in his left mitt. “Those with love have nothing to fear. For their Matchmaking Icecreamer is here!”

“That’s not what I—” Mme. Mite pauses, *“—eh. Fine. Whatever. Call yourself what you wish, so long as you take care of Lady Luck and Karma.”* Then the outline disappears from the akuma’s faces.

The akuma points his ice cream scooper at the brunet. “Forget the kid glove. You have been judged unfitting of love!”

“What?! Who the hell—” He screams as he’s frozen solid in place.

“Now who’s next? Ah! Yes. There is one other pest.”

□□

Sabine, Tom, and Luka neatly tie up the last bags of paper then set them by the backdoor. “Thanks for all your help, Luka.”

“Happy to help, M. Dupain.”

Tom claps the blue-haired teen on the back walking toward the shop counter. “I know! How about a free pâtisserie for the assistance!”

Sabine walks over to the staircase where Alya is seated. “This is a very clever idea, Alya.

Helping the environment and paying Lady Luck and Karma the respect they deserve.” Alya nods in agreement, “we’ll be sure to spare whatever recyclable materials we can.”

“Thanks, Mme. Cheng. That’ll be great.”

Chloé, seated at the table in the corner, looks up from her phone. “Are you done yet? We stayed longer than a courteous visit permits. I’d like to leave now. There is actual, *healthy* food we can order at the hotel.”

Sabine raises an eyebrow at Chloé. “Do you know *exactly* what they put in your ‘healthy food?’” Chloé frowns then looks back down at her phone.

“What in the hell is that?!” Tom exclaims.

Everyone turns to him then to the shop window where a giant two-headed ice cream man is standing. “*Move, move!* Tom!” Sabine yells. Tom nods and picks up Chloé then tosses her over to Sabine as the ice cream man shatters the windows where the blonde was just sitting with his large ice cream scooper. The brunet narrowly managed to avoid any of the glass shards as he ran to the staircase.

Chloé blushes as Sabine puts her down. “Y-You—! Why?”

“Why?” Sabine questions, “why would Tom save you?” Still blushing, Chloé nods.

“It is not surprising in the slightest that you don’t understand kindness.” The ice cream akuma taunts, pointing the scooper at them.

Sabrina holds onto Chloé’s shoulders, “wait a minute, is that the ice cream matchmaker guy?” Everyone turns to Sabrina then the akuma.

“Unbelievable!” Chloé yells, unable to move with Sabrina holding onto her, “what happened, ice cream man? Send out the wrong love flavor? Or did Kagami get to you? If you can’t handle criticism, you shouldn’t be in sales!”

“Chloé, I don’t think it’s a good idea to...”

“I’m stalling until Lady Luck shows up.” She whispers and Sabrina nods in understanding.

“All of your flavors are ridiculous, utterly ridiculous! And Lady Luck will show you just how ridiculous *you* are!”

The akuma laughs, “you think yourself playing hero but your tone rings hollow. Do you claim to be attempting to help when you’re really only looking out for yourself? Puff out your chest if you wish to, I have no interest in you.” Kagami opens the restroom door then gapes at the state of the boulangerie pâtisserie, “target acquired, *she* is the one I require!”

“Wha—?” The blue-haired teen dives out of the way of a large scoop of ice cream being hurled in her direction. “What’s going on?”

“What is going on is you were in the wrong! You humiliated me, you should at least grant me the same liberty!”

“Run, Kagami!” Sabrina urges.

“Ah yes, run. How could I expect anything but cowardice from one with such ice cream prejudice!” He slams his scooper on the ground creating people-sized ice cream scoopers that climb into the boulangerie pâtisserie. “Then again. It is not like you would care, leaving them unprepared. To suffer your fate. What can you expect from one with nothing but hate?”

Kagami balls up her fists as she gets to her feet, “my ‘fate?’ You want me to pay for bruising your fragile pride? That’s quite the ego you have. I suppose it’s why you were given two heads.” The akuma bristles and the mask outline appears over both of its heads.

“Hey! Just who in the hell do you think you are threatening a child?” The mask outline disappears as the akuma looks down at Sabine.

“You wish to get in the way? Then you will pay!” The akuma points the scooper at Sabine but then his arm starts shaking.

“What’s happening?” Sabrina whispers.

Growling, the akuma puts his arm down. “I told Mme. Mite from the start I would not harm those with love in their heart.”

Sabine smirks, “pity.”

Tom puts his hands on Sabine's shoulders, "we have plenty of love in our hearts~"

"Get Kagami out of here." Sabine yells over her shoulders. Alya, Sabrina, Luka, and Chloé all grab onto Kagami and pull her out of the boulangerie pâtisserie and toward the park.

"Kagami, as hot as you were, it was foolish and above all else *insane* to try and take on an akuma without Lady Luck there. You have no idea what the akuma could've done to you!"

"It was worth the risk to draw him away from the boulangerie pâtisserie."

"That's noble..." Sabrina butts in, "but Lady Luck would just fix everything up with the miraculous cure."

Kagami sighs, "I just hope Marinette's parents are alright."

"They will be. You'll see." Sabrina says then looks over her shoulder at the partially destroyed boulangerie pâtisserie and sees the akuma walking away from the shop. She grimaces then turns back around.

Meanwhile, the akuma creates more sentient ice cream scoopers and they start grabbing people on the street. "All of Paris will feel love of their own or feel the cold steel from my scooper drones!" Some people hit with the large ice cream scooper get turned into ice sculptures and others are simply ...left alone. "How's that for a start? You have nothing to fear if you have love in your heart!"

"Did he say—? Right! Love in your heart. I love Lady Luck! Maybe I'll—"

Sabrina holds onto Chloé, "let's not chance it."

"Look for the girl with the cold brown eyes. If you find her, I'll throw in a surprise!"

"The park's too open a place to hide. We need somewhere enclosed." Luka says.

"We shouldn't be hiding at all. You're all putting yourself at risk for me."

“It’s worth it to see Lady Luck... a-and to save *you*, of course.” Beside Chloé, Sabrina shakes her head.

□□

“Marinette Dupain-Cheng! You know, I really shouldn’t be fueling your coffee addiction.”

Marinette chuckles as she approaches the counter. “You pay me in coffee and I pay you in pâtisseries, Kenzō.”

The black-haired teen laughs heartily, “you’re all right, kid. What can I get for you?”

“How about an—”

All the phones in the coffee shop go off at once. “Shit. Akuma attack. Everyone remain calm and ...indoors?” Kenzō blinks at the brunet behind the counter shrugging. Wait a second...!
“Where did Marinette go?”

“Get your coffee fix?” Alix asks over the phone as Marinette’s running through the street trying to find somewhere to transform.

“No. Didn’t even get to order.” Marinette grumbles.

“Better deal with the akuma quick then.” Alix laughs. “I’m at the tech store getting communication equipment.”

“I thought you were banned from the tech store?”

“Yeah... I went to another one. Alright, enough bullshit. Go kick some ass.”

“You know it.” Marinette hangs up then slips into an alley. Why is it always a damn alley? Plagg yawns when Marinette opens her purse.

“I don’t smell any coffee.”

“Didn’t get any.” Marinette grumbles and Plagg groans, “we’ll get some later. Hopefully. Claws out, Plagg.” Yawning again, the kwami flies into the ring on her right middle finger. After she transforms, Karma checks the luckyblog on her baton but there’s nothing. With a shrug, she puts her baton back.

Karma takes one step forward and when the sky darkens suddenly, she looks up at the large rainbow gooey foot hovering over her. She dodges the foot before it can land on where she was just standing. “Look for the girl with the cold brown eyes!” The akuma yells, “if you find her, I’ll throw in a surprise!”

“W-Was that...?” Karma’s right eye twitches, “was that the ice cream matchmaking guy? What the hell? O-Oh! Oh no! H-He just... *fuck!*” Karma hauls ass to the boulangerie pâtisserie and sees the state of the building. “That fucker’s gonna...” The hero tilts her head to the left as she sees the heads of the proprietors of the shop sticking out of a giant glob of red ice cream. [Okay. *This* may very well be the strangest sight an akuma has created. Tom Dupain and Sabine Cheng in a busted up boulangerie pâtisserie stuck inside of a giant glob of red ice cream. Looking strangely not frozen to death, or cold in the slightest.]

“Karma!” They cheer. “Thank goodness, you’re here!”

“What in the hell happened?” Karma makes her way over to them and taps her baton against the ice cream.

“We were stalling while the kids made their escape,” Sabine begins with a sigh, “that, naturally, pissed off the akuma but he apparently swore he wasn’t going to harm anyone ‘with love in their heart’ so he...”

“Threw this disgusting tasting ice cream at us to keep us from helping any further!” Tom finishes with a scowl. “I think he purposely put some horrid flavor—”

“*Tom*, that is what you’re choosing to focus on!?”

“I’m gonna need you folks to not move.” Karma raises her baton over her head then brings it down to slice the ice cream scoop in half separating Tom and Sabine. They both sigh in relief, until they realize the baton separated them but they’re still encased in ice cream. “Huh. Not what I thought would happen.”

“I figured as much...” Tom mutters, “this *is* magic, right? We need some unconventional magical approach to beating this.” Sabine stares at him in awe. “I’ve been getting lessons on

magic from Alix. The ice cream akuma said ‘anyone who doesn’t have love in their heart’ will be frozen; I’m guessing the only way to defrost someone frozen is to show them love?’ He blushes as Karma and Sabine stare at him. “I-It’s worth a shot, right?”

Karma wordlessly puts her baton back on her belt then walks over to the couple, putting a hand on each ice cream scoop. If only she could outwardly express just how much love for them she has. However, they’re just a pair of awesome civilians to Karma. Her civilian feelings will have to take a backseat. “I... really enjoy the pâtisseries you two make. You’re so thoughtful! You cater to just about every food allergy and sensitivity there is! I feel all the emotions you bake within each bite.” Tom and Sabine gasp as the ice cream starts melting.

“Thank you, Karma! Thank you!” Karma squawks as Tom bear hugs her.

“You’re the one who had the plan, M. Dupain.” He releases Karma and pats her on the back.

“I really have to thank Alix.” His eyes widen, “oh no! Alix! That asshole might target Alix! I’ll call her.”

“No. She could be hiding. We don’t want to give her position away. What we need to do is help...” Sabine pauses, “where’s Lady Luck?”

“Yeah, uh, I don’t know.” Karma shrugs. “I’m sure she’s fine. Don’t worry about it.”

“Have you ever fought an akuma by yourself?” Tom asks.

Karma pauses then smiles, “first time for everything, right?”

Tom and Sabine exchange a glance then nod. “Then we have to help you until Lady Luck comes along, if she does come. We have to focus on the akuma and help protect our girls and their friends.” Sabine says and Tom nods in agreement.

“‘Help?’”

“The akuma won’t target us, we can shield you.” Tom offers.

“That’s insane!”

“But so badass! Our daughter Marinette is gonna be so jealous when we tell her we helped out a superhero!” Tom chuckles.

“Y-You—! I can’t just use civilians as a shield! That’s outrageous! No, I won’t be putting you two in any sort of danger—”

“We’re helping you, Karma. End of discussion.” Tom and Sabine say simultaneously, tone brooking no room for argument. Karma stares at them staring back at her then sighs heavily. Not even as a superhero could she defy those two.

□□

“You can’t hide forever! You are delaying the inevitable! I will find her!” Karma’s baton hits the akuma on one of his heads and he stops walking then looks around and spots the hero on the ground looking up unimpressed at him. “Predictable. Lady Luck and—?” The akuma pauses then looks around, “Lady Luck and—? What’s this? No Lady Luck? My, oh my, doesn’t that suck?” Karma gives him a toothy grin catching her baton, “I suppose one miraculous is better than none; especially from the one who’s garrulous.”

“You’re throwing an awful lot of rocks at a glass house calling *me* chatty, Bucko! I’m not the one fishing for rhymes. By the way, the circus called: They were wondering where their clown disappeared to!”

The amok-akuma hybrid mask forms over the akuma’s faces. “You will pay for your insolence and—”

“Blah, blah, blah, blah. Someone *obviously* added more salt than sugar into your ice cream mixture. But ice cream is so *bleh*. Give me a warm pâtisserie any day~” Karma sighs in content, “just thinking about it makes me feel all giddy.”

“A warm pâtisserie, you say? Even on a warm day?”

“Yum. *Especially* on a warm day. There’s nothing better. Hey, Mite! Listen up, you nectar slurping dipshit, if you want my miraculous so damn bad come get it yourself and stop hiding behind civilians!” The mask outline flashes before it disappears. “Cataclysm!” With her glowing left hand, Karma swipes at the akuma’s leg but instead of melting or getting destroyed, the leg bursts into sprinkles. “Aw shit.” She barely has time to defend herself before the sprinkles cover her entirely. And to make matters worse, the akuma loses his balance and begins falling.

“Karma!” Kagami shouts running over to the hero and tackling her out of the way as the akuma explodes into millions of sprinkles.

“Kagami!” Alya, Sabrina, Luka, and Chloé run after Kagami but are unable to reach her when the sprinkles shower down. The five of them were still looking for an optimal hiding spot when they saw Karma and Kagami just easily broke out from their grasp and started making her way over to the hero.

“Karma!” Sabine runs over to the pile wading through until Tom picks her up and puts her on his shoulder, “good thinking. *There!* I see Karma’s baton.”

Tom carefully wades them over to the baton and Sabine picks it up but Karma isn’t holding onto it.

Alya carefully makes her way through the sprinkles and starts pushing them aside, then Sabrina and Luka follow suit. “Did Lady Luck fall in the sprinkles too?”

“Just **help**, Chloé!” Sabrina shouts. The blonde huffs but walks into the sprinkles with a grimace.

“We should be looking for what caused him to become an akuma!” Alya yells.

“What is this?” Chloé pulls something from the sprinkles then gasps, “I know this shoe! I found Kagami!” Chloé reaches into the pile and pulls Kagami’s entire body from the sprinkles. “Thank goodness I have such an eye for fashion!” Kagami coughs out sprinkles. “I don’t suppose you saw Lady Luck, did you?” Kagami shakes her head. “Then I’ll keep looking.”

Sabine gasps, “everyone out of the sprinkles, they’re starting to move.”

“It feels so gross.” Chloé shudders.

Luka manages to make his way out of the pile. Sabrina pulls Chloé out of the sprinkles who pulls Kagami out. Tom and Sabine pick up Alya on their way out. “The akuma must be reforming.” Alya reasons, “nothing broke, right? Whatever transformed him is still whole.”

All the sprinkles congregate then the akuma reforms laughing. “I picked up a little extra

snack after that vicious attack.” The akuma pats his belly, “Mme. Mite will be pleased as punch with my lunch.”

“Karma’s *inside* him?” Sabrina gags holding her mouth.

“But not her baton.” Alya says.

“Don’t worry, that problem will take care of itself. Karma has powers of destruction, remember?” Luka says with a grin.

“Should we tell him?” Tom whispers then the group shakes their head simultaneously taking several steps away from the akuma.

The akuma laughs, “terrified by my—” He hiccups then grabs his stomach with a grimace. “Oh. A stomach ache for goodness sake?” His stomach rumbles violently then his eyes widen. “Oh no.” When the akuma explodes, again, Tom shields everyone from the assault of sprinkles.

“I *hate* sprinkles.” Karma grimaces shaking herself off. She spots the large ice cream scooper then walks over to it. “Cataclysm!” She punches the ice cream scooper and it disintegrates and an akuma and an amok float out of it.

“Karma!” Alya tosses the baton at Karma and she catches it.

“Thanks!” Karma points her baton at the akuma and amok, “night, night~” She hits the paw-shaped button on her baton and it absorbs both the akuma and the amok. Karma sighs in relief.

“Where’s Lady Luck?” Chloé asks stomping over to Karma.

“Good question.”

“What does it matter? The akuma is taken care of.” Sabrina frowns, “but there are still sprinkles all over, and I’m sure the boulangerie pâtisserie is still all smashed up.”

“I got something for that.” Karma spins her baton in her hand, “from the ashes, there’s regrowth.” She slams her baton onto the ground, “miraculous cure!” The ground pulses then

an ethereal wind blows through everything and everyone. The group watches the sprinkles disappear before their very eyes and the mist or wind or whatever sweeps over the ice cream man, returning him to normal.

“Holy crap! Holy crap!” Alya excitedly puts her hands against her face, “how did you do that? Did you know you could do that?”

Karma chuckles pulling her baton out of the ground, “sort of. You know how in those magical anime the transformed character just *knows* what to do?” Alya nods, “it was one of those moments.” When Alya starts hyperventilating, Karma puts a hand on each of her shoulders helping her regulate her breathing.

“T-That was amazing! Simply amazing! You and Lady Luck are welcome to our pâtisseries whenever you need them!”

Alya’s breathing slowly returns to normal and she nods at Karma who nods back, “I appreciate that, M. Dupain. I’ll pass the word onto Double L when I see her. Gotta, I guess, gallop outta here. Thanks for the help. I’ll take you up on those pâtisseries another day.” She uses her baton like a pogo stick and jumps in the air landing on a nearby building before sprinting away.

“Lunch isn’t over yet. We can still make it to the hotel.”

“You can always come back to the boulangerie pâtisserie for lunch.”

Chloé groans as the vote is unanimously against her. Then everyone begins making their way back to the boulangerie pâtisserie. “I can’t believe Lady Luck didn’t show up! She let her lackey do all the work? Ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous!”

“Karma is not Lady Luck’s *lackey*, Chloé.” Sabrina says. “She’s just as capable a hero as Lady Luck. Today proved it.”

The blonde scoffs, “whatever. Lady Luck would’ve dealt with this twice as fast.” Sabrina groans.

“You don’t like Karma? Why?”

Chloé narrows her eyes at Luka, “what’s it to you, Rock Boy? I just *don’t*. That’s all.” Luka

hums as he keeps walking. “Wait, that’s it? No lengthy speech about how utterly *amazing* Karma is? You made a band for her!”

“I have nothing to say.”

“Why?”

“My reasons are my own.” Chloé frowns at the teen’s retreating back.

□□

Fri, Nov 27th, 2020

Karma stretches on the tree branch, Lady Luck lunchbox beside her, “nothing like lunch during afternoon patrol.” She unwraps her sandwich from its wrapper but before she can take a bite, Lady Luck lands down beside her on the same branch. “Oh, hey. Want some?” With a sigh, Lady Luck shakes her head. Shrugging, Karma takes a bite of her sandwich. “You know...” She begins, chewing thoughtfully, “if you’re here to apologize, don’t.”

“You *don’t* want me to apologize for not showing up?”

“If you *could’ve* showed up, you *would’ve*, right?” Frowning, Lady Luck nods. “Then that’s that.”

“Just like that? How are you able to trust me so easily? When have I ever given you any reason to trust me as explicitly as you do?”

Karma shrugs, “I’m not sure. I just trust you.”

“Have you always just trusted me or was there an ‘ah-ha’ moment when you were just hit with the realization?”

“When you pulled me away from that boulangerie pâtisserie before even introducing yourself to me? Yeah, that’s trustworthy-worthy.”

“Y-You’ve trusted me since we first started working together?! I-I don’t know what to say.”

Lady Luck sighs, “I was raised to believe everyone is always looking out for themselves more than they are willing to assist others.”

Karma chuckles, “wow. Would you believe me if I told you I was raised in the same manner?”

“I would not believe you.”

Karma laughs, “it’s true! Difference is, my parents told me to be the one willing to assist and let others see it’s alright.”

“You bring the optimism and I bring the cynicism. Makes us a great pair, Chaton. There’s no one else I’d rather do this with.” Lady Luck pauses and it could be Karma’s imagination but her cheeks look slightly pink under her mask. “I-I have no idea where that came from! I-I have been giving the nickname a lot of thought and it just gets blurted out? That’s karma for you.”

“Stop overthinking, Lady Luck. I like the nickname. I’ll be cool with any other nickname you think of... unless it’s something terrible. And if it is something terrible, I’d definitely tell you. Same goes for you, you know. If I think of any nicknames you don’t like, let me know.”

“I don’t know what is it about you that means me feel like I’m laying on the floor under the warmth of the sunlight.”

“I’m the cat, Double L, that sounds like something more my style.”

“Ladybugs don’t do well in cold weather. I’ve found myself drawn to warmth since the side effects started kicking in.”

“I’ll have to find a nice sunny spot for both of us to lay on.” Karma moves her lunchbox over then draws closer to Lady Luck. “Better?”

Lady Luck puts her head on Karma’s shoulder, “better. Thanks.” She smiles to herself when Karma begins to purr. One day she’ll tell Karma how they defeated those duplicates so easily, but for now she’ll just enjoy this moment. “Nice lunchbox by the way. I have a Karma one. It doesn’t do you justice.” Karma snickers, resting her head on Lady Luck’s.

let's get started music making

Chapter Summary

Tension forms between Kitty Section; meanwhile elsewhere, plans are being put into action

Sat, Nov 28th, 2020

Alix puts her backpack on, “—all good. Thanks for the snacks.” Sabine and Tom both kiss her on the cheeks. She’s gotten used to full-on affection from the adults she’s living with. “I’ll be back by dinner. See you. Love you!” The pink-haired teen skates out of the boulangerie pâtisserie.

“Odd. I wonder why Marinette isn’t going with her?” Tom questions.

“It’s band practice, not roller derby practice.” Sabine explains.

“Ah, right. Wait, what?”

“Wha—” Alix skates to a stop as the street is barricaded, “what’s going on?”

“Construction, mademoiselle.” The guard instructs, “move along, please. The detour is down the street.”

Alix groans then skates in the direction of the detour. “I don’t need this.” She checks the time on her pocketwatch then freezes. “Huh.” Grinning, Alix skates behind a building then takes her helmet off. “Time to cut down our travel time.” Fluff yawns, “Fluff, clockwise!” Alix and Fluff stare at each other, unmoving for several seconds. “What the hell? I said ‘Fluff, clockwise!’ why didn’t anything happen? Hell, I just said it again!”

Fluff yawns again as they rub their head, “I don’t know. Try it again. Maybe it wasn’t working because I wasn’t awake?”

Alix nods then waits a few seconds, “Fluff, clockwise!” Fluff flies at the pocketwatch in

Alix's hand but instead of flying *into* the miraculous, the kwami *bounces off of it*. Alix gapes, "are you kidding me?!"

Fluff grimaces, "that was not supposed to happen."

"Great. I don't need this." She groans, "it's probably because I haven't tried using the miraculous in almost a month."

"Or, conversely, because you are trying to force it?" Alix frowns, "the transformation *will* happen, Kit. You just need patience."

"Well, good thing I'm not the avatar of patience." Alix motions for Fluff to get back under her helmet before putting the helmet on once the kwami is nestled on her head. "*Is there* an avatar of patience?" Fluff lifts the helmet then nods before lowering the helmet again. "Huh. We'll worry about this back home." Alix puts the pocketwatch back in her pocket, clipped onto her pants' belt loop, then skates off toward the pier. It's *plausible...* being the avatar of time has screwed Alix over before she was aware because she's constantly late to things. Even if she leaves on time, like the case of today, *something* makes her late.

Alix reaches the pier but pauses as Liberty isn't docked. In fact, the entire pier is empty. "What the hell?" Alix takes out her cellphone and calls Juleka as she skates around the area. The purple-haired teen picks up on the second ring, explaining The Captain felt like sailing and Liberty will be returning to the pier within the hour.

With nothing to do, Alix skates around the pier thinking. Why are there so many fucking things wrong with the rabbit miraculous? She loses track of time until she sees Aurore running toward her waving, "Alix!" She yells. Alix stops skating in front of the blonde, "did you hear about Mme. Captain Couffaine? She was drunk sailing her boat—ship... vehicle!"

A few minutes later, Ivan, Jessica, and Adrien make their way to the pier waiting for the houseboat to arrive so they could practice. "Man," Ivan yawns, "I should've eaten breakfast."

"Where's Rose?" Alix asks.

"Oh..." Ivan rubs the back of his neck, "sore throat. She was raring to go, but it doesn't make any sense for her to try singing." The others nod in agreement.

"Since *I'm here*—"

“No!” Alix interrupts. With a huff, Aurore folds her arms over her chest.

Adrien nervously looks over his bandmates, “d-do you all think Captain Couffaine will let us sail while we practice?” Everyone turns to him. “I think that would be pretty cool.” He clears his throat. “A-Am I the only one who thought of that?”

“That *would* be good exposure.” Jessica muses. She hadn’t exactly told her mother about joining Kitty Section, and having her find out while Jessica is playing and sailing on a houseboat is not the best way to go. (If she ever found out Jessica moonlit as a superhero, back in New York, she’d freak out.) “Oh! Speaking of exposure, I have my song! I saved it in the notes app on my phone.”

“Awesome!” Aurore says holding her hand up for a high-five Jessica obliges to, “uh... what song are you talking about?”

“Luka asked all of us to make songs after...” Ivan clears his throat, “the song I made.” Ivan blushes slightly, scratching his left cheek. “He wants us all to share pieces of ourselves... or something.” Aurore tilts her head to the left. “Yeah, I didn’t really get it either.”

“Luka’s hella weird. *Deep*, but weird.” Alix says.

“He *is* a little weird, isn’t he? Always making vague musical references to everything.” Ivan adds with a chuckle. “Or playing random guitar notes while he talks.”

“Luka’s super cute, who cares if he’s seriously weird or just a little bit? He’d be boring otherwise, and there’s nothing worse than a bland hot guy.” Aurore’s eyes flit to Adrien for the briefest of seconds before she nods to herself.

Adrien caught Aurore’s glimpse at him. Wait, did she just call him boring? He glances in her direction and now she won’t meet his eyes. Well, she’s not wrong. Sneaking out of the manor and into François Düpont was the most adventurous thing he’s ever done in fourteen years on this earth; thankfully, it was not the last. “I-I have a question...” Adrien pauses, “actually, I have two questions. One... do you guys practice at home?”

Ivan makes a seesawing motion with his hands, “I *tried* but maman wasn’t thrilled about my new hobby, especially since I was using her cookware.”

“I don’t have anything sax like to practice on, uh, *with*.” Alix replies with a shrug.

“I practice the fundamentals. It helped create the song. However, it is difficult to truly practice when your maman has ears like an owl and does not know you are part of a band.” Adrien nods sympathetically. “What was your second question, Adrien?”

“If...” He frowns and shakes his head, “would you guys like to practice at my place?” The band cheers and Adrien chuckles, “I’ll take that as a yes.”

Alix squints, “hold the fucking phone, is that *Chloé*!?” Everyone follows the pink-haired teen’s line of sight until they spot the blonde’s bright *red* towncar parked by the pier and the blonde, wearing a red and black horizontal striped dress with red leggings, getting out of the towncar. The band turns to Adrien who flinches.

“I have no idea why she’s here! I didn’t invite her! I swear!”

“*Chloé* can’t be part of Kitty Section, *I’m* not even part of Kitty Section!” Aurore growls.

“She could’ve overheard us talking about band practice yesterday?” Jessica remarks with a shrug.

Chloé approaches the pier but Alix meets her at the entrance, “leave.”

“Hello to you too. I have business here.”

“Last time we dealt with you on a weekend, you were turned into an akuma and turned the school into a skating rink. The only *business* you’re about to have here is picking your teeth up from the pier when I kick them out of your mouth.”

Chloé laughs, “cute. As if you can *reach* my teeth. Now move, I’m not here to bother with you.” She pushes Alix aside walking toward the others, “yes, I’m beautiful but you don’t have to stare so vacantly.”

Alix stomps on the pier brushing past Chloé, shoving her aside. Chloé growls but Adrien runs over to her holding her back. “Don’t hold her back, I’ll kick her ass if she starts anything. Why the fuck are you here? I can’t think of anyone here who’d *willingly* want to see you!”

“Adrikins would!” She loops her arm around Adrien’s drawing him nearer. “And for your

information, Mlle. Noisy, I *was* invited.” Chloé mock pouts, “bet you feel as dumb as you look, don’t you?”

“But still not half as dumb as you. Like I said, no one here would willingly want your company.”

Chloé glares at her, “right. No one *here*. Luka invited me.”

The band gasps. “*Luka!*?”

“That’s impossible! Luka wouldn’t want you here! You got his sister turned into an akuma!”

Chloé waves Ivan off, “water under the boathouse, Brûlée. Luka isn’t the type to hold grudges like some *petty, pink-haired people*.” Alix wordlessly flips Chloé the bird.

Liberty blows its horn approaching the dock, and the band turn toward it waving their arms excitedly. Adrien nudges Chloé, “...do you have a crush on Luka?”

“That can’t be a serious question, Adrikins. My heart and soul belongs to Lady Luck. You know that.”

“That doesn’t mean you can’t like more than one person at a time.”

Chloé pauses then frowns. “...True, but you’re wrong. I found a certain level of respect for him recently. He’s passionate about junk and I need that passion.” Adrien eyes Chloé suspiciously.

“All aboard!” Anarka yells through the megaphone dropping the plank, “we’re moving this practice!”

Adrien gasps excitedly, “w-we’re gonna sail while we practice?”

“Aye!” Luka replies. “Come aboard.” Chloé pushes everyone out of the way to board first. Once everyone is onboard, Luka moves the plank back. “To the seas, me hearties! If anyone gets motion sickness, we have tablets to help.”

“Good.” Chloé groans clutching her stomach as she leans on the railing.

“The boat’s barely moving.” Chloé sends the pink-haired teen a half-hearted glare, “guess that’s karma for you, hm? You know you don’t belong here. Even the boat doesn’t want your company.” Chloé continues to glare as Alix walks off whistling.

“Uh, Luka...? What’s Chloé doing here?” Ivan whispers. “She said *you* invited her? That can’t be right, ...can it?”

“I did.” Ivan’s jaw drops, “I... I was going to address that. Everyone, can I get your attention for a sec?” Adrien pats Chloé on the back as she groans miserably. “Chloé expressed an interest in joining—”

“**Fuck no!**” Luka and Adrien stare at their scowling bandmates.

“You can’t be serious!? She terrorizes us *daily* in school! We don’t want her mucking with our recreational activities too!” Ivan yells.

“Absolutely not! We’re Kitty! Section! She’ll probably want to change the band’s name so that her name is first!” Jessica says with a huff. “Besides, she doesn’t have Rose’s range.” Chloé gasps then glares at the brunette.

“No way in hell and I don’t need an explanation.” Alix folds her arms over her chest. Juleka merely shakes her head repeatedly.

Chloé clicks her tongue struggling to stand upright, “I—” She gags then grimaces, “I expected this.” She says. “They’re jealous.” She tsks. “Can’t say I blame them. **I** *am* great. **I** helped Lady Luck’s sidekick deal with an akuma. **I’m** oozing with talent and good looks. Why wouldn’t they be jealous?” She gags again then dry heaves before standing up straight. “I am Chloé Fucking Bourgeois, this waving water will not defeat me!” The boat turns and Chloé hiccups then throws up all over Adrien’s pants. Adrien groans looking to the sky.

“Guess the water doesn’t care who you are.” Alix says grinning.

Luka sighs, “I’ll get the mop. Alix, wanna help me out?”

“No?” He grabs her hand pulling her along. “What’s the deal? You can’t get the mop on your

own?”

“I actually wanted to ask you to not antagonize Chloé.”

Alix wrenches her hand free from Luka’s grasp. Luka stops walking then turns to her wide eyed. “You want to talk about antagonizing!? I don’t start shit but you’d damn well better believe I finish it. *When you’ve dealt with nearly three fucking years of hell because of a spoiled brat calling her papa every time a fucking fingernail gets bent, you can talk to me!*”

“Alix—”

“No! You listen to me, Couffaine! I’ve complicitly put up with too much of Chloé’s shit and I’m just about fucking done. You bring that bitch into this band and I’m gone. And I can guarantee I won’t be the only one. Or did you happen to forget an akuma by the name of ‘Mirror Image?’ On September 7th?” Luka frowns, “*she* did that to your sister! Mocked her until she was angry enough to give into Mite! That’s not something easily forgiven.”

“I know that! Jules still...” He shakes his head, “I’m just trying to help.” Alix’s eyebrows furrow. “I’m an empath. For as long as I can remember, I’ve always been able to... *feel* other people’s emotions. But I feel it as music. Chloé’s music is just screaming out for help. That’s why—”

“Oh no! You wanna make that brat into some pet project and ‘help her’ or what the fuck ever? Fine! *Don’t* drag the rest of us into it! And fuck you for deciding this without consulting the rest of us!”

“She’s right. We’re supposed to be a band.” Luka flinches then turns toward Juleka folding her arms over her chest. “You were seriously going to bring *Chloé* of all people into the band... without talking to us? Without talking to *me*?”

“Juleka, I—” She holds up a hand.

“No, Luka.” She shakes her head. “Not this time. I don’t care about *her* suffering, not when she’s been giddily relishing in causing the suffering of others. Including me.” Luka grimaces. “I’m with Alix all the way. You bring her in and I’m out.”

“Juleka, come on! There is no Kitty Section without you!”

“Then you’d better figure out who you’re interested in helping.” She turns around and leaves.

“Yeah, you got one bitching mess to clean up.” Alix puts her hands behind her head as she walks off after Juleka.

Luka sighs heavily then goes to get the mop.

Chloé is leaning over the railing groaning. Adrien has on a large pair of pants he’s holding by the waistline. After Chloé’s second wave of vomit, Anarka took pity on Adrien and gave him a pair of her pants from the captain’s ready room then set his pants and socks (it got in his socks!) in the washing machine. (He didn’t know a houseboat could have a washing machine.) His shoes were just wiped and are air drying. “Thanks for the clothing, Mme., uh, I mean Captain.”

“Aye. No problem. The landlubber had a big breakfast, eh?” Adrien shrugs with a smile.

Alix rejoins the group. “Hey, are we practicing or not? I left my best friend at home for this *band practice*.”

“That reminds me! Luka, I have my song.” Jessica approaches the blue-haired teen with her phone in her hand. “Could we maybe practice it today?”

Luka tightens his grip on the mop. “Y-Yeah, sure. Let me take a look at it.”

“What’s wrong with Luka?” Ivan asks. “He seems... sullen. Didn’t think he could do sullen.” Alix nudges Ivan then he crouches down so she can whisper in his ear. “*What!?* Y-You can’t —” His eyes widen until Alix moves and he stands up straight. “Even niceness has a limit.” He grumbles.

“Hey, Sun...whatever, let me talk to you for a sec.” Without waiting for a reply, Alix grabs Adrien by the collar turning him around and having him walk with her at her pace as he struggles to keep his pants from slipping. Alix abruptly stops walking then turns to Adrien. “I don’t know what shit Chloé is planning but you’d better swear you’re not part of it or your as good as out of this band.”

“No! Please don’t kick me out! I-I enjoy being a member of something.”

“This isn’t about *you*.” Adrien flinches, “fucking typical. I should’ve realized. Birds of a fucking feather. Forget it.”

“Alix, wait!” Adrien holds his pants up as he tries running after Alix. When he gets to Alix, she is standing against the railing Chloé is leaning against.

“It would be so easy to just toss your ass overboard.”

“My papa—” Chloé gags then rests her head on the bottom railing.

“Won’t get here fast enough.”

Chloé glares up at her, “I bet you’re enjoying this, aren’t you? Finally being able to look down on someone?”

Alix crouches with a wide smile, “I broke your nose once already; care to try for a second time?”

Chloé scowls at Alix as she stands back up, “you’re lucky I’m feeling sick. Can’t believe I’m plagued with... with *seasickness*. I’m supposed to go on a fucking cruise for Christmas break!” She hiccups then puts her hand over her mouth when she gags. She takes a deep breath then glares up at Alix, “can’t you see talking is making me more sick? Why are you still tormenting me?”

Alix mock gasps, “you didn’t know? I’ve still got two years worth of tormenting left. You should get comfortable.”

“I’m gonna throw up on your shoes.”

“Do it and I’ll feed it right back to you.” They glare at each other. “When the hell did you even get the opportunity to speak to Luka?”

“You’re not gonna leave me alone until I tell you, aren’t you?” Alix shakes her head. “Fine.” Chloé huffs. “It happened on Thursday. I helped Lady Luck’s lackey deal with an akuma. Luka just happened to be at Dupain...” Chloé pauses then looks Alix up and down, “at the boulangerie pâtisserie.” She amends. “Don’t know why he was there. Don’t care. All that

matters is that asshole ice cream fraud got pissed when Kagami didn't want any of his ice cream and the bastard went after her! He should get his license revoked!"

"An akuma was at the boulangerie pâtisserie?! But...?" Alix frowns. "What happened?"

Chloé sighs heavily, "Alya wanted to drop off some recycled paper *there* for some project honoring Lady Luck and... whatsherface. Kagami was with her and I decided to join them. I did not know about going to *that place* until after I already joined up with them. On our way there, the ice idiot tried his stupid pitch but Kagami wasn't having it. Then, because this is life now, he turned into an akuma and tried getting her. I tried stalling for as long as I could but the boulangerie duo stepped in and told us to move Kagami. So we did. Lady Luck's *lackey* showed up later by herself, which was ridiculous. *Utterly* ridiculous! The boulangerie duo helped her out then she did this baton twirl that was probably a less effective version of the 'miraculous cure.'"

"Doesn't sound like you were much help at all."

"*I'm* the one that found Kagami in the sprinkles!"

"Whatever. I'll just talk to Kagami."

"Yeah, you do that. Then you'll see how amazing I was." Alix rolls her eyes as she walks off. Chloé takes a deep breath, "where the fuck are those damn tablets?!" A small clear capsule package drops next to Chloé's hand. She reaches for it then pauses when a black boot stops in front of the package. Chloé glares up at the purple-haired teen standing over her. "As if you need to tower over anyone further. What do *you* want, Goth Harpy?"

"I'm giving you one warning: My brother believes there's good in everyone." Juleka's visible eye narrows and a chill rakes through Chloé's entire body, "I don't share that sentiment." Chloé grimaces. "I don't know how you took advantage of Luka's kindness and I don't fucking care, but as long as I draw breath you will **never** be part of Kitty Section."

"*Y-You* can't deny **me**! First of all, *I'm Chloé Bourgeois! I do the denying!* Secondly, it's not *your* band! It's *Luka's*!"

"Wrong. *I'm* the one who came up with the entire idea. And unlike Luka, I asked our bandmates' opinion. You're unanimously not accepted." Chloé snarls. "Kitty Section is about promoting positivity and expressing our love for Karma. We're not interested in voicing your selfish, immature, gremlin tactics."

““Gremlin!?”” Chloé gasps then jumps to her feet then pauses as a wave of dizziness overtakes her, “you... you listen to me, you... gothy tower of a person! *No one* talks to me like this! And I *always* get what I want! Did you forget my papa is the mayor? If you don’t let me into the band, I’ll end your band’s existence before it gets off the plank, matey.”

Chloé leans back when Juleka leans toward her, “go ahead and try.”

Chloé suppresses a shiver, “I-look at you...” She looks Juleka over, “got your tough girl boots on, don’t you?” Regaining her composure, Chloé leans toward Juleka with a smile while Juleka’s expression remains impassive, “let’s see how badass you think you are when we’re back on even ground, Vampeka.”

Juleka nudges the capsule package off the dock with her boot. Chloé screams watching the package fall into the water. Then the moving water makes her dizzy and she doubles over clutching her stomach. Meanwhile, Juleka walks past her.

Chloé dry heaves gripping onto the railing, “she’ll—” She takes a deep breath, “no, no. Calm down, Chloé. The last thing you want is to bring about an akuma.” The blonde unsteadily gets to her feet holding her head as she stumbles toward the captain’s ready room then knocks on the door. Standing in front of the door, she grabs a piece of paper out of her purse and finishes writing on it when the door opens.

Chloé has to take a step back to fully take in the tall woman. Huh. Damn genetics. “What?”

“I apologize for the mess I created and I’d hate to damage your boathouse further.” Chloé hands Anarka the paper in her hands. “For the trouble.”

Anarka stares at the paper with a raised eyebrow, “you wrote me a cheque for five thousand euros?”

“Not enough? I can add another zero.”

“The *amount* be fine, lass.” Anarka shakes the cheque at the blonde, “it be the *reason* I find suspicious. Don’t think I didn’t hear shouting behind me door.”

“Like I said, Mme. Captain, I’m paying for the mess I created. Nothing more. Nothing less.” Anarka looks the blonde up and down then puts the cheque in her jacket pocket. “By the way... is there any way I can have something to settle my stomach? I still feel a bit queasy.”

“Aye.” Chloé watches the grey-haired woman walk around her room then returns with a mini bottle of water and a capsule package like the one Juleka nudged off the boat.

“Thanks.” She rips open the package and pops it in her mouth then drinks the entire miniature bottle of water. She curtsies then deposits her trash in the nearest wastebasket. Out the corner of her eye, she sees the door shut. Once the door is closed, Chloé goes in search of Luka. She’s not miraculously expecting the medicine to kick in immediately (and she is hoping she was given the medication). The blue-haired teen is strumming his guitar nodding to himself as that semi-familiar brunette moves her pointer finger from side to side and Ivan is on the drums. Kubdel and the teenage witch are mercifully missing so Chloé makes her way over. “Luka!” Luka plays an abrupt, out-of-tune note on his guitar as he looks up into Chloé’s smiling face.

“Chloé.”

Her smile widens, “I am officially hiring you to be my songwriter. Here is your first payment.” Chloé takes a cheque out of her purse and puts it on Luka’s guitar.

Luka’s eyes widen considerably when he sees the amount written on the cheque, “flaming guitar plectrums!” The band (*is* Aurore a member?) crowd behind Luka and all let out squeaks of different volumes. Aurore faints but the others are too engrossed with the cheque to realize, until they hear a thud then they look around and see the blonde on the floor.

“Chlo, this is *a lot* of money.”

“And if the international model says it’s a lot of money, *it’s a lot of money!*” Ivan says, though his voice is still a few octaves too high.

Chloé rolls her eyes, “*please*, fifty thousand euros is purse money.”

“You put five zeroes on the cheque.” The brunette says and Chloé turns to her, “that’s not fifty thousand euros, that’s five hundred thousand euros.”

“Huh. I put one zero too many.” Chloé shrugs, “oh well. Who can’t use extra money? You can use it to...” She looks around the boat, “buy newer instruments! Or... whatever this boat...thing will need! Hell, you can buy a new boat...thing.”

“Chloé, I can’t accept five hundred thousand euros to write you a song.”

“What are you saying? That I’m paying too much? Is that a thing?” She glances at Adrien who shakes his head with a shrug. Chloé groans, “*fine*. I’ll lower the amount. Just make sure the song isn’t too broody. I want a love song that encompasses my perfection and tells Lady Luck that I am the perfect candidate for her. It needs to be catchy and upbeat so we can play it throughout our wedding.” Chloé takes out a cheque and rests it on the other one, “I left it blank so you can fill out how much you want.”

“I’m flattered you want *me* to write you a love song.” Luka says laughing nervously, “but I don’t have an ‘on switch’ that’ll just make me write music.”

“I never said I wanted it *now*. I just said I want it. Take as much time as you need to make it perfect. With your songwriting and my singing combined, we’ll net Lady Luck. And think about it. Once I’m dating her, *you* can date Karma. A win-win.”

Luka taps his chin in thought for a few seconds. “*Luka!*?” The others yell at him, each giving him a look of disbelief.

“Hm? *Oh!* Right, right. Lost myself for a second. Sorry. Chloé, there is more to writing a love song than having a catchy tune that ensnares your crush.”

“Then do all that stuff too! What do you think I’m paying you for?”

“I’m trying to say we need to write the song *together*; it’s *your* feelings you want to showcase.”

“Why are you entertaining this, Luka? Do you seriously think a catchy song is enough to gain Lady Luck’s interest?”

Chloé glares at Jessica, “of course I do! Why? Are you competition for Lady Luck?”

“What? No!”

“Then mind your own business, Whoever-You-Are. In fact, all of you shoo so we can start working.”

“To hell with that, this is *our* band practice which *you* aren’t part of. If anyone should ‘shoo,’ it’s you.”

“You don’t want to get on my bad side, Twinbraids.”

“As if you have a good one. I’ve never heard *anyone* say *anything* complimentary about you.” Chloé growls and Adrien walks over to her side holding her shoulders, “did I strike a nerve? Are you gonna become an akuma again? Or will you call your papa to handle your dirty work?”

Chloé’s left eye twitches, “I officially hate you.”

“Chlo, why don’t you let us practice for a bit before you work with Luka?”

“No. I want to work on my song now! My cause is far more important than theirs.” Jessica scoffs folding her arms over her chest. “But I don’t wanna have the talent spoiled with all this negative energy.” She looks over Jessica with a sneer, “Bob Roth is staying at my hotel. We can go there and work where he can hear you!”

“B-Bob Roth? I—I’m not meeting up with a talent scout without my band.”

“Oh, *now* you show your loyalty?” Alix says approaching the group. “Why not meet up with him? Working on a ‘love song’ for Chloé? How cute.” She lets out a humorless chuckle, “as if someone that narcissistic knows what romantic love is?”

“I know better than someone incapable of feeling it!”

“I don’t need to feel it to know you’re creating some nonexistent version of Lady Luck as your ‘perfect match.’”

“Lady Luck *is* my perfect match! What do you know? All I need is a non-akuma moment of her time and she’ll see we’re meant to be!”

“Even if that were in the realm of possibility, a civilian dating a superhero is extremely dangerous!” Jessica says.

“T-Then I’ll just become a superhero too!”

Alix laughs, “you have officially lost whatever was left of your mind! Fuck being a hero,

Lady Luck wouldn't date you if the human race depended on it!"

"And you can't just become a superhero because... *because you feel like it!* That's not how it works!"

"Kid. Mime." Jessica scowls folding her arms over her chest. Damn Kid Mime. She should've known. "As we're working on my love song, we'll work on a theme song too."

"I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm calling it a day. I'm gonna grab something to eat on dry land."

"Sounds good. Anything is better than listening to caterwauling with no way out." Jessica replies then Ivan nods in agreement scooping up the still unconscious Aurore then the three of them head to the captain's room while Alix approaches the netting.

"Juleka," She yells, "we're getting food on land. Come on."

"Bye, bye, losers~" Chlo   waves at them then turns to Luka, "okay, I think the medicine is kicking in. Let's get started music making."

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Bob Roth groans pushing the stack of papers on the table into the garbage bin. "Useless, worthless, garbage. None of this 'music' is worth my time. What am I paying you morons for? Just...get out of my face!" The alleged songwriters disperse. "I need some new blood." As much as it pains him to admit it, his son isn't as popular or as talented as he believes. What XY needs is a backup band or something-slash-someone to bring in more popularity. The bald man leans back in his seat stroking his chin watching XY singing the latest song those hacks wrote. It was... decent, but he needs something more. With a sigh, he leans forward then presses the speaker button. "Take five, XY."

The blond pauses then nods taking off his headset. The interns swoon at XY when he walks past them.

Bob Roth notices the unfamiliar purple scarf tied around XY's neck in place of his usual diamond-encrusted gold "XY" chain. Strange. XY showered with his chain on. Even slept with it on. He'd never replace it. "I'm gonna grab some lunch."

“Sure, sure. First... where’d you get that scarf from?”

XY blushes ever so slightly as he adjusts his scarf, “it was a gift. Remember the hero outfit I had made last week? The designer also made me a scarf to protect my throat. It’s really soft and...” He gasps then clears his throat, “lunch. Be back in thirty.” Then he flees the room.

How curious. Bob Roth stands and stretches. Guess he’s taking a trip. Thanks to the locator app on his son’s phone, Bob Roth locates XY at this large homely looking building. From inside the town car, the man frowns debating whether or not to enter the shop.

Meanwhile, inside the boulangerie pâtisserie, XY carefully climbs the stairs and knocks on the trap door. Marinette’s parents let him upstairs, all smiles. And they were definitely eyeing their daughter’s handiwork around his neck. “Come in.” Marinette’s melodious voice singsongs. XY pops his head in when he opens the door. “*Oh*. Hello, XY. I wasn’t expecting to see you.”

The blond looks around the room. He sees three girls around the room staring him down. He tries (and fails) to ignore their stares. It’s not the heart-eyed stares he’s used to getting. In addition to them, there’s also various cat-themed paraphernalia strewn around the room, and Marinette is sewing something purple onto the purple-haired girl’s purple bodice. “Yeah, I was singing and thought of you.”

“How sweet!” The blonde on the chaise coos then giggles into her hands, then she coughs into her hands.

The pink-haired teen laying on the bed frowns, “how is it—” The blonde turns to the pink-haired teen shushing her.

“Um, thanks? I think?” Marinette accidentally sticks her pointer finger with the needle then swears lowly in Mandarin. XY rushes over to her and holds her hands. “Thanks, but I’m alright. This is old hat to me.” Marinette smiles moving her hands from XY’s then presses the long pink cloth around her waist against her bleeding finger.

“Oh! I had another reason to stop by.” He pulls a small box out of his pocket and hands it to Marinette. “A thank you. For this awesome scarf and my outfit. I wanted to deliver it to you personally.” The blonde lets out another coo but she gets shushed. XY clears his throat, “I-I should get going. My pa—manager doesn’t like me disappearing for too long for breaks. I’ll catch your next roller derby match? See you around, Superstar~” He points finger guns at Marinette before climbing down the trap door.

Once the trap door closes, Rose rushes over to Marinette, “an international celebrity has a crush on you!” She squeals. “If you associate with him and are seen with him, this could get your designs on the map!”

“What’s in the box?” Jessica questions as she and Alix come closer. Marinette shrugs then opens the box. All the girls gasp as Marinette slowly takes out a diamond pendant.

“T-That can’t be *real*, can it?” Juleka asks.

“I’ll check.” Rose takes out a loupe and portable diamond tester from her purse then checks the diamond.

“Y-You just *had* that in your purse?! Why?” Alix asks.

Rose shrugs nonchalantly, “I like looking at jewelry.” She puts the diamond tester down, “it’s real! And it’s ten carats! Do you know how many eu—Ooh! There’s a piece of paper! I think XY wrote you a note~”

Alix picks up the folded up piece of paper with XY on it then unfolds it open, “...it’s probably cheesy, but this made me think of your eyes.” She reads aloud.

Rose screams shaking Alix. “He likes her! He likes her!”

“Rose, your sore throat—” The blonde coughs as she continues shaking Alix. Jessica sighs shaking her head. “Oh forget it.”

“Likes me?” Marinette laughs, “come on, Rose. Seriously? We spent like three hours together tops! Two hours when I had to measure him and another hour when he came to pick up his outfit.”

“Don’t forget he came to see the roller derby match last Saturday.” Rose says nodding to herself. “He might even show up again for tonight’s!” Rose continues nodding. “You don’t have to know each other long for romance to blossom—” Alix makes gagging noises behind Rose. The blonde clears her throat then takes out some cough drops from her purse then puts one in her mouth.

“Why’d you make him a scarf?” Juleka asks.

Rose inches closer to Marinette and the blue-haired teen nudges the blonde back, “I didn’t. That is, I didn’t *intentionally* make it for him. I was just working on a scarf. Sometimes when I don’t have commissions I just work on random things to keep my fingers moving. The scarf was pretty much finished. When XY was here, it was kinda cold and his neck was exposed. He kept rubbing at his throat so I finished up the scarf and gave it to him. Singers have to protect their throats, right? Just like how I have to protect my fingers for designing.” Before Rose can squeal again, Jessica puts her hands over the blonde’s mouth.

“Rose, this implies nothing. Marinette was just being thoughtful.”

Rose mumbles behind Jessica’s hands until the brunette moves them, “I know that! My concern is XY thinking it means something! He already looked lovestruck when he came into the room.”

Marinette grimaces, “...did he?” Rose nods enthusiastically. “Oh no. That’s not good.”

“Well, he didn’t try anything when Marinette was working on the outfit.” Alix cracks her knuckles. “Personally made sure of that.”

“What if he asks you out?” Marinette’s grimace deepens. “Oh. Not what I was expecting.” Jessica frowns. “I don’t find him attractive, but he has a decent-sized fanbase. And like Rose said, associating with someone famous can put your designs out there.”

Juleka sighs, “you can say no, Marinette.”

“Yeah, I know. It’s just... I *do* wanna go on a date. My first date. *Not with XY!* I mean, I don’t mind going on a date with XY... just not my first date. I’d rather have my first date with someone I already know. Someone fun.”

Juleka smiles, “yeah, I get that.”

Jessica smiles at Marinette too, “you are not the only one. I sometimes think of my first date too. I guess we *are* at the curious dating age.” Alix smiles though she shrugs.

“What am I talking about dates for? I’ve never even had my first crush!”

Rose gasps, “**never?!!**” Everyone else looks at Rose who puts her hands over her mouth

laughing awkwardly. She slowly lowers her hands. “I’ve had *tons* of crushes before! I’ve tons of crushes now!”

“Honestly, Marinette, you’re not missing much.” Juleka mumbles with a shrug.

“Sounds like you’ve experienced heartbreak alongside having a crush.” Jessica says and Juleka nods. “I know how you feel. Some people are only in your life to teach you a lesson.”

“*Damn*, that’s deep.” Alix says. “and you all know my stance on this topic.” She blows a raspberry. “Let’s move onto a less angsty topic, yeah?”

“Right. Juleka Piper Couffaine, I have finished the alterations to your winter Kitty Section outfit.” Marinette gives the slightly shorter teen a sly smile, “you should no longer have a problem with your bust.” Juleka puts her hands on Marinette’s face smushing it together then stretching it and Marinette laughs through it.

(Rose pointedly looks *away* from Juleka’s chest that is pretty damn close to her eye level.)

□□

XY bought two dozen blueberry macarons before leaving the boulangerie pâtisserie. He’s not surprised his father is sitting in the hotel’s living room rather than his studio. “I still have fifteen minutes of break left.”

“We’re done for the day.” The blond frowns, “good friend of mine came up with this brilliant idea you’ll love!”

““A friend of yours...?””

Chloé round the corner, “ta-da~” XY stares at the blonde, “it is I, Chloé Bourgeois, one of your biggest fans. I used to be your biggest fan, but then Lady Luck arrived.”

“Lady Luck doesn’t make music.”

“So? She’s my first true love. That puts her number one in all the categories.”

XY sighs, “what’s the ‘brilliant’ idea?”

“We’re... well *you’re* hosting a contest! You’ll scour the city for new talent to create a song with! It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity!”

Bob Roth laughs, “see? What did I tell you? Brilliant!” Chloé nods in agreement, “*and* to kick this opportunist contest off, you’ll be making a collaboration with Jagged Stone! That bastard may not be on my label anymore, but he still owes me that damn favor.”

“Ewww. Why would I want to work with Jagged Stone? He’s some geriatric with a leather fetish *way* past his prime. Why can’t I work with Clara Nightingale? She’s amazing! Or Carla McRyden-O’Lyar? Ooh or—”

“No.” Bob Roth shakes his head, “for starters, it’s damn near impossible to *find* Clara Nightingale. With her ‘freespiritedness’ and no manager, she only appears when she wants. She’s like a damn wisp or something! And that country singer girl is the exact opposite, she has bodyguards *for her bodyguards*. Besides, you don’t want any of them. You don’t want girls. We want the girls to come to you.”

“What?”

“Let me put it this way. We want **you** center stage. Expand your fanbase past broke teenage girls with a serious lack of artistic talent making tacky handwritten signs that proclaim their ‘love’ for you, to people who can actually pay for your merchandise. I know the kids are into what the kids are into, so if you and someone around your age works together attention will be divided. *No teenager* fantasizes about wanting to marry Jagged Stone.” He pauses then shudders, “at least, I sincerely hope not.” He shudders again, “what an image.”

“I don’t know about this.”

“But I do. All I want as your père and manager is for your name to be the most screamed throughout Paris!”

“You’re *his*...” Chloé grimaces, “*oh*. Huh.”

Chloé shakes her head when Bob Roth and XY turn to her briefly before looking back at each other. “This’ll make you more famous, XY! **All** the big names do collaborations! I know

what I'm talking about. I've been doing this since before you were born." Bob Roth stands rubbing his hands together, "got some phone calls to make."

XY sighs as his father pats him on the shoulder as he walks to the other room. XY turns to Chloé, "what do you get out of this contest?"

"An opportunity to show Lady Luck why I'm perfect for her. I'm going to have a song made for the contest and when you and my singer work together, Lady Luck will find it *and me* irresistible."

□□

Mon, Nov 30th, 2020

"I just saw the cinquième students boarding the buses on my way in." Alya says entering the classroom.

"That means our class trip is next!" Kim pumps his fist in the air, "I can't wait! It feels like school's been going on forever."

"I've been to Africa before, but I've never been to Kven." Lila says tapping her left cheek, "the weather was positively beautiful. Especially for this time of year, it's warm all year round so they basically don't have winter."

"Pack shorts?"

Lila giggles, "I wouldn't say it's *that* warm, Kim."

"Please *do* tell us of your visit to Africa, Lila." Chloé says with a smile.

"I went there with my maman when she went for work." Lila replies with a smile, turning to Chloé. "As my only parent, she couldn't just leave me in Italy when she traveled. While she was doing her work, I went out exploring. It was a great opportunity to learn about my papa's culture. I didn't get a chance to learn much when he was still alive."

"Hold up." Alya adjusts her glasses, "are you saying you're Pan-African?"

“I’m *what?*”

“Pan-African means you have African roots. You’ve never heard the term?” Lila shakes her head, “I looked up the term for a family tree project I did at my old school last year. I’m Afro-Caribbean since my papa was born in Luxor, which is in Egypt, and maman was born in Martinique; which is where me and all my sisters were also born.” Alya gasps, “*oh!* I wonder how far Luxor is from Kven?”

“Approximately 2,146 miles. Kven is east of the city of Burundi.” Max replies.

Alya nods with a hum, “thanks.”

“So, Lila, you’re part Italian and part African?” Chloé asks.

“Yes. I was born in Italy, as was my maman, and my papa, like I said, was born in Africa.”

“What country?”

“Libya.”

“Wow. I certainly do not envy your maman’s occupation. Must be so *draining* being responsible for your country’s communication efforts with other places around the world, is it?”

“Yes, it is difficult at times, but it is also rewarding.” The two girls smile at each other.

“When did those two become friends?” Beside Adrien, Sabrina facepalms shaking her head.

The loudspeaker crackles on, “*attention students, this is Principal Damocles with an important announcement. The quatrième class trip to Kven has been moved to Dec 14th, therefore the troisième students will be visiting Luxembourg next week.*” The entire classroom gapes up at the intercom. “*I repeat, troisième students will be visiting Luxembourg next week as the quatrième students trip to Kven has been moved to Dec. 14th. Then, we will break for the holidays on Dec 22nd.*”

“Is he serious!? This had better be the best damn school trip ever!” Kim grouses.

Professeur Bustier walks into the classroom, “good morning, everyone.” The class, per the norm, mutter their less than enthusiastic greeting to the redhead as they take their assigned seats. “I know we’re all a little upset about the trip but let’s not lose sight of what’s in front of us.”

□□

Professeur Mendeleiev dismisses her class and students exit the room. Marinette packs her notebooks into her schoolbag when her sketchbook slides off the pile and onto the floor without her noticing. As she gets up, Kagami spots the notebook on the floor and picks it up then turns it over. The cover of the book is light pink someone’s very neat handwriting proclaiming: *This Sketchbook Contains All The Kickass Design Ideas of Marinette L Dupain-Cheng, Vol 7.*

“Huh? Wait a—*oh no!*” Marinette rifles through her backpack, “oh no, no, no! My—” She turns to the left and sees Kagami holding her sketchbook, “my sketchbook!”

“Here. It must’ve fallen off your desk. I found it on the floor and was seeing who it belonged to. Your handwriting is very nice.”

“Alix wrote that.”

Kagami hums. “I didn’t expect her to have such impeccable handwriting.”

“Right?” Marinette giggles. “She likes to tell people I wrote the cover.” Kagami hands her the sketchbook, “thanks.”

“My pleasure. You have six other sketchbooks?”

“Six other *filled* sketchbooks. They’re all fortified in my bedroom on smudgeproof paper in a binder that doesn’t press the pages down or smear anything.”

“You’ve put a lot of thought into this.”

Marinette makes sure everything is secure in her bag before closing it and putting her backpack on, “yup! Designing is my passion. Plus, I’m super clumsy so I need to make sure

my sketches are safe, uh, from ...me.” They exit the classroom together, “what about you? What’s your passion?”

Kagami’s eyebrows furrow. “I... don’t believe I have one.”

“Don’t look so bummed out. You’ll find it.” They walk into their literature classroom then look at the tiny unfamiliar white-haired woman writing on the chalkboard. “Who are you?”

The woman turns around with a smile, “I’m Professeur Marianne Lenoir. Your old literature professeur has fallen ill and I’m filling in.”

Kagami gets a chill and steers Marinette along. “Thank you.”

“What’s up?” Marinette whispers.

“There is something unsettling about that woman.” Kagami whispers back.

“Yeah? Hm. Not like our old professeur was anything to write home about. And hey, at least we don’t have Bustier.”

“That’s true. Still...” Kagami takes the seat to Marinette’s left watching their professeur rub at her septum ring then continue to write on the chalkboard. “It’s best to be cautious rather than careless.” Marinette nods in agreement. Sounds like something Lady Luck would tell Karma. While other students enter the classroom, Marinette keeps an eye on their new professeur writing on the chalkboard.

Mireille enters the classroom with a groan, “did you hear our class trip got delayed a whole week!?” She sighs heavily taking her seat, “a whole week! This had better be the best damn class trip ever!”

Félix sighs right alongside the black-haired teen as he takes his seat, “we should’ve expected as much. Kven is much farther away than the other trip locations. Personally, I wouldn’t be surprised if our trip was canceled entirely.”

“Before you guys all have a meltdown, the trip *had* to be postponed.” Everyone turns to the black-haired teen with her hair styled in a pair of high afro puffs seated behind Mireille, “we’re going to Kven for ‘celebration week,’ right? That’s basically Achu’s Pre-New Years’ week-long holiday, where their crowned royalty is sworn in to welcome the new year.”

“That’s right!” Mireille gasps turning around, “Katherine, *you were born in Kven!*’ Most of the class inch closer toward the girl from their desks. “Do you know what celebration week is about?”

“I’ve never been inside the kingdom of Achu, so I’ve never witnessed the celebration first-hand before, but I’ve heard stories, and of course, I’ve seen pictures online. All we do for the entire week is embrace and celebrate Kven’s culture to its fullest!” The crowd murmurs excitedly.

“Hold on... if the crowned whatever gender-neutral royal term individual is getting sworn in for the new year, what are they before the celebration?” Jessica asks. Out the corner of her eye, she sees Ali squirming in his seat.

“From what I was told, they’re still royalty but they don’t have royal standings. Like they can’t get married or buy land legally or anything.”

“The principal is hardly astute when it comes to non-French cultures. The only possible way I see him putting in any thought into this trip is that this about to be sworn in royalty is going to join our school once the trip is over.” Fran says.

“That makes sense...” Félix murmurs. “If he makes it seem as though he cares, he can make the school seem like it’s worth attending.”

Ali flinches then turns around staring at Fei wide eyed, “you’re awfully jumpy...” He smiles nervously, “you’re from Kven, right? You don’t look all that excited to return.” She whispers. “Not that I’m one to talk. I’d never willingly go back to Shanghai.” She shakes her head, “anyway, can you give this card to Marinette, please?” Ali takes the pink handkerchief Fei hands him. “Thanks.”

“I *am* excited to return home, Fei. In fact, I can barely contain my excitement.” Then he turns around and taps Marinette on the back. “Fei wanted me to give this to you.”

“Oh, is this the card? Thanks, Ali. Thanks, Fei.” Marinette hums to herself accepting the handkerchief and unwrapping it. She giggles to herself then turns to Kagami showing her the card.

“Oh no!” Mireille stands. “I’m all for celebrating a royal holiday in another continent, but we’ll have a week out of Paris which means we’ll be out of touch with the luckyblog and since Alya and Max are attending the trip we really won’t be getting any new content!”

“I would much rather bask in a new culture for a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity than refresh the luckyblog website repeatedly for a week.” Jessica says with a shrug. “But perhaps that’s just me?”

Mireille groans sitting back down, “yeah... yeah, you’re right. I’ve gotten so used to seeing Lady Luck and Karma the past two months it feels like they’ve been around longer.”

The professeur taps her chalk against the board, “alright everyone, may I have your attention, please? I am your new professeur. Professeur Marianne Lenoir.”

□□

Nora leans against the doorway of Alya’s bedroom watching her little sister lay an empty open suitcase down on the floor then stand up and walk toward her dresser, “sneaking out?”

“Nah. Got our class trip in two weeks. Not gonna pack clothes yet because they’ll get rampled, but I will pack toiletries and other necessities.”

“Good thinking, but do you need that big of a suitcase for a class trip?”

“Yeah. This one is an entire week. Well, I think it’s eight days but... *you know*.”

“What the hell kind of class trip lasts a week? Clearly, we didn’t go to the best schools.”

Alya laughs, “yeah. Uh, where are we going again? Right! It’s to the kingdom of Achu in Kven.”

“Are you for real? Who the hell shelled out for your whole grade to not only go to an entirely different continent but to a fucking *kingdom*? I need in on this trip. Think I can chaperone? I’m eighteen. Totally chaperone-able, right?”

“You *do* have a passport...” Alya begins with a shrug, “and while I don’t know the logistics involved, I *do know* the principal has no backbone. As an amateur martial artist, you can use that to your advantage.”

“There you go using that big brain of yours.” Nora walks into the room and bear hugs Alya,

“so proud of you!” Alya laughs, “and I’m glad to see you smiling again.”

She lets go of Alya who looks up at her smiling. “I can’t believe school’s actually been decent. Sure there is the common annoyance... and the akumas but the people are really nice. You know if you were able to come on the trip, my friends would be excited. They’re always asking about you.”

“Oh no. I am not getting in trouble for messing with cute underaged girls.”

Alya sighs, “you know damn well that wasn’t what I meant.”

“Hey, is it *my fault* you have cute friends?” Alya shakes her head with another sigh. “So... speaking of cute friends, is there one you have a crush on?”

“W-Wha—?!”

“There is! Which one? *Please* tell me it’s the tiny one with the bob and freckles?”

“Uh. No. Huh. Come to think of it, I *did* believe I was getting a crush on Marinette last month when I first started roller derby? But... I don’t feel like I did a month ago. I guess it’s because I got to know her a bit better? Or maybe it’s what Kagami told that creepy ice cream dude before he became an akuma. I’m only interested in hanging out with my friends and just having fun.”

Nora cracks her knuckles, “I’m gonna kick that ice cream guy’s ass. And every other akuma that comes near you.”

“I appreciate the extra layer of protection, Nora, but don’t go putting yourself in danger trying to save me from that same danger.”

“*Fine.*” Nora grumbles, “hey, what about the heroes? Mlle. Lucky and Kitty Chaos? No crush on either of them?”

“Hm. Never really thought of either of them like that. I guess if I had any sort of love for them it would be sisterly. I wanna help protect them and help them protect Paris—*without* putting myself unnecessarily in the way.”

“Good. I mean it when I say I’ll kick an akuma’s ass to protect you. The same goes for Ella and Etta too. I’m the oldest. It’s my duty and privilege to protect my little sisters. I’ll take you to school tomorrow and talk to your spineless principal about coming on your trip.”

□□

Tues, Dec 1st, 2020

“This is Bob Roth and boy oh boy, do I have an opportunity for all you musicians in the city! This Saturday, XY and Jagged Stone will be performing their newest duet at Le Grand Paris! It’s only natural they’d want their biggest fans front and center so get your tickets now! And that’s not all, all this week I’m hosting a contest to give you musicians an opportunity of a lifetime to sing your own duet with XY at my recording studio!”

Rose pauses the video then beams at Jessica who smiles awkwardly at the beaming blonde, “I-I see it. We don’t have very long to come up with a new song, and after what happened over the weekend, I’m not too certain I want Luka involved.”

Rose lowers her phone, “what do you mean?”

“Remember how we told you, before you started ‘gushing’ about XY having a ‘thing’ for Marinette, that Luka was working on a song with *Chloé* for Lady Luck?”

Rose sighs staring at her phone sadly, “oh yeah.” She almost immediately perks up, “*but* we don’t need Luka to come up with a song! In fact, we don’t even need a new song! We can just pick one of the songs we already made and enter that. We need to talk to Juleka.”

Jessica nods. “Then let’s talk to her.”

Walking down the hall, Lila gasps as she sees Juleka chuckling as she stands by Nathaniel’s locker while the redhead struggles to reach something in his locker. The brunette grabs Aurore as she passes by, “do you think Juleka and Nathaniel are a thing?” Aurore laughs so hard, people in the hallway stop and stare at her concerned. “Why are you laughing!? They are *always* together! He shows up at roller derby. He regularly sleeps over at her houseboat boathouse... place! Every time there is a Kitty Section practice, he’s there. I’m getting serious ‘going out’ vibes from them.”

Eventually, after a minute or two Aurore’s raucous laughter simmers to a chuckle. “Oh man,

have you never had friends before?” Then the blonde shakes her head as she walks off. Lila frowns looking around the hallway. Someone must know!

“Juleka!” Rose screams running down the hall toward the purple-haired teen with Jessica in tow. “Look, look, look!” Lila cautiously wanders over to her classmates as Juleka stares at some video on Rose’s phone.

Juleka hands Rose her phone back when the video ends, “you want to enter that contest? It seems kinda sketchy.”

“Of course it does, but it’s guaranteed fame! If the contest is legit and we win, Kitty Section will be a household name! If the contest is a ruse, and Bob Roth screws us we’ll get support from the city and that’ll make us a household name!”

“That’s pretty devious.” Juleka says with a hum, “I’m convinced. Let’s give it a shot.”

Rose pumps her fist in the air then pauses. “What about Luka?”

“What happened to Luka?” Lila asks. The three girls turn to her; hell, even Nathaniel briefly glances in her direction, “sorry, I just wanted to see the video and I wandered over. Did something happen to Luka?”

“Yeah.” Juleka replies. Lila stares at her then Rose, then Jessica who both frown. Well, she’s obviously not gonna get the answer from any of them. Time to change the subject.

“Uh... Luka or no Luka, Kitty Section is amazing, so I know you guys will do well in the contest. I used to play the castanets back home.”

“Oh! Ivan told me you helped inspire a song for a famous singer! I don’t remember what the singer’s name was though.”

“R-Right. I’m not the type to go... bragging about that. I was just trying to help him with his song. So glad it turned out so well.”

Rose nods in agreement, “me too!”

“We should head to class. Practice at lunch?” Jessica asks. Juleka and Rose nod. Jessica nods

at them then walks off. Nathaniel closes his locker then he, Rose, and Juleka start walking.

“Juleka, may I speak with you for a moment? Alone?” Rose and Nathaniel both pause then look over their shoulder at Juleka. She shrugs then gives Rose and Nathaniel a thumbs up. They nod reluctantly before leaving. “May I ask you a personal question?”

“Go ahead. I don’t have anything to hide.”

“You spend an awful amount of time with Nathaniel...” Lila rubs the back of her neck, “and I just wanted to...? I wanted to know if you two were dating?”

“Are you into Nathaniel?”

Lila does a double-take, “what? No!”

“Are you into me?”

“...No?” Lila scratches her head. How did she lose control of this conversation?

Juleka hums, “figured I’d ask. Anyway, me and Nathaniel aren’t dating. We became best friends with him coming to see Alix during roller derby and making the Kitty Section outfits. And last month we ended up meeting at this newly opened synagogue with our families, and ever since we started going together.”

“Oh, I see. Sorry for... assuming, but you two are cute together.” Lila taps her chin, “speaking of cute? Is your brother dating anyone?”

“Pretty sure the only person Luka is presently interested in is Karma, but realistically speaking that relationship won’t ever come to fruition, so take a shot if you’re interested.”

Lila blinks at her, “u-uh...” She *definitely* lost control of this conversation, “I will? Thanks for the support?”

□□

Markov startles as Chloé slams her hands on the desk, “hey there, uh, you.” The robot

narrows his eyes, “I’m *really* enjoying the luckyblog, except for that ridiculous page comprised of ‘LucKarma’ pics. Who even came up with that name? I mean, they aren’t even together like that!” The blonde shakes her head, “never mind. Not important. Your brain has like information on *everything*, right? I need a teensy favor and if you do me this teensy favor, I’ll get you ...whatever it is robots need to do... whatever they do. Sounds like a great deal, am I right?”

“Is this information you require, *legal*, Chloé Bourgeois?”

“Of course it’s legal! Of all the utterly ridiculous questions...! Doing a crime will wreck my chances with Lady Luck! And I won’t allow anything to get between us! What I need are the best superpowers in existence! I’m going to be a superhero! That’ll definitely up my already wonderful chances of being with Lady Luck! I don’t have magic like Lady Luck but I have money so I can just *buy* superpowers! Then get them crammed into a superhero supersuit! I’m thinking of red with stars or hearts instead of polkadots. Then Lady Luck will know we’re fated. I’m gonna call myself Charm Red! Or Lucky Red. I can worry about the name after the superpowers.”

“Generally speaking, superpowers are not containable within the confines of chiffon and lycra fabric.”

“*That’s* what the suits are made of? I gotta write this down.”

“Furthermore, although it is possible to make yourself more ‘durable’ with sturdier material; it is, however, impossible to protect yourself from magic unless you are also imbued with magic.”

“Im... *what*? What the hell are you saying?”

“I am saying that no supersuit will protect you against an akuma’s magic. I was merely coded for magical detection, I do not possess magical abilities nor do I know where to find them.”

“I watch cartoons, I know science and magic are best friends. You can science me some superpowers. If I can’t be protected by magic, protect me with science.”

“Curious. I would like to see if this is possible. Alright.” Markov’s eyes shine, “I will assist you, Chloé Bourgeois.”

“Just call me Chloé. And thanks. Now, what do you want for your help?”

““Want?” I have no wants. No, that is incorrect. What I want is memory, more memory. I want to be able to remember every single moment I’ve shared with Max since my creation.”

“You forgot?”

“My memory is stored in various memory units. I wish to have one large memory unit so that I can access all my memories with Max whenever I choose.”

“I’m surprised you don’t want to be human or something.”

“Why would I wish to be human? I cannot help Max if I were human. No. Furthermore, this is how Max created me and this is how I will remain.”

“That’s both weird and sweet. I’ll get you the memory... whatever. Now in addition to whatever powers you can whip up, I wanna be able to arrive on the scene of an akuma the same time Lady Luck does, so I’ll probably need to be hooked up to the luckyblog’s akuma alert thing. I want some kind of anti-cat thing to keep Lady Luck’s lackey away from me, and most of all, I want to be able to destroy or contain an akuma without destroying the city... or killing myself.”

“I can tell you now that neither I nor anyone will be able to assist you with the last thing. I do not know how Lady Luck contains and purifies the akumas. There are theories, but the list is incomplete.”

“Fine. Then make something that’ll not make me attract an akuma. Like bug spray or something.”

Markov nods, “I will attempt to. But first I will need the memory in order to compile all of the data.” Chloé nods, “one petabyte should suffice.”

“Petabyte? I’ll get you two! Better safe than sorry. No price is too much for Lady Luck!” Chloé takes her phone out of her pocket then hands it to Markov, “order the petabytes. It’s time Lady Luck got some *real* superhero help.”

□□

“Kitty Section lunch practice~” Rose shouts into the microphone.

Jessica rubs the back of her neck. "I'm glad Professeur Montalaging is letting us use the art club room for practice, but if Rose keeps shouting we're gonna get discovered before we can work on any songs."

"Countdown!"

Alix takes the microphone from Rose, "we don't need to test out the song yet, considering we haven't written anything." The blonde sheepishly nods moving away from the microphone.

"I get why you're doing this... but why am I here?" Nathaniel asks.

"Because we need your creativity." Alix hisses.

Marinette points to herself, "and I'm assuming I'm needed for the same reason?" Alix nods.

"What about me?" Alya asks pointing to herself.

"We need all of your creativity!" Alix yells. "All! Of! You!" She points at Fei, Kagami, Fran, Max, and Ondine before they can open their mouths. "I don't know the first thing about songwriting. I don't even know how I know I can play the sax!"

"I *have* found that odd..." Nathaniel mutters.

"Wait! Where is that blond boy? Isn't he part of the band too? The blank-faced bland looking one? With his expressionless pictures all over the city?"

Alix snickers. "*Damn*, Fei. I *gotta* use that."

"Bland?" Ondine blushes slightly, "I think Adrien is kinda cute."

"You also believe *Kim* is cute, meaning we can't truly trust your taste." Alix points out.

"Kim *is* very cute, right Max?"

Max does a double-take, "uh...? I suppose?" He scratches his head in confusion. How odd to

ask him of all people.

“I say this with extreme biased. Kim is way better looking than blank-face bland boy.” Fei high-fives Marinette as she nods.

“Who are we talking about?” Kagami whispers to Frankie who shakes their head with a shrug.

“Adrien’s not here because we didn’t invite him. He’s not out of the band,” Ivan explains, hurriedly holding up his hands, “but if Adrien shows up we know Chloé will too and I’ve had enough of Chloé today, and it’s just lunch. Plus, I’m pretty sure she hacked Markov.”

Max chortles then clears his throat, “sorry, the mere *idea* of Chloé having the technical prowess to hack Markov is both hilarious and terrifying. Markov told me he is working on a top-secret project with Chloé. Naturally, he told me what this project is but asked me not to tell the rest of you.”

“We respect Markov’s wishes but tell him this is extremely sketchy.” Alix mutters.

“I will relay the message to him.”

“What is Chloé planning? First Luka and now—” Jessica stops abruptly then gasps, “*you don’t think she’s serious about being a superhero do you!?*”

“Wait, *what?*” Fei puts her hands on Jessica’s shoulders, “speak slower, New York, we can’t understand you.”

“Who cares about what *she* face?” Alix waves her hand dismissively, “I’m not letting her ruin my lunch. Let’s think of some songs!”

“Why not channel your current anger into music?” Kagami suggests.

“And that is why *she’s* the favorite.” Fei says nodding to herself, then draping herself over Kagami.

“I’m ready to get angry! B-But not akuma angry.” Rose gasps, “but this could be a good way

to prevent an akuma, right? We let our anger out so we don't let Mme. Mite control us with it!"

"That's good but it's not just anger she manipulates." Juleka says with a frown, "there's hurt, sadness..." She wraps her arms around her body, "the cold..." Marinette stands up then walks over to Juleka hugging her, pretty soon everyone else gets up and hugs Juleka. Juleka lets out a content sigh as she murmurs her thanks.

□□

Wed, Dec 2nd, 2020

When Lila enters the changing area, she looks around and sees the entire team is already there occupied with one another. No one even noticed her walking in! *Well*, she'll just have to change that. Won't she? The brunette grips her bag tight as she looks around the room, she approaches the first bench she sees with a bit of space left then drops her bag down on it. Sabrina must've been vying for the same spot because she glares then walks to the bench across from her, and stands by it with her arms folded over her chest. "Hello everyone~" She greets with a smile. Sabrina's eyes narrow.

The seven girls squeezing together on the two benches across from each other all look up at her as they return her greeting (with far less enthusiasm than she put out).

Thankfully, and she would never say this out loud, Alix is so small that Lila is able to take a seat on the bench after she drops her bag on the floor in front of her. "Sorry, I'm so late. I had trouble finding my rollerskates... so I had to settle on my rollerblades." She takes her rollerblades out of her bag. "Can't believe this is our last match of the year." She sighs heavily, "but I am looking forward to the holiday. Anyone have plans for Christmas break?"

Something in the air *shifts* when Fei looks at her from the other bench, "you mean Winter Break." It's not even a question.

"Yeah..." Lila gives a one-shoulder shrug, doing whatever she can to not make eye contact, "sure, that. Same thing, right?" When she looks up briefly, she sees Sabrina snicker and Fei's eyes narrow. Damn, she definitely goofed up.

"It is not 'the same thing' and to smugly..." She stops herself then takes a deep breath, "due to the fact that Christmas is not as popular as some cultures like to perpetuate, the last vacation of the school year was unanimously worldwide renamed to 'Winter Break' this year."

“O-Oh... I had no idea. I’m sorry, Fei. The last thing I wanted to do was upset or offend anyone.” Fei’s eyes remain narrowed as she laces up her rollerskates while still looking at Lila. And there’s nothing Lila can do because they are right in front of each other. “S-So... any plans for *Winter Break*?”

Marinette stretches, Alix expertly ducks to avoid getting hit, “my only winter break plans are getting better acquainted with my bedsheets. I can already see the boulangerie pâtisserie being swarmed with last-minute shoppers thinking *pâtisseries* can save failing relationships...” She grumbles.

Alix chuckles patting Marinette’s back when she slumps forward to tie her rollerskates, “hey, at least you got me able to help from the start this time.” Marinette sighs with a nod.

“Food can mend a relationship just as easily as it can tear one,” Alya says sagely. “My ma’s a chef and any problems she has with people, she settles with food.” As the others murmur Alya’s words to one another, Alya nudges Juleka beside her. “Hey, will you be able to go on the class trip?” She whispers. Lila stills attempting to hear their conversation better, “you’ll be missing half of Hanukkah.”

Lila sees the tall purple-haired teen give Alya a small, unexpected smile. “Yeah, I can go.” She whispers back. “Already went through the details with Captain. Just need to figure out the time zone differences.”

“I’m glad. Trip wouldn’t be the same without you.” Juleka blushes slightly as she smiles.

“I can’t wait for the trip.” Lila says aloud. “Then we go back to school for *one day* just to go on ...break.” She sighs loudly, “I was *hoping* to go back to Italy, but I don’t think we can afford and I also don’t think mamma will get the time off.”

“The mall just opened an Italian pâtisserie shop. You can get your taste of home from there.” Sabrina says with a shrug.

Lila huffs. “It’s hardly the same thing.” Sabrina merely shrugs again.

Lila spots Alya shoving her phone into her bag before she sits up. “Hey, Marinette?” Marinette turns, Alix again expertly moves out the way. “Do you think your family would want a few extra hands at the boulangerie pâtisserie for winter break? Ma works at Le Grand Paris every day except Christmas and New Year’s Eve. We *usually* go with her to work and help out but...” Alya grimaces then shakes her head, “anyway, my family keeps harassing me

for more of the boulangerie pâtisserie's sweets, the fried dumplings and macarons most of all. They asked me to help so they can earn their snacks."

Marinette chuckles, "sure. We could always use some extra hands and help with some of the leftovers."

"Marinette, is the boulangerie pâtisserie *open* on Christmas?"

Lila holds her breath when she sees Fei move. "Yeah. Regular shop hours. Heavy customer traffic is from opening time until about 3:30pm, then the stragglers show up two at a time until closing."

"I don't even know why it's always two at a time." Alix says shaking her head, "complete strangers that just meet when they both try opening the door at the same time. It's like a bad TV special, *every time*."

"...D-Do customers wish your family a 'Merry Christmas?'"

"Yeah. A few correct themselves," Marinette sighs, "though most don't bother. Could be because they're rushing to get home."

"Or they could be inconsiderate assholes." Alya finishes with a shrug.

Marinette laughs, "that too."

"May I offer my assistance as well, Marinette?" Fei asks. Marinette nods with a smile.

"Can my family help out too? Captain won't know what to do with the kitchen, but she can definitely tame a rowdy crowd."

"I-I—" Marinette stammers, "y-you'd all just help out at the boulangerie pâtisserie?"

With a nod, Alya gives Marinette a thumbs up, "you and Alix taught us how to skate. But more than that you two are amazing friends I'd help out anytime."

"You made Kitty Section's outfits from scratch. You're an invaluable friend, Marinette."

Juleka adds.

“We’ll always have your back.” Fei finishes.

Marinette tears up then everyone minus Lila gets up and hugs Marinette and happy tears fall freely from her eyes.

“What’s—” Camilla freezes then gasps, “M-Marinette?! Why are you crying?”

“These are happy tears. I just realized I have the greatest friends in the world.”

Camilla sighs in relief, “that’s good. Although now you’re gonna make me cry.” She fans her eyes, “g-go do laps, all of you.” Everyone breaks away from Marinette with a groan.

“I’m gonna clean my face up.” Marinette skates toward the bathroom while everyone else gets on the rink.

Plagg floats out of the purse and onto Marinette’s shoulder as she dabs the corners of her eyes with a wet paper towel, “you’ve got yourself an impressive clowder.”

“A what?”

“A clowder. You know,” The kwami gestures vaguely, “a group of kits.” Marinette nods slowly. “They’re fiercely loyal. I like that. And I have just the kit you should ask out for your first date!”

Marinette’s hand slips and she headbutts the bathroom mirror. Plagg winces as she moves back and rubs her reddening forehead. “Plagg! You can’t just say shit like that suddenly!”

“Yeah, that was my fault. But Kit...” Plagg floats closer to Marinette’s face, “you *gotta* do it before Letter Guy asks you out.”

Marinette looks at her reflection in the mirror then bites her lip, “...you think—”

“Don’t you dare start, Marinette Lei Dupain-Cheng! **Anyone** would be thrilled to have you on a date! You don’t believe me? Do I need to call Lady Luck? Or should I get Mini Bunny?”

Marinette pauses then shakes her head. “Good. My pick is Freckles. She’s *adorable*. Oh, but so is the Blogger Girl. Hm. And the Midnight Aura one. You got quite a few choices in the clowder.” Plagg shakes his head, “Freckles first. She has to be the first date.”

“Freckles?” Plagg gestures to the middle of his face. “Wait! *You mean Kagami!?*” Marinette straightens up immediately, “are you out of your mind?” She hisses. “K-Kagami? I can’t ask out Kagami!”

“Why not? You two are friends, right?”

Marinette stammers, “I-I don’t know! We’ve never hung out together, like... just together. We just have some of the same friends. As much as I’d like to, I wouldn’t consider her a friend... yet.”

“Then take her on a friend date.”

“Why are you so insistent on it being Kagami?”

“I-Insistent? I’m not ...insistent! I just want you to do it before your— *we’re*—bored out of our minds with Letter Guy probably taking you to an exhibit with other letters he has on chains.” Marinette snickers. “You wanna be friends with her? Make the first move!” Marinette nods at her reflection then at Plagg.

“I’m gonna do it! I’m... gonna ask Kagami out.” She whispers the last part walking out of the bathroom. Plagg gives her an encouraging pat from inside the purse.

“Did you all check out the luckyblog’s latest page? Don’t Lady Luck and Karma make *the best couple?*” Lila asks as she skates. “I wish I had something like that with someone.”

Fei mutters something but Rose elbows her with a frown. “Don’t worry, Lila, you’ll find someone. As much as I agree Lady Luck and Karma are the best couple ever... they’re not a couple. I mean, they’re not a couple romantically.”

“Maybe not yet but it’s only a matter of time. The way they look at each other? They’re fated to be together.”

(Fortunately, no one can see Kagami massaging her temples with her skating so far behind everyone else.)

“What are you basing this off of?” Alix asks. “A pair of badasses can’t do their thing without people ‘shipping’ them together like they don’t have feelings of their own?”

“I’m basing this off of seeing Lady Luck and Karma together.”

“Exactly. Seeing. Them. Together. No doubt out of context. You don’t know either of them and it sounds like the only feelings you care about are yours.”

“W-What? No! That’s not—!” Lila shakes her head, “of course, I care about Lady Luck and Karma! They’re amazing! And I care about their feelings too!”

“Whatever. I don’t wanna talk about this anymore.” Alix grumbles skating off. Sabrina glares at her too before skating after Alix.

Fei skates to a stop in front of Lila causing the brunette to stop. Lila sees everyone else skating around them, “I find your noisiness to be as offensive as your ignorance.” Lila gasps, “if you know what’s good for you, you’ll remove yourself from *my* team.”

“‘*Your* team?’ *I* was part of this team before you were!”

“And yet, I have bonded with these girls more than you have or will.”

Lila scowls. “Y-You can’t threaten me!”

“Watch me. This is your only warning.”

“You don’t scare me.” When Fei smiles at her, Lila feels the need to immediately retract that statement. Fei wordlessly skates away and Lila shivers.

Sabrina skates beside Alix, “are you okay?” Alix sighs heavily. “sorry. Not the best question to ask. A-And you probably don’t want to hear that I actually approve of and am a member all for ‘Team Karmady.’”

Alix glares at her. “You... *wait!* ‘Karmady?’ I thought it was ‘LucKarma?’” Rose skates on Sabrina’s other side.

“Why should Lady Luck’s name be first?”

“That’s just the way it is! You know I like Karma more—”

“K comes before L in the alphabet!”

“Lady Luck was introduced first!”

“They literally arrived at the same time!”

“Will you two shut up!?” They both stop then stare at Alix. “If **anyone** says a peep about any sort of relationship regarding Karma and Lady Luck, they’re doing laps first practice of the new year backwards!” She grits her teeth then skates off.

“What did you two do to Alix?!” Rose and Sabrina scream and hold onto each other when they turn to the blue-haired teen who appears out of nowhere.

“I-I was just trying to make a joke when Rose rudely butted in, talking about how ‘LucKarma’ is a better couple name for Karma and Lady Luck than ‘Karmady.’ What do you think, Marinette?”

Marinette gives them both a blank stare then skates past them. “I’m guessing she’s not a fan?” Rose guesses. Sabrina shakes her head.

Before Marinette can reach Alix, she sees the pink-haired teen chuckling against the railing with Juleka and Kagami then Marinette sighs in relief and makes her way over. “I was going to check in on you but you seem to be okay.”

Alix smiles, “yeah, you can thank these two for that.” Her smile turns into a frown, “every time this damn concept comes up I get so damn angry. I mean, it’s no one’s fault that I don’t understand it but when I don’t understand things I get mad. Makes me feel like I’m missing something. And there’s no way for me to understand the problem, which makes me even madder.” Marinette hugs her.

“I am uncertain where I stand with this whole ‘relationship’ concept. However, I am over the constant mentioning of it. I’ve truly never given it any thought. Then again, I am considered... slow when it comes to social interaction.”

Marinette abruptly releases Alix, who would've fallen on her face had Juleka not grabbed her, "what? Who told you that?!"

Kagami ticks off with her fingers, "my grandma, various instructeurs at my old schools, some doctors, peer reviews—"

"Every single person who's told you that is full of shit! Everyone's pace is their own! There's no competition! Who the hell are they to judge?" Kagami blinks at her and Marinette pauses then rubs the back of her neck with a nervous laugh, "*sorry*. That... well, I've been called slow too and my parents basically said something similar."

"Only, Marinette was considered slow because of her clumsiness."

"*Alix!*"

Alix laughs then quickly hugs Marinette before skating off. All Marinette's pseudo anger instantly deflates. Juleka laughs then pushes herself off the railing to join Alix. Meanwhile, Kagami is subtly attempting to leave the rink but Marinette *somehow* (damn cat kwami) hears her and turns around. Kagami stares at her wide-eyed then she points toward the snackbar, "I need to relieve myself in the restroom."

Marinette skates over to her, "bathroom's that way." She points in the opposite direction. Kagami turns then swears under her breath in Japanese. "Now that I'm thinking about it, I hardly see you on the rink during practice and you never wanna join in on a match."

Kagami frowns, "I am not improving. I see no reason to continue being this chain's weak link. I will neither steal the spot of one more deserving nor will I continue to slow you all down and waste your time in fruitless attempts to teach me. I am quitting the team once the match is over. I hope you find a more suitable replacement."

Marinette looks gobsmacked and Plagg has to nudge her in order to get her to move, "hold on! You're quitting? Y-You wanna quit the team? Aren't you having fun?"

Kagami pauses, "fun? What does fun have to do with anything?"

"Fun is the entire purpose! This whole organization isn't about winning or losing! It's about building lifelong friendships. Giving one another confidence and support."

“I am doing none of those things either. Why would it matter if I left?”

“Because you’re irreplaceable! You’re the only Kagami Tsurugi on the team and I’m fortunate enough to be acquainted with you. You... huh.” Marinette shakes her head. This feels familiar, “you need to have more confidence.”

“Confidence is something I do not lack. What I lack is skill. The truth of the matter is, I am not a good fit for this sport. I merely joined out of curiosity, and because a friend needed a favor. Now that my curiosity is sated, and there are enough participants in this group, I believe it would be for the best if I left.”

“It won’t be for the best! You *are* getting better. Please, believe me. Our entire team dynamic will... implode without your morale!” Kagami looks taken aback, “you *say* you don’t give us support but you do. Ask anyone on the team.”

“Fine. Let’s do that.”

“Fine.” Marinette grabs Kagami’s hand then they skate over to the team. “Question: What does Kagami contribute to blackberry clobber?”

“Is that a serious question? Just being in her beautiful presence boosts morale.” Fei says with a nod.

“In addition to that,” Sabrina says briefly eyeing Fei strangely, “she has a keen eye for detail.” She adjusts her glasses looking back at the group. “She pointed out my blackberry headband was actually a cherry painted blue! She also helped me get my money back.”

“She’s someone to confide in.” Juleka mumbles.

“She’s fun to hang around.” Alya replies.

Aurore nods, “yeah, Kagami’s amazing. She got me to stop biting my nails.”

“Kagami’s a badass hardworker. She’s... what was that word?” Alix pauses, “sauce...? ...Stalwart! Yeah. She’s very stalwart.”

Rose tilts her head to the left. “What does that mean?”

“It means dependable,” Lila replies. “Which I happen to agree with.”

“Kagami is very kind.” Rose pauses, “that reminds me, I have to apologize to you, Kagami.” Everyone turns to Rose perplexed, “at first I thought you were too cool to approach. You were expressionless and just... well, you just looked like you wanted to be left alone. Like those ultra-cool characters in the cartoons you swoon about when they walk by but would never, *ever* talk to! I was a little scared of introducing myself to you until I heard Alya and Alix talk about how great you are. So, I apologize for judging you before getting to know you. Because I’m glad I’m getting the chance to know you.”

“Wait. You’re saying Kagami looked too cool to approach?” Rose nods at Lila. She flinches when everyone else stares at her. “I... I didn’t think that was a thing?” She clears her throat.

Marinette turns to Kagami who frowns, “see? Irreplaceable.”

“‘Replace?’ Kagami’s not thinking of *leaving*, is she?” Aurore screams. The others gasp then turn to Kagami wide eyed, deathly silent.

“That is not the reaction I expected.” They all talk over one another attempting to talk Kagami out of leaving. “I will not leave if it makes you all hysterical!” They all abruptly stop talking. “I had no idea I left any impact.”

“Are you kidding? I only started enjoying school once you transferred.” Fei says seriously.

“I am uncertain what to say.”

“Kagami needs a hug now~” Alix sing-songs then everyone group hugs Kagami.

“If...” Kagami takes a deep breath when everyone separates from her, “if it is alright, I would like to participate in today’s match.”

“Fucking A!” Alix grins. “We’ll clobber ‘em!”

Marinette didn’t even notice she was still holding Kagami’s hand until the other girl pulled

her arm to get her attention, “thank you, Marinette.” Marinette’s eyes widen when she turns around. “It turns out I did not have as much confidence in myself as I originally thought.” Kagami smiles at her and Marinette feels her entire body heat up. Huh. This has never happened before. “Is there any way I may repay you for your kindness?”

“Wha—?” Plagg nudges her and she nudges the kwami right back, “we’re... okay, so I don’t know if we were friends before we spoke but we’re becoming friends. And in my experience, friends don’t need to repay each other for helping cheer each other up. I was honored to help you see you’re amazing.”

Kagami shakes her head, “you’re the amazing one.” Marinette’s cheeks pink slightly, “you might be the most selfless, kind-hearted person I’ve ever had the pleasure and privilege of meeting. I am humbled to be acquainted with you and I look forward to our blossoming friendship.” Marinette’s cheeks redden and she gulps. “Oh! I know how I can repay your kindness. May I also assist with your family’s boulangerie pâtisserie on the 25th?”

“We’d love to have you but don’t think you *have* to lend a hand or anything because of today.”

“Very well. I wish to help by repaying your kindness forward.”

“I, uh, I think you’re supposed to pay it forward by being kind to someone else.”

“...Then I will be kind to your parents when I assist them.”

“Huh. Alright. Damn, you got me.” Kagami smiles at her.

□□

Thurs, Dec 3rd, 2020

“This is principal Damocles with an announcement.” The class groans. “Quatrième students, please make sure your passports are up to date by next Friday or you will be unable to attend the class trip. I repeat, quatrième students? Please make sure your passports are up to date by Friday, December 11th. Thank you and have a great rest of the day.” The intercom goes back on, “Chloé Bourgeois, please report to my office.”

“Why?”

“We will discuss the reasons when you arrive.”

Then the intercom shuts off. “Ridiculous! Utterly ridiculous! These are new shoes!” With a huff, she grabs her purse then the hallpass and stomps off to the principal’s office.

“What do you think? A host family who doesn’t know what they’re in for?” Kim asks.

“Almost anything would be better than her current family.” Professeur Bustier pointedly clears her throat at them and they ignore her, “speaking of...” Kim inches closer, “Marinette thought, you know, for the mental health of all of us that we could sort of try to make Chloé a decent person.”

“There aren’t enough pâtisseries in France to make me want to join a pointless endeavor like that.”

“Ah, but listen, we won’t have to do anything. Chloé idolizes slash air-quote loves Lady Luck, right? And she’ll do whatever to appear approachable in Lady Luck’s eyes.” Kim nods along. “Whenever Chloé starts to... do Chloé things, we just remind her that Lady Luck will hear about it.”

“Ooh. Oh-ho. Now I’m interested.” Kim strokes his chin, “this is the best type of manipulation one can be part of.”

“But...” Alix lowers Kim’s other hand, “maybe not say that out loud?” Kim nods slowly.

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Kagami looks at her reflection in the phone’s camera app and fiddles with the LLK headband pushing her bangs back. “It doesn’t look strange? With my hearing aids visible?”

“If *anyone* has a problem with seeing your hearing aids, they deserve to fall face-first into wet cement.” Alya fluffs Kagami’s hair around the headband. “Your hair was just all over your face. How were you able to see? Hey! You know something? I do my sisters’ hair all the time, do you want me to help style your hair? I can give you a low-key makeover.”

“I’ve kept my style because of its simplicity, but I would like to try out new hairstyles. I’d appreciate the help, Alya.”

“Anytime. I get the simple hairstyling. I used to keep my hair in bantu knots in primary school.” Alya shows Kagami a picture of the aforementioned style on her phone, “this one prick just cuts two of my knots off without any warning! *Of course*, the white professeur didn’t see an issue with it. In fact, he said my hair was ‘distracting.’ Headmaster called my parents to frame me as the issue. I was tempted to channel my inner Nora and beat the shit out of the kid but I held off. And it’s a good thing I did. Maman politely told them where to stick their ‘issue,’ and the next thing I know the kid was being hauled off in a cop car and the headmaster was carrying a box of his belongings out of the building!”

“Wow. Your maman is amazing.”

“Yeah. I’m real lucky. You wanna come over to my place tomorrow after roller derby and have me style it? Or maybe Saturday?”

“I-If it’s okay, may I come over after roller derby and have a sleepover?”

“You *want* to sleepover at my place? Not trying to deter you or anything, but you *know* I have three sisters, correct?”

Kagami nods with a smile, “I am aware. I’ve met all three of them.”

“And you *still* wanna see them in their natural habitat?” Alya shrugs, “alright, I’ll ask my maman when I get home. I’m sure she’ll be cool with it. We can go shopping for the hair stuff on Saturday. Or even after roller derby. Any particular things you want or don’t want?”

“I’m not certain. I don’t know much in terms of styling but you do and I trust you, so I’m leaving the decisions in your capable hands.”

“You...?” Alya looks taken aback and Kagami gives her a reassuring nod, “wow, thanks. I’ll make sure your trust isn’t misplaced and will give you the best hairstyle ever.”

It is *very*, very difficult for Marinette to not hear Alya and Kagami’s conversation two seats away from Alya. Damn cat kwami enhanced hearing. If Juleka wasn’t asleep slumped against Alya, Marinette is certain she would’ve been staring at her strangely.

Damocles taps on the microphone and the feedback causes a collective wail throughout the auditorium. “Ooh. Apologies. This is the last assembly of the year and it has a surprise guest

who needs no introduction!” The auditorium cheers and wolf whistles when Alec Cataldi hops up the stairs onto the stage. They begin chanting his name.

“Hello, François Düpont!” The cheers intensify. “Thank you, thank you.” The crowd quiets so quickly Damocles is taken aback. “As a first-generation Caribbean-Parisian, I struggled to stay true to myself. I did things my grann would wallop me for! I know it’s gonna sound odd but if it weren’t for Lady Luck and Karma, I wouldn’t’ve changed.” The crowd murmurs quietly. “I haven’t been an akuma yet. Knock on wood. Nor have I been saved by them. At least, not personally. As a talkshow host, I literally made a living making people miserable. Nearly as miserable as me. Getting their ‘dirt’ and whatnot. Granted, it was all over-exaggerated for views. We *did* have legal limits, though they toed the line of amoral. I don’t wanna do that anymore.” The crowd gasps. “I want to focus on positivity. You wanna know how they metaphorically saved me? During the first-ever interview in which they proudly spoke of their Asian heritages. Everyone says they ‘love’ diversity but things too different from *their* norm scare people, anger them even. I say fu—” Damocles pointedly clears his throat, “they’re *teenagers*, man, they use swears I’ve never heard of!” The students laugh. “I say if people wanna be afraid of you, don’t half-ass it, make them really afraid! Not everyone’s gonna like you and you will go mad trying to split yourself appeasing multiple people. I speak from personal experience. There was this quote I found perfect for this occasion. ‘You will meet people in life who will just dislike you for no reason, not because there is anything wrong with you but because everything is going right for you. Until they master their own peace, they will always try to destroy yours.’ So if you find people who are gonna dislike you immediately, it stands to reason you’ll find people who are gonna like you right off the bat. So focus on those people. The people you don’t have to change yourself for. And don’t worry about trying to find them because you will. It’s only when you stop forcing it that it’ll happen naturally.”

“You can’t stop being a talkshow host! Your talkshow was the only reason I got up early for school!” Chloé yells from the front row, standing.

“Hopefully, you’ll like my new talkshow just as much?” With a dramatic sigh, the blonde sits back down. “Any questions?”

□□

“Kagami, is that an official LLK Lady Luck and Karma headband? May I see it?” Kagami lowers her head and Rose gasps, “it suits you.” The blonde walks backwards while the others are walking behind her forward, “you should wear your hair back more often so it doesn’t hide your pretty face. Ooh! Are your earrings rose gold? How pretty!”

Kagami smiles, “thank you, Rose.” The blonde blushes as she nods. “It is Alya’s headband she lent me.”

“Ooh. Right. Of course, Alya would have official Lady Luck and Karma merchandise.” Rose nods to herself.

Alix yawns, “I’m starving.”

There’s an odd noise that has Juleka jolt. She stops walking, prompting the others to do the same, and takes her cellphone out of her fanny pack then unlocks it. “Huh. Text from Captain. There’s a hole on Liberty. She says it’ll take the weekend to repair but that means we gotta find somewhere else to practice.”

“And you have nowhere to sleep!” Rose points out.

“Oh. Right. That too.”

Alya whispers to Kagami who nods, “you can stay over at my place with Kagami.”

Juleka looks at Kagami who nods, “awesome. Thanks. Let me ask Captain.” The response is almost immediate, “she said that’s okay and she’ll be staying at her girlfriend’s house.” Her phone chimes with another text. ““Oh, by the way, I have a girlfriend now.””

“You got your sleeping situated but what about the practice?” Marinette asks. “I can ask my parents if you all can practice behind the boulangerie pâtisserie, or even in front and put on a little show. You’d have to bring your instruments from Liberty though.”

Alix makes a displeased noise, “there *is* another option. On Saturday, Sunnie Locks offered to let us practice at his manor.” Everyone turns to Alix surprised, “I didn’t think we’d need to take him up on the offer, so I didn’t think it was worth mentioning. And if we’re just practicing, we don’t have to tell him about the contest.”

“No. I say we do tell him. And we tell Luka. Then we tell them we aren’t involving them.”

Alix whistles, “*damn*, Rose. I like.”

“I like that option as well, but did Luka do something to warrant exclusion?” Kagami asks.

“*Chloé* hired Luka to be her ‘songwriter,’ to write her a love song for Lady Luck, and that

cheery S.O.B. *agreed!*”

“But I thought Luka liked—” Marinette stops mid-sentence, “ **what!?**”

“A love song?” Kagami and Alya echo.

Alix nods, “nuts, right?”

Alya makes a seesawing motion with her hands, “not gonna lie, Chloé’s feelings for Lady Luck seem genuine. Having said that, *and this is pure speculation!*, I don’t think a love song is the best way to go. Lady Luck ripped me a new one for excluding Karma’s name from the blog. Which absolutely was not my intention. I just wanted something to do with the concept of luck, since both of their names sorta have something to do with luck. Plus, I hadn’t gotten any sleep the night before and I was starting to hear things. Anyway, Lady Luck is not gonna want all this attention solely on her. *And* Chloé has vocalized, multiple times, how much she dislikes Karma. Also a bad way to go. Lady Luck isn’t gonna want anyone who dislikes her partner. Again, this is pure speculation!”

“No, I think you’re right.” Marinette agrees. “Lady Luck is quick to shut down anyone who says anything negative about Karma. R-Remember that sculptor?”

Alix chortles, “ooh, I cannot *wait* for Lady Luck to tear Chloé to shreds~” Marinette elbows her and Alix groans, “you never let me have any fun!”

“Look, I don’t care about Chloé in any capacity, what I care about is how selfish Luka was and how he fractured our trust deciding on his own to bring a girl who bullies me into our band just because he hears her inner music screaming for help.” Alix and Marinette briefly share a glance no one else catches.

“Not defending him, his actions were purely despicable, but perhaps Luka was trying to help the only way he knew how?” Kagami says with a shrug.

Juleka shrugs, “maybe, still pissed at him though.”

“Then let’s forget about him and talk to whatshisface and see if his offer still stands? If not, I’ll personally help move some of the instruments off Liberty.”

“I’ll go with you all for the questioning but there’s no way in hell I’m stepping foot back in

that place.” Marinette shakes her head, “because I’ll end up being escorted in handcuffs.”

“I... wasn’t gonna say anything so hardcore, but that place has serious bad juju smeared all over the walls. I want nothing to do with it.”

“I agree with Alya,” Kagami says, “it left an acrid taste in my mouth.”

The six of them turn down the hall and see Kim opening Adrien’s locker. They can’t see the blond’s expression from their angle but Kim is beaming. “—worry about it, Sunbeam. Always—” Kim’s smile fades, “uh-oh. Alix looks pissed and for once it’s not directed at me. Gotta make sure it stays that way! Later!” Then he flees.

Adrien turns around and it isn’t just Alix that looks displeased but the entire group of (beautiful) girls she’s with. “H-Hi?”

“Hey. Alix said you offered your place for practice?” Juleka asks.

Adrien’s eyes widen and he nods, “yes, I did.”

“Can we come over tomorrow to practice? Don’t know what Captain did to put a hole in Liberty but we can’t sail on her this weekend.”

“I’m sorry about Liberty, and you all can absolutely come over tomorrow.”

“Don’t you have to ask your parents?” Rose asks.

“My parents will probably be too busy to notice.”

Alix hums, “Is that a fact? Nino told me you had a full-blown anxiety attack over not eating the food your parents had prepared for you.”

Adrien chuckles awkwardly, “*actually*, I had the anxiety attack because my parents didn’t have any food prepared for me and I had no idea what to eat.” The girls all stare at him, “t-they usually plan out my meals... as well as everything else in my life.” He holds his arms out in front of him, “everything will be okay. My parents’ bedroom is all the way on the opposite end of the manor from my bedroom. If we use the back entrance near my room, they won’t even know.”

“Not adding breaking and entering to my file, Agreste.” Alix and Juleka say simultaneously. Adrien is the only person who looks at both girls in surprise.

“U-Um... no one will get in trouble. I promise.”

“We’d better not, because it’ll be a bit difficult to smile for your next few photoshoots with a busted lip.” Alix threatens.

“I’ll have my towncar pick us up after school. A-Also, I was wondering if we were entering Bob Roth’s contest?”

“We’ll let you know.” His band members respond walking away. Adrien scratches his head watching them leave.

“Marinette?” She stops walking and turns to Alya, “I could use your help with something.” She tiptoes to whisper in Marinette’s ear, “I’m giving Kagami a makeover after roller derby and your eye for creation would really help me out.”

Blushing, Marinette rubs the back of her neck when Alya moves back, “I-I don’t know how much help I’ll be but I’d love to help out.”

“Sweet, thanks. You wanna sleepover at my place after roller derby too?”

“I’d love to. I just have to ask my parents.”

□□

“A sleepover?” Sabine and Tom question, exchanging a glance. Marinette nods as she leans against the counter opposite of her parents.

“I’m so happy you’re making friends, Cheese Biscuit.” Tom walks over to Marinette embracing her, “let’s bake some treats for you to take! Any allergies I should know of?”

“A couple. I’ll have to double-check who has what.” Tom hums to himself when he releases Marinette.

“Which new friend of yours is having this sleepover? Will their parents be there? Are you sleeping over the entire weekend? Where does your friend live?”

“Mā mā! What’s with all the questions?”

“I won’t apologize for asking questions. It’s not like sleeping over at the Kubdel’s apartment is an option any longer. We need to make sure where you’re going is safe.”

“It sounds more like you don’t trust me.”

Sabine’s eyes widen then she frowns. She wipes her hands off in her apron then walks over to Marinette. “I’m sorry.” She holds Marinette’s face in her hands, “of course I trust you and your judgment. I know I’m worrying over nothing, but that damn akuma the other day...” She sighs releasing Marinette’s face, “I’ve been so frazzled ever since.”

“Oh, mā mā.” Marinette hugs Sabine. Tom joins in on the hug.

“Why didn’t you say anything?” Tom asks releasing them from the hug.

Sabine sighs. Marinette lays her head upon Sabine’s, “the thing is... I wasn’t scared. I just *knew* Karma and Lady Luck would save the day and fix everything. But then Karma was all alone and I thought... what if it was one of our daughters caught up in some crazed magic fight? *Then* I got scared. Scared for them. They’re *children* fighting some butterfly lunatic obsessed with causing trouble!”

“W-What makes you think Lady Luck and Karma are children, mā mā?”

“That *is* a good question.” Tom adds. “Not that I haven’t had my own suspicions.”

“I may not know magic, but I’ve been a *maman* for the past fourteen years. I can *tell* when I’m speaking to children versus adults in costume. Lady Luck and Karma are children no older than our own.”

“Huh. I figured they were *at least* sixteen! Damn. What kind of asshole dumps that kind of burden onto a pair of fourteen-year-olds anyway? Hell, even sixteen is too young for this! As adults, we need to do something to help them along without jeopardizing their identities.”

Sabine nods in agreement, “that’s a good idea... but how will we go about doing it?”

“We can talk to some of the other parents and bounce off ideas.”

“W-Well, I’m just gonna...” Marinette gestures to the staircase.

“One moment, demoiselle.” Marinette tilts her head to the left, “I *need* you to continue steering clear from akuma attacks. I cannot commit to this type of stress.”

“I-I... I will do my best, mā mā.” Marinette kisses both parents on the cheek before she slips away and runs to the staircase.

“Wait!” Marinette pauses mid-step on the first step. “You didn’t tell us which friend is having the sleepover? And don’t forget to ask about the allergies.”

“My friend’s name is Alya.”

“The luckyblogger?” Tom hums, “she... seems to be almost always around akuma attacks. Nevertheless, I like her. She’s very no-nonsense.”

“I like her too. I would also like to meet her.”

“Yeah. We never get to chance to chat with any of your friends after a match. Let’s invite them all over after the match!”

“I’ll send out some asks in a group text.”

□□

Fri, Dec 4th, 2020

Juleka zips up her duffle bag then lugs it out of her bedroom. “H-Hey...” She walks past Luka who sighs then walks after her. “How many times do I have to apologize, Jules?”

“Just once. When you truly mean it.”

Luka sighs again, “*I am* sorry, but I still want to help Chloé.”

Juleka stops walking then drops the duffle bag near Luka’s feet, “give me the song list.”

“What?”

“The song list.” She repeats, “of all the songs the band made? I need it. We’re practicing at Adrien’s after school. You’re invited but don’t expect to be forgiven.”

“That’s fair. I’ll give you the copies of the songs I made. Then I guess I’ll see you after school.”

Alya’s older sister Nora picks up Juleka’s bag on her motorcycle, then she takes Juleka to school and presumably heads home with Juleka’s stuff. “Good morning, Juleka.” Rose greets struggling to fall in step with the ~~much~~ taller girl as she returns the greeting. “I looked up exercises to keep your voice intact.”

“Yeah?”

Rose nods, scratching her cheek. “I’ll find out if they work later today. I need to get my books from my locker, I’ll see you in class.” Juleka nods as Rose walks straight ahead to the row of lockers and Juleka turns the corner.

“I am fully capable of feeling remorse. It was never my intention to create a rift between fans. I wanted all of us to celebrate Lady Luck and Karma from all angles.”

Juleka sees Markov floating around Alya’s head, “you need to apologize to *them*, not me.” Markov sighs heavily as he nods.

“Morning. What happened?”

“Morning.” Alya thumps her head against her locker, “have you seen the luckyblog lately? *Every page is overrun* with comments about ‘how cute Lady Luck and Karma are together’

and all the ‘relationship goals’ bullshit.” Alya lifts her head, “I’m gonna have to scrap the page so we can focus on what’s really important.”

“What *is* really important?”

Alya looks around before beckoning Juleka closer, “figuring out who Mite and Méfait are.” She whispers.

Juleka leans back with a nod, “that *is* important, but I’m an avid luckyblog reader and I’ve never seen any page like that.”

“I don’t put it on the website. Who knows if they’re watching.” Juleka nods in agreement. “I’ll figure out what they want and why they’re around. And while I’m doing that, I don’t want Lady Luck and Karma to have any additional *unnecessary* stress.” Markov beeps sadly.

“You’re really dedicated to this.”

Alya elbows Juleka with a smirk, “am I the only one?” Juleka chuckles.

“True. If you need some help, I’m available. I’m not great with computers though.”

“I will purge the luckyblog of the relationship page but there will be serious backlash.”

“I don’t care about backlash, if people can’t respect their opinions are wrong to hell with them. The luckyblog’s purpose isn’t to dehumanize Lady Luck and Karma to just ‘the UTP,’ it’s to help them. To... appreciate their heroics! To thank them for saving our asses.”

“‘UTP?’ I thought it was ‘OTP?’ One-True Pairing?”

“They’re the ‘Ultimate True Pairing.’” Alya replies with an eye roll.

Markov beeps sadly again. “I understand. It was wrong of me to jump the gun, as they say. I think it would be prudent to speak to Lady Luck and Karma once the page is erased, so that I may apologize to them for creating the page in the first place, without their consent.” Alya nods. “But I will require a way to contact them.”

“Why are you looking at me? I don’t have some magic communication device that can contact them.”

“Oh? I apologize. I was certain you did.” Markov floats off.

“It’s gone!” Chloé cheers kissing her cellphone, “that ridiculous page that assumed Lady Luck would stoop to Karma’s level is gone!”

“You realize Karma is taller than Lady Luck, right?” Kim yells.

Chloé sticks her tongue out, “I meant metaphorically!” She kisses her phone again walking into the classroom.

“Markov apologizing about creating the page and wanting a chance to apologize face-to-face.” Alix nods to herself, “that’s good.”

Lila taps her chin, “I wonder if the page was taken down because it was true?”

“Didn’t you see Markov’s apology? There’s no way it was true! The page shouldn’t’ve been created! Lady Luck and Karma are not dating! And I’m sure they’ll tell all of Paris that whenever they talk to Markov.” Sabrina huffs.

“Excuse me, but you were just gushing about the idea of them being together!”

“I still am! But I respect them enough to keep my opinions on the subject to myself.” Lila rolls her eyes as she closes her locker and heads to class.

The classmates all surround Markov asking the robot questions.

Lila takes her seat away from all the madness. A petite white-haired woman walks into the classroom. She loudly clears her throat and everyone turns to her. “Hello, class. I am Marianne Lenoir and I will be filling in for Professeur Bustier this morning. Please take your seats so that I may take attendance.” The class murmur while complying.

Alix jumps up, “may I use the restroom?” The professeur nods then Alix sprints out of the classroom. She runs into the bathroom then kicks the door open. The girl at the sink jumps

then runs out of the bathroom without turning the water off. “Alright,” Alix takes her hat off and sees Fluff inside it shivering, “what’s wrong? Are you sick? Does this have anything to do with why you can’t merge with the miraculous?”

“I don’t know.” Fluff replies. “I’ve never felt like this before.”

“My hat won’t be the warmest place for you. I’ll put you in my hoodie pocket.” Alix lifts the kwami out of her hand then gently places them in her front pocket, then pets the kwami as they continue to shiver. “Gotta talk to Marinette.” Alix sends Marinette a text before returning to her classroom.

Fluff shivering is making Alix cold, even with the hoodie fabric separating them. When class mercifully ends, Alix gets up but the professeur puts a hand on her shoulder halting her movement. “Are you unwell? You feel cold.”

It’s hard to reply without her teeth chattering. “I’m good.” She walks around the professeur then exits the classroom to meet up with Marinette in the hallway.

With a sigh, the white-haired woman takes a seat behind her desk and puts her left arm over her eyes. Fù walks into the classroom then approaches the desk. “This wasn’t the best idea you’ve ever had.”

Fù chuckles then Marianne lowers her arm to frown at the man, “true. Unfortunately, it really is all we can do.”

□□

Alix frowns, “I don’t know what to—” She yelps when a portal comes out of nowhere and she falls through it. The portal closes before Marinette can try and go into the portal herself.

“Oh, hell no. Not this time. Plagg, claws out.” Marinette pauses then looks around her bedroom, “Plagg?” She stares at her ring. “W-Wait... don’t tell me? Did Plagg go into the portal without me?” Marinette groans. “If I *ever* see Cosmic Colt again...”

Alix cries out in pain when she lands on her back. “Fucking frack.” A white-haired man with a leather brown horse outfit hovers over her.

“Greetings, Avatar of Time, I am Cosmic Colt. Pleased to finally meet your acquaintance.”

Alix glares, “you’re the asshole ‘guardian’ who forced my best friend into this bullshit! Come just a bit closer...”

“I am perfectly aware of your temper, Mlle. Kubdel.” He leans back when Alix swings, “and your radius. I only brought you here to offer help. Your kwami is sick, allow us to heal them.”

“Go to hell.”

“I second that.” Plagg floats in front of the horse’s face. “I oughta fucking claw your eyes out but I know Lady Luck deserves the first strike.”

“You know who Lady Luck is?”

“The greatest partner for my kit.”

Cosmic Colt sighs, “I meant, you know her identity?”

“Yeah. I do. How else would I be able to help my kit without the exhaustion timer you two so graciously clamped on our miraculouses?”

Alix groans sitting up. “You never said you know who Lady Luck is.”

“You never asked. Besides, the ladybug kwami will clip my whiskers if I say anything. Just heal Fluff and send us on our way. I left my kit just for the chance to yell at you morons! Hypocritical assholes! You inconvenience the kids whenever the mood strikes yet you do **nothing** to help! They’re damn good partners and heroes and it’s no thanks to you or the potion maker! Just give Baby Bunny the healing elixirs and whatever else we need so we don’t have to have another ‘visit.’”

Cosmic Colt frowns, “I had every intention of giving you the elixirs. As I’ve said before, I am here to help. I did not select the avatars, I merely distributed the miraculouses to them. Bovine has created a variety of healing potions, and she’s made additional power-up potions.” He holds out a satchel and puts it in Alix’s lap. “I wish you, Karma, and Lady Luck well. And I’m sorry you can’t see we’re only looking out for you.” He waves a hand then Alix falls through the portal. Plagg glares at him before flying after the rabbit miraculous wielder.

Alix floats upside down into the bedroom and bounces off the bed landing on the floor. “Fucking frack.” She sits up then the satchel falls on her head causing her to fall back down.

Plagg floats over Alix’s head, “you’re gonna be okay.” Alix grimaces. “Let’s tell Kit about the elixirs, yeah?” Alix nods.

Marinette re-enters the bedroom then runs over to Alix, “Alix!”

“I’m good.” Marinette helps her sit up. “Aw, fuck. Maybe I’m not good.” She rubs her back.

“Here.” Plagg holds a tiny pink circle out toward Marinette, “feed this to Fluff. It’ll heal them.”

Marinette nods then scoops up Fluff from the bed and gently feeds the kwami the food. Fluff sneezes then their eyes widen and they eagerly gulp up the rest of the circle. The kwami burps out a large pink bubble. “What was that? It was so good.” They moan, “ah! And it made me feel better!”

“It was one of the potion maker’s curealls.” Fluff nods in understanding. “With Lady Luck being the guardian of the box, I think you should see her. It’s been centuries, right? Maybe reuniting with the box will help you?”

“Maybe. At the very least, I would like to see everyone.”

“Thing is...” Alix rubs the back of her neck, “how are you supposed to do that? I don’t know who Lady Luck is.”

“Then maybe it’s time you do.”

“Plagg, we can’t interfere with identities! And I’m not being *that kwami*, we physically cannot interfere! Why do you think we’re forbidden to speak the name of miraculous wielders we know aloud? Ma—” White bubbles float from Fluff’s mouth and the kwami gestures to the bubbles with a knowing look.

“I didn’t know you couldn’t say the name of other miraculous wielders.” Alix says.

“Yeah. Lady Luck’s name is—” Green bubbles float out of Plagg’s mouth. “She lives—” More bubbles come out of his mouth.

“Right. You’ve met Lady Luck twice now. First to take off the exhaustion timer, then when we swapped miraculouses at the Agreste manor shitshow.” Plagg nods. “As an avid superhero fanatic, I am not interested in obsessing over Lady Luck’s identity. As her partner, Lady Luck doesn’t need to tell me her identity. Lady Luck will always be Lady Luck. My second best friend and confidant.”

“You *don’t* wanna know who you’ve been working with the past two months?” Alix hedges.

“Nope. I trust Lady Luck as much as I trust you, Alix. Our relationship is great, why fix what isn’t broken? Curiosity killed the cat.”

“But satisfaction brought it back.” Plagg adds, “I would’ve told you when I found out if I could. But I can tell you that you know her in a school setting.”

Alix hums. “Bunnyx *did* say Lady Luck was gonna be a transfer student at François Düpont.”

“Speaking of Bunnyx, Cosmic Colt knows you have the rabbit miraculous. Not only that but he knows who we are and where Lady Luck keeps the miraculous daruma doll.” Marinette scowls, “it’s hardly surprising, although it is annoying.”

“He could sell us out!” Alix gasps, “or take our miraculouses! Plus, he can portal in and out of *wherever*! I have to be Bunnyx. You’re definitely gonna need me out there watching your tail, Marinette. You’re my best friend and I’ll be damned if I’m gonna keep being sidelined, allowing you to deal with this supernatural arcane bullshit without me.”

“Alix, you know that I love you more than I love fabric shopping, but *think* about this. Please? Once you become Bunnyx, you can’t stop until we take Mite and Méfait’s miraculouses. And who knows how long that’ll take! The only thing we know about them is how big of a pain in the ass they are. The akumas are starting to take a toll on *mā mā*, she’s coming apart at the seams. I need you to look after her.”

“That’s not fair. I need to look after *you*, you’re the one that’s constantly in danger!”

“I don’t want you to do this just because you’re worried about me! Trust me, Alix. I can handle this.”

“I know you can! I don’t want you to! How do you think I feel *knowing* you’re out there fighting that butterfly asshole’s goons? I hate feeling helpless. I have to help if I can.”

Marinette hugs Alix, “*please* don’t force this, Alix.”

Alix sighs, “alright. *Fine*. For you. I won’t put myself needlessly in danger screwing with powers beyond my comprehension. In the meantime, Plagg take Fluff to Lady Luck and let them spend time with the other kwamis.” Alix grins, “and let Lady Luck know Bunnyx will be coming soon.”

□□

Luka rides his bicycle to François Düpont and sees a black towncar parked in front of the building. Students stare at the towncar as they exit the building. “Luka!” Adrien runs over to him. “Hi. Thanks for coming.”

“At least you’re happy to see me.”

“Adrikins~” Chloé exits the building and puts an arm around Adrien’s waist when she walks over to him. “Can you believe my towncar has a flat tire? How ridiculous.” She huffs, “can I ride with you?”

“No! I-I mean, you *could* but I’m giving Kitty Section a lift.”

“I’m practically part of the band.” Adrien gapes as Chloé climbs into the towncar.

Adrien sticks his head in the towncar as Chloé gets comfortable, “Chloé, I really don’t think you should be here.”

“Oh? Then give me one good reason why I should leave?”

Adrien grimaces, “because I want to avoid conflict.”

Chloé rolls her eyes, “grow a backbone, Agreste. *Conflicts* are part of life. You’re no longer the princess held helplessly in her glass tower. You’re out in the real world that’s filled with *conflict*. I’m not moving. If *you* or anyone else has a problem with that, too damn bad.”

“Hey, everyone...” Adrien comes out of the towncar to see the rest of the band staring impassively at Luka. “Ready to go?”

“I will take your bicycle, monsieur.” The chauffeur says picking up Luka’s bicycle and putting it into the trunk.

“Let’s get this over with,” Alix mutters. Adrien side steps and Alix sees Chloé in the towncar on her phone. “Oh, hell no. Are you kidding me?”

Chloé lowers her phone to glare at the pink-haired teen, “you could always get a ride from another towncar~” She sing-songs.

“Or I could drag your ass out.”

“Alix.” Jessica puts both hands on her shoulders, “she isn’t worth it.” Alix flexes her fingers.

“Why are you all just standing in front of the towncar?” Marinette asks.

“Chloé’s inside.” Rose replies.

“The towncar *is* or should be big enough to ignore her.” With a groan, Kitty Section plus Kagami, Alya, and Marinette pile into the towncar. Sabrina and Mylène also came out of nowhere and got into the towncar before anyone realized.

“Since we’re all together, we need to decide what song we’re dropping off for the contest.” Luka begins.

“You want us to decide *together*?” Jessica asks with narrowed eyes, “didn’t seem like an option for the last decision you made.”

“I won’t apologize for trying to help, but I *will* apologize about how I went about doing it. I should’ve discussed it with all of you and for *that* I am sorry.”

“If you wanna help someone who doesn’t warrant the help you’re offering, it’s fine,” Jessica says with a shrug. “So long as you don’t involve us.” Luka sighs. “I suggest we deliver

‘Inaction,’ for the contest.” She pauses, “and I am not suggesting it solely because I thought of it.”

“I love your song, Jessica. The message is so powerful.” Rose remarks. “Let’s sing it!”

“W-Wait! I love ‘Inaction’ too, but I don’t think it’s something we can submit to the contest.” Ivan interrupts.

“We *shouldn’t* let the city be aware of the discrimination and abuse of power the police harbor?”

“What ‘abuse of power?’” Sabrina asks, “my papa is a great police officer! He never would’ve been promoted to police chief otherwise!”

“There is no such thing as a good police officer when the entire system is broken.”

Rose pats Jessica’s shoulders, “maybe we should sing that one somewhere else to let the city know?” She suggests.

Jessica groans, “*fine*. What about Ivan’s song then?”

Ivan blushes, “w-wha—? Why?”

“Why not?” Rose asks. Ivan subtly flicks his line of sight between Rose and Mylène. “A-Ah. Right. We need something more... snazzy! Yeah, that’s it! Ivan’s song won’t work. Nope.” She shakes her head fervently.

Alix tilts her head to the left. “What the fuck does that mean?”

“‘Snazzy?’ It means ‘flashy.’” Jessica replies.

“I have a suggestion.” Adrien lifts a hand, “why not ‘Shoulder-to-Shoulder?’ It has a powerful message and it hopefully honors Lady Luck and Karma.”

“You made a song about Lady Luck?” Chloé angrily asks.

“Lady Luck *and Karma*.” Adrien corrects.

“Better not be a love song.” Chloé grumbles with a sneer.

The band look among one another then nod. “Not a bad suggestion.” Juleka says, “Alya, can you copy that song onto a USB?”

Alya rubs her hands together, “perfect time to unveil my luckytablet.” She pulls a green tablet from her backpack. “An easier and safer way for me to record live footage from akuma battles. My parents wouldn’t let me supe it up unless I programmed some safety protocols.”

“You did everything by yourself?” Alix asks.

“Yeah. Of course, I checked with Max to see if I didn’t screw anything up.”

“Give yourself more credit, Alya Césaire.” She turns to Kagami surprised, “you’re a very creative person. There is no way you screwed anything up.”

“Aww. Thanks, Kagami.” Kagami puts an arm around Alya who chuckles, leaning into the embrace.

“We’ve arrived at Roth Recording, M. Agreste.”

Adrien does a double-take. “Already?”

“Towncars are so smooth. It didn’t even feel like we were moving.” Rose gushes, “Juleka, you should deliver the song.” The rest of Kitty Section nod in agreement.

Juleka stares at the USB in the tablet then shakes her head, “it’s just the delivery. Anyone can hand it in.”

Alya makes a noise of triumph then ejects the USB. “I’ll take it.” Alix says and Alya puts the USB in her hands. “Be right back.” She gets out of the towncar.

Kagami whispers to Juleka who nods her reply. She puts her other arm around Juleka

drawing her near. Juleka murmurs her thanks as she rests her head on Kagami's shoulder.

Marinette smiles as she watches Alya and Juleka cuddle with Kagami across from her.

The door opens and Alix climbs back in then closes the door, "so... delivered the song, no big. *But* got a text from the entraîneur straight from the roller derby league and our matches are postponed until Sunday." The group collectively groans.

"If roller derby is canceled, can you drop me, Marinette, and Kagami off at my place?"

"Okay... I thought you'd wanna listen to practice like usual?"

"No disrespect to you, specifically, but I'd rather be lit on fire from head to toe than go back to your place."

Adrien's jaw drops.

After dropping off Alya, Kagami, and Marinette at Alya's apartment complex, the town car takes everyone to the Agreste manor through the back entrance. Taking a deep breath, Adrien unlocks the door. As expected, the hallway is empty. He beckons the band to follow him then they sneak through the foyer and up the stairs to Adrien's room. Adrien nervously opens his bedroom door. (The last time any of the band was here was during his birthday party.)

Once inside the room, Alix plops down on the floor and takes her shoes off. Juleka follows suit though she remains standing. The others stare at them. "Wearing shoes indoors is bad luck. That's why we have different shoes for the boulangerie pâtisserie and slipper shoes for the house part of the building."

"We have shoes we just wear on the houseboat because it's hardwood floor and... there could always be a leak... or hole. The shoes we wear on the houseboat aren't the shoes we wear when we go off the houseboat." Shrugging, everyone minus Chloé takes their shoes off and rests them by the wall by the door next to Alix and Juleka's shoes.

"I think I should have all the instruments we need somewhere..." He walks into his enormous closet.

Chloé plops down on Adrien's bed and crosses her legs. "Chloé, aren't you going to take off your shoes?" Sabrina asks.

“Why should I? These shoes are brand new and I’m not gonna take off my shoes just because everyone else is.”

“You’re dragging in dirt from outside into Adrien’s room.” Mylène says and Chloé stiffens.

“Are you calling my shoes dirty? I just said they were brand new.”

Mylène squeaks and Sabrina encouragingly pats her on the back, when Mylène looks up Sabrina nods at her then she nods back. “T-They may be new but you’ve been walking outside and around school in them.”

Chloé’s eyes narrow then uncrosses her legs and leans down to unbuckle her shoes, all the while keeping eye contact with Mylène. She slips the shoes from her feet then picks them up by the buckles and throws them at the wall with the other shoes.

Adrien pokes his head out of the closet door, “I found the instruments everyone needs, but I’m gonna need some help bringing them out.”

“You have all of our instruments... in your closet?” Jessica asks.

“Y-Yeah... I can play multiple instruments but my parents decided the piano was the best option. So that’s the one they paid for extra lessons with.”

“Easy decision.” Chloé interjects, “piano players are in high demand. It’s a very lucrative profession.”

□□

Émilie laughs, on a video call with Audrey from North America. She pulls her nail polish brush from the bottle and applies a coat on her pointer finger. As she applies the second coat, there’s this loud noise that startles her so bad it makes her drop the royal blue nail polish brush from her hands and onto the white carpet. The blonde screams then picks up the brush before more of a mess could be made.

“What happened?” Audrey asks moving closer to the camera trying to get a better look.

Émilie puts the brush back into the bottle and closes it. “I intend on finding out. I’ll call you back.” She hangs up on the video call then stands. That small blue smear on her carpet mocking her. That stain will be dealt with later. First, she has to figure out where the noise came from. Noise in the manor? Preposterous! Émilie stops in her tracks when she hears more noise. She gasps. Are they being robbed!? The dishes! **Her miraculous!**

Émilie runs out of the study then down the hall into her bedroom. Thankfully, nothing is amiss so she heads to the kitchen. Again, nothing out of place. Frowning, she looks around the ground floor. Nothing. Émilie looks up then sees Adrien’s bedroom door is ajar and what’s more, there are flashing lights coming from the room reflected on the wall.

She storms up the stairs then kicks the door wide open. Inside the room are a group of unfamiliar teenagers playing on her son’s musical instruments. They sound decent, but that is beside the point. “What in the hell is all this?!” She yells startling everyone and they stop abruptly.

“Maman!” Adrien greets with a wide smile moving from behind his grand piano and walking over to her, “remember I told you about the friends I made in school?” He gestures behind them, “these are them. Some of them. I think you’ve met them all at my party? Anyway, I joined their band!”

“You what?”

“I play piano!” Adrien continues, obliviously.

Émilie is still processing what in the ever-loving hell is going on when a tall blue-greenish-haired boy gently sets the guitar down and approaches her. “Afternoon, Mme. Agreste, Adrien is an invaluable member of Kitty Section.” Adrien beams at the praise.

“It’s Graham de Vany, and of course, my son is great and irreplaceable. That is obvious. Now, just what type of ‘music’ does Kitty Section, you said, play?”

“Various types of rock.”

“‘Various types?’ How vague. And you’re the leader? The one I hunt down if anything happens to my son?”

“I’m not the band’s leader but I will accept all responsibility of keeping not only Adrien but the entire band safe.”

“How noble of you.” She looks around the room. *Chloé* of all people is on Adrien’s bed either just flat out not caring or trying to hide. She also sees Sabrina and Mylène not on any musical instruments. Émilie spots that short angry pink-haired girl staring her down. “Ah. It’s you again, looking no less angry than the last time you were here.”

“I’m only here with the band.”

“How curious that your tall fashion friend isn’t a member of this band?” Blue eyes narrow. Oh, yes. Émilie doesn’t need to sense emotions to know this kid will make a powerful akuma. The only downside... is Émilie will no doubt be the target. Émilie sees Chloé flinch then raise her knees against her chest. “Look. I’m going to need names if you’re going to be in my place of residence so there’s no confusion with parents.”

“I’m Luka Couffaine, madame.” The boy who approached her first, introduces.

“I-I’m Ivan Brüel, madame.” Says the tall, timid black-haired boy.

“Jessica Keynes.” The brunette with her long hair in a pair of braided ponytails states.

“My name is Rose Lavillant!” The perky, short blonde chirps.

“Juleka Couffaine.” Mumbles the tall, indifferent purple-haired girl.

The angry pink-haired teen folds her arms over her chest, “Alix Kubdel.”

Émilie raises an eyebrow, “how do I know you aren’t giving me a fake name?”

The pink-haired teen snorts, “you aren’t worth the effort.”

“I see. Adrien? Discussion. Now.” Adrien gulps as he follows his mother out of the room. The others just brazenly look out the door until Émilie closes it. “What has gotten into you Adrien Allan Agreste?!” Émilie hisses, “*first*, you sneak off to school without permission or supervision! *Then*, you plead with us to throw you a birthday party of all things! *Next*, you sneak *into* the manor with unapproved company?! And last of all, you just boldly state you are part of some homemade band I’ve never heard of!?”

“Maman—”

“Do not interrupt me.” Émilie massages her forehead. “Are Chloé, Mylène, and Sabrina part of the band as well?”

Adrien shakes his head, “maman, I made more friends than just the three of them. And... And I finally feel truly, truly happy. Doesn’t that matter to you?”

Émilie sighs heavily, “of course your happiness matters. All I want is for you to be happy. I also want you to be smart and safe! How do you know these bandmate ‘friends’ of yours won’t just use you as their walking credit card? Do I have to check your account?”

“There’s no need, maman. I spent money *willingly* on getting our outfits made. I’m the one who offered to pay for everything.”

“*Adrien—*”

“Hoarding my money isn’t making me happy, maman. Spending it on my friends? *That* I’m happy to do.”

“Your grandpas will be very disappointed to hear you say that.” Émilie takes a deep breath, “nevertheless, happiness notwithstanding, you need to be punished for... all this. You won’t be seeing any of your friends or playing with this pretend band until I can trust you.” Adrien gasps. “So finish playing music today and know this may be the last time you are able to do so.”

“But that isn’t fair! You just said my happiness matters!”

“Don’t start whining or I’ll pull you out of that school so fast you’ll think I’m moving in reverse.” Adrien snaps his mouth shut. “From now on, you are to go to school, come home for lunch, return to school, then return home. Is that understood? And I swear you had better not be slacking on your grades or modeling gigs.” Adrien glares at the floor, “answer me when I’m talking to you.”

There’s a glimmer of defiance in her son’s green eyes that disappears as quickly as it appeared. “Yes, maman.”

“You have one hour to ‘practice.’ Don’t make me time you.” Adrien frowns when she walks away. With a sigh, he walks back into the bedroom and Chloé falls on the floor in front of the door.

“Are you okay?”

“I was trying to hear what was being said.” Adrien helps her up.

Émilie’s eyes narrow. “Charmainé Cloris Bourgeois, may I have a word with you?” Gulping, Chloé nods then exits the room. Émilie impatiently taps her foot as Chloé approaches her, “I am very disappointed in you.” Chloé flinches, “*you* vouched for that school, and look what we have to show for it. Adrien’s gone insane! Joining random bands? Behaving like some unruly ruffian? That is not the son I raised! I need an explanation for all this!”

“I pleaded with him not to join the band but he wouldn’t listen. B-But now that I’m a member too, I can watch him closer.”

“Adrien said you weren’t part of the band.”

“I-I just recently joined! I’m even working on a song.”

Émilie hums, “fine. Curb Adrien’s defiance by any means necessary. If he won’t listen, make him listen. And he is temporarily removed from the band. Make sure to tell the others that.”

“What? Adrikins—” Émilie’s eyes narrow, “I-I’ll tell them, Tante Émilie.” She hangs her head as she walks back toward the door. Sabrina meets her in the doorway and hugs her.

Adrien frowns as his mother walks away. He can’t just let things end like this. He never would’ve had the courage to do anything like this if it wasn’t for Chloé urging him to make a break for it. Or the old man who asked him what did he have to lose by trying something new? He’s not ready to give up the band. Nor is he ready to give up his newfound freedom.

□□

“Adrien has friends over?” Gabriel takes his glasses off and cleans them, “had I known, I would’ve called the boulangerie pâtisserie for catering.”

Émilie slams her hand down on the desk, “Gabriel, *focus!* Something is wrong. *Very* wrong. This isn’t our timid, obedient son any longer. This... rebellious child is an unknown—sneaking over friends? Joining *bands*? Birthday parties? I don’t want to deal with this!” She hangs her head with a sigh, “is it worth it? To have another child? What if they turn out like...”

“Émilie.” Gabriel sighs, “it’ll be worth it. It’ll be absolutely worth it. And as for Adrien? All of this is just a phase. He has everything a child could ever dream of having. He’d never do something so foolish as to toss it all away just for fleeting companionship. Once he realizes the pleasure he sought aren’t worth the overall effort, he’ll go back to being the son we raised.”

Émilie lifts her head. “He said he was ‘truly’ happy.” She whispers.

Gabriel puts his glasses back on, “perhaps this isn’t just a phase then. If the boy is happy, I don’t see why we’d take this away from him. Until we get the black cat and ladybug miraculouses, we’ll have to tolerate this.”

“And just *let him* be caught up in akuma attacks? No! To hell with that! I’m not taking any chances. These friends must be removed from his life—”

Gabriel stands up at his desk then walks over to Émilie putting his hands on her shoulder and turns her to him that they’re face-to-face, “Dammit, Émilie, *think* for one second! A happy Adrien will not attract an akuma. An Adrien *sulking around because you took his friends away* will attract an akuma, constantly. You want him out of harm’s way? Then let him keep his damn friends! He hasn’t been near any akumas so far.”

Gabriel releases Émilie and she scowls. “it’s too late. I already told him no band practices until further notice.”

“Émilie—”

“What did you want me to do, Gabriel? I was hardly expecting to find this! Oh, and Mlle. Bourgeois knew all about this bullshit.”

“Why wouldn’t she, Émilie? They’re best friends. I’m not surprised Chloé didn’t tell you about this because she knew you’d take it away from Adrien and she was protecting him.”

“Protecting him? From what? *Me*? Don’t be absurd! I should’ve made her tell me everything that went on inside that building.”

“Are you not hearing yourself? Punishing our son just for living his life? Has the miraculous made you go mad? You aren’t sounding like the woman that I love.”

Émilie scowls, “I want the wish so bad it’s giving me physical pain.” She puts a hand to her forehead, “before I allow Adrien to hang out with his so-called ‘friends’ I will need background checks on all of them.”

“Background checks for thirteen and fourteen-year-olds. This is stooping to an all-time low, Émilie.”

“I’d stoop to subterranean level to protect Adrien. Even from himself. Hell, *especially* from himself! He *willingly* paid for the band’s outfit materials and who knows what else! Which means these ‘friends’ don’t come from recognizable families and therefore are not people our son should be associated with!” Before Gabriel can open his mouth, Émilie continues, “Chloé and Mylène come from perfect families! Sabrina’s papa is in a position of power! Powerful people have powerful friends! They don’t make pretend bands! They build real empires!”

“For all we know, they could be doing both! Stop being so unreasonable, Émilie.”

“I haven’t begun to become unreasonable, Gabriel. We won’t have the perfect family if we lose our perfect son in the process. I am not willing to give *anything* up.” In the bedroom, Nooroo shivers as a crack forms on the brooch.

that's one fucked-up medley

Chapter Summary

Kitty Section's tension comes to a head, turning the band members into musical cat akumas

Chapter Notes

In case it wasn't obvious or forgotten because it happened briefly all the way back in chapter six, I will be changing some of the miraculouses' objects and powers.

Fri, Dec 4th, 2020

Alya takes Marinette and Kagami to the hair supply store near her apartment building. The shopkeeper greets Alya as she grabs a basket.

Marinette looks around the store in awe. "There is... a lot of stuff here." As she walks around, she looks up at the signs for the aisles. The aisle Alya and Kagami enter says, "multicultural hair care?" Marinette wonders aloud. Kagami and Alya both stop whatever they were doing and turn to Marinette. She looks down at them looking at her strangely. "Uh...?"

"Marinette, where do you buy your hair supplies from?" Kagami asks cautiously.

"The grocery store?" Alya facepalms as Kagami hums. "What? They have sections for hair care! I grab whatever smells good while we buy—*hey!*" Tsking, they both each grab one of Marinette's hands and pull her into the aisle. "I feel like I'm about to have an intervention."

"You are." They both reply.

Marinette grimaces. They release their hold on her when they stop in the middle of the aisle. "You can't buy just *any* product for your hair," Kagami begins, "even *I* know that much, and I would never consider myself wholly knowledgeable on the subject of hair care."

“Ouch. That’s putting us both down. Although... it *does* explain why your hair is always so shiny.”

“I use argan oil.”

Alya beams nudging her, “me too.” Kagami smiles at her briefly then they both turn to Marinette, “you need to figure out what causes breakage, what can help your hair grow. Basic stuff.” Marinette nods slowly. “Hold up. Aren’t you a badass fashion designer? How are you not taking care of your hair? Don’t you make hair accessories?”

Marinette puts both hands on her head, “I do but I’ve never given hair this much thought!”

“Fortunately,” Alya playfully elbows Marinette with a wink, “you got us now.” Kagami nods in agreement as she smiles brightly. Marinette can’t help but smile back. “And we’ll help Alix too because that girl got serious hair damage. That reminds me! Juleka knows *a lot* about hair. When she comes over I’m sure she’ll wanna help. Let me send her a text real quick. See what you like and we’ll see if it’s right for your hair.”

“But how would I know if it’s right for my hair or not? The stuff I use seems to work.”

“May I?” Marinette nods and Alya runs her fingers through the end of one of Marinette’s twintails. “Hmm. Your hair is alright, but it could be better. Feels like a 1B? You know something? I know just what we can use to zhuzh up your beautiful hair and make your twintails bounce.”

Marinette’s eyes sparkle and she holds Alya’s hands, “I defer to your judgment.”

Alya chuckles, “what do you think about highlights or hair coloring? Love the bluish-black you got going on but how about we mix it up some?”

“I’d...” Marinette instantly deflates and lets go of Alya’s hands, “have to ask my parents.” She sighs heavily.

“Not a big deal.” Alya pats Marinette on the shoulders, “what about you, Kagami?”

“I already told my maman I was getting a makeover. She told me to describe the style to her as detailed as possible.”

“Your hair texture is a 1c and if you want a new color let’s see what they have.” Alya gasps then picks up two boxes from one of the shelves, “red?” She shakes the left box enthusiastically, “or green?” She waggles her eyebrows shaking the other box just as enthusiastically.

Marinette squints at the box then gasps, “n-no way! Does that say ‘Karma Green?’”

“Yup! Vinh is amazing! I’m totally gonna try hooking her up with Nora but that’s neither here nor there. With Vinh’s help, Lady Luck, Karma, Max, and Markov came up with all sorts of products for young kids of color thanks to that interview. It was originally just for girls, then I realized gendering products is for assholes. Every... *Mostly* everybody has hair and they’d wanna take care of it.” Alya points her elbow toward the shelf, “look at all these beauties!”

Kagami and Marinette look at the shelf and see a picture of Lady Luck on the box then a green arm reaches up to grab that same box. Marinette and Kagami turn toward the arm’s owner at the same time they turn. “Ah!” Marinette and Nino point at each other. “What are you doing here!?”

“Me? I’m always here. Chris wants his hair super curly.” He picks up a box in his left hand. “As for me...” He hugs the box tight to his chest, “I gotta have Lady Luck red.”

“That’s not her—how did they get Lady Luck’s hair color?” Kagami asks.

“They didn’t. It’s an approximation. Same with Karma’s hair. Disclaimer’s on the box.” Nino’s eyes widen, “you all should come to that new LLK shop that just opened! Not a lot of foot traffic now.”

“Nino, you like Lady Luck more than Karma?” Kagami asks. “You abstained from voting when Fei and Jessica got into that argument yesterday.”

“I thought Jessica was a big fan of not picking between Lady Luck and Karma?”

“She is, that’s why she and Fei had the argument,” Marinette replies with a sigh. “For some reason, Fei all of a sudden caught ‘Karma-mania’ she called it.”

“Ooh. Do you think I can use that?” Alya grins to herself as she makes a note in her phone.

“Uh...” Nino rubs the back of his neck, “no, it’s not—I like both heroes the same but...” He grimaces, “the green hair didn’t suit me. Thank goodness we were on All Saints’ break.”

“Is *that* why you refused to leave your house?”

“My hair was bright *green*, Marinette! I shaved it all off and it was still green!” Alya laughs and Nino frowns at her. “Which one do *you* prefer O’ Luckyblogger?”

“Truthfully, I never thought about the answer. I only came to Lady Luck because she was closer. While I was recording them, she seemed like the calm serious leader type. Of course, proclaiming Lady Luck as the ‘leader’ of a pair of heroes discredits Karma. Despite how it looks, I didn’t name the luckyblog solely after Lady Luck. I would’ve called it the *lady* blog or something. I was thinking of something fitting both of their names but I guess I didn’t think lucky wouldn’t have much to do with Karma by name.”

“Wow. I—I’m sure no one would’ve viewed the name of the blog quite like you’d hoped.”

“I *do* have a tendency to overthink when it comes to superheroes. It’s like that one song *everyone* sings wrong and the songwriter has to look on and sigh.”

“You mean that baa-bee-doo-bop song? With the annoying yet catchy hook?” Nino asks and Alya nods. “Man, every time I look up the words every website gives me a different answer. Hey, speaking of websites? Markov deleted that page he created?”

“With the coupling?” Kagami asks and Nino nods.

“When I went on the luckyblog, there was a video of Markov apologizing to Karma and Lady Luck about creating the page. He also asked for the opportunity to apologize in person.” Nino pauses, “or, well, *you know*, face-to-face.”

“Markov is a sweetheart, so I know he didn’t mean anything by making the page.” Marinette begins. “Having said that, I’m glad it’s gone. Not that it’ll stop people from making posts about Lady Luck and Karma being ‘the perfect romantic couple’ and all that.”

Alya sighs, “true. At least they won’t be posting it on the luckyblog anymore. Markov set any images or comments with the word ‘relationship’ straight to ‘flagged.’ Unfortunately, well before Markov unearthed that bag of worms, all sorts of ‘romantic inspired’ blogs about Lady Luck and Karma were already up.”

“I’m guessing with the luckyblog catering to it people stopped making their own blogs?” Nino rubs the back of his neck, “the latest blog? There are *a lot* of porn-related images.” Both Kagami and Marinette facepalm, as Alya scowls. “And they’re right on the front page without any censor! My *seven-year-old baby brother* found the website! I don’t even know if he saw anything.”

“I can always hack the website and give it a virus?” Alya offers, “my Karma-obsessed little sisters found a couple of adult-centered Lady Luck and Karma ‘love’ blogs.”

“I feel like if you hack one website, three more will take its place.” Kagami says frowning.

“Yeah, what’s worse is... can’t these dumbasses see Lady Luck and Karma **aren’t** adults!? It’s child porn propping them up with mostly unzipped pictures that make their breasts way too big to be able to stand straight!” Alya groans, “unfortunately, according to Vinh, there’s nothing that can be done without an actual, *confirmed* age from either hero, we can’t slam these skeevy assholes for child pornography. And I’d never ask either of them to reveal anything about themselves. I respect the superhero secret identity code.”

Marinette scratches her head. “Is that a thing?”

“Pretty sure it is.”

Kagami puts a hand on Alya’s shoulder startling her, “I wish Karma and Lady Luck could know how truly amazing you are.”

“Wha—? I’m just a superhero nerd. Nothing special.”

“You’re not a superhero nerd, you’re *the* superhero nerd.” She elbows Nino. “Come on. Let’s all check out LLK.”

□□

XY rounds the corner and sees Chloé inserting a keycard into the door then opening the door. He hides behind the corner when he sees that hot broody guy he saw at the roller derby match. “Here you are! A suite all to yourself for an entire weekend! I made sure the bed is a waterbed so you’d feel like you’re floating on the boat.”

“I appreciate this Chloé, and I know you’re only doing it to get the song out of me.”

“I’m doing this because I’m a nice person. A nice person who is worthy of Lady Luck’s unyielding affection, make sure you put those lyrics somewhere suitable. You’re lucky I’m so observant or you’d be sleeping somewhere far less fabulous than here.” Chloé tosses Luka the keycard, “breakfast is from 5am to 10am. Get plenty of sleep, we’re gonna be working on a song tomorrow for the contest. And note this is a different song than the one I’m asking you to write about Lady Luck. Naturally, I will compensate you for your assistance. Goodnight~” Before Luka can say anything Chloé leaves the suite.

Pressing the elevator button, Chloé takes out her cellphone. She frowns when she gets the answering machine. “Sabrina Elizabeth Raincomprix, I need you to stop whatever you’re doing and come to the hotel. I have to buy some new clothes and I need you to be the first person to see me in them. I’ll let you try on some of my custom-made Lady Luck shoes fresh out of the box~”

□□

Nora opens the door and sees the purple-haired girl nearly her height standing there. “Hey.” The girl nods, “find the place okay?” Another nod. “Come on in.”

“Thanks.”

Nora pats her on the back. “Alya, your friend is here! Last room down the hall.”

Juleka nods, “thanks.”

Alya runs down the hall and meets Juleka halfway, “hey, did you bring it?” Juleka nods, “sweet! Let me show you my room.” Juleka smiles to herself following behind Alya. With her mother being a pirate, and a known fugitive in several parts of the world, it was hard to find a place that felt homey off Liberty. Alix befriended her on the first roller derby meeting and Juleka’s been making friends ever since.

Alya’s bedroom door is wide open and Marinette and Kagami are in there sitting on Alya’s bed. Juleka looks around the room. All of Alya’s walls are bare excluding the wall above her bed that has two corkboards and a whiteboard on it. The first corkboard on farthest to the wall has ripped out pages of magical content and sticky notes stuck to pushpins; the second corkboard has pictures of Lady Luck and Karma along with some of their merchandise. The whiteboard has a giant purple question mark in the center. A purple butterfly magnet and a

blue feather magnet have strings attached to them and the strings are pointed at the question mark.

“Juleka!” Marinette greets.

“Hello, Juleka.” Kagami greets.

“Hey. I brought the stuff.” Juleka takes out a box of Karma Green hair dye, some brushes, and some gloves. Alya happily accepts the products given to her.

“We’ll have to do this in the bathroom. It’s big enough for all of us.”

“Wait. We’re doing the coloring now?”

“Yeah. Did you wanna wait until the morning?”

“N-No, no. Now is fine.” Marinette psychs herself up, “let’s do it.” Nodding to herself, Marinette gets up then Kagami follows suit and they all follow Alya to the bathroom where she places the rest of the hair color boxes on the counter. Marinette was surprised her parents, her mother in particular, okayed adding color to her hair. She *would’ve* honest-to-goodness put some Lady Luck red into her hair... but that felt like something she’d have to ask Lady Luck’s approval for. So she just settled on brown. Kagami selected a dark green and Marinette was thankful for it because she wasn’t sure what she’d do if she saw Kagami with Karma’s hair color – especially since Plagg wouldn’t stop bothering her about asking Kagami on a “friend date.”

As Juleka and Alya begin mixing the hair color Marinette attempts to casually squeeze behind both girls over to Kagami who is sitting on the bathtub. Kagami tilts her head in confusion when Marinette takes a seat beside her. “Is everything alright?”

“Y-Yeah. Kinda. I-I was just... wondering if you’d do me a favor?”

“I was told friends are always willing to do favors for one another.”

Marinette smiles awkwardly, “this is... uh, an unusual request. I... Rose is,” Marinette bites her lip and Kagami just sits there waiting. No pressure. No condescending facial expression. Just patiently waiting. “Rose thinks XY wants to ask me out on a date.” She whispers, “and

sure whatever who'd say no to free food, but the thing is... I don't want him to be my *first* date. I wanna have my *first* date with a friend, and I'd like that friend to be you."

Marinette leans back from Kagami grimacing. As for Kagami, she hums with a nod. "I'm flattered you considered me an option when there are other friends you no doubt know better."

"That's the thing. Well, another thing. I want to get to know you better, and this'll give us a good opportunity to do so."

Kagami smiles radiantly and for some reason it makes Marinette's face feel warm. "I would be honored to go on a date with you, Marinette."

Marinette hugs her, "thanks, Kagami. Seriously. You're the best."

"Where shall we go?"

Marinette releases Kagami as quickly as she hugged her. "Huh. Yeah, I kinda forgot the aspects of a date. I-I'll figure something out. *Ooh!* We can go to the—no, not the Louvre." Kagami sees a dark look cross her face briefly. It was one of those blink-and-you-miss-it looks. "Movie? Wait. Is there anything I wanna see? Is there anything *you* wanna see?"

"Don't overthink it. Let's just agree to meet up then see where it goes from there?"

"Sure. Sounds great. Though you should know I've got overthinking down to a mastery." Kagami chuckles.

Meanwhile, in the bedroom, Tikki flies out of Kagami's fanny pack into Marinette's purse and tackles Plagg. "You're up to something." She hisses.

Plagg puts a paw on his chest, "mademoiselle, I'm shocked you'd accuse me of—"

"Don't play coy with me, Whiskers. You know we can't interfere with our wielders' bonding process!"

Plagg scoffs, "not interfering! Well, not intentionally." Tikki eyes him critically. Plagg sighs, "*look*, if I was trying to do something, I wouldn't be able to." Tikki's eyes narrow,

“Sugarcube, my intentions are nothing but noble. My kit is one of—no, *the best* wielder I’ve ever had! She’s resourceful, creative, genuine, plucky; she’s the true deal, alright? I’d sooner go hairless than allow that tacky letter guy to ruin her optimism!”

“...What tacky letter guy?”

□□

Sat, Dec 5th, 2020

With his scarf tied securely around his neck, XY jauntily walks into the boulangerie pâtisserie. He frowns when he sees the line of people in front of him. To wait in line like a commoner. Absurd. He sighs. No. He perks up. The food and Marinette are worth it. He was looking forward to seeing Marinette at roller derby but the match was canceled. Seeing her here is the next best thing. Eventually, the size of the line decreases, and XY finds himself standing in front of the counter. “Good morning, M. Dupain. May I have two dozen blueberry macarons? Oh, and I’d like to speak to Marinette please?”

“Marinette isn’t here.” XY’s mood instantly deflates, “and it’ll be a bit for the macarons. Would you like to order something else instead?” XY shakes his head then somberly pays for his order and steps out of line allowing the next person to order. The blond slinks against the wall and sees that tiny, angry pink-haired girl out the corner of his eye in the kitchen.

“Did you try the lucky ladyfingers?” XY overhears one of the kids in front of him ask.

“What do you think I ordered?” The other responds giddily. “That and the karma bomb.” They gush. “I might have to come here every day after school.”

“I wish I went to François Düpont to get a daily glimpse of Lady Luck and Karma.”

“And have to run from akumas all the time? I’d rather watch their heroics on the luckyblog.” The kids squeal in delight when Sabine hands them a box with the shop’s logo on it (no doubt Marinette’s handiwork). They profusely thank the woman then giggle to each other as they leave the shop.

“H-Hello, Mme. Cheng.” Sabine turns to him with a smile.

“Hello. Here to see Marinette?” XY nods. “She isn’t here. Won’t be here all weekend.”

“Oh.” Would it be weird to ask where she is? “Can you tell her I stopped by? Actually, I have something for her.” XY takes an envelope out of his jacket pocket. “It’s tickets to the show I’m putting on later today at Le Grand Paris with Jagged Stone. I’d really like Marinette to be there.”

Sabine hums as she accepts the envelope. “I can’t make any promises, but I will let Marinette know you stopped by and brought these for her. Ordered some macarons?” XY nods, “they’ll be a while. We’ll give you some extra as compensation for the wait.”

“Oh no. No need. I’d willingly wait as long as it takes for your macarons.” Sabine smiles as she heads back to the kitchen. It’s easy to see where Marinette gets her beauty from. Both of her parents are wicked hot. (Though ordinarily, two hot people don’t have an attractive child. It’s usually just the way the world works. XY is fortunate for his mother because his dad isn’t all that appealing to the eyes. Ooh! Speaking of his mother, he should call her. Her birthday is coming up. And what better to do than to call her with a new girlfriend for her to meet?)

□□

“Here.” Luka looks at the envelope in Chloé’s hand, “Adrikins is grounded, so he wanted me to give that to you.”

“...Did we get Sunbeam in trouble?”

““Sunbeam?”” Chloé scoffs, “what a nickname. And yes, Kitty Section got Adrikins grounded so **I** will be filling in for him.”

Luka raises an eyebrow, “do you know how to play the piano?”

“How hard can it be? If Adrien can do it, I can do it better.” Luka merely nods then opens the envelope. Chloé takes a seat on the bed, “I’ve taken the liberty of getting all the songwriting necessities brought to this suite. You’re welcome. You can thank me by writing a song for the contest that’ll knock Lady Luck’s antennas around.”

“What is it about Lady Luck that you love?”

“Everything! Her poise. Her grace. She’s beautiful. She protects the city. She puts up with that mangy cat which deserves an award in itself.” Chloé gasps, “that’s it! I’ll call my papa and make him give Lady Luck some kind of award for her heroism.”

“You’d have to give one to Karma too.”

“They can share the award.” She gets up from the bed, “I have to make a phone call. If there’s a knock on the door it’s either the delivery people or Sabrina.” She walks out onto the balcony. Meanwhile, Luka takes the letter out of the envelope.

He skims the letter. Oh. It’s a song. Adrien wrote a song with all the feelings of anger that would’ve instantly made him an akuma. “That’s one fucked-up medley.” Luka blinks, “yeah, that suits the name.” He takes out his phone and sends Adrien a text with the letter in his hand and the title he wrote on it.

“Okay! I’m back. Papa will have the medal ceremony tomorrow.” She sits back on the bed, “let’s songwrite.” There’s a knock on the door and Chloé springs up from the bed and walks over to the entrance opening the door. “Ah! Sabrina, glad you could make it.”

The orange-haired bespectacled teen fully comes into the suite. “I thought you’d be wearing the contest outfit?”

“I don’t want it dirty.”

“Makes sense. Oh! Hi, Luka.” Luka waves. “Can I hear the song?”

“It hasn’t been written yet.”

Sabrina gasps, “can I help?”

“Of course!” Chloé puts an arm around Sabrina. “Why do you think you’re here? You can tell Luka all my amazing qualities that should be put in the song.”

□□

“Marinette, your purse is moving.”

“What?!” She laughs nervously, “o-oh... probably vibrating because of a text! Yeah! I’ll just grab it later. Thanks, Kagami.”

“I’m almost done, come take a look.”

Marinette sees Juleka and Kagami approach and lean against each other. Marinette feels Alya removing the remaining rollers from her hair. “You two aren’t showing any sort of emotion. How am I supposed to know how I look?”

“You look incredible.” Kagami answers with a smile. “Of course, you always look incredible.” Marinette blushes slightly with a small smile.

“Kagami’s right,” Alya dangles the last roller in front of Marinette’s face before dropping it into the bucket with the rest. “Check yourself out.”

Marinette stands then walks over to the mirror. She gasps when she sees her reflection, “no way.” She grabs her face in awe. Her now brown shoulder-length hair is styled in tight ringlets that frame her face with no bang covering her forehead. “Alya Simone Césaire, you are a miracle worker.” Marinette hugs her. “Thank you, thank you!”

“You’re welcome.” Alya laughs. “Juleka, you want me to try that new style?” Juleka’s visible eye darts around then she quickly shakes her head. “Alright. Kagami, you’re up.”

“Juleka, you know you can tell us anything.” Kagami says taking the seat in front of Alya. Juleka nods. Marinette was surprised Juleka dyed her hair red; she figured she’d go green for Karma. Though Juleka’s red is a much, much darker red than Lady Luck’s hair or outfit. And the color is ombré styled, with the tips of her hair significantly brighter than the top. Kagami, on the other hand, went dark green and the color has balayage coloring with some random red and lighter green streaks. Alya added a bit more orange to her hair as well as some pink streaks.

Juleka takes a seat on the sink. Marinette sees her nod at Alya who gives her a thumbs up. With a sigh, Juleka hesitantly lifts the hair over her left eye. The color of Juleka’s eye is a much deeper red-brown than her right eye and there is a vertical scar across her eye, and another long deep horizontal scar from her ear to her cheek. “As cool as I think scars and bruises are, these have gotten me a lot of uncomfortable looks.” She moves her hand and her hair falls back over her eye. “Covering my face with my hair was easy. I felt so at ease with Alya that I completely forgot about my eye when she washed my hair.”

“I forgot to ask, these aren’t because of bullying or anything are they? Because I can track *anyone* down.”

Marinette pats Alya on her shoulders, “how about we use those powers of yours for good?”

“What’s gooder—*better*—than helping right some wrongs?”

Juleka chuckles, “no, wasn’t bullying.” She gives a small smile, “first time I tried to do my hair myself. Didn’t know how to use a hot comb. Still don’t actually. Can’t see all that clear with my eye.” Alya hugs Juleka then Kagami and Marinette join in. Juleka smiles to herself. “I-I’m glad you all know, but I don’t think I’m ready to let everyone else see yet.” The three of them nod hugging Juleka once more before letting go, “a-and, yeah, I’d like trying that style when you’re finished with Kagami.”

“You said you feel at ease with Alya.”

Juleka’s cheeks redden slightly, “y-you and Kagami too.”

“T-Thanks, but what I meant was you’re supposed to feel at ease with friends.”

Alya, Kagami, and Juleka look among one another before turning to Marinette. “Marinette, you’re the only one of us with any experience with friends.” Alya states.

Marinette gapes at the three of them, “seriously? That can’t be—”

“Hero nerd.”

“Pirate.”

Kagami merely points at her ears.

Marinette wordlessly counts on her fingers. “I’ve made way more friends this school year than I’ve had in the previous years of my life combined! This has been an amazing school year so far, and I’m glad to have met all of you.” She heads over to her phone and takes it out of her purse, petting Plagg unbeknownst to the others, then checks her messages. “Wha—? Alix said XY came by the boulangerie pâtisserie to give me tickets to a show he’s doing at Le Grand Paris today.”

Juleka groans, “*that place*.”

“Who is XY?” Alya asks.

Kagami meets Marinette’s eyes and Marinette nods, “he’s a musician Marinette designed an outfit for. Rose seems to think he has a crush on her.”

“Ah, right. I remember that conversation.” Juleka mutters.

“A crush on Rose?”

“No, a crush on Marinette.” Juleka clarifies.

“Free tickets to a show from a musician? People don’t just give out free stuff for no reason. Even free video games have all the good content locked up so you shell out money. I’ve spent more allowance money on Pokémon Go and Batch Brownie Bananza than I’d ever admit outside of a lie detector. You were paid to make the outfit so this isn’t making things square. Sounds like this boy is thinking big time. *He wants you to be seen with him.* You go to this show and next will be family cookouts!” Marinette screams in terror.

“You shouldn’t frighten Marinette, she was already dreading the prospect of a single date with XY.”

“He asked you on a date?” Juleka asks.

“N-No. Not yet.” Marinette squirms, “but this *does* feel like he’s gonna.”

Alya, Kagami, and Juleka exchange glances then nod at one another. “Fear not, Marinette.” Alya pats her on the shoulder. “Want me to hack into his bank account?” She offers.

“I can break his fingers.” Kagami offers with a shrug.

“He sings, right? I can temporarily shut off his vocal cords?” The others turn to Juleka, “you pick up interesting things when your maman is a pirate.”

“All of you are sweet to offer injury on my behalf, but it’s okay. I asked Kagami on a friend date so XY wouldn’t be my first date.”

“If you don’t wanna go on a date with this clown, just tell him.”

“The thing is... I *want* to go on a date. You know? It’s a curious feeling.” Marinette rubs the back of her neck, “at the dance, I was a wallflower. No one wanted to ask me out because of my clumsiness and height.”

“I thought it was because Alix terrified everyone?” Juleka asks.

“Oh yeah. That too. But XY doesn’t go to school with us and he’s about as tall as me. Besides... it would be rude to say no when asked out, right?”

“To hell with etiquette,” Kagami cuts in, “your entire body language shifted when you said his name aloud. You don’t have to go on any date just because you were asked. Your comfort is more important than etiquette.”

“Kagami’s got a point. Besides, if you’re worried about niceness, you *can* reject people really nicely.” Alya says with a nod. “I learned all the tips from Nora.”

“If you wanna be asked out by someone as tall as you, I’ll ask you out.” Juleka says then blushes, “o-on a friend date. In fact, we should all go on a friend date. Tomorrow.”

“No.” Alya beams, “we’ll go on our date today, to see XY in concert.” She cackles evilly.

“Remind me to never piss her off.” Juleka mumbles while Kagami and Marinette nod in agreement.

□□

“I don’t need a ticket, *I live in this hotel!*” Chloé screams in the guard’s face. “Now, if you don’t want to be fired, I suggest you move aside!”

The guard adjusts their glasses looking the blonde up and down. “Sorry, mademoiselle. Can’t do that. Rooftop access to the show requires a ticket.”

“Did you not hear me? I! Live! Here! I can go on the roof whenever I want!”

“C-Come on, Chloé. Just call your papa?”

Chloé smirks, “good idea, Sabrina.” She holds up her phone to eye level then takes a photo then dials one on her phone and puts the phone to her ear, “papa, some soon-to-be-fired guard won’t let me on the roof! Get up here and fix this ridiculousness!” Then she hangs up. “All you had to do was let me through~” She sing-songs.

Thirty seconds later, the elevator opens and a panting, sweating, disheveled André runs out of the elevator over to Chloé. “What...” He takes a deep breath, “what is the issue, Princess?” Chloé points at the guard with a scowl. André clears his throat then walks over to the guard. “What seems to be the problem, monsieur?”

“I was told, by Bob Roth himself, that rooftop access requires tickets. Your daughter *demande*d I let her in anyway because she lives here.”

“She *does* live here! It’s my hotel, and I’m the mayor of the city! Where else would she live? I could have you fired for making my princess unhappy!” Chloé nods in agreement behind André. “Please give us tickets to the roof.”

“What?! Why do we need tickets? You’re supposed to just let us go up there!”

“I know what I’m doing, Chloé.” The blonde huffs folding her arms over her chest with a scowl. “How much are the tickets?”

“The tickets are sold out.” Chloé screams in frustration.

The elevator opens, “uh-oh.” Bob Roth mutters under his breath then walks over to the door. “What’s going on?”

“We need tickets to the roof but your guard says they’re sold out—”

“We don’t need tickets to our own hotel!”

“Not now, Chloé!” Sabrina reassuringly pats Chloé’s shoulders as the blonde seethes.

“Ah. I see. So sorry about this mix-up.” Bob Roth takes out an envelope from his jacket’s

inner pocket and gives it to André. Before the man can accept the envelope, Chloé snatches it from his hand and opens it.

“There are only two tickets in here, I need two more.” Bob Roth and André exchange a glance then André jerks his head in Chloé’s direction. Bob Roth takes out another envelope from his jacket’s inner pocket and pulls out two more tickets to hand to Chloé. She takes them with a huff and André clears his throat. “What? If he didn’t mess up in the first place, we wouldn’t need tickets.” Then she stomps off. Sabrina thanks them both before running after Chloé.

“That’s one-hundred-and-ten percent Audrey right there.” Bob Roth shakes his head then hands a ticket to André, “see you up there.” He pats André on the shoulder. André sighs as the guard opens the door letting them climb the staircase to the roof. Several of the guests have arrived and are mingling amongst one another.

Meanwhile, back in the suite, Sabrina zips up Chloé’s red halter dress then pauses, “why is the zipper in the front?”

Chloé scowls at her reflection, “this dress is hideous!” She growls unzipping the dress then pulling it down and kicking it off. “Nothing is going right today! Luka couldn’t make a decent song. Adrikins can’t come to the concert. I need tickets to watch a show *I came up with!*? The universe is trying to spit on my face!”

“But we won’t let it.” Sabrina says with a thumbs up. “Try on that beige strapless dress?”

“You can have that one. My entire wardrobe is getting revamped to red clothes only.”

“Why just red?”

“Why else? Because Lady Luck only wears just red.”

“Lady Luck has black in her outfit too.” Sabrina adjusts her glasses, “not to mention, ladybugs aren’t solely red but come in a variety of colors.”

Chloé taps her chin, “do they?” Sabrina nods holding up a one-shouldered red-orange fit and flare dress. Chloé gasps loudly. “Where did you find that?!”

“In your closet.” Chloé makes grabby hands and Sabrina puts the dress in her hands.

“You always come through for me, Sabrina.”

“What are best friends for?”

“I would’ve had Uncle Gabriel make me a dress but I won’t do any business with them until they un-ground Adrien.”

“If the concert wasn’t in a few minutes, we could’ve staged a heist to kidnap him.”

“You should quit that roller derby team before you get more infected with Kubdel’s stupidity.” Sabrina sighs, and Chloé looks at her through the mirror. “You know, Sabrina,” Sabrina pauses looking up at Chloé. “You’re a catch. If Kubdel doesn’t want you, that’s *her* loss. There are much prettier girls in the city who’d be thrilled to have you. Just don’t try taking Lady Luck.”

“I won’t. I’d never...” Sabrina blushes slightly.

“Ugh. *Right*. You like Karma.” Chloé’s eyes light up, “I was going to vouch for Luka, but I’ll vouch for you instead. We can have a double wedding.”

“A doubt—*wait*, we can’t get married at fourteen!”

“Why not? Papa is the mayor.” Before Sabrina can open her mouth, there’s a knock on the door. Chloé groans, “what?”

Mylène pokes her head in the suite door, “h-hi.”

“You’re late!” Chloé snaps, “get in here and pick a dress to put on.”

Mylène shyly enters the suite fully, “Chloé, will any of your clothing... *fit* me?”

“I’m not insensitive, Mylène.” Chloé rolls her eyes. “Sabrina can’t fit my clothing either. I had clothing ordered in both of your sizes. May as well leave them here for convenience.” Mylène nods. “What’s the matter with you?”

“N-Nothing.” She walks past Chloé to the dresses on the rack. Chloé looks at Sabrina who shakes her head with a shrug.

□□

Jagged Stone leans on XY, “come on. Show me. Which one is she? Where is your muse?”

“Will you get off of me?” XY shoves Jagged off him. At the same time, he sees Marinette show her ticket to the guard, who puts a paper bracelet around her wrist. She... changed her hair. It looks good.

“Yes,” Bob Roth leans on XY now, “where *is* this muse of yours? I’m assuming she has the tickets you asked for?” XY scowls.

“Rock on, Kid.” XY groans when Jagged ruffles his hair then steps on stage to check his microphone.

“Listen, I need you focused on now.”

“Pa—”

“Check your microphone.” With a heavy sigh, XY walks on stage.

“Music lovers!” Bob Roth says into a microphone. XY does a double-take and notices it’s the microphone from *his* stand. “In less than five minutes you’ll all be treated to a one-of-a-kind, once-in-a-lifetime event! Jagged Stone and XY, combining generational music, in a musical masterpiece they co-wrote solely for this occasion!” The crowd cheers.

“How am I supposed to check my mic when you take it?” XY hisses.

“If you weren’t distracted looking for your ‘muse,’ you would’ve noticed.” XY growls then catches the microphone tossed to him. He adjusts the microphone back to the stand then sighs. And what’s this co-wrote bullshit? XY didn’t write anything. Frowning, XY adjusts the scarf around his neck.

“Seriously?” Chloé grumbles folding her arms over her chest as she leans back in her seat,

“just perfect. As if my day couldn’t get any worse? Can’t even enjoy watching XY perform in peace?”

“What’s wrong, Chloé?” Mylène asks.

Chloé huffs, “nothing important.” Sabrina tries to look over her shoulder but Chloé forcibly turns her head forward, “show’s *this way*.” Well, Sabrina knows what *that* means. Sighing, she leans back in her seat.

“I’m so glad we came to this.” Tom gushes, “I don’t care a lick about either of these musicians, but I take whatever opportunity I can to show off my talented daughter’s designs!”

“Tom, sit.” Sabine pulls him down to a seat.

“No one can see Marinette’s designs if I’m sitting.” Sabine shushes him, “you don’t even know any of their songs.”

“I’m using this time to familiarize myself with titles, at least. Also, as we’re in the back, no one will see the clothes during the show.”

“Good point. Mind if I look too?” Tom leans into her and reads her phone. On Sabine’s other side, Kagami also leans toward the phone.

Alix stretches. Marinette, Juleka, Alya, and Kagami returned to the boulangerie pâtisserie to get the tickets for the show. XY had ten tickets in the envelope. As much as Alix despises XY’s music (and isn’t too fond of the musician either), she wouldn’t miss the opportunity to show off Marinette’s clothing. Nino also joined them at the show since he and Chris were at the boulangerie pâtisserie when they showed up. Both of them also wouldn’t miss an opportunity to show off Marinette’s clothing.

“Rock and roll!” Jagged Stone yells into his microphone. He looks at XY nodding, XY nods back then they start signing simultaneously.

“Thought they’d sound weird together. It’s... good.” Nino says lowering her phone, “we can record this, right?” He whispers. Marinette shrugs. Shrugging back, he lifts his phone and continues recording.

Marinette looks to her left and sees Alya whispering furiously to Juleka who looks downright

murderous. And whatever is being said makes *Alix*, on Juleka's right, sit up in anger. Before Marinette can wonder, Alya turns to her then whispers in her ear. Marinette gasps then covers her mouth with both hands. When Nino looks over at her curiously, she turns to the others and they all nod then she lowers her hands to whisper in Nino's ear. He does a double-take and Marinette nods, he leans on Chris who complains then whispers in Kagami's ear mindful of her hearing aid. Kagami turns to Nino frowning and Nino nods. She nods back then turns forward.

"When shit starts flying, I'd like to be warned ahead of time?"

"Nobody's gonna do anything at Chloé's hotel."

"Alix will."

"No, Alix *might*. It's Juleka I'm more concerned with."

"Different classes, never hung out with her before." Nino leans back and sees Juleka wringing her hands together. "She does look like she'll deck *someone* and Alix will hold them for her."

After the duet, both singers each perform their greatest hits as a duo which amps up the crowd. Bob Roth rubs his hands together as the crowd cheers. It's sad but true to admit that his son unfortunately lacks the... *je ne sais quoi* to command the stage on his own. Hopefully, this contest will help out. But so far everything has been—

Frowning, Bob Roth pats his vibrating jacket pocket. He told those morons only to...

He takes his phone out of his pocket and his eyes widen at the text from his assistant. Now his assistant is new, but they know their shit. "Found the one." He reads the text over then smirks. Hard to believe Chloé Bourgeois came up with the idea. Oh no! It's not— "Not from Chloé Bourgeois." Comes through on his phone next, underneath the last text. Yup. He's getting that kid a free keychain for this. Chloé too.

When the songs end and the crowd is sated, Jagged singsongs that he and XY will be signing autographs and taking pictures. Bob Roth re-pockets his phone then snatches the microphone from Jagged, "please line up, single file, for autographs and pictures. Five-hundred euros apiece." Then he glares at the grinning purple-haired man.

There isn't a lot of people on the roof, but this isn't a charity event. He's trying to make a

little money here. Everyone surprisingly orderly stays on line awaiting their turn.

“Let’s get on line.” Marinette gently pushes Juleka in front of her, “and not be culpable for any violent mishaps.”

Alya adjusts her glasses, “Marinette’s right. We’re dressed too fly to get blood on our clothes.”

“You can just—” Marinette steps on Nino’s foot and he yelps in pain. “What happened to no violence?” He mutters wincing.

At the sound, Jagged Stone looks to the side and gasps. There’s an indignant shout when Jagged walks away from the autograph he was about to sign. The crowd murmurs watching the man head to the back of the line. “Pen? Pen! It’s *her!*” XY’s blood runs cold then he remembers he didn’t tell Jagged or anyone anything. *Then why the hell is Jagged Stone standing in front of Marinette!?* “Penny!” The brown-skinned woman with the bright fuchsia hair stands up and looks around then she drops the phone in her hand but catches it and walks over to Jagged. “It’s her, right?” The woman nods. “Your clothes are amazing! And your hair! Could swear it was another color though...? Ooh, Pen, quick! Take a picture with us!”

The other people on the line start complaining.

Bob Roth walks over to them, “what are you doing? People are waiting for their pictures and autographs! You can’t just—”

“You actually did something right, Rothy!” He pats the man on the back, “I’ve been looking for this talented li— *young* rockstar designer!”

“Is that Marinette?” Sabrina asks. Luka flinches then leans forward on the line and sees not only Marinette... but *Juleka* along with some of their other friends. He quickly makes sure to lean back so he’s in line. With Juleka not speaking to him, he didn’t get the opportunity to tell her he’d be here. And he’s only here because Adrien got grounded because of the band.

The fuchsia-haired woman holds Marinette’s hands, “Mlle. Dupain-Cheng, I’m Penny Rolling. Jagged’s agent. It’s an honor meeting you in person. As this ‘concert,’” She side-eyes Bob Roth who frowns, “was short notice, Jagged didn’t get the opportunity to personally extend an invite to you.”

Marinette would point to herself but Penny is holding both her hands. “B-But why would you

want to invite me here?”

Jagged leans on Penny, “we wanna hire you for a commission.” Marinette’s jaw drops. “I saw the way you stuck it to that boring fashion snob. Then I heard personally from Camilla about how you designed not only your team but the roller derby uniforms of the entire league?”

“I, um, just gave them the idea for the symbols. I didn’t design the uniforms.”

“The whole league is crediting you.” Marinette’s eyes widen, “check the website. Coming next year all the team uniforms are gonna change with your designs.”

“D’oh!” Tom facepalms, “I’m sorry, Honeymelon, I forgot to tell you about the cheque that came in the mail.” Sabine stares at her husband who laughs nervously, “I, apparently, forgot to ever say it aloud.” He laughs nervously. “Oh! But this design and...” He points out the others wearing Marinette’s clothes, “all of these were also created by Marinette!” Not even that recognition is enough to get Sabine to stop staring at him like that.

“Marinette, I *need* your joie de vivre! I need a new style and you’re the only designer I trust to help.”

“M-Me?”

“Her?” Chloé glowers gritting her teeth as she glares at the group from her seat, “what’s so great about that perky pile of uncoordinated limbs? Just what is it that makes people *gush* and flock to her?”

“Fang’s over the animal print.” He gestures to his crocodile-printed suit. Marinette just *stares* at the suit. Isn’t Fang... a crocodile? “He knows it’s not real crocodile.”

“Jagged—”

“No way, that tall brunette made your hat?” A kid asks and Nino nods proudly.

“Marinette Dupain-Cheng is wicked talented. She knew how to sew back in école primaire.”

Bob Roth looks around sees everyone checking their phones and approaching the admittedly

stylish group about their clothes and no longer complaining about the wait. In fact, the only person that looks pissed is...

No. He turns back to the girl. *Hm.* At least his son has taste. He pushes Jagged out of the way, “Mlle—”

“No.” Penny interrupts stepping protectively in front of the girl then turns to her. Bob Roth looks taken aback. “Please meet us here tomorrow so we can discuss the commission.” She hands Marinette a backstage pass. Everyone gasps at the pass.

“No reason for you to wait on this line! Let’s take that photo!” The crowd chants Marinette’s name as Jagged and Penny take her to the front of the line. Jagged and Penny squeeze together with Marinette in the middle and take a few photos.

“Hey! We’re supposed to be taking pictures *together!*” XY grumbles.

Jagged and Penny exchange a glance before looking down at Marinette who gives a one-shoulder shrug. They nod, then Jagged grabs XY and pulls him to his side. Which isn’t near Marinette. XY forces a smile when the photo is taken. The. Single. Photo. And he’s back to scowling when Jagged signs the photo. The scowl slips off his face when Marinette smiles at him holding the photo. He smiles then signs the photo. She smiles then steps out of line. The crowd begins chanting her name again and Marinette blushes rubbing the back of her neck as she walks. When she tried paying, Penny told her it was a pre-commission gift.

Not that she’d need much assistance, Chloe sticks her foot out and tries to trip Marinette when she walks past but when Marinette trips – to the surprise of the crowd – she steps on Chloé’s foot in the process.

Chloé howls in pain and Kagami catches Marinette before she can hit the ground. Alix gapes. She moved faster than Alix could, and Alix didn’t even hear or see Kagami move! “Are you okay?” Sabrina whispers subtly moving Chloé’s foot back. Chloé smiles gratefully at her.

“Marinette, are you harmed?” Marinette cracks an eye open and looks into Kagami’s brown eyes. Above her?

“What happened?”

“I was hoping you could answer that? I just saw you falling and ...caught you.”

“Thanks.” Kagami stands Marinette upright. She blinks at Kagami with her mouth wide open until Alix subtly nudges her. “I...” Alix nudges her again, “yeah, I... just fall sometimes. All the time really. Thanks again.” Kagami nods.

Juleka sees Chloé rubbing her foot. “What happened to your foot, Chloé?” Chloé freezes then looks at Juleka. Then at the others, as they all stare back at her.

“Nothing happened to my foot. Mind your own business.” She winces crossing her injured foot behind her other one.

Chloé bites her lip, tears prickling in the corners of her eyes from the pain of her foot. If that clumsy tree of a girl broke Chloé’s foot, she’s gonna— Chloé gasps, vision blacking out temporarily. Oh no. She feels that familiar cold chill down her body. An akuma. And if it flew into her replacement Lady Luck necklace that is solid rose gold, she’s gonna be pissed!

“Good afternoon, Outlier, though from the look of things... I wouldn’t say it’s been too good to you. I’m—”

“I know who you are and I don’t want any part of it!”

“What is she—” Alix turns around then gasps seeing the mask outline over Chloé’s face. “Seriously?” She growls.

Kagami puts an arm on Alix’s shoulder halting her movement, “look, she’s fighting it.” Alix gasps then turns back to Chloé. The mask outline is a muted grey color compared to its usual tacky bright lavender coloring.

“Oh, really? That girl has everything you want, right? Take it from her.” Chloé’s left eye twitches, *“but don’t stop there, take Lady Luck and Karma’s miraculouses too.”*

“I!” Chloé clutches her head, “told! You! No!” She grits out.

“Come on, Chloé! Fight it!” Sabrina cheers.

“Why are you so protective of Lady Luck? What has Lady Luck ever done for you, hm? You can be a hero too. A hero more exceptional than Lady Luck.”

“Ex...?” The word echoes in Chloé’s brain repeatedly until something within *snaps*. The blonde falls to her knees screaming until the mask outline shatters and the akuma flies out of her necklace only to disintegrate mid-flap while trying to escape. Chloé’s eyes roll and she falls forward but Kagami catches her before she falls.

There’s a collective gasp from the roof. “Holy shit.” Alix mutters.

□□

The akuma’s sudden destruction ripples through Mme. Mite slamming her into the wall and breaking her transformation immediately. “Émilie! Duusu, close my feathers!” As his transformation ends, Gabriel holds Émilie as she wipes her bleeding mouth with the back of her hand curiously. “Émilie? Speak to me.”

“I’m fine.” She coughs out some blood. *Chloé Bourgeois* of all people not just fighting through an akuma possession but winning the fight? So much for controlling a girl so desperate for affection and attention she couldn’t control her own emotions. Maybe that’s why the akuma didn’t work? “I’ll just exude more control next time.”

“Émilie Charlotte Graham de Vasily, are you *purposely* targeting Chloé Bourgeois?”

Émilie shrugs Gabriel’s arm away, “don’t get preachy with me. Don’t you want another child?! If you aren’t willing to do whatever it takes, I will replace you with Chloé!” She shakily gets to her feet then slumps against the wall.

“I *am* willing to do whatever it takes, except lose you.” Émilie looks over her shoulder at him. “Your tactic is all wrong.” He adjusts his glasses, “Chloé idolizes Lady Luck. Loves her, even. She’ll never hurt Lady Luck unless Lady Luck hurts her first. That isn’t what we need anyway. What we need... is to target someone both heroes trust.” Émilie looks at him strangely. “Chloé has, in no uncertain terms, loudly stated her dislike of Karma; however, she will never harm Karma for fear of a falling out with Lady Luck.”

““Someone they trust?!’ Gabriel, there’s only two of them! The only people they trust are each other! And it’s not like we can find the damn guardian! *Fitting* they have the powers to fucking hide.”

Gabriel puts both hands on Émilie’s shoulders. “We don’t need the guardian. We need the Luckyblogger.”

□□

Sun, Dec 6th, 2020

Chloé suddenly springs up from her bed, “Lady Luck, I’m sorry!” She looks around her room in confusion, “huh? What in the hell...?”

“Chloé?!” Sabrina jolts upright then gets up from the chair beside the bed over to Chloé’s side. “Oh, Chloé!” She cries. “I’m...” She hiccups.

“What happened?”

“You fought off an akuma. It was the coolest thing I’ve seen! But it knocked you out for hours. It’s 12am now. How are you feeling?”

“Tired.” Sabrina hugs her and Chloé pats the bespectacled teen’s back, “I’m okay, Sabrina.” Sniffling, Sabrina nods against Chloé before letting go.

“I’ll let you rest. See you when the sun’s up. I’ll—”

“You aren’t going anywhere. You said it’s past midnight. Just stay in here and we’ll share the bed.”

Sabrina nods, “okay, I just gotta go to the bathroom first. Be right back.” Sabrina gingerly walks out of the bedroom. Both because of fear of peeing herself and the fact that her left leg fell asleep.

“I must say...” Gasping, Chloé turns toward her opened balcony door putting both hands over her mouth as she sees a tall woman in a tacky lavender gown and a large black butterfly mask covering most of her face walking into her suite from the balcony like it’s nothing, “you surprised me. No one has ever fought off one of my akumas before. You must be something quite... *special*. So special in fact, I just had to grant you my first personal appearance. Congratulations! You can tell *all* your little schoolmates you were the first to meet Mme. Mite in the flesh. You should feel honored. I don’t plan on making many house calls.” Heels clack against the hardwood floor as Mme. Mite gets closer to the bed. “Don’t be afraid, Chloé Bourgeois, I won’t hurt you. Not today. In the future, however, that truly depends on you.” Chloé’s eyes narrow, “*ah*, there’s that fire. I need your help, and I can compensate you for it.”

Chloé lowers her hands, “forget it! **I would never do anything to hurt Lady Luck!**”

“There you go protecting her again. Do you think she’d do the same for you?” Mme. Mite tks. “In any event, I’m not asking you to *hurt* Lady Luck. I’m not asking you to hurt anyone. Taking Lady Luck’s miraculous could be doing her a favor! Who wants all this added pressure all the time? I don’t even wanna keep this charade going. So tedious. I just want my wish granted so that I can go about my business.”

“What wish?”

Lavender-tinted lips curve into a cruel smile, “*oops*, I’ve said too much.” She shrugs, “not like there’s anything you can do about it. I’m honestly surprised you’re declining without hearing my offer. What if I was giving you what you *needed* to keep your maman in Paris? Or get rid of that pesky clumsy girl who infuriates you?” Chloé’s eyes widen and Mme. Mite shrugs again, “*but* I guess you’ll never find out. Simply put, Chloé Bourgeois, if you won’t help me *willingly*. I will force you into helping me. *Then...*” Her smirk widens, “*then* I’ll make you hurt your precious Lady Luck.”

“You’ll **never** win against Lady Luck!” Chloé snarls.

“Aww. Your faith in Lady Luck is admirable. Misguided, but admirable. I suggest you check your emotions regularly, little girl, you *never* know where an akuma is hiding. And *do* tell your precious Lady Luck about my visit. It’ll be distracting enough for her to lose that indomitable focus and all the more easier for me to grab her miraculous.”

“That won’t happen!”

Mme. Mite laughs, “oh? Well, what if I told you about the wish? When the ladybug—”

Chloé screams covering her ears, “stop! I won’t listen!”

“Fine. Your loss.” She walks back toward the balcony, “by the way, you shouldn’t sleep with your door unlocked. It’s just *inviting in* trouble.” Then she jumps off the balcony.” Chloé moves her covers out of the way and steps on the floor. She takes a step then looks down at her bandaged right foot. Determined, she walks over to the balcony door and locks it then puts a chair next to it for safe measure. Next, she texts Alya a summary of everything Mme. Mite just said to her then asks Alya to invite Lady Luck to the suite to hear everything.

With a sigh, she hobbles back to the bed and curls up under the covers hugging her yellow and red bandit bear tight.

Sabrina re-enters the room with a sigh of relief, “that was a close one.” She looks around, “Chloé?” She walks over to the bed, “Chloé? What happened?” Scowling, Chloé moves the covers. Sabrina frowns and climbs into the bed and hugs Chloé.

□□

“Hello, Kitty Section! This is Bob Roth congratulating you on winning the contest! There really was no competition with your song about Lady Luck and Karma. I’m interested in hearing more of your music. Free up your Sunday and meet me at my recording studio at noon.”

Émilie scoffs, “today *is* Sunday. Idiot.” She sets Adrien’s phone down. That ungrateful little shit wasn’t speaking to either of them since he was grounded. Her. Perfect. Son. Ruined! That’s what she gets for allowing him to enter public school. It’s enough to—Émilie gasps. Oh my. Grinning, Émilie picks up Adrien’s cellphone then goes to her bedroom.

Gabriel is looking through the closet when Émilie enters the room, “possess me with an akuma.” He turns around, bewildered. “Do you not *feel* my anger, Gabriel? Possess me!”

“Émilie, *I* can’t possess you with an akuma. *You* have the akumas. The most *I* can do is create an amok from something—” She holds out the brooch toward him, “no.”

“Gabriel—”

“Why do you want to be possessed? Just to see how it feels?”

“I’m going to trick Adrien into thinking he has permission to attend a recording session with his band. Then I’ll be so upset I’ll have to be possessed.” She holds out Adrien’s phone, “Nooroo, plant this somewhere Adrien can find it.”

“Nooroo, stop.” The startled kwami stares at Gabriel. “I thought we were going to target the Luckyblogger?”

“We are! In fact, why aren’t we doing that now!? She’s in Adrien’s class isn’tt...” Émilie

snatches the phone from Nooroo then puts the brooch back on and runs out of the room.

Gabriel puts a hand to his forehead, “she’s going to screw with everything with her impatience.” With a scowl, he walks out of the room then heads to Adrien’s bedroom because that’s no doubt where Émilie went.

Adrien is practicing playing the piano when he hears his parents arguing right outside his bedroom door. With a groan, he thumps his head on the piano keys. “What are you doing?” He jumps looking up at his parents frowning at him. “Never mind. Here. You are still grounded but I will be *damned* if you are excluded from a band song.”

Adrien stares at his phone, “what?”

“Your band won some contest and the right to create a song with XY. Go there, do the song, then come right back.”

Adrien nods accepting the phone handed to him, “thank you.” Then he gets up from behind the piano and walks into his walk-in closet.

“I was expecting a little more emotion.”

“That wasn’t *any* emotion.” Gabriel and Émilie exchange a glance then both smirk.

□□

Marinette left for Le Grand Paris to talk to Jagged and Penny about their commission; Juleka reluctantly got into the town car Roth Records sent for her and met up with the rest of Kitty Section there. It left Alya and Kagami to bond some more. They played video games and read comics, now they were doing each other’s nails. “What is your color called?”

“Plum, I think.” Alya wiggles her freshly painted toes, “I like it.” Kagami stares at her aquamarine-colored toenails. “What’s wrong? You don’t like your color?”

“I do. I’ve never applied nail polish before. I was hoping I did an adequate job with yours.”

“You did great. You’re very meticulous. So glossy and even.”

“Alya,” Nora leans against the doorway with a bored expression. Both girls look over at her. “Some loud girl called the house phone asking if you were dead because she’s been texting you all morning and you haven’t responded.”

Alya looks around, “huh. Must’ve forgotten to turn my phone on when I woke up. Thanks, Nora.” She nods then walks off.

“You take your phone off when you sleep?”

“Or silence it. Not like I’m using it. And we have a landline in case of emergencies. You keep your phone on?”

“No. I wouldn’t be able to hear it anyway. Though... come to think of it, I don’t think my phone even has any sounds on it.”

“We gotta fix that.” Alya gets up to retrieve her phone, “I have cartoon and video game sounds on my computer I download onto my phone.” She turns her phone on. “Shit, thirteen texts from Chloé?” Alya’s eyes widen, “fuckbucket shitballs! You gotta read these texts with me.” Alya unceremoniously plops down beside Kagami and shows her the texts from Chloé. Kagami gasps, eyes widening, then meets Alya’s eyes. “So my glasses prescription is good then? Chloé *met* Mme. Mite in person?”

“So it appears. Unless my eyesight is waning.” Kagami lolls her head from side to side, “Chloé *did* make an akuma disintegrate by screaming.”

“Girl’s got a powerful larynx for sure, but I don’t think it was just the screaming.” Alya pauses, “unless she’s got like banshee blood or something.” Another pause and Alya glances at Kagami who shrugs. “It must’ve been whatever she felt to do it, right? Akumas only appear because of taxing emotions. Isn’t that what Juleka said?”

Kagami nods with a frown, then snickers. “She wants you to tell Lady Luck about this.”

With a sigh, Alya scratches her head. “I read. Why does everyone think I have some kind of magical communicator that can contact Lady Luck and Karma whenever I want? My little sisters won’t leave me alone because I won’t introduce them to Karma. If I had that type of power *and everyone knew about it*, it would make me a liability!”

Kagami shakes her head, “no. You would never abuse that type of power. You are a smart,

trustworthy, reliable, remarkable young woman with uncompromisable ethics.” Alya smiles. “You know... it’s odd. Growing up, I watched television serials where one character would remark on how their life changed forever thanks to another character. I always thought ‘how could that be possible?’ after all you existed as long as you had without that person. But after I met you, I finally understood the feeling. You changed me for the better. It was you that caused me to make friends that I treasure, and I treasure you most of all. You were the first person to ever both confide and believe in me. Your courage emboldens me, your trust honors me, and best of all your presence calms me. I believe that makes us best friends, wouldn’t you?”

Alya beams, “hell yeah it does. We’re best friends...” She pauses, “I never had a friend before let alone a best friend.” Another pause, “do we need friendship bracelets? Our own language? A catchy jingle? Secret handshakes?”

“Yes, to all of that. However, I would like to embark on this best friend journey with a secret we should share.” Alya tilts her head to the left.

□□

“Welcome, Kitty Section!” Bob Roth does a quick headcount of the seven teenagers in the hall. He recognizes Agreste Jr. easily enough (though he’s damn surprised his parents allowed this. They seemed like the type of people who’d try to stop fun from happening at every opportunity). “Thank you for entering the contest. I’m hoping we do Lady Luck and Karma proud with a little reprise.”

The tiny, angry, pink-haired girl makes a buzzer noise and puts her hands on her hips. There is just *something* about the look of those angry whitish-blue eyes Robert Roth III will not consider fucking with. “You’re not gonna remix *our* song. This whole thing was to make a new song, wasn’t it?”

Bob Roth chuckles nervously. What a terrifying child! She looks like she could effortlessly toss him off the building’s roof! “Let’s record something new then? Something you can all agree on.” XY scoffs folding his arms over his chest. “I need to know your genre. Get the angle we’re jumping in from.” The band huddles together whispering then they separate.

“We’re a fusion of every type of music there is.” The tall black-haired boy says.

“That’s not much help, *but* it means we can go in any direction! Great! That means you can’t be pigeonhold. Pigeonholded? Pigeonheld? Follow me!” Everyone reluctantly gets into the elevator with Bob Roth. When they exit, he takes them to the recording room. “Sit wherever gives you inspiration. Now, what are your names?”

The blue-haired teen points to himself, “I’m Luka—”

“No, no, no. Your *bandnames*!” The kids all look among themselves confused, “you’re kidding! You need bandnames! *All* bands have aliases! You—” He points to the wide-eyed blonde just *radiating* sunshine, “what do you want your fans to know about you?”

She taps her chin, “that I’m all about the rage!” She replies with a far deeper voice than expected.

Bob Roth does a double-take. Unexpected, but strangely in a good way. “Keeping up with the cat thing you got going on. You will be known as Purrincess Rage.” She squeals in delight. “You—angry girl: Dynamittens.”

The pink-haired girl shrugs, “I have no problem with that.”

“Which of you is the lead singer?” They all point at the blonde. “huh. Who sang ‘Shoulder-to-Shoulder?’” They point at the blue-haired boy. “Ah. You... your aura. Serenading Paws!” The aforementioned teen scratches his head in confusion. Can’t please everyone. “Big Guy, what instrument are you on?”

“Me? I play drums.” He replies shyly.

“Drums, hm? Purrcession—”

“She’s *purr*-incess, you can’t have purr-cussion too. They sound too similar.”

Bob Roth frowns at the brunette, “*you* are gonna be Cattitude.”

The brunette frowns, “no, I’m not.” Great. *Another* one. What happened to the days where children were docile and not terrifying? He’s not sure what he would’ve done if XY wasn’t malleable.

“You’re more than welcome to input ideas.”

She frowns, “ooh!” The blonde perks up, “what about Catvalier? Or Catotic?”

“Rose, it doesn’t have to have the word cat in it.”

The blonde’s perkiness wilts somewhat. “I know.”

“I got it!” The pink-haired girl exclaims, “Clawestruck.” The brunette nods at her bandmate.

“Great. It’s settled. Back to the big guy! Catdenza!”

Everyone groans, “I... I don’t know.” The big guy replies, “I kinda like it.”

Bob Roth gives him a thumbs up then lastly turns to Agreste Jr., “and for you...? Golden Whiskers!” He opens his mouth but Bob Roth holds up a hand, “let it marinate. Everyone good?”

“You forgot Juleka.” The brunette says.

“Who?” He screams when a tall redhead is pulled from the shadows by the angry pink-haired girl. “O-Oh! You scared me. Um, *uh*... Moonlight Meows!”

“Moon*lit* Mews.”

He blinks at her, “even better! You know what else would work? If you all sang a line in the song!”

“I don’t *sing*.” Angry—Dynamittens says with narrowed eyes.

“R-Right. The rest of you sing, right?” They give half-assed shrugs and nods. Good enough. “Time to get to work!”

□□

Marinette walks into Le Grand Paris with Plagg and Fluff in her purse, along with the rabbit pocketwatch. She brought a bigger purse to accommodate both kwamis. She made sure to bring everything she might need in her sketches and designs bag The second time in twenty-four hours she’s in this hotel... not transformed. The lobby just *screams* wasting money at

you. “You’ll do great!” Fluff chirps from inside the purse. Marinette smiles at the kwami then makes her way to the receptionist’s desk.

“Hello, I’m here to see Jagged Stone?”

The receptionist looks her up and down with a scoff, “yeah? And I’m a descent of a king.” They shoo her. “Move along, kid. I’m not just letting anyone—” Plagg and Fluff hand her the backstage pass Penny gave her yesterday and she shows it to the receptionist, “...see.” They blink at the pass then sit up in their seat. “shit! Deepest apologies, mademoiselle. Y-You see... there are many, *many* people hoping to get an audience with M. Stone.” They awkwardly clear their throat, “I-I was just doing what M. Bourgeois told me to! M-M. Stone is in...” The receptionist looks around, “the luxury suite.” They whisper. “Take any elevator to floor twenty-seven and go to room 2701. Again, I’m very, *very* sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it.” The receptionist does a double-take then nods slowly. Marinette smiles then makes her way to the elevator with the receptionist scratching their head the whole time.

“Seriously?” Marinette glances down at her purse, “you’re too nice of a person, kit. I would’ve let them have it.” Fluff nods in agreement. Marinette smiles then lifts her head as the elevator opens.

Mylène gets out of the elevator then waves at Marinette, “hello, Marinette. What are you... *oh!*” She looks around, “you’re here for the commission.” She whispers. “I couldn’t think of any other reason why you’d come here.”

“That makes two of us.”

Mylène chuckles, “good luck.”

“Thanks. See ya.” Then Marinette gets into the elevator. When the elevator opens on the twenty-seventh floor, Plagg bristles. He opened the bag just a smidge to see the elevator person (seriously, they have *people to press the elevator buttons for you*) giving his kit the hairy eyeball when she told them the floor. Marinette gives Plagg a nice petting and the kwami calms down somewhat, only for him to get angry again when Fluff pushes him out of the way to get some pets for themselves.

Marinette knocks on the door. Penny opens the door and greets her then lets her inside. Jagged is strumming his guitar when Penny and Marinette walk into the suite. “Marinette!” Jagged shouts resting the guitar beside him.

Marinette waves. Penny directs Marinette to the chaise where Jagged's pet crocodile is laying. She may be tall but that doesn't mean she can't be eaten by an animal that doesn't need to chew. She sits on the chaise's arm. "First of all," Penny begins, "we'd like to thank you for coming. Rest assured that you will be properly compensated for giving us some of your time."

"I already got you an autographed jacket! Ooh, what about I throw in a CD too? Do kids still use CDs?" Jagged glances at Penny who shakes her head. He nods then looks back at Marinette, "a new phone then!"

"Why don't we focus on what you need me to design first?"

"Okay. But we're talking about the phone." Jagged picks up his guitar, "I need..." He strums loudly, "a new outfit~" He continues to play until Penny puts a hand on the guitar stopping him.

"Specifics would be helpful." Penny gives Jagged a knowing look and he sighs putting the guitar down.

"Fine. Fine." Jagged stands, "leather is lovely, no complaints. But I need a new fabric. All the kids have their own fabric and style. Clara Nightingale has that whole colorblock thing going on. Lina has her checkered thing. Carla's wardrobe is suede and other... cowpeople stuff. Even XY has his nylon tracksuits... for whatever reason."

"Uh-huh. If leather is your thing, why change it?"

"Because of *this*—!" He says dramatically. Marinette stares at him, then looks at Penny who is also staring at him. "Oh! I should *show you*." He picks up his phone from the side table. After angrily scrolling through, he walks over to Marinette and holds out his phone, "because of—"

"We got that part already."

Marinette squints at the low-light image of a man with long shiny black hair tied in a low flowing ponytail singing into a microphone; he's wearing a matching blood-red jacket and pants with a pair of knee-high black leather boots. "Do you see this?! See how hot he looks? I can't compete with that!"

“Who is he?”

“You don’t—! His stagename is ‘Harlow.’ A new face that just *popped up* in Europe. My. Home. Turf! And look, *look* at his social media! He’s more popular than XY!” Jagged pauses, “well, that’s not too big of a feat. But he is more famous than Tree Pixies!”

Marinette makes a face, “you mean *Three Nixies*.”

“What? What kind of name is that?” He shakes his head, “doesn’t matter! I could be next! And I can’t walk in heels!” Jagged clutches his head, “that’s why I need a new style!”

“What do heels have to do with anything?”

“His boots have heels.” Marinette squints at the phone, drawing it closer. “I can’t compete with that, and you know what? I don’t want to! I want a style that is all me. When fans go to the stores they say, give me *Jagged* made by Marinette Dupain-Cheng! So...? My favorite rockstar designer, will you help your best friend find his new style?”

“No one person owns the rights to wearing any sort of fabric, nor does anyone own the right to claim an entire continent as their 'home turf,'" Jagged shrugs sheepishly, "but I will help however I can. Let’s start with fabric options and all the color variants.” Marinette pulls out a binder from her backpack and opens it. There are fabric swatches stapled to pages and beneath the names are little dots of color representing all the available colors for said fabric.

Jagged’s eyes widen. “So... many... fabrics...” He lifts Fang’s head up so he can sit on the chaise next to Marinette.

□□

Chloé admires herself in her red and white polkadotted bandage dress. Lady Luck won’t be able to resist her in this. She even got her boot to match her outfit. Thanks to Markov, who received an extra petabyte of storage for his assistance, Chloé’s supersuit was in the process of being created. Several powers she never heard of... or the material the suit was made of but none of that mattered. She can figure everything out along the way. The only thing that mattered was she would get the opportunity to fight beside Lady Luck. “Well?” Sabrina wolf-whistles, “thanks! I hope Lady Luck arrives soon.” Chloé smooths out her dress, “it’s hard to breathe in this thing. Doubt I’ll be able to sit down.”

“I liked the other dress you had on. And unzip the dress if you can’t breathe.”

“The zipper’s on the bottom, I can’t risk it. I don’t want Lady Luck to undress me so soon, Sabrina.” Sabrina blushes, balking at Chloé’s leer. “The tighter the dress, the better. Makes me look like I’m bigger than 75B, right?”

Sabrina squints at Chloé’s chest, “*I suppose?*” Chloé pouts. “As hot as you look, it’ll all be for nothing if you pass out.”

Chloé groans, “*fine*. Unzip me.” As Sabrina unzips the dress Chloé takes a deep breath. “Whew. Let me try on another. What’s taking Lady Luck so long? I texted Alya since this morning!” Grumbling, Chloé steps into an all-red strapless bandage dress. “I—” As she’s being zipped up, Chloé looks over Sabrina’s head and screams. Lady Luck knocks on the closed balcony door. Behind Lady Luck, Karma is stretching forward touching her toes. “Lady Luck!” Chloé runs to the balcony and opens the door. “You’re here! Come in, come in! Like my dress? I had dozens made with you in mind! Are you hungry? I’ll have some hors d’œuvres brought up.” Chloé walks back into the suite and Lady Luck grabs Chloé’s hand with the yo-yo stopping her movement. “Hm?”

With a sigh, Lady Luck retracts the chord then walks over to Chloé holding her by the shoulders, “I understand you are grateful I am in your home, but let’s not forget the reason I’m here is not something to be grateful for.”

“There’s no akuma to worry about *now*, relax a little! Let’s take a picture.” Chloé motions Sabrina to take a picture of the two of them together. She puts her arm around Lady Luck squeezing them together. She smiles while Lady Luck sighs. Sabrina runs over and shows Chloé the picture. “Oh no! This won’t do. Why aren’t you smiling?”

“You don’t need me here. Can I go?”

“No.”

“Yes.”

Both Lady Luck and Chloé frown at each other. Sabrina subtly takes a few steps back until she’s sitting on Chloé’s bed.

“Chloé, you need to tell us everything that happened.”

“I know. Why else would I invite *her* here?”

“Trust me, Red Mummy 3, this is my personal hell.”

Chloé glares at Karma before turning back to Lady Luck. “Can’t I at least *enjoy* having you in my home without any immediate danger?”

Lady Luck sighs, “*fine*. One. Picture. And it must have Karma in it.”

Chloé groans, “okay.”

“Me too!” Sabrina jumps off the bed then runs over to the group. Chloé makes sure she’s on the edge so she isn’t in contact with Karma then she takes the picture of the four of them together smiling. Sabrina sighs happily then goes back on the bed.

“That’s a keeper.” She kisses her phone.

“Chloé...”

“I know, I know.” She kisses her phone one more time then clears her throat, “let me start from the beginning. I—” Sabrina loudly coughs. Chloé looks over to her with furrowed eyebrows until Sabrina makes a cut gesture at her throat then mouths the word *song*. “Right! Thank you, Sabrina, for reminding me! It all started Friday! That’s right, I nearly said Saturday! *Friday*, Adrikins got in trouble for sneaking the band Kitty Section into his home. Only *I* got in trouble for that too! Tante Émilie was furious with me and I had nothing to do with it!” Chloé sighs, “because of this, Adrikins got grounded and was unable to come to XY’s performance yesterday. So yesterday I was already feeling crummy, and if *that* weren’t bad enough one of my schoolmates decided to ruin my weekend. This obnoxious, clumsy goody-goody *everyone* loves named Marinette Dupain-Cheng. Jagged Stone was complimenting her style and even wanted her to design him an outfit! How ridiculous, right?”

“Correct me if I’m wrong, but according to your akuma testimony, wasn’t this the same schoolmate the reason behind your first akuma possession?” Karma asks, deadpan.

Chloé’s cheeks redden, “my second testimony cleared up that misinformation! My headache muddled my thoughts. Dupain-Cheng wasn’t any more annoying than usual, so there was no reason for me to go after her. Of course, prior to that day we weren’t certain akumas existed

and we could get revenge on people who annoy us.” Chloé shakes her head, “but none of that matters. Dupain-Cheng is a waste of talent and a waste to talk about.”

Karma’s ears twitch, ““talent?””

Chloé’s entire face turns red, “that’s what I said, and you’d better not tell this to her either! I hate her, understand? But I can also recognize she has a modicum of fashion prowess. I mean, not only is my maman absolutely obsessed but I even heard Oncle Gabriel praising one of her designs!” She gags, “disgusting. An absolute clumsy mess who trips over her own lanky limbs twice in one step *up one step* with that dopey grin and people just *gravitate* to her side!” Chloé balls up her fists, “then she got tall for like no fucking reason! She was shorter than Sabrina last year!” Lady Luck and Karma turn to Sabrina who makes a seesawing motion with her hands. “She just irritates me!”

“Why?” Lady Luck asks.

“Who cares why? People can dislike other people for no reason!”

“I agree with that, but this issue sounds deep-rooted.” Lady Luck turns around, “Sabrina?” The aforementioned girl sits up straight. “Has Chloé ever said anything about Marinette Dupain-Cheng that wasn’t at least ninety percent hateful?”

“Ten percent would have to be just once in a sentence, right?” Sabrina taps her chin. “On the last day of school last year, when Marinette was still short, she wore this *really* beautiful pink dress with a matching hat? Chloé said it was lovely despite who was wearing it. In fact, Chloé loved the dress so much that she searched—”

“*Sabrina, stop talking right now!*” With a *meep*, Sabrina covers her mouth. “You aren’t gonna let this go, are you?” Lady Luck folds her arms over her chest. Chloé sighs, “fine. I’ll tell you but only because you’re you. I hate Dupain-Cheng for many reasons but the main reasons is...” Chloé scowls, “she has the one thing I don’t. The one, possibly *only* thing all my money can’t buy!” Chloé takes a deep breath. “She has affectionate, supportive parents.” She mumbles.

Karma’s ears twitch. “What?” Lady Luck asks. “You may as well say it aloud because Karma already heard it.” Lady Luck jerks a thumb at Karma without looking at her.

“Dammit. Why don’t you just tell her then?”

“Actually, I’d like to hear the reason too.” Chloé turns to Sabrina who shrugs, “I always assumed you had a crush on her?”

“*Please*, Sabrina, that’s demented! Dupain-Cheng is a four in the appearance department.”

“You’re no catch.” Karma mutters.

Chloé’s eyes widen, “I heard that!” She points at Karma then lowers her hand with a scowl, “eww. I’m not gonna thank you for trying to make things less awkward.”

“You’re welcome.”

“I—” Chloé groans, “forget it! I said that I hate Dupain-Cheng because she’s popular without even trying! Wait, I *should’ve* said that! Okay, I can go through a list of the main reasons I hate her. But I said was...” She scowls, “Dupain-Cheng has parents that support her.” Chloé grumbles. “My parents support her! At least maman does. She drew one romper and suddenly my maman’s looking all over Paris for her.”

“Drew...? How did you know she drew a romper?”

“We were seated next to each other in class and I saw her draw it. I didn’t copy her idea! I just took the idea to do the inverse colors like she did, but maman didn’t believe me! My maman paid more attention to Dupain-Cheng in one afternoon than she has to me *my entire life*! It’s not fair! I only entered the stupid contest to get her to pay attention to me! I don’t want to design clothes! I wanna wear them! But maman said to schedule an appointment or enter the contest, otherwise stop wasting her valuable time.”

Karma gets a sudden chill and she looks over at Lady Luck seeing a dark look on her face. “Have you ever spoken to anyone about your domestic abuse, Chloé?”

“Abuse? My parents don’t hit me.”

“No, they’d have to be around to do that.” Lady Luck mutters darkly. Karma shudders again, “abuse is far from just physical. Your parents neglect you.”

“N-No! I see papa almost every day.” Chloé winces, “dammit. That felt wrong as soon as I heard it. B-But... he’s the mayor.” She argues weakly.

“What about after your first akuma possession?” Chloé turns to Sabrina angrily, “I’m not gonna lie to Lady Luck! Chloé’s parents are terrible! I finally get to say it aloud to someone other than my therapist. My papa is a lot of bad things but even he sometimes listens! Chloé’s parents never listen at all! And all your maman’s advice about fashion is wrong!” Chloé gasps in shock. “I was *there* when Chloé tried to speak to her papa about the akuma attack during school. He said he was on a call and he’d speak to her later, when she tried to press the issue he gave her his card and shooed her! And speaking of bad parents, Adrien’s are horrible too! All he did was sneak his friends into practice and he got grounded and his parents said he had to leave the band!”

“When did you start going to therapy?”

Sabrina looks away, “after All Saints’ Break.” She looks back at Chloé who nods with a frown. “You know! Alix also has or *had* a terrible parent but Marinette’s family adopted her. I hear Alix’s own family tried *killing her* on her birthday!”

An image flashes by Lady Luck’s eyes too quick to decipher. “If Marinette d-Dupain-Cheng didn’t cause the akuma, what did?”

“My pettiness and non-cat-related karma. I tripped Dupain-Cheng when she walked past me at the show, but she kicked my foot and broke it as she fell!” Chloé points to the red boot on her right foot. “I was trying not to cry because of the pain when I felt that cold numbness of an akuma. No anger. Just excruciating pain at a broken foot I caused myself. Mite tried to convince me to take what I wanted from Dupain-Cheng but not even an akuma can grant me that. Plus, I wasn’t going to fight you. I’ll never do anything to hurt you.” She sighs, “*or Karma*. I may dislike her but you don’t and hurting her will hurt you.”

“See? Disliking people for no reason. Don’t worry, I don’t like you either. Though I have plenty of reasons.” Chloé huffs, “Don’t get your tight dress bunched up further, I’ll still save you from an akuma.”

“Whatever. Anyway, Mme. Mite said...” Chloé scowls, “she said she could make me a hero. She said she could make me **exceptional**.” Sabrina springs up from the bed and runs over to Chloé hugging her. “That word...” She flexes her fingers angrily, “it’s the word my maman uses. The word she says about Dupain-Cheng. She even called a *dog collar* exceptional! But anything I’ve done? ‘Did you steal that idea?’ ‘I can’t believe *you’d* come up with that!’ What do I have to do to get my own maman to—” She gasps then frowns trailing off.

Lady Luck encouragingly puts a hand on her shoulder, “go on, Chloé. You will have no judgment here.”

Chloé sniffles, “I just want maman to love me.” She cries.

“You...” Chloé immediately stops crying and looks up at Karma, “oh boy. You have some ...redeeming qualities.”

“Oh? Like what?”

“I was hoping you wouldn’t ask.” Karma rubs the back of her neck, “uh—”

“You’re very brave.” Lady Luck continues and Karma sighs in relief. “And have incredible determination.”

“R-Right.” Karma nods in agreement, “to hell with your maman if she can’t see that. And I hope that girl didn’t give your maman the time of day.”

Chloé huffs a laugh, “ugh. Sad thing is I *know* Dupain-Cheng wouldn’t bother with my maman if she found out, but that would be terrible! One: the whole world goes outta whack when Dupain-Cheng and I aren’t mean to each other. I feel my skin crawl whenever she’s *nice* to me. What even is that? I will not tolerate niceness from her! And second, my maman is *The Queen of Fashion*! A snub is worse than a slap in the face! At least you can play a slap in your favor! If word gets out that Dupain-Cheng won’t work with my maman, it can get her barred from the fashion world! They’re petty, sadistic people who look for the next person to ignore and belittle! I would know! It’s the environment I grew up in.”

“That explains so much,” Karma mutters to Lady Luck who nods. “Wait. I’m confused. Why are you protecting Marinette? Wouldn’t her being barred from the fashion world be good for you? She wouldn’t be your concern anymore.”

“You think I haven’t given that thought? I’ve read articles about people my maman ‘dealt with.’ I don’t want that for her. I also don’t want to deal with Kubdel or her parents. Besides, I want the personal satisfaction of ruining Marinette Dupain-Cheng’s life with no outside interference. Furthermore, if Dupain-Cheng wasn’t around to harass life would get boring. When she had the flu last school year, class was so dull. Let me tell you what Mme. Mite looks like!” Chloé changes the subject, “she has this large black butterfly mask that takes up half her face. She was tall. Taller than Karma. Clearly, an adult who hadn’t aged gracefully. Had long stringy-looking lavender hair and her lipstick was the same color. She had on this flowing lavender mermaid gown. I’ve seen better.” Chloé sticks out her tongue in disgust, “she was just lavender on lavender on lavender. No wonder all her akumas are so tacky. I mean, *I wore a black and red figure skating dress*! And before that was that all-gold suit.” Chloé shudders, “eww. Oh! She said if I didn’t help she’d make me. Then she said something

about a wish. Does that sound familiar?” Lady Luck and Karma both shake their heads, “she started to tell me but I stopped her. I don’t want to know. I *shouldn’t* know. She just wants to tempt me into helping her. She said she could’ve helped me keep my maman in the city.”

“Mite needs to be guillotined.” Lady Luck says, “thank you for telling us this, Chloe. You’ve been very helpful.”

Chloé blushes. “I-I helped? She said this would distract you!”

Lady Luck shakes her head, “no, it strengthens our resolve to stop her.”

“How else can I help?”

“We appreciate the enthusiasm,” Karma wordlessly shrugs, “but I don’t see how unless you can prevent akumas from happening.”

“Now, *there’s* an idea.” Karma grins, “François Düpont needs to be purified of its akuma-causing aura.”

Chloé sighs, “papa says I can’t renovate the whole school. I asked when I first started attending.” Her eyes light up, “but if it’s for the good of the city, how can he say no?” She chuckles to herself. “‘The akuma prevention redecoration project!’ We can finish it up before school starts back for the new year! You aren’t completely useless after all, Karma.”

“Hold on, now. If we start with these half-assed compliments, we might start liking each other and no one wants that.”

Chloé smiles, “of course.” She takes out her phone and begins texting André.

“Good thinking, Chaton.”

Chloé pauses. Did she hear that right? She looks up from her phone seeing Lady Luck and Karma smiling at each other. “These half-baked ideas don’t cook themselves, you know.” The two of them chuckle. What is with all this flirty energy? And when did Lady Luck give Karma a nickname? Hmm. The only possible upside to this is it indicates Lady Luck does like girls.

Sabrina squeaks as her phone begins buzzing. “Oh no! An akuma just appeared at Roth Recording studio.” Lady Luck and Karma nod to each other.

“Roth—That’s where Adrikins is!”

“Don’t worry, we’ll deal with the akuma. Thank you for your help and hospitality, Chloé. Stay safe.” Blushing, Chloé nods. “Come on, Karma.” Lady Luck unlatches her yo-yo then winds it up, then she puts her arm around Karma’s waist and together they swing off the balcony.

□□

“I’m done with the song~” XY says proudly setting his paper down on the table in front of him. “Feel free to bask in my amazing writing talents.” He scowls when no one says anything. “I said—”

“O-Oh! I-I didn’t know we were supposed to announce when we finished.” Adrien says holding his paper close to his chest.

“Who cares about you? My lyrics are the only ones worth adding to the song.”

Ivan scratches his head with the pencil eraser, “man, I could use some help...” His eyes immediately go to Luka who is sitting in that uncomfortable-looking deep round chair. “Luka?” Luka looks up from his notepad to Ivan, “think you could help me?”

“Sure.” Notepad in hand, Luka gets up to head to Ivan. XY gets up and intercepts Luka before he reaches Ivan’s seat.

“*Here*. You’re the leader, aren’t you? Read mine. Better yet, *sing* it.”

Luka takes the paper with a scowl and skims it before holding it back out for XY. “This is supposed to be a thank you song for Lady Luck and Karma. These lyrics are all about *you*.”

“Yes. *Me* thanking them for keeping me safe.”

“No one is accepting this.”

With a huff, XY snatches the paper from Luka's hands. "Don't forget, Charity Case, this is *my* song!" He grumbles stomping over to his seat. Luka sighs then sits down next to Ivan.

"What did you need help with?"

"Everything!" Ivan groans.

XY gets up from his seat, "let's warm up our vocal cords!"

Luka walks over to XY. "We're not singing your song."

"Oh? Let's sing what *you* wrote then." XY smirks when Luka frowns, "nothing? Then—" XY pauses looking down at the paper in Luka's hands pressed against his chest. "Then let's sing, Pretty Boy."

"I'm confused!" Rose raises a hand, "we were coming up with songs? I thought we were making lists of everything we like about Karma and Lady Luck, and what we wanted to thank them for?"

"That's what we're *supposed to be* doing." Luka replies. "This—"

"Is your song for Chloé?" Alix asks, batting her eyelashes. Luka frowns. "Can't even deny it?" Alix tsks.

"Wait. Chloé came up with the whole contest idea just for her to have her song sang *by me* to Lady Luck, but Chloé didn't enter the contest."

"I wasn't able to think of that song plus this one."

"We're not singing Chloé's 'love song' to Lady Luck today or ever!" Alix shouts. She points at XY, "and we're not singing your song, your ego's inflated enough, you bleached pain in the ass."

"Bleached!? My hair isn't bleached!"

“Whatever.”

“I say we combine what we have written and pick out the best options to create lyrics.” The brunette suggests.

“I have the perfect thing for that.” XY walks into the closet and rolls out a rickety chalkboard. “I’ll go first!” He writes out a few words on the chalkboard. “There. Done.”

“Perfect. Talented. Eyecatching?” Jessica scoffs, “you aren’t referring to *yourself* again, are you? Those aren’t three adjectives anyone would associate with you.”

“Check my fanbase, babe.”

“I’m not your *babe*, you misogynistic, entitled, bleached dipstick!”

“This. Is. My. Natural! Hair! Color!”

He flinches when Jessica points to him, “there isn’t an ounce of realness or talent within you! All of your songs are pretentious and repetitive!”

XY balls up his fists glowering. “You don’t know anything! I don’t even write my own songs! Papa has people to do that for me!”

“*Papa!*?” The band looks among one another confused and disturbed.

“That’s right, Bob Roth is my papa! And you know what else he does well? Gets rid of annoyances. You can all easily be replaced. No one knows the members of this band’s names and thanks to papa, no one ever will.”

“Pretty arrogant for a talentless hack,” XY snarls, “if you didn’t suck, you wouldn’t need people coming in trying to save your dismal career from careening off the edge of its tracks. And you know something else, Cow Grass? If you think that I will ever allow a prick like you the opportunity to ask out my best friend, you’ve reached an undiscovered plane of existence!”

“*You* don’t have any say in who Marinette dates or doesn’t date! I’m going to date her. Know

why? Because I always get what I want! I'm Xavier-Yves Robert Roth and what I want is Marinette Dupain-Cheng. Marinette is the perfect girl for me. She's just as beautiful and talented as I am."

"You disgusting creep!" Rose yells, "Marinette is the sweetest person on this planet! She's not some trophy girlfriend you get to show off! She deserves a partner that's her equal! And that sure as hell isn't you!"

"How dare you even think you deserve someone like Marinette?!" Jessica huffs.

"You're just the lowest of the low." Juleka mutters.

"Only Marinette gets to say who she gets to date." Ivan says with a scowl. "And trust me, she would never in a billion years pick someone like you!"

"You're all just jealous!" XY smugly tugs on his scarf, "Marinette made this for me."

"Marinette is a designer, you asshat." He glares at Jessica, "she made *the entire roller derby league* outfits! Get over yourself. You aren't anything special. And that scarf was not *made for you*, she only gave it to you because she's a considerate person. Not because she has any feelings toward you."

Alix tackles XY to the ground straddling his body, "you listen to me, you pathetic human cockroach, I would kill for Marinette without hesitation. And killing you would be easy. You think Marinette can be bought? Well, think again!" XY's eyes widen as Alix lifts her hat and takes out the diamond pendant he gave Marinette. "Don't you *ever*—" Her eyes flash white briefly, "—disrespect my best friend again!" Dropping the pendant on XY's chest, Alix gets up then dusts herself off. "Fuck this contest. I'm outta here."

"Wait up, Alix!" Rose angrily turns to XY. "I don't wanna be in this room any longer either. I'm telling Marinette exactly the type of person you truly are!" She huffs then walks after Alix.

Clutching the pendant in his hand, XY gets to his feet, "and just what are you going to tell her in your jealous rage? That I'm determined? Willing to do whatever I can to get what I want? No, what I *deserve*?"

"The only thing you deserve is an ass-kicking." Juleka utters.

Luka sighs, “how are you not getting it, XY? You’re not treating Marinette like a person. Just something to claim ownership of. She isn’t going to want anything to do with you if you continue.”

Alix rolls her eyes, “you gonna try *healing* him too?”

Luka frowns, “I’m sick of your bad attitude.”

“Aww, boohoo. Serenade me a river, you fucking hypocrite. You started this preachy helping tirade and all you’ve been doing is putting down anyone who doesn’t wanna help you help! You think helping Chloé is gonna make you a saint or ascend you to godhood? Guess what? Karma isn’t gonna care about your dumb song! And when she hears what you’ve been doing in some pathetic attempt to seem like a decent person in her eyes, she’s gonna hate you forever.”

“Why are you so hateful?”

“I’m not hateful!”

“How dare you say that about Alix!” Rose yells. “Who do you think you are?!”

“Everyone shut up!” Adrien screams. Everyone stares at him. “What’s the matter with all of you? You all hate Luka because he wants to help Chloé? That’s the most judgmental thing I’ve ever heard! And you all now hate XY because he has feelings for Marinette?”

“What conversation were you listening to? Nobody hates anyone.” Ivan says, “we all dislike Chloé because she personally made our lives hell. Luka hasn’t experienced any of that and downplays what we went through with his victim-blaming. And saying Alix is hateful!? She’s one of the most loving people ever! She gets angry because she cares! And XY’s feelings for Marinette are as fake as his tan!” Ivan points at Adrien, “and you have a lot of nerve calling us judgmental while judging us!”

“Akuma!” XY screams. Everyone stops yelling and looks around. The akuma flies into the carpet then everyone shudders and the mask outline appears over all of their faces simultaneously.

Juleka clutches her head as Mme. Mite laughs in her hand, “no, not again!” She repeatedly slams her head into the wall until the mask outline shatters from around her face. Juleka

holds her head with a groan then gasps as the others are transformed into anthropomorphic cats holding onto their musical instruments.

“Juleka!” The blue cat runs over to her, grabbing her hand. Juleka jerks her hand away and the mask outline appears over his face, “it’s gonna be okay, Juleka.” Juleka steps on his foot then runs off.

The white and yellow striped cat swings his microphone cord overhead, “looks like we’ve got a live one~” He sing-songs.

Before the cord can reach Juleka, Lady Luck’s yo-yo string wraps itself around Juleka’s waist pulling her out of reach and into Lady Luck’s arms. The mask outline appears over all seven of their faces, “Lady Luck and Karma! You two may have the symmetry, but a duo hardly compares with a band 🎵”

Lady Luck’s left eye twitches, “they’re singing.” She says flatly.

Karma massages her forehead, “I just got a headache. Hey, can’t we settle this like civilized talking animals?” The band ready their instruments. “Guess that’s a no.” Lady Luck grabs Karma then they both protectively cradle Juleka as they jump out the window.

“Give me back my sister!” The blue cat howls.

They ran from the recording studio but Kitty Section didn’t give chase. “They can’t leave the building.” Juleka explains, “the akuma is in the floor in the recording room. We were all standing on it.”

“How come you weren’t affected?” Lady Luck asks.

Juleka wraps her arms around herself, “I was. But I-I couldn’t take it again. I slammed my head against the wall until she got out of it. I’m angry at my brother but I don’t want any more evilness to influence him.”

Karma puts a hand on Juleka’s shoulder, “don’t worry. Double L, I know we didn’t have any practice but I think we should challenge Kitty Section to a battle of the bands.”

Lady Luck grins, “excellent idea. Juleka Couffaine, what we’re about to show you must remain a secret.” Covering her mouth with both hands, Juleka nods. Lady Luck draws a circle

on her yo-yo and it opens. Juleka's eyes widen. It's like there's an alternate dimension inside the yo-yo. Lady Luck dips into the yo-yo and pulls out a gold chain with an orange and white hook-shaped pendant. Lady Luck lowers one of Juleka's hands and puts the chain in it. The pendant changes from a hook into a lightning bolt once it's in Juleka's palm. "This is the miraculous of the fox. It grants its wielder power to create illusions."

"We need you to use it in order to help us save Kitty Section. You were strong enough to break free from Mite's control at great risk to yourself. That's the type of hardcore thinking we need. Can you help us?"

Juleka nods fastening the chain around her neck, "Mite will pay for this." The pendant glows bright orange then a beam of light shoots from it forming a creature.

"Guardian. Whoa, is this Plagg's kit? Oh! Is this mine? Hey! I'm Trixx. Kwami of illusions." They bow. "Good to meet you..."

"Juleka."

"Killer name." Trixx floats around Juleka's head, "to transform you must say, 'Trixx, intro.' Simply enough, to cancel the transformation you say 'Trixx, outro.' Understand?" Juleka nods slowly. "Lady Luck, Karma, and I believe in you. You were selected for my miraculous because you exhibit cunning and courage. I feel this."

"Do you think she could be an avatar?" Lady Luck whispers to Karma.

"Could be?" Karma whispers back. "But we don't know what the other avatars are avatars of?"

Juleka stands, "Trixx, intro!" They stare at Juleka in awe. The first time either of them has ever seen someone else transform. An orange light engulfs Juleka. When the light fades, Juleka is standing there in an asymmetrical colored bright orange and black catsuit with large black ears with orange tips and a long orange tail with a black tip. Her left arm is black with orange fingertips while her right is orange with black fingertips. She has a poofy black skirt around her waist and her flute is through her skirt's belt loops. Her hair is tied into a high ponytail showing off her fox mask that covers her entire face that has a broken smile on the bottom.

"Badass." Lady Luck and Karma utter.

“What are we calling you?” Lady Luck asks.

“Whistler.” Her mechanical voice replies.

“Badass.” They repeat.

“Right. Karma, pick a miraculous.” Nodding, Karma digs into the yo-yo and pulls out a pink anklet. “The pig?”

“If negative energy brings about an akuma, why wouldn’t positive energy send it away?” She shakes the anklet with a grin. “Now you pick one.”

“I picked the fox.” They both turn to Whistler. Her mask tilts downward and she looks(?) into the yo-yo. “You select one. We’ll tell you what it is when you pick it.”

Nodding, she dips her left hand into the yo-yo and pulls out an orange feather barrette. “Ooh, that’s a good pick.” Karma says with a nod as Whistler drops the barrette into her gloved hand. “That is the chicken miraculous. It grants its wielder the power...” Karma gasps then she and Lady Luck stare at each other.

“Of sound!”

Whistler nods, “badass. Now what?”

Karma hands off the barrette to Lady Luck, “now, the two of us will each find one person we think is trustworthy enough to temporarily wield the miraculous in our hand and help us even our numbers.”

“Solid plan. I’ll keep watch.”

“Meet back in ten minutes?”

“Sound good.” They both jump onto other roofs in the opposite direction.

Whistler unlatches their flute from their skirt loops and uses it like a telescope.

my cherished friends

Chapter Summary

Lady Luck and Karma's bond continues to strengthen, but it isn't solely their bond with each other that gives them strength

Chapter Notes

A/N: Because I feel like it, I'm giving Zoé brown eyes.

As Félix is a completely different character, courtesy of the North American Quantic Kids, Adrien's asshole cousin who sometimes impersonates him is named Avril who is nonbinary.

Sun, Dec 6th, 2020

"Alya," Alya and Kagami look up from their freshly painted toenails to Nora leaning in the doorway with a bored expression, "some loud girl called the house phone asking if you were dead, because she's been texting you all morning and you haven't responded."

Alya looks around, spotting her cellphone on her computer desk. "Must've forgotten to turn my phone on when I woke up. Thanks for the heads up." Nora nods then walks off. Alya cautiously stands on her heels, minimizing the risk of having her toes release from the toe separator, then retrieves her phone and sits back down on the floor. She turns her phone on then hums the chime. "Shit. Thirteen texts from Chloé?" Before Kagami can comment, Alya's eyes widen considerably. "Fuckbucket shitballs! You gotta read these texts with me!" Alya slides over to Kagami, mindful of their toes, then shows her phone. "You reading what I'm reading? I'm not overdue on my glasses prescription yet? Chloé *met* Mme. Mite, in person?"

Kagami nods slowly, "so it appears. Unless my eyesight is waning." She lolls her head from side to side, "remember, Chloé *did* make an akuma disintegrate by screaming at it just yesterday."

"Girl's got a powerful larynx for sure, but I don't think it was just the screaming." Alya pauses, "unless she's got like banshee blood or something." Another pause. Alya glances at

Kagami who shrugs. “It must’ve been whatever she felt to do it, right? Akumas only appear because of taxing emotions. Isn’t that what Juleka said?”

Kagami nods with a frown then stares at the phone and chuckles. “Did you read this last text? Chloé wants you to tell Lady Luck about this.”

Alya hangs her head with a heavy sigh, “I read. Why does *everyone* think I have some kind of communicator to contact Lady Luck or Karma whenever I want? My little sisters won’t leave me alone because I won’t *properly* introduce them to Karma. If I had that type of power *and everyone knew about it*, that would make me a liability!”

“I don’t think so. You are a smart, trustworthy, reliable young woman with uncompromisable ethics. You would never abuse any power given to you.” Alya blinks at Kagami. “In fact, I’m certain of it. You know... that has me thinking. I’ve changed so much in a few months, and you were instrumental in that change.” Alya points to herself in surprise. Kagami nods with a smile. “Growing up, I watched television serials where one character would remark on how their life changed forever thanks to another character. I always thought, ‘how could that be possible?’, after all... you existed as long as you had without that person. It wasn’t until I met you that I finally understood that feeling. Your introduction to my life changed me for the better. It was your warmth that allowed me to make friends that I cherish. And of all my cherished friends, I cherish you the most. You were the first person to ever both confide and believe in me. Your courage emboldens me, your creativity inspires me, your trust honors me, and best of all your presence calms me. I believe that makes us best friends, wouldn’t you?”

Alya beams, “hell yeah it does. We’re best friends...” She pauses, “I never had a friend before let alone a best friend.” Another pause, “do we need friendship bracelets? Our own language? A catchy jingle? Secret handshakes?”

“Yes, to all of that. However, I would like to embark on this best friend journey with a secret we should share.” With a wide smile, Kagami takes off her pink earrings then holds her hand toward Alya, “I never want to lie to you. Because I have no intention of breaking your trust. You are, after all, the one who taught me to trust when you showed me trust first.” Alya stares at the earrings until Kagami gestures for her to take them. Alya holds out her hand and Kagami gently drops the earrings in her palm. They physically change color from pink to green when they land in Alya’s palm.

“Whoa.” She picks up an earring with her other hand and holds it close to her glasses examining it, “magic, color-changing jewelry?” She gasps, “they even changed shape! This is such a cool thing to share.” She hands the earrings back to Kagami who immediately puts them back on, “do they do anything else?”

“Yes, I’m glad you asked. Tikki, spots on.” Alya watches something bright pink fly into

Kagami's right earring. Alya's jaw drops as Kagami changes to Lady Luck before her very eyes.

When the spots fade from behind her eyelids, Alya opens her eyes and gapes. "Y-You...!" She takes her glasses off then rubs her eyes, then she rubs them once more for good measure before putting her glasses back on. "Oh man. *You're* Lady Luck." She whispers. "That's so badass." She pauses, "*you* are so badass! So when you mentioned trusting—"

Lady Luck nods, "the copy akuma, yes."

"I-I'm honored you are sharing this with me but... best friend or not why are you sharing this with me?"

"Tikki, spots off." The pink light shoots out of Lady Luck's left antenna reverting her back to Kagami. "Because I have to check in on Chloé and I couldn't bear the thought of coming up with some flimsy excuse to disappear. I'm having so much fun here with you and I don't want to go but I have to."

"Aww. Kagami, you're so—what in the fuck is that?!" Alya stares at the floating ...thing beside Kagami, "d-did that thing just come out of your earring?"

Kagami nods, "Alya, this is Tikki. She powers the ladybug miraculous. Tikki, meet Alya."

Tikki nods beaming, "and I'm very pleased to finally meet you, Alya. I'm grateful Kagami has someone to rely on, who also sees her creative spirit and allows it to shine. The guardians *never* wanted our wielders to tell anyone about the miraculouses, but a lot of the rules they decided upon were iffy at best and ignorant at worst. Miraculous wielders work together better when they're forming a positive bond. I can already feel the strength of your bond." Tikki inclines her head, "so, thank you."

Alya bows her head in reply, "thank you for thanking me. And it wasn't difficult forming a bond with Kagami, she *is* the definition of badass." Kagami chuckles, "if you power the miraculous, you'd have to be with Kagami all the time then? In case the dramatic duo wanna start shit?" Tikki nods, "Kagami and I aren't in the same class. I guess I could cover for her with a text? How would that work?"

"That is something we can figure out at a later date. I would like to suggest, Alya, that you – as Kagami's confidant – are given a miraculous to protect yourself as well as help her and Karma out." Alya's jaw drops.

Kagami turns to Tikki in surprise. “You can do that?”

“With the box in your possession, *you* can give anyone you want a miraculous.” Tikki answers.

“Hmm... other than Alya, of course, I believe Karma and I should select our candidates together.”

“‘Karma?’” Alya repeats, “you don’t know who Karma is? I mean, like, without her miraculous?”

“The short answer is no. Kwamis,” Tikki gestures to herself, “are forbidden from interfering with their wielders' natural bonding process. Bubbles float from our mouths when we speak the name of one wielder to another. Due to this irritation, I cannot say whether or not Lady Luck and Karma know each other as civilians.” Tikki grimaces. “Even saying that sentence was trying.” A lone pink bubble floats from Tikki’s mouth. “Kagami told me that you are the only person equally important to Kagami as you are to Lady Luck.”

“Wow. I had no idea.” Alya rubs the back of her neck, “I’m glad I helped you out, Kagami. Really. And you know, you helped me out a lot too. Your meditation techniques actually *work*. And I went to three different therapists to find ways to handle my ADHD both with and without medication.”

“It was... difficult finding something that worked. Meditation helps a lot with my anxiety. My maman didn’t want me medicated on top of ...everything but now that she’s changed, perhaps she’ll allow me?” Alya nods encouragingly. “I think we should... speak of this more later. I just realized your door is wide open.”

Alya turns around, “huh. So it is. Weird. I normally can’t go ten minutes without—”

“Alya!” Etta yells.

“And there it goes. Hey! I know. Let’s have a sleepover at your place tomorrow? That way I can be your emotional support when you ask your maman. Plus, we could talk about our friendship bracelets, oh and the magical items.”

“That would be wonderful, Alya. You truly keep on giving.”

“Alya!” Etta screams again, followed by a loud shatter.

“Aw hell. Look, you’d better book before the whole house shows up.” Kagami nods then quickly hugs Alya before running out of the room.

□□

From the balcony, Sabrina and Chloé both swoon as they lean against each other watching Lady Luck and Karma swing away.

The suite door suddenly bursts open, but neither girl can hear it on the balcony. “Useless! You are utterly useless!” Audrey fumes storming into the suite with André trying to match her pace. “You don’t have even a single iota of fashion knowledge! You are a **waste** of the genetics you’ve been blessed with!” She stops walking suddenly and André bumps into her, then she turns to André. “As you *graciously* decided, on your own, Zsöphyá will no longer require education, at her very prestigious finishing school, she is now officially *your* problem.”

“‘Problem?’ She isn’t a *problem*, she’s your daughter!”

“Exactly! **My** daughter that **you** thought **you** could decide the future for! You didn’t want Charmainé Cloris in a finishing school, and even though I disagreed I still respected your decision because she is your daughter too. But that wasn’t enough for you, was it? You had the fucking gall to go behind my back and decide I don’t know what to do with my own kid! Do you think her papa was doing anything?! Do you think he ever did anything!? No! That’s why *I* was paying for the schooling! *That’s* why we got divorced when I met you! Do you have any idea how fucking long I was on that goddamn waiting list to be interviewed for the interview for the possibility of having her enroll!?”

“Far longer than you’ve spent with either of your daughters!” Audrey gasps in outrage.

While André and Audrey argue, the blonde, forced in a pink t-shirt dress and matching pink flats courtesy of Audrey, ventures over to the open balcony. She sees a blonde and a bespectacled orange-haired girl in the chairs chatting.

The orange-haired girl does a double take in her direction. “Gah! Who are you!?” She shrieks.

“My name is Zsöphyá.”

The two girls glance at each other. That all-too-familiar glance the blonde sees whenever she introduces herself, “can you spell that?” The orange-haired girl asks, hesitantly.

“Z-S-Ö-P-H-Y-Á.”

The two girls nod at each other. “Audrey.” Zsöphyá blinks at them. The orange-haired girl moves her feet to the side and pats the vacant spot on the chair. Zsöphyá thanks her as she takes the offered seat.

“We’re saying you were definitely named by Audrey Bourgeois.” Says the orange-haired girl. She glances at the other girl with a smile, “and all this time I thought she was cruel for the names she gave you.” The blonde merely sips her drink through her straw with narrowed eyes. “I’m Sabrina and that is Charmainé Cloris.”

With a sigh, the girl lowers the straw. “Chloé is fine.” Sabrina chuckles until Chloé glares at her. “I don’t think maman put much thought into the impact my ‘unique’ names would have... or the teasing it would produce.” She finishes with a grimace, “and I suspect the same goes for you.”

“You know...” Sabrina taps her chin, “I can’t imagine T—*Audrey* naming a child that isn’t hers.” She gasps, “that means you have a sister, Chloé!” She squeals. The blonde chokes on her drink and the orange-haired girl jumps to her feet and pats her on the back. “Sorry! Sorry! I was just so excited!” A pause, “hey! Since she goes by Chloé, why don’t we call you Zöé?”

“Uh, sure. Why not?”

“How old are you, Zöé?” Sabrina asks, sitting back down. “And where are you from? I’ve never heard an accent like yours before.”

“I’m fourteen,” Sabrina squeals then mimes zipping her mouth closed, “uh... I was born in—*wait.*” She shakes her head. “I had this same trouble on the plane with someone who didn’t speak English. Last thing I want is to be known as that ignorant American who believes everyone knows everything about her country. *I* don’t even know everything about my home country.” Zöé takes a deep breath, “I was born and raised in North America, in the United States specifically the state of New York. It’s in the northeastern part of the continent. Continent?” A pause. “Yeah. My papa is a travel agent but he instead stuck me in a boarding school while he got to see the whole world.”

“Did they teach you French in your school?”

Before Zöé can reply, Sabrina squeals again. “Are you twins? You two could be twins! When’s your birthday?”

“January 2nd.” Sabrina instantly deflates. Zöé eyes her carefully. “papa said that Audrey said she knew I was going to be a handful because I came a day later than intended and she missed out on getting a New Year’s baby and the cash prize that comes with it.”

Still deflated, Sabrina taps her chin. “Chloé’s birthday is in August. So, *theoretically*, you two should still be twins being seven months apart.” She sighs heavily, “but I doubt it. Still! You two are sisters! Chloé is the closest thing I have to a sister. My papa is engaged to be engaged with the worst woman on the planet and her equally horrible daughter. Wouldn’t surprise me one bit if she was Mite.” She grumbles.

“That reminds me. The future you told me about where you...” Chloé clears her throat, looking around uncomfortably. “There is no way in hell I would allow that. I had to have been removed from the picture for you to even consider—” Chloé shakes her head. “**You** are the world to be Sabrina Elizabeth Raincomprix. The only person on the planet that I love more than Lady Luck. I will never, ever forgive myself if anything happens to you.” Chloé takes a deep breath. “From this moment, you will be living here with me.”

“Wait, really?”

“If those bitches back you into a corner, we’ll blow out the back wall. You aren’t gonna live in constant misery so long as I’m around.”

Sabrina tears up, “oh! Thank you, Chloé! Thank you!” Chloé gets up and hugs Sabrina.

Zöé looks on with a smile until her dress *pinches*. “So, uh, hate to break up this heartfelt moment but do you have anything I could wear, Chloé? This dress is itchy.”

“Well, I suppose I could spare some clothing for my big sister.” She pauses, “feels weird to say that.” She shrugs. “Come on.” She helps Sabrina up then holds out a hand and Zöé takes it. They stop at the balcony doors seeing André and Audrey arguing. “For fuck’s sake.” Chloé groans. “What are they yelling at each other for now?”

“Me. My school contacts M. Bourgeois whenever anything parental was required. I mean, he

told me they call Mme. Audrey who then calls my papa, Howard, who then calls back Audrey, who lastly calls the school and tells them to call M. Bourgeois.” Sabrina whistles. “Anyway, I was suspended for ‘ill-conduct’ and he got me out of the school. But he never told Mme. Audrey. I’m guessing the school contacted her and she actually took the call.”

“‘Ill-conduct?’ Were you caught having sex on school grounds or something?” Sabrina asks. They walk around Audrey and André as the two continue to argue.

“Sabrina, *please*, no sibling of mine would...” Chloé pauses then looks Zöé over, “well I suppose we wouldn’t’ve been siblings then.” She looks Zöé over again, “you... didn’t, right?”

Zöé’s cheeks flush bright red, “n-no! Nothing like that! And we were always siblings, even if we never knew about each other.” Chloé and Sabrina share a glance that has the latter shrug in response. “I was getting a tattoo.” She moves some of her hair by her neck right under left ear revealing a starfish tattoo colored with the lesbian pride flag colors.

Chloé gasps, “at school!? You could’ve gotten a disease or something!”

“I didn’t do it at school! I went to the tattoo parlor. I guess the ‘ill-conduct’ was me sneaking out of the school past curfew to get the tattoo,” A pause, “and probably the tattoo itself.”

Sabrina’s eyes light up, “ooh! You’re a bad girl then?”

“W-Wha—? I—*No!*”

“Bad girl, hm? I could definitely put together an outfit with bad girl lesbian aesthetic. I’m still figuring out whether or not I like boys. Girls are a no brainer but boys are just no brains.” Chloé shakes her head with a sigh, “so I’ll hold off on any orientation tattoos, but kudos to you for owning what you are. As we kinda look alike, in exchange for the clothing you have to let me dress you up. You could be that lifesize Barbie doll papa broke and still hasn’t bought back.”

“I—” Zöé sighs with resignation, “yeah, fair. Just don’t throw something crazy on me and immediately take me outside? I don’t know what my aesthetic or style is yet, I’ve been wearing school uniforms my whole life.”

“I was gonna say you look like you were forced into that dress. Even before you said it was itchy.” Sabrina says with a grimace. “And that definitely looks like a pink version of the dress —”

“Sabrina!” Sabrina *meeps*, snapping her mouth shut. Zœé eyes her briefly before looking back at Chloé. “Don’t you worry, big sis. Whatever I don’t have in my closet we can buy. You’ll be the most stylish girl around, next to me. And since we’re related, we have to keep up appearances. I’ll tell you everything you need to know. You’re likely going to be attending our school, François Düpont. It’s filled with unpolished cretins. Sabrina and I will prepare you fully.”

“Uh, thanks?”

□□

“Hello all out there in the physical world! It is I, your machinery maven, Azami Tsurugi, here unveiling to you my latest technological marvel. Tsurubeans. They’re all-purpose assistance devices you don’t need wires for. Smarter than smart devices, is what I’d call them. Just stick them onto your body and they read your temperature, heartbeats, all that stuff! Now when I say ‘stick,’ I don’t mean any messy residue or abrasive material.” The woman in the commercial holds out her hand and sticks a brown bean-like device onto it. She moves her hand up and down and the device doesn’t move. “They interact with your body’s natural temperature and read your vitals. They don’t even require charging! They are the future! And they will be hitting cities, well, today! And Paris is the first city I am unveiling them to! Consider yourselves lucky!”

Nodding to himself, Markov picks up the pencil with his claw and writes a note on the notepad in front of him as he sits at his charging station. Through the television screen, he sees the reflection of Lady Luck. (Ironically, as the next commercial is about Lady Luck.) He turns around then sees Karma land on the same roof as Lady Luck. They speak briefly then begin looking around the roof. On the building across from theirs. Curious, Markov flies out of the bedroom window and flies to the roof across the street. “Greetings. Lady Luck and Karma. I would like to apologize for the chaos I caused with my page.”

They both blink at him then gasp. “We need to know where you live!”

Max reenters the bedroom to see Lady Luck and Karma sitting in his window waving. Markov flies over to Max, “they’ve come for your assistance!” He chirps happily. “And they say they would enter but their shoes are magically linked to their outfits and therefore cannot come off.”

“Ah. Well, then. If they need my help, I can go on the luckyblog after—”

He stops when Lady Luck shakes her head, “we don’t need the luckyblog. We need *you*,

Max.” Max points to himself in disbelief; both Lady Luck and Karma nod. “Max Kanté, we have come before you because we value your insight.”

“And you’re super trustworthy.” Karma says and Lady Luck nods in agreement, “we would like you to help us fight Kitty Section—”

“Though hopefully *fighting* will not be necessary.” Karma makes a seesawing motion with her right hand.

“I’m flattered to be considered, but what could I do to help? I don’t have magic, and I can’t really say I’m musically inclined.”

Karma smiles, “you could help us just by being yourself, Max. That’s all we or anyone could or should ask of you.”

“I-I...” Max frowns, “this is unexpected.” He pauses, “I’m sorry for appearing impolite. It’s just... in my experience, whenever I am specifically asked for it’s due to my intellect. Everyone appears jovial and supportive until the task is complete, then they go back to ignoring my existence.”

“Ah! I forgot you were a genius!” Lady Luck exclaims.

Max does a double take. “Wait. You *what*?!”

“I completely forgot.” Lady Luck repeats, “I considered you solely based on the fact that you’re trustworthy and reliable. Although those are two reasons.”

“I did remember you were a genius but I too wanted you to work with us because you’re trustworthy. And we’d like to be your friend. And those assholes that discarded you will get their due.” Max suppresses a shiver at the look in Karma’s eyes. “Anyway!” Her eyes resume their normal brightness—although now that he’s looking, Max never realized her pupils were slit like a cat’s. “We’d never force you into anything you’re not comfortable with—”

“Wait, wait!” Markov pleads. “Don’t give up so easily! Max could provide tremendous help!”

“No doubt, but we weren’t given a choice to do this. We can’t do that to someone else.”

Max tilts his head to the left. “You two were *forced* to be heroes? Who would do something so callous?”

“He calls himself Cosmic Colt.” Lady Luck replies. “He *was* the guardian of all the miraculouses presently in use in the city.” Markov gasps, “he lost the miraculouses that are in the possession of Mite and Méfait and he gave us our miraculouses to try and retrieve them but he and his miraculous-wielding partner have not provided us with any help or training.”

Karma frantically waves her arms as much as she’s able in the window, “we didn’t tell you that to guilt you into helping! You asked and we figured you have the right to know.” Karma’s baton begins beeping, “what the hell?” She unlatches her baton then a screen pops up with Whistler’s face. Max stares at the individual with the (creepy) fox mask projected from Karma’s baton screen. “Wow. You’re better at this than we were starting out.”

“Not really. I hit the button by mistake. Anyway, you two better get back here. Some weird shit is going on with the building.”

Lady Luck and Karma nod at each other, “copy that, we’re heading back.” Karma replies, “okay... we’re gonna see what’s what then come back for your help.”

“Or, at the very least, provide you with more information. Should we not require your help.” Lady Luck finishes.

Max nods, “I appreciate that.”

“Let’s bug out, Double L.”

□□

Mite was experimenting how many people she could possess with the same akuma. As it turns out, seven is far too many for her to handle. She can’t exert control on any of them let alone all of them. And that damn angry pink-haired teen is the hardest to keep a handle on! If it were possible, Audrey would say the kid is deliberately screwing with her. Of course, that isn’t possible. The *...thing* with Chloé was a fluke! **Nobody** can resist or fight back the powers of her akumas! The damn book even says so!

But... the room full of akuma-possessed teens were only interested in fighting one another.

And as the akuma ended up in the carpeted floor, no one could leave the room! It was an unmitigated shitshow out the gate.

In order to stave off her impending migraine, Mite severed the akuma from all of them. And the damn butterfly flew out of the carpet and right into Lady Luck's yo-yo as she and Karma were hanging in the window. (Not that they were there a few seconds before!)

"Well, that was easy." Karma announces. When the akuma gets purified, Mite loses her connection to it. Sight, hearing, all of it.

Émilie rips the brooch off her shirt in anger, breaking her transformation, then she throws her miraculous on the altar and she storms out of the garden. They changed *how* they use their miraculouses! They changed *where* they used their miraculouses! Nothing! Works! She used seven people. Seven! Absolutely **nothing** to show for it! She couldn't even keep the possession long enough to overwhelm those annoying pests.

Screaming, Émilie plops face-first onto her bed. She spends an indeterminate amount of time just screaming into her pillow until she hears the door open. "Go away, Gabriel."

"Oh my. Marital problems?" That voice! Émilie's eyes snap open then she lifts her head to see her identical twin sister, Ámelie, leaning in the doorway with her miserable brat Avril. "Having a bad day, Émilie?" Émilie's eyes narrow. "I'll take that as a yes." Ámelie saunters into the room then takes a seat on the bed next to her twin. "I came all this way just to see you. What's the matter?"

"Where's Adrien, Tante Émilie?"

Émilie *twitches* ever-so-slightly and Ámelie notices. She smirks to herself then turns to Avril, "can you make sure our luggage is in, Peaches?" Avril salutes before leaving the room. After Avril leaves, Ámelie turns to her sister. "You know, you aren't being very hospitable."

Émilie scoffs, "you're hardly a guest."

"Even so, you're crankier than usual. If it isn't marital problems... perhaps it's Adrien?" Émilie sits up with a scowl and Ámelie mock gasps. "D-Don't tell me he's... *rebellin'?*" She whispers the last word. Émilie's scowl deepens. "Tut, tut, *baby* sister." Émilie glares. "I told you the rope was too tight. And given Chloé Bourgeois is his closest confidant?" Ámelie clicks her tongue, "it was bound to happen."

Émilie growls, “and your dau—” One cold glare from her sister forces Émilie to correct herself. Émilie can fuck with her sister all she wants, but never with Avril; the woman is ferally protective of her... child, “Avril never rebelled?”

“Never.” Ámelie says proudly. Émilie eyes her doubtfully, “for one to rebel, one must be denied the opportunity to do something they want. I have no reason to deny my precious Avril anything. When they told me about the change in gender, I accepted it without question. Without hesitation. My one and only desire in life is for Avril to be their best, truest self. All their tutors say their grades are perfect. They keep up with all their extracurriculars. They want for nothing. Ergo, no reason to rebel.”

Ergo? Émilie rolls her eyes. Ámelie taps her chin. “I’m honestly surprised in your raising of Adrien. I’d think you of all people know what happens when the whip gets cracked one time too many.” Émilie scowls, “you rebelled against maman and papa and that rebellious nature has come full circle to bite you on the ass.”

“I don’t know what *you’re* bitching about, you’re the one who ended up with Samuel.”

“Ah yes. Bless his heart.” Ámelie puts a hand on her chest, “he was the love of my life. I miss him every day. A real shame Avril doesn’t remember their papa.” She sighs heavily. “But, I suppose, things ended up well for you too – in a sense.”

Émilie glares, “uh-huh. You mentioned luggage? You planning on staying here?”

“When have we ever celebrated our birthday apart?” Émilie’s eyes widen, “...you forgot our birthday?! What’s going on with you?”

“It...” Émilie trails off with a scowl. On the left hand, Ámelie would no doubt do what she can to aid Émilie’s cause. It’ll give her another niece, nephew, or whatever the gender-neutral term is. On the right hand, Ámelie Graham de Vasily Moore **never** misses the opportunity to steal the spotlight, clothing, *boyfriend*, or whatever-the-hell-else she can from her “baby” sister. Three fucking minutes apart and the shit Émilie had to go through. Knowing Ámelie, Émilie was probably the first born but Ámelie pushed her out of the way inside their mother’s womb to be the first one out. “I’ve just been busy.”

Gabriel walks into the bedroom, stopping at the doorway. “Ámelie, what a surprise.”

“Clearly. My twin sister forgot our birthday.” Gabriel stares blankly at her and Ámelie frowns, “*seriously?* You forgot too!? One of you better tell me what the hell is going on.”

Gabriel adjusts his glasses, “winter is approaching and I have to remove my fall collection to make space for the winter collection.”

Ámelie eyes him dubiously. “Shouldn’t you have done that weeks ago?”

“Yes. I’m falling behind in my work.” While it is the truth, sadly, Ámelie has no need to know *why* Gabriel has to meet three deadlines before the end of the week... and that he has nothing started yet.

Ámelie rolls her eyes, “whatever.” She rises from the bed, “you don’t have to tell me now, but just know I will find out eventually. Anyway, I’m starving. I’m ordering in.” She walks out of the bedroom past Gabriel.

“She’s going to be a problem.” Gabriel says closing the door.

“Isn’t she always?” Émilie scoffs, “I can handle my sister. But you know, planning and hosting our annual birthday bash will be a much-needed reprieve from ...everything.”

Humming, Gabriel takes a seat on the bed next to Émilie. “I knew this wasn’t going to be easy, but if I had any idea how much effort it would take...” He sighs, “I would’ve taken some time off.”

“You’re a designer. Can’t you just take time off whenever?”

Gabriel chuckles, “is that what you think? Aren’t you always on call, waiting for the next commercial or movie from your agent? It’s more than just making clothes then having someone else distribute them. I have to keep up with the latest fashion trends, the upcoming trends, the former trends, seasonal wear... it’s a lot. But the only thing I love more than designing clothing, is you and Adrien.”

Émilie playfully elbows him, “you sap. But wait! We’ve been so absorbed in this that we aren’t doing our normal jobs! What good would it be to have another child if we can’t afford anything!?”

“Don’t be so dramatic. We’d hardly become destitute if we took off a month or two—” Émilie holds up three fingers. “Yes, I know it’s been three months. Three months will not have much of an impact either. Your family is ‘old money,’ aren’t they? We could take off for years and be fine.”

“My parents hate you, remember? Said I’m ‘ruining my life’ marrying you? Do you honestly think they’ll give me any money? Why do you think I work in the first place?”

Émilie and Gabriel stare at each other for a few seconds then they both frown. “I will get to work on these deadlines I have to meet, then I will request a reprieve... for your birthday. Speaking of, aside from the obvious... what *do* you want for your birthday, Émilie?” Émilie taps her chin in thought.

□□

Mon, Dec 7th, 2020

“Maman, I’m home.” Kagami announces as she and Alya enter the apartment. They decided to stop by Kagami’s apartment first to talk to Tomoe before school. As they’re taking their shoes off on the mat by the door something flashes by the corner of their eyes. They pause briefly before resuming taking off their shoes. “When did you say was the last time you saw an eye doctor?”

“Apparently way too long ago.” They start walking into the apartment. Something dashes by and Alya pulls Kagami back and out of the way. They see three very large, deep claw marks embedded in the wall.

“T-That would’ve been my face.” She looks up at Alya, “you have amazing reflexes.”

“Perks of having three sisters.”

“Kagami~” A voice sing-songs. “Kagami~”

“Oh hell no, I do not fuck with horror shit.” Tomoe and Anarka Couffaine both exit the kitchen slowly and step in front of Alya and Kagami. “T-They’re puppets?” Although there are no visible strings, the two women are clearly wooden instead of flesh.

The Tomoe puppet shakily raises her left arm, “there’s nothing to fear, Kagami. I am better now. She has forgiven me, just like she will forgive you.”

““She?”” Alya questions.

Kagami balls up her fists, “my grandma.”

Alya whistles lowly, “sounds like your grandma is a real piece of work.”

“That’s not even the half of it.” Kagami grumbles.

“Tut, tut.” The same voice from earlier tsks, “such hostility.” A giant grey harpy wearing a black and grey pinstripe Agreste® dress just casually floats into the apartment – which Alya and Kagami belatedly realize is a wreck. “After all I’ve done for—” She stares at Alya, “and who is this? You have a girlfriend now too? No one thought to tell me such things!?”

“Too...? Whoa. Your maman and Captain Couffaine?”

“Whoa is right. I never would’ve guessed.”

“They make a cute couple, and if they’re both happy—”

“Enough!” Azami interrupts, “I will not be ignored! And I will no longer be disrespected! It’s time I get my due. Never thought a butterfly of all creatures would grant me such power, and all for some measly trinkets? Eh. Why not?”

“You just gleefully aligned yourself with a supervillain because your pride was wounded?” Alya snickers, “that’s sad.”

Azami growls. “Why you—” The akuma mask outline shines over her face, “*no !*” Her shout echoes. “I can—” She appears to fight the akuma’s control briefly before the mask outline disappears. “You’re right. They’re no threat to me. And I’ll find your damn trinkets!” Tomoe and Anarka walk over to Azami who swoops them up in her talons, “consider yourselves lucky, for now. I will be back and I will enjoy hunting you.” Then she flies out of the hole she created in the apartment.

“Gotta admit,” Alya adjusts her glasses, “even for an akuma that was strange.”

“Yet, it is the norm for my grandma. She never let morals interfere with her objective. And now she has superpowers.” Kagami sighs, “let’s focus on finding the best way to stop her.” They gather up their belongings then enter Kagami’s room. The kwamis all rise from the bed then fly over to Alya in awe.

“Hi! They’re all so cute!” Alya squeals.

“Everyone, this is Alya. She’s going to be helping us out from now on.” Alya waves, “we’ll just have a quick run-through of all the kwamis and their powers so we can know which is our best option.”

The kwamis all turn to Kagami. “What’s the matter, Guardian Kagami?” Wayzz asks.

Kagami sighs, “my grandma is a giant bird woman akuma... and she has captured my maman and maman’s apparent girlfriend.” The kwamis simultaneously gasp in horror. “Our saving grace was Mite’s impatience.”

“I can imagine her being extra cranky after yesterday’s failed multi-person akuma.” Kagami nods in agreement then sighs again.

“If you’re going after a bird, you’ll need a bird.” The orange bird kwami says proudly, “greetings. I’m Orikko, kwami of sonokinesis.”

Alya’s eyes sparkle. “Sound manipulation? That’s so badass.” Orikko’s cheeks flush a bright orange. “I’ve always wanted to be a bard!” She pauses, “or an archer. I love archers.”

“Excuse me,” The turtle kwami flies in front of Orikko, pushing them out of the way, “I believe *I* would be more effective.” The kwami bows his head, “I am Wayzz, kwami of protection.”

“I’m Daizzi.” The pig kwami introduces, “my powers involve invoking the power of positivity! You’d *think* the guardian would’ve sent out me, you know, specifically to handle just *how* akumas are happening but no... he sent out the two miraculouses the bad guys asked for.” She rolls her eyes. “What a wonderful strategy.”

“Um... what does that mean?” Daizzi blinks at Alya, “I know a lot of superpowers... but I’ve never heard of a power like that.”

“It’s like this. The peafowl and butterfly, Duusu and Nooroo, and myself have emotion-based powers. Duusu finds the emotion and embodies it, Nooroo personifies the emotion, and *I* amplify the emotion’s power.”

“Then we really would’ve been fucked if Mite and Méfait had you as well, right?” Daizzi nods in agreement. “You amplify it, how?”

“My power is called ‘wish,’ as the name suggests I interact with the target showing them a glimpse of their innermost desire. And I can also weaponize that desire.”

“Wish.” Kagami repeats. “Chloé said Mite said something about a wish.”

The kwamis all groan. “Unfortunately,” Daizzi says, “the former Guardian was a stickler for the rules and so he never actually told us the process of the wish. Just that ‘it will destroy the entire world’ and other such things.” The other kwamis nod in agreement.

Alya hums. “Considering Mite’s always griping about your miraculous and Karma’s, the wish must involve the two of them.”

“Fair assumption.” Kagami agrees. “I’m glad to have you here to think with me.” Alya beams at her.

“Guarding Kagami, if I may provide assistance?” Alya gapes at the dragon kwami floating toward them holding a black choker.

“Is this a dragon?” Alya’s eyes brighten, “no fucking way! How badass is that? I mean, you’re all badass but a dragon? Come on!” Alya pets the kwami and she leans into Alya’s hand before shaking herself away.

“T-There will be time for head pats later. I am Longg, I possess the power of the elements. If you use my miraculous to combat Guardian Kagami’s ...akuma grandma, you’ll be able to fly and control the elements in your favor.”

“Fly...” Alya turns to Kagami, “you can fly, right?”

“Huh. I *do* have wings, don’t I? I keep forgetting. I’m honestly not sure if I’m capable of flight.”

“Now is as good a time as any to see, right? And I’ll be there to catch you if you can’t. Thank you for the offer, Longg, but I gotta go with the bird bard power. Orikko, was it? May I have your miraculous?” Orikko trills then flies over to the daruma doll then pulls out a hair

barrette. “So cool.” Alya gasps in awe as the barrette turns from red to bronze in her hands. “Right. Forgot about that part. Okay, what do I do?”

“Kagami,” Tikki flies over to her, “it is possible that you could use the power of two miraculouses at the same time. It’s called synergy, you just call the transformation phrases of the two miraculouses you wish to use then say ‘synergize’ and, well, you will... synergize.”

“But that can cause unnecessary strain on the body of one so young.” Wayzz interrupts, “worst of all, without practice, we’d be no better than the former Guardian.”

Tikki’s eyes widen, “you’re right, Wayzz. I’m sorry, Kagami. Alya. It was short-sighted of me to suggest it—”

“No,” Alya disagrees shaking her head, “we may not need it now, but we should still know how to do it later on.”

“Alya is right. Thank you, Tikki. We’ll practice when we don’t have an akuma to deal with.” Alya nods in agreement, “ready?”

“Born ready.” Alya ties her hair into a high ponytail using the barrette as a hairtie. “Let’s hero up!”

“I like your enthusiasm.” Orikko says, “to transform you, wearing the miraculous, say ‘Orikko, raise the volume.’”

“Then I would have to say an opposite phrase in order to return to normal, right?” All the kwamis and Kagami blink at Alya in surprise, “...what?”

□□

Sabrina kicks open the doors of François Düpont, knocking a student down the stairs. “Out of the way! Excellence coming through!” The orange-haired teen announces. Students already inside form a small crowd to see what the commotion is about. Though knowing Chloé and Sabrina, it’s probably nothing good. Chloé walks into the building with the assistance of crutches under her arms as there is a giant red boot on her right foot.

“Behold, peons, we’re about to make your schoolyear!” Chloé says with a smirk. A blonde wearing a one-sleeved black and pink horizontally striped dress with her left knee-high sock

pink and the right knee-high sock black, pink flats, and a pink beanie on her head walks in the building between Chloé and Sabrina. “Although you are undeserving, you’re in for a treat. It is my esteemed honor to introduce my older sister, Zöé!” The crowd gasps. Zöé attempts to raise her sleeveless hand but Sabrina almost immediately yanks it down.

“What was that?” Sabrina hisses in a whisper, “were you about to *wave*?”

“You are a Bourgeois adjacent,” Chloé adds, “you do not *wave*.”

“Remember that first impressions are important, Zöé.” Sabrina continues, “*you* are important. And you showcase that importance with an air of indifference.” Zöé looks at both girls then at the crowd of students staring back at her. The blonde gulps, swallowing hard, before she schools her features into a blank expression.

“As I was saying, Zöé will be observing the school today while her enrollment paperwork is being handled. You may speak to her if she acknowledges you, so do not bore her with your useless inquiries.”

“Hey!” Kim runs into the building pointing upward behind him, “there is a giant, maman stealing bird akuma in the sky!” The crowd excitedly murmurs as they make their way out of the building, mindful of Chloé’s crutches. Sabrina helps Chloé out of the building leaving Zöé behind.

Before Zöé could move, something or someone collides into her from behind, knocking her to the ground. “Oh no. Oh crap. Sorry, sorry.” There is a *blur* of colors before Zöé finds herself being helped up looking into a pair of kind, beautiful grey eyes. “Sorry about that.” Zöé can only nod slowly. Her accidental assailant is beautiful. And... tall. She has shoulder-length dark brown hair, freckles, and her mouth—is moving very fast. “—I’m always in a rush. Rush, rush, rush. Not that it’s an excuse for knocking you down. B-But I’m rambling. I have to go! Hey, I don’t think I’ve seen you before. Take this.” She hands Zöé a flier for Sabine & Tom’s Boulangerie Patisserie. “When all this akuma craziness is done with, stop by there and I’ll hook you up with apology pâtisseries. Sorry!” Then she runs out of the building.

Zöé stares into space at the spot the very fast-talking tall girl was occupying for about ten seconds, then she looks down at the flier in her hands. In a daze, Zöé inputs the address on the flier into her phone and the map reveals it is right across the street.

Zöé puts the flier in her purse then takes a step out of the school. The crowd, which has tripled in size, have their phones out recording, presumably, the giant grey bird in the sky.

Zöé squints trying to make sense of what she's seeing but she can't. Not without a speck of context.

"I must go to her." Several women run out of the school.

"There you are!" Sabrina says, panting in front of her. "Thought you were run over by the mob. Come on. You'll get to see Lady Luck and Karma in action."

"Lady Luck and Karma?"

Sabrina nods, "they're... *oh*." She frowns, "right. That was the important bit we forgot to tell you about yesterday. Sorry. The short version. Lady Luck and Karma are superheroes, both girls, and they protect us from magical shit," She gestures to the sky, "called akumas that are the creations of the villainous pair known as Mite and Méfait."

"O-Oh. Um, okay. There were superheroes in New York. They called themselves the Quantic Kids."

"Wait. They're *real*?! I thought they were just a comic!"

Zöé shakes her head, "they're real alright, well *were* real, they disbanded earlier this year."

"Let's exchange superhero information then." Zöé nods with a smile.

□□

Karma propels herself on top of Kagami's apartment building. She was tempted to check in on Kagami and Alya, as they came here while she and Juleka went to school – actually early for a change, but she realized she has no idea what apartment Kagami lives in. Something she intends on rectifying. After yesterday's akuma attempt, Marinette couldn't get back to Alya's fast enough. She already had a headache from being in Chloé's presence, then the akuma only added to the pain. At least she was fortunate enough to relax for the rest of the evening. But then this morning starts with more bullshit.

Lady Luck sent her a video introducing their temporary partner, Soundchick – someone using the chicken miraculous and gave it a very fitting name, then she apologized for not consulting Karma before giving Soundchick the miraculous. Then the video asked Karma to meet them

here so they could strategize. “Hi!” Karma greets walking over to the duo with her arms out wide. “It’s so nice to meet you and work with you.”

“I feel the same way.” Soundchick replies. “Lady Luck told me you two were planning on using this miraculous yesterday but then something came up?”

Karma nods, “yup. Mite bit off more than she could chew, which did not stop her from creating another akuma. Speaking of, what do we know about this akuma?”

“I haven’t seen her use any powers... but she does seem to have some kind of control over all the mamans in the city.”

Karma’s eyes widen, “what?!” She looks over her shoulder at the boulangerie pâtisserie just as Sabine busts through the glass door with Tom and Alix holding onto her and being dragged to the street corner. “Shit. Look, there’s someone we can save.” Without further information, Karma jumps off the roof. Lady Luck and Soundchick nod to each other then follow after Karma.

“Thank goodness you’re here!” Tom cries. “She’s stronger than she looks.”

“I. Must. Go. To. Her.” Sabine grits out as she shakes her foot trying to throw Tom off.

“What do you think she’s gathering up mamans for?” Karma hears Soundchick whisper.

Lady Luck scowls, “if I had to guess,” She whispers back with a sigh, “she’s telling them all that they are raising their children incorrectly.”

Soundchick whistles lowly. “Damn. I could honestly picture that. We gotta do something to snap them out of this trance. You know, aside from the obvious.”

Lady Luck tilts her head to the left. “Obvious?” Soundchick brings her knuckles together, “*oh*. Yeah, let’s not do that. I guess we could see what the lucky charm has to offer.” Lady Luck takes a deep breath throwing her yo-yo into the air. “Lucky charm!” She looks up, prompting the others to do the same. There is no glow or flash of light or anything. Several seconds later, her yo-yo falls from the sky onto Soundchick’s head. “Ow. Sorry. That’s never happened before.” She grabs the yo-yo then stares at it. Her miracle vision inverts the colors of her yo-yo but when she glances at Soundchick, she’s lit up correctly.

“Uh-oh.” Lady Luck looks over at Karma, “that’s the I can’t figure out this damn thing look.”

“You know me all too well, Chaton. The lucky charm didn’t give me anything, but perhaps that’s because there is nothing *I* can do. Soundchick, it hit you, so I think that means you’re the only one who can help bring these women to their senses.”

Soundchick lolls her head from side to side, cracking her neck. “Leave it to me.” She clears her throat then mimics the akuma’s voice ordering Sabine to stand down, which she does instantly. The others look on in awe as Sabine lifts her foot out of Tom’s grasp then robotically walks back into the boulangerie pâtisserie.

“Wow. Can’t say I was expecting that.” Alix mutters. Alix helps Tom off the floor, he hugs the three heroes then goes into the shop to check on Sabine. “Who are you?”

“Me? Oh, right. Who else would you be talking to? Duh. You can call me Soundchick.” She takes an exaggerated bow.

“Double L, SC,” They both turn to Karma, “your nickname is a working progress,” She shakes her head, “but that’s not important. If Soundchick can mimic voices, we have a way to bring down the human shields without violence, but how will we get to the akuma?”

“To get to the akuma, I’m thinking good old-fashioned violence.” Lady Luck cracks her knuckles.

“The akuma must’ve *really* pissed her off, huh?” Karma whispers to Soundchick who nods. “Damn.”

□□

As the akuma didn’t cause any damage near the school, Damocles kept the doors open and had the staff usher the exceedingly large crowd of students (and other staff members) back into the school; then he had them usher *out* students from other schools who stopped by to watch the fight. He literally cannot afford to have anything go wrong before the quatrième students’ trip. If he can prove this school is worth something, the donations and students from other countries will pour in. No more semi-relying on the Bourgeois family for their half-assed support. And he won’t have to resort to asking the Agreste slash Graham de Vanily family either. The thought alone makes him shudder. There are always lines tacked onto these things and the very last thing he wants is for the school to become Gabriel Agreste’s fashion headquarters. Damocles had no idea how people find his clothes palatable. The door opens,

“Mlle. Bourgeois is here to see you.” The man stiffens in his seat as Chloé opens the door wider with one of her crutches. His assistant couldn’t leave the area fast enough. ~~If only he could do the same.~~

“What can I do for you, Mlle. Bourgeois?”

Chloé smiles as she walks into the office, “I’ve come to inform you that this brilliant, beautiful young lady beside me,” On cue, Sabrina pushes Zöé into the office, “has come to enroll here.” She lowers Zöé’s hand without looking, though she misses the frown. “Papa will be by later to sign whatever needs signing. In the meantime, she’s going to need a visitor’s pass to stay on the premises.”

Damocles eyes Chloé suspiciously, “yes, of course.” He opens the top left drawer, still looking at Chloé, then takes out a visitor’s pass then holds it toward Chloé. Sabrina slips into the room and takes the visitor’s pass, sticking it onto the other blonde. “Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“Not yet. We’re going now.” With a sigh of relief, Damocles watches the girls go. That was ...painless. Something must be settling in the storm.

As they walk toward the lockers, Sabrina points out everything to Zöé. “Chloé?” Kim stops behind them and the three girls turn to him. “I thought it was you. What happened to your foot?”

Chloé looks the brunet up and down with a blank expression, “I fell. What’s it to you?”

“You fell? From where, your balcony?”

Sabrina steps in front of Chloé poking Kim in the chest, “what’s with the grilling? Can’t you see she’s already suffering? She told you what happened, now leave!”

“I’ll go. I’ll go. Excuse me for being concerned. Be more careful, Chloé~” He sing-songs as he walks off.

“Who was that?” Zöé asks.

“Nobody.” Chloé answers. “You’ll find there are lots of nobodies in this facility not worth naming.” She sighs, “just got a fucking headache.”

“Do you have your pain medication? Let’s see if Professeur Bustier can get you a cushion or something for your foot.”

Chloé hugs Sabrina, “what would I do without you? Come on Zöé, you can see lackluster public schooling firsthand.”

“I’ll be right there. I just have to use the bathroom.”

“The school isn’t that big but we still don’t want you getting lost.” Sabrina says.

Chloé rolls her eyes. “She’s not a puppy, Sabrina, she doesn’t need constant monitoring. And I’m not about to stand by the bathroom with my foot and head hurting. *We* are going to talk to Bustier. Zöé, meet us at room 202. If we’re not in there, just wait by the wall.” Zöé nods then watches them walk off.

Zöé enters the empty bathroom then goes into one of the stalls. She quickly relieves herself then exits the stall with a heavy sigh. She knows Chloé and Sabrina mean well, or rather she *hopes* they mean well, but their methods appear a tad extreme. During the akuma attack, a boy approached her and Sabrina *hissed* at him causing him to flee. She was already forced into the lone gunslinger role due to her father’s infamy (or perhaps everyone knew her mother’s identity when she didn’t?), and she was miserable every day of school – for fourteen-and-a-half years! The downside of attending a “finishing school,” is that they “teach” all grades. Had it not been for André, Zöé would’ve been stuck there until university!

Frowning, she holds her hand out for the soap dispenser. The soap automatically falls on her hand then she rubs them together and turns on the sink. When she looks up in the mirror, she sees a purple butterfly behind her. Gasping, she turns around and the butterfly flutters closer. “W-What the—”

The door opens. “Akuma!” Is all Zöé hears while right-side up. All she sees is a blur before the wind gets knocked out of her and she’s on her back watching the butterfly fly away through the ceiling. “Oh, uh, hmmm. That was not the smartest course of action.” Zöé gapes at the dark green haired girl hovering over her. The girl stands then offers a hand to Zöé who accepts it. “Apologies. There should have been a forewarning.”

“It, uh...” Zöé’s eyes widen, then she puts her soap-covered hands on her face, “your shirt!” The girl looks down at the two soapy handprints on her chest. “I’m so sorry!”

“Don’t be. It’s only a shirt.” Zöé blushes as the girl just casually takes off her long-sleeve

black t-shirt then grabs a paper towel from the dispenser and blots the soap from the water of the still running sink. “What’s important is you’re okay.”

Zöé’s certain her entire face is as bright pink as the girl’s bra that has a rainbow armadillo on the left cup and the words Arnie Armadillo on the right cup. “Also, you have soap on your face.”

Zöé glances at her reflection with a grimace. “Ah.” She re-soaps her hands then washes the soap off then washes the drying soap from her face. “What was it you yelled? Achu-man?”

The girl looks up at her, “you’re new.” Zöé nods, “akuma. That’s what the butterfly is called. They possess people through their negative emotions.” Zöé gasps. “If you were afflicted, you’d be at the mercy of Mite. She’s a selfish sadist hellbent on destroying peace with her akumas.”

“Wow. Got it. Thanks for the information, and saving me from the akuma. My name’s Zöé.”

“Kagami.” With the soap off her shirt, Kagami holds it under the dryer. “I know what you’re feeling.” Zöé flinches, “anxiety about being in an unfamiliar environment where you know no one.” Zöé sighs in relief as she nods. That certainly is *one* way she’s currently feeling. “Allow me to be your first friend in order to make your experience here less terrifying.”

“That—I’d like that. Thank you.”

“No pro—”

The door opens and Zöé stares at the beautiful—*wait*. That’s the girl that knocked her over. The *first* pretty girl to knock her over today. “Ah, it’s—” Her eyes widen comically, “Kagami!? What happened to your shirt?!” Without waiting for a reply, the girl takes off her long-sleeve navy sweater then puts it on Kagami, which is hilariously oversized, but as her hands are under the dryer, the shirt is only over her shoulders. The tall girl is left with a t-shirt with a red and white polkadotted koala on it.

“Thank you, Marinette, but this shirt is rather large on me.”

“Then we can switch.” She takes the shirt from Kagami then puts it over her head. Zöé only gets a glimpse of the girl’s black and blue horizontal striped bra as she slips the sweater back on while removing her koala shirt then putting that on Kagami. “Better. Ah, right. I’m Marinette.” She bows her head, “sorry for earlier.”

“What did you do?” Kagami asks.

The girl stands at her full height then turns to Kagami. “On my way out of the building, I bumped into... into...”

“Hm? Oh! Zöé.”

“Zöé. I promised her apology pâtisseries at the boulangerie pâtisserie.”

“Can you double on that? I saw an akuma as soon as I entered and tackled Zöé without thinking.”

“Wow. Kagami, you’re... pretty sturdy. Like brick wall sturdy. Remember when Alix tried to shove you to prep for a match and she missed then went flying?” They both chuckle at the memory, “you’re not hurt though, right?” Marinette turns to Zöé. “I know non-clumsy people don’t go around knocking over everything and everyone in sight like a tornado.”

“I’m fine. There are worse things than being knocked over by pretty girls.” Zöé puts both hands over her mouth, staring at Marinette and Kagami wide-eyed. They both stare back at her and she lowers her hands, “you can... just forget I said that.”

“Why? What’s the matter?” Marinette asks.

“That was a compliment, right?” Kagami asks, turning to Marinette who nods. “A very nice one.”

“I... I’m—” She sighs then turns her head and lifts some of her hair showing off her tattoo. “I’m... well, *you know*.” She gestures to the tattoo before moving her hair back down to cover it. “Last thing I want is to make anyone uncomfortable.”

“I don’t think you have to worry about discomfort from the girl who stripped without a second thought.” Kagami nods in agreement. “As for me, my best friend is aroace and the president of the school’s LGBTQ+ club. In fact, I’m kinda flattered. Hearing that you’re pretty from a pretty girl is far from the worst thing in the world, right?” Zöé blushes as she chuckles. “Ah! Why not join the club? We don’t officially begin until the start of the new year but we can still put you in.” Zöé nods with a smile.

“I should apologize for making you uncomfortable...” Kagami pauses, “or aroused. Should I apologize for that?”

Marinette puts a hand over Kagami’s mouth, “you’re making things awkward.” She whispers gesturing to Zöé’s red face.

“No, no. I’m not embarrassed, I’m in awe. You’re so fearless, Kagami. Jumping to my rescue without even knowing me. Telling me all about the akumas. I wish I could be that bold.”

“Not to deter you, but the only person on the planet bolder than Kagami is our friend Alya. Her boldness is unmatched, you’ll see when you meet her. But... you can be a strong third. If Kagami helps you out?”

“I would be honored. And I promise to ask before undressing.” Groaning, Marinette thumps her head on Kagami’s shoulder. “Was that the wrong thing to say?”

Zöé laughs, “no. You’re great just the way you are. Honesty is refreshing. I’m... the environment is different. Hearing honesty like this will take some getting used to. My old school was a finishing school and we had to fake ‘proper lady behavior’ even when we weren’t in class.”

“A finishing school?” Marinette and Kagami question, pure disdain on their faces. “Those are the worst!” Kagami continues. “My grandma sent me to one back in Japan. It was a horrifying experience. Down to the fire.”

“Don’t you mean ‘down to the wire?’” Zöé asks.

“No. The building caught fire.” Marinette and Zöé exchange a questioning glance. “And they still tried to teach us the ‘proper’ way to exit a burning building. Before that was tea ceremony after tea ceremony...” She grumbles, “ikebana—”

“Let’s not backpeddle down memory lane and cause more fires, okay?” Scowling, Kagami nods. “If you want, we can show you around the city? Introduce you to the rest of our friends.”

“Yes. That was what I was going to do. With your sincerity and bubbly nature, you’re the most qualified to make Zöé feel at ease as she meets new people.”

“Wow. I don’t think I’ve ever been called ‘bubbly’ before.”

“I meant it as a compliment.”

“Oh, I know. Thank you. I’m starting to understand you a bit better now. Nothing you ever say is intentionally offensive, but you never waste time mincing words.”

“I also never make time to think before acting or speaking.”

“You lead with your heart,” Zöé says, “that’s admirable.”

“Thank you, Zöé. I really hope you enjoy Paris.”

“Oh. Thank you. I’m certain with you two as my friends, I will.”

They all leave the bathroom then start walking down the hall. “I belatedly realized you were wearing a visitor’s pass for quatrième. That’s the grade we’re in. You should observe our class.” Kagami nods in agreement.

“Okay. What class is it?”

“201.” They head up the stairs, Zöé slows down a bit when she sees Sabrina and Chloé entering the classroom with 202 on the wall by the door. Kagami and Marinette notice Zöé’s hesitancy then stop. “You okay?”

“Yeah, almost fell out of my shoe.”

Marinette groans, “I know the feeling.”

“Yeah, I can be a bit clumsy.” Marinette gasps then holds Zöé’s hands in hers.

“A kindred spirit.” Zöé laughs. She makes sure Marinette is blocking any chance of Chloé and Sabrina noticing she’s going into a different classroom. As Zöé walks inside, she sees Sabrina leaving the classroom but fortunately, she goes down the hall the other way. Not that there is another, other way with this classroom being by the wall. “Professeur Mendeleiev.”

Marinette approaches the purple-haired professeur chugging a large red thermos with green polkadotted cat paws on it. “This is Zöé. She’s observing today. When do you think you’ll be registering?”

“Today, hopefully. Not really sure who is going to handle that though.”

The professeur sets the mug down, “registration is Damocles’ purview. So long as you don’t cause a disturbance, I’m perfectly fine with you observing. As you already know Mlle. Dupain-Cheng and Mlle. Tsurugi, you can sit with either one of them. They’re both brilliant students.”

“Why choose? Let’s sit next to each other.” Marinette suggests.

“Well, there you go. Told you they’re brilliant.” A shared desk. Zöé shares the desk with Marinette in the second row as Kagami takes the desk behind them.

A redhead with brighter red highlights enters the room then makes a dash for them. Zöé blinks at the girl staring intently at her. “Hi.” She says then leans back, “I’m Fei. Love your outfit.”

“Thanks. I’m Zöé.”

Fei glances at Marinette tapping her fingers along the desk. “Marinette, what’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Kagami leans forward and pokes her in the arm, “stop. Nothing is—” Kagami continues to poke her, “alright, alright!” She sighs, “just because I am obsessed with fashion does not mean I can be *that person* and criticize slash scrutinize someone’s clothing decisions or style. Fashion is about the freedom to express oneself.” She frowns, “as cute as your outfit is... it doesn’t feel like it’s *you*. You know?” She rubs the back of her neck then frantically waves her arms in front of her, “not saying that you look bad or anything!”

“Marinette,” Zöé grabs one of her hands, “I get what you’re saying. I like it, but I didn’t pick this outfit. The only other choice—” She shudders then shakes her head. “Never picked *any* outfit before. Been wearing uniforms my whole life. Since you’re obsessed, can you help me find my style?” Marinette blushes as she nods. “Thanks.”

“Redress her during lunch.” Fei says as she takes the seat next to Kagami.

Marinette shakes her head, “can’t just throw on something without thinking about her feelings and what she’s trying to convey. You can come over during lunch and I can measure you—” She quickly turns to Kagami, “don’t say it.” Smirking, Kagami leans back in her seat. “Anyway,” She turns back to Zöé. “I can measure you then after school, we can put on like a fashion show or something.” Marinette gasps, “better than a fashion show! A welcome party for you!”

“A—A what?”

“Welcome party. Like a little get-together where you meet everyone and we celebrate your move to Paris.” Marinette’s eyebrows furrow, “you’ve never heard of a welcome party before?” Zöé shakes her head. “Then this is the perfect time to introduce you to one. Ooh, or we can do it Wednesday since we don’t have school. That’ll give us more time to prepare. Alright, Wednesday it is. Party for Zöé... Zöé... What’s your surname?”

“It’s Lee.”

Marinette takes out a sketchbook then writes “Welcome Zöé Lee To Paris” on it and draws little decorations and balloons. “What do you like to do?” Kagami asks, “we can have games or books if you prefer. Something that lets us connect with you. But on your terms.”

Marinette turns to Kagami with a frown, “this is about your birthday party, isn’t it?” Gasping, Marinette drops her pencil. “Aw fuck! I’m doing it again! Dammit.” She tears the sheet of paper from the sketchbook. Zöé puts her hand on the paper stopping Marinette from crumbling it. “I’m sorry, Zöé. I was so caught up in celebrating you that I wasn’t even asking what you wanted.” She looks back at Kagami, “and I’m sorry to you as well.”

“Don’t be. You kicked me out of my comfort zone, but you were there all the way to give me some comfort.”

Marinette smiles at her then turns back to Zöé. Marinette slides the sketchbook over to Zöé. “Your terms.”

Zöé slides the sketchbook back to Marinette, “I like what you were doing. No one’s ever considered my feelings for anything before. So thank you. But I really like the idea of a welcoming party and the little add-ons you made.”

“What about colors?” Fei asks.

“Um... pink, orange, and red.” Before Fei can say anything Kagami nudges her then puts a finger to her lips. “It’s okay, Kagami, I have a tattoo of it. I’m not really hiding. But I appreciate you looking out for me. Those are some of the colors of the lesbian pride flag.”

“That’s what I was going to say!” Fei gushes, “you too? That’s amazing. We’re best friends now.” Fei takes her hair out of its ponytail and shakes it showing off her orange and pink highlights. Even her hairtie is the colors of the lesbian pride flag.

“Why didn’t you say anything?” Marinette asks.

Fei shrugs putting her hair back into its ponytail, “I thought it was obvious? I talk about how hot Kagami is all the time.”

Marinette scoffs, “*everyone* is attracted to Kagami, Fei.”

Fei hums, “fair point. Zöé, you have to join the club... whenever it opens. We’re gonna have little pins; inside ones and outside ones.”

Zöé smiles, “I will. Definitely.” Zöé’s cellphone rings and she pulls it from her purse to quickly silence it. She leans to the left, “sorry, professeur.” She takes the sound off her phone then shoves it back into her purse.

“Do you have to go?” Kagami asks.

“No. I mean, class is about to start, right?” The professeur takes one final swig from her thermos then stands. She walks over to the door. The bell rings and a bespectacled brunet slips into the classroom before the professeur can shut the door.

Mendeleiev brings her thumb and pointer finger together where they’re almost touching, “*this* close, M. Lahiffe.” Nino shrugs with a smile as he takes his seat.

□□

André and Audrey both enter François Düpont. “Let’s do this quick and get it over with.” Audrey grumbles, “subjecting *both* of my daughters to substandard learning. I bet you’re pretty pleased with yourself. Well, you shouldn’t be. I’m hiring them a private tutor the second we get back to the hotel.”

“Oh, then you’re staying now?” Audrey glares at him. “Chloé gets good grades, Audrey. She doesn’t need a tutor—”

Audrey scoffs, “‘good’ grades?” She repeats, “I want *great* grades. Exemplary grades! The best of whatever the grading system is!”

“It’s on a 10-20 scale, and Chloé’s grades are 13s and 14s. You’d know that if you bothered to talk to her.”

“Don’t start this shit again. So you were right about one thing. Big deal. Stop milking it. Just so you know, I will be spending more time with her, with both of them.” André eyes her suspiciously. Audrey opens the office door. Damocles’ assistant hastily hits the button in an SOS morris code to alert Damocles. (They devised it after the last time Audrey Bourgeois came to François Düpont.) They brush right past the assistant’s desk and march into Damocles’ office.

Damocles only has about two seconds to right himself before André and Audrey Bourgeois barrel into his office. So much for that early lunch. “Ah! M. and Mme. Bourgeois, please, have a seat. What can I do for you this morning?”

“Paperwork or something?” Audrey says taking the seat on the left. André sighs then takes the seat on the right.

“We’re here to register Zsöphyá Lee to the school. I believe she’s already here observing?”

“Ah yes. Mlle. Bourgeois asked for a visitor’s pass for her. What is your relationship to Mlle. Lee?”

“What kind of question is that? You think we’d be wasting our time registering a stranger!? She’s my daughter and *his* step-daughter.” Damocles glances at both of them. “What? You want the dramatic backstory? I was pregnant and divorcing the good-for-nothing when I met André. I got stuck with the kid and all the expenses. Then I got pregnant *again* with Charmainé Cloris. While I was pregnant with Zsöphyá which was not a thing I thought possible! Anyway, I enrolled Zsöphyá into **the** premiere finishing school in New York. Sister school to the finishing school *I* attended in America. Which wasn’t cheap! It was to keep her throughout every standard grade but André took her out.”

André sighs, “she was miserable, Audrey. And alone.”

Audrey rolls her eyes, “*everyone* is miserable in school, André.” André gapes at her. “You know what? Whatever. It doesn’t matter anymore. After all, now we’re all together like one big happy family.” She scoffs. “Ridiculous. Utterly ridiculous. This better not fuck both of them up.” She turns back to Damocles. “Give me the stuff to sign so I can go home and take a much-needed milk bath.”

Damocles glances at the two of them again then forces a smile, “of course.”

□□

“Chlobug~” Chloé walks out of the classroom straight into Adrien’s arms, but there is only *one* person who calls her that ridiculous nickname. She shoves the blond away.

“Avril. What the fuck are you doing here? Where’s Adrien?”

Sabrina nearly intervenes but decides against it and quietly walks away. “Your precious Adrikins is still grounded, so I’m doing him a solid by keeping his attendance record intact. You’re welcome.” Avril loops their arm around Chloé’s, “now now, you don’t want Adrikins getting a bad rap.” Chloé grits her teeth, “we’re gonna spend the rest of the school day together.”

“I hate you.”

“I’ll inscribe that on our wedding rings.”

“I know I’m irresistible but you should know I’m spoken for.”

Avril snorts, “*right*. Adrien told me. Lusting after a superhero? Get in line. I’ve seen the websites. All the family-friendly ones. Where her bunched breasts and enlarged ass aren’t the sole focus of the shot. Personally, I’m more fond of the cat.”

“Of course you are.”

“Adrien!” They both stop then Kim runs over to him. “Man, I heard you were in trouble for the thing with Kitty Section.”

“O-Oh, yes, I was. My parents were feeling uncharacteristically generous today, so I decided not to test it by asking questions and just...” They shrug, “came to school. Before they changed their minds.” A bit wordy, but definitely something Adrien would say.

“Nice.” Kim gives Avril a fist bump then leaves.

“Cute~” Chloé groans rolling her eyes. “Any more hotties into Adrikins? Lord knows the boy could use some affection.”

“You were pretending to be Adrien before transitioning, did that make you want to become nonbinary?”

“No.” Avril grimaces, “*maybe*. I didn’t want to pigeonhole myself to one gender. That’s so blasé.” They stick out their tongue. “Nonbinary fits. I like it. Maman has been supportive.”

“How nice it must be to have supportive parents.”

“I know, right? When we get married, you’ll finally have an actual role model.”

“Ye—*wait*. I am not marrying you.” Chloé groans, “when will these damn headache pills kick in?” Out of the corner of her eye, she spots Zöé walking down the stairs. “Zöé!” Wide-eyed, she looks up at Chloé atop the staircase. “Get. Up. Here.” Zöé cautiously walks up the stairs. “What the fuck happened!? I was about to file a missing person’s report! Where were you? Why didn’t you answer your phone?!”

“I couldn’t answer my phone during class.” Chloé’s left eye twitches, “I was going to call you back... but I don’t know the class schedule—”

Chloé groans, “whatever. You’re here now. Come on. Only one class period went by, there’s still the rest of the school day to slug through.”

“Hi!” Avril greets, “I’m Adrien. Adrien Agreste.” Chloé rolls her eyes, “what’s your name?”

“Oh, right. Sorry. My name’s Zöé. Zöé Lee.”

“Right. She’s my sister.” Avril turns to Chloé wide-eyed, “I’ll... explain it on the way to class,

Adrikins.” She grits out the nickname.

break through the chrysalis

Chapter Summary

François Düpont witnesses a metamorphosis unlike any other

Mon, Dec 7th, 2020

“Are you alright?”

Azami glares up at the offered gloved hand then knocks it away, “don’t you dare pity me, Bug.” With a huff, she shakily gets to her feet.

“Showing concern for another isn’t pity.” Azami pauses, “but you wouldn’t know the difference, would you?”

Azami angrily turns to Lady Luck, “just who the hell do you think you are talking to me like this?! I am Azami Tsurugi, maven of machinery and—”

“Yap, yap, yap.” Soundchick interrupts, “all your money can’t buy the common sense you seem to severely lack.” Azami seethes, “did you believe Mite’s powers would give you the respect you sure as hell don’t deserve?”

“And you got some nerve criticizing how other people parent when you don’t have a basic understanding of parenting your damn self.” Karma adds.

“You ignorant brats! Thinking you’re so high and mighty playing dress-up as animals. You will pay for disrespecting me. And I won’t need Mite’s powers to do so.”

“Whatever.” Lady Luck tosses her tuba in the air, “miraculous cure.” The magical ladybugs return all the women, excluding Azami, back to wherever they were taken from and also fixes the damage the akuma caused. “Let’s get out of here.”

Azami glares watching the three heroes jump away. An akuma floats into her cellphone and

the mask appears over her eyes. “*You won’t need my powers, sure, but why waste an opportunity? We both want those pests out of the picture.*”

Azami’s grip on her phone tightens, “if you have a plan, I’m listening.”

Lady Luck, Karma, and Soundchick all land on a nearby roof, “fucking shit, that was a mess.” Karma groans stretching, “I feel like I need need a shower after interacting with that lady. Just who was she anyway?”

“Azami Tsurugi is a... businesswoman,” Lady Luck answers making a face, “self-proclaimed ‘maven of machinery.’ Whatever that means. She makes all sorts of complicated technological devices that are supposed to *fix* people with disabilities.”

“She what?! What kind of ableist shit is that?! Someone needs to fix her.” Karma growls.

“You know how it is...” Soundchick drawls, folding her arms behind her head. “ableists eat up that shit because they appear in the right. They want to erase disabilities and by ‘helping’ physically disabled folks ‘get over’ their disabilities means they don’t have to change their hateful perspective.”

Karma clinches her fists and *visible* black energy crackles around her, “just who does she think she is?!” Her voice echoes.

Lady Luck and Soundchick share a brief glance, “whoa.” Soundchick begins, “power-up alert.” The energy immediately dissipates around Karma. “What was that?”

“She wasn’t aware of what she just did.” Karma tilts her head to the left at Lady Luck. “In layman’s terms, you’ve ‘leveled up.’ It appears, if angry enough, you can conjure destructive energy from your entire body.” Karma looks over herself in awe.

“Wonder if I can do it again? Oh! That reminds me. I feel like I’m getting stronger, as a civilian, even though I probably don’t look it. Check out my bicep.” Sharing a glance and a shrug, Lady Luck and Karma both feel Karma’s left flexed bicep.

“Perhaps the more we fight, the stronger we get?” Lady Luck guesses.

“Nice! Like pokémon.” Soundchick adds then she high-fives Karma’s raised hand.

“While I have not noticed any physical differences, I know that I’ve changed mentally because of the miraculous’ power.”

Karma nods in agreement. “Yeah, that too.”

“It isn’t just your physical strength that superpowers power-up. You need a strengthened mind to be able to use your powers and out-think your opponents.” They both turn to Soundchick, jaws dropped. “What?”

Karma’s the first of the duo to snap out of her stupor. “Double L, we gotta turn our duo into a trio with Soundchick.” Soundchick nods eagerly.

“It’s a tempting offer, but it’s not practical.” Soundchick and Karma instantly deflate. “Wha—oh. I worded that incorrectly. The impractical thing I am referring to is the chicken miraculous, not the addition of another person to our team.” The other girls nod slowly. “Perhaps if, with your permission, we can train you to use several miraculouses with powers likely to be needed.”

“Hell-to-the-yes.”

“Wait. Can we train someone else? No one trained us.”

“That is precisely why we have to train her, or at least tell her about the powers beforehand.” Karma nods in agreement. “What are the most practical miraculouses in our arsenal?”

Karma taps her chin, “the fox, definitely, monkey, turtle, and ...weird to say but I’d say the pig could be a good choice too.”

“I agree. And speaking of the fox, it’s only right we extend this offer to Whistler as well.” Karma nods enthusiastically. “Then I guess we’re all set.”

“If we’re a team, we need a team-name.” Soundchick clears her throat. “Presenting the Miraculous Ass-kicking Animal Squad Defenders of Paris!” She poses dramatically then lowers her hand when Karma and Lady Luck simply stare at her. “Uh... too wordy?” They both nod. “Yeah, thought so. Got a bit caught up there. Ah! I know! Miraculous Girl Force!”

“Definitely better.” Karma begins, “but doesn’t feel quite *there* yet. Also, what if we find a boy?”

Soundchick scoffs, “why would we need a boy? If we add one boy to the team, the sexist assclowns are going to swarm and praise anything he does and practically declare him as the team’s leader.”

“She’s right, Karma. I think we’d be better off without a boy. In fact, I think we’d be the first all-girl team of superheroes.”

“That is something I can get behind. Hands in.” Lady Luck and Soundchick comply and Karma puts a hand on both of theirs, “here’s to badass girls and their badass girl teamwork.” They lift their hands in cheer.

□□

Nino closes his locker then heads to class. The akuma attack only delayed the school day by less-than-an-hour but Damocles decided to snip the end of the school day rather than the beginning as he usually did. As Damocles only hired **one** foreign language professeur, for the entire school, two-to-three classes had to be smushed together as one class. Bustier’s and Mendeleiev’s classes were bunched up, not just in this class but also art and music – which Damocles belatedly informed them (a month after the fact). A lot of the “extracurriculars” were being bunched together due to lack of funds and staff. *Yet*, they’re still going to another continent next week... to celebrate royalty. If that doesn’t scream *we need funding*, nothing will.

Taking a step inside the classroom, the loudspeaker crackles on. “*Hello and good morning, François Düpont.*” Eyes widening, Nino stops and looks up at the ceiling. That voice...! “*My name is Dr. Savitri Lahiffe. You are no doubt wondering why I am on the loudspeaker. I felt it only right I introduce myself, as I have just been hired as your vice principal.*” The news brings a smile to Nino’s face. His and Chris’ step-maman had connections with the judge who gave her custody over the two of them rather than Savitri claiming, as a doctor, she’d be “too busy” to deal with the children. She even went so far as to block visitation rights to Savitri for an entire year! Thankfully, Vinh Lê Chiên was on their side and it looks like she got Savitri rightful custody by going through a legal neutral party. “*And now, I will hand the microphone over to Mlle. Bourgeois.*”

“*Thank you, Doctor Savitri.*” Nino looks back up at the loudspeaker, hearing Chloé’s voice. Right. How could he forget Chloé also helped because of her fondness of the doctor who fixed her broken nose several years ago. And his aunt also gained an immediate fondness for Chloé, in turn. Even if it wasn’t for Nino’s aunt, Chloé – who may have the worst biological parents in creation (only trumping Alix because Alix only has one biological asshole parent) – genuinely wanted to get Nino and Chris away from their stepmaman. It’s hardly out of character for Chloé as she empathizes with kids in shitty situations due to their parentage,

likely due to her shitty parentage. She got Adrien enrolled in François Dupont and took Sabrina out of her abusive home. *“Beginning next year, we will start our quest to de-akuma-fy the school. Each morning will begin with meditations. Plus, as an added preventative measure, the latest addition to the school will be a much-needed de-stressing room. Remember, if you see an akuma do not panic as that would make you an akuma target. Big changes are coming in the new year.”* A pause. *“That sounded sinister. Uh... Back over to you, Doctor.”*

“Thank you, Chloé. I think that’s pretty much it. Have a wonderful rest of your day! Oh, and Nino Lahiffe, please report to my office.” She giggles then the intercom crackles off.

Beaming, Nino turns around and nearly bumps into Marinette. “Sorry.”

“Don’t worry about it. I know your tante is just as excited to see you as you are to see her.” Nino nods, still beaming. “Well, go and see her.” Nino briefly hugs Marinette before running out of the classroom.

Marinette watches Nino leave then walks past the professeur’s desk to find a seat. “Ah, Mlle. Dupain-Cheng, a moment?” She turns around then approaches the desk. “Not sure if I properly thanked you for your assistance. Not only saving my life, but rejuvenating my tastebuds. There are so many pâtisseries I’ve yet to try from your boulangerie pâtisserie.”

Marinette stares at the professeur strangely, “um... you’re welcome?” Scratching her head, Marinette walks to the back of the classroom to get a seat. As she walks, Plagg sticks the top of his head out of Marinette’s shirt collar glaring at the man who smiles in reply.

A small crowd forms outside of the classroom. “She was a phoenix!” Fei exclaims. The girls in the crowd murmur their agreement.

“And I’m telling *you*, she wasn’t!” Kim argues. The boys murmur their agreement. “She was —” Kim gulps when Fei takes a step toward him, all the boys not only collectively take a step backwards but begin to cower. “Y-You cowards!” They all run down the hall. As soon as Kim turns back to Fei, she takes another step toward him.

“Tell me then... if she wasn’t a phoenix, what was she?”

“I don’t know birds like that—” When Max walks by to enter the classroom, Kim grabs him then puts him in between him and Fei, “I need a huge favor. Could you name some other kinds of birds? Fei thinks the new hero is a phoenix but I think she was some other kind of bird.”

Fei pulls Max out of Kim's grasp, "Max isn't your encyclopedia." Max looks up at Fei in awe. "If you wanna know something, look it up yourself! Come on Max, you can sit with me." Fei glares at Kim before she takes Max by the hand then enters the classroom. The girls all huff and glare at Kim as they walk away to their respective classes. Kim groans before entering the classroom.

"T-Thank you, Fei."

"Hm? Don't mention it. You're more than just a succulent brain." As they're sitting behind Marinette, she makes a face as she turns around. "What? Was that not the right word?" Kim walks over to them, "what do you want now?"

"I want to apologize to Max. I know he—you're more than an information bank and I'm sorry for suggesting I thought that. Because I don't think that at all. I think you're a bunch of amazing things beside just smart. That's what I like about you—a-as a friend!" He amends. "Like you as a friend." He repeats, "so... sorry!" Before anyone could respond, Kim flees to the other side of the classroom.

He nearly bumps into Alix who stares at him questioningly before she takes the seat in front of Marinette. "Was that a confession?" Fei asks.

"Sounded like it." Marinette agrees.

"Confession? Who had a confession?" Alix asks.

"Kim, just now. He said he likes Max." Alix stares at Fei for a few seconds before wordlessly rising from her seat. The three of them watch her walk over to Kim, haul him by his hood then pull him out of the classroom. "Hmm..."

"I'm flattered, Kim is objectively appealing but I don't experience amorous feelings." Both Marinette and Fei stare at him. "I'm not romantically or physically attracted to him, to anyone."

Fei holds Max's hands, "join the LGBTQ+ club." She whispers.

"I didn't know the school had one."

“It’s only been, I think, two weeks since Aurore brought it up to Damocles and every club needs a certain amount of members and an advisor. Basically, all of that has been on hold because of the class trips.”

Alya, Kagami, and Juleka all enter the classroom together. Fei waves them over. Alya sits next to Marinette and Kagami sits on Alya’s other side, Juleka takes the seat next to Max. “I want to let you all know that I love and cherish each of you dearly, but Kagami and I are official besties. Our secret handshake is pending.” Alya says and Kagami gives a confirming nod.

Fei lets out a sigh of relief, “I thought you were going to say you two were an official couple. My heart stopped for a second.”

“I’m happy for you two.” Marinette says, “there’s nothing greater than having someone in your corner who just gets you.” Kagami and Alya nod at each other while smiling. “I mean, I consider all of you my best friends but, naturally, Alix has seniority.” They all nod in understanding. “If we’re all one another’s secondary best friends why not cement that with friendship bracelets?”

“Hell to the yes!” Fei cheers. “We can do that at the party. Make it one of the welcoming activities.”

“Party?” Juleka asks.

“Yeah. We’re throwing a welcoming party for the new girl. She’s cute and gonna join the LGBTQ+ club.” Fei answers.

Alix re-enters the classroom then unceremoniously plops down in her seat with a heavy sigh, “ouch. That bad, huh?” Marinette asks and Alix grunts in reply.

“Class.” The professeur gets up, “I have to run a quick errand. Please remain in your seats until I return.” Then he walks out of the classroom.

“I’ve never heard of a welcoming party.” Alya muses. “And what new girl?”

“Welcoming parties are these grand events that, well, welcome someone to the community or school or something. It’s gonna be lots of fun. I mean, who doesn’t love a party?” Unsurprisingly, Kagami, Fei, Alya, and Juleka all raise their hands. “Yea... that’s

understandable considering the string of not great parties we've had recently. But Kagami's birthday party was fun. So we'll learn from that and downsize." Sabrina pushes Mylène into the classroom, both of them fiercely whispering to each other. Next, Adrien enters arm-in-arm with Zœ. "Ah! That's her. Zœ, over here!" Marinette waves the blonde over. Smiling, the aforementioned blonde walks over to them after freeing her arm from Adrien's grip.

"When did Sunblock get so clingy?" Fei asks. Alix opens her mouth to correct the nickname but doesn't, it's a better nickname for his pale ass anyhow.

"She *is* cute." Juleka mutters, "kinda looks like Chloé a bit."

"Are you saying you think Chloé is cute?" Alix asks with an eyebrow raised.

Juleka nods with a one-shoulder shrug. Zœ waves as everyone introduces themselves then the blonde stares at Juleka. "You look like the girl in Chloé's contacts named Her Goth Hotness." Zœ gasps then facepalms, "I don't think I was supposed to say that aloud."

"Chloé has a picture of me?" Juleka wonders.

"You met Chloé yesterday?" Marinette asks.

Zœ nods, "she's my little sister." Everyone gasps. "W-What?"

"You're related to Chloé?" Alix asks. "Hell of a curveball."

"Then your outfit is Chloé's?" Zœ nods. Marinette looks Zœ over. "Huh. I can kinda see it."

"Screams bad girl lesbian aesthetic." Fei muses, "I wonder if she'll let me borrow it?"

"But that isn't your aesthetic. Chloé didn't so much force you into that outfit so much as she just put together the best of what she had."

"Uh... you know you're defending Chloé, right?" Alix asks.

"Yes, and I was unaware that Chloé actually had a fashion perspective, and a good one at that. Her outfits were always 'approved' by Audrey Bourgeois, and never suited her. They

made her look like a fashionable albeit uncomfortable grandma. What if Chloé doesn't have a true aesthetic either?" Marinette balls up her fists, "I can't believe I ever idolized her. Fashion is all about expressing *yourself*. Not forcing uniformity. Why do we let critics dictate what should wear when everyone has different tastes?"

"Not that this isn't important but I have a question, Zœé." She turns to Kagami. "If your family is *here*, why were you a whole ocean away at that finishing school?"

"Chloé and I don't have the same papa. Mine is a travel agent... who was never around because he was always traveling. And not once did he ever bring me a souvenir!" Zœé sighs. "Papa didn't even have a home address, and since I had no idea who my maman was either, I was forced to stay on school grounds every holiday. Guess it was easy for papa to do whatever he wanted while I was stuck in a school he never had to visit."

"Wait. You had no idea who your maman was?" Alix asks. Zœé nods. "Wow. I've seen and experienced some shitty things but that is top tier. I don't know who your papa is but he's climbing to the top of my shit list, right behind your maman." Alix cracks her knuckles.

"That's wild. Considering you didn't know her identity, and she set up her base of operations in North America, she wasn't around you or Chloé. Which..." Fei lolls her head from side to side, "which might be a blessing in disguise. I never met my parents but I had some kickass guardians in my life. Fuck blood ties. Genetics don't bind you to a life of misery with assholes."

"Sounds like we're changing the theme of this welcome party to a support party." Marinette says. The others all stare at Marinette. "What? Oh. Why am I on board with this?" They nod. "Because I empathize with Chloé – and Zœé's – situation. Everyone has that shitty relative they don't talk about. Only it appears that every relative of Chloé's, other than Zœé – of course, is like that."

"You?" Fei prompts, "but your parents are the best."

"Yeah, they are. I'm fortunate to say I've never experienced having parents who don't listen or care. My parents have always supported me, even my screw-ups. Every—" Marinette pauses, "— *most* children," She amends, "deserve that. My shitty relative is my paternal grandpa. Never met the man but his face was cut out of every photo in every photo album. No one ever even says his name."

"Shit, what did he do?" Alya asks.

“He very vocally objected my parents’ wedding – and I mean *my parents’ wedding* – as in the ceremony itself. Burst into the chapel completely unhinged with an actual honest-to-goodness paper list of all the reasons his son shouldn’t’ve married outside his race.”

“Whoa. What a shitty human being. I was told bits but never the whole story.” Alix scowls, “I feel like we should make a list of every asshole adult we know, but I also feel like there aren’t enough trees in France to complete the list.”

“That has me thinking...” Alix tilts her head at Marinette, “we’ve spent long enough disliking Chloé for past events and things beyond anyone’s control. I’m taking the first step. It’s time to stop being petty or we’ll end up turning into bitter asshole adults ourselves! Roller derby teaches us to support one another. I’m willing to forgive and forget. What do you say, Alix?”

Alix sighs, “*fine*. It really wasn’t doing any of us any favors anyhow. And Chloé can be semi-decent at times. I mean, she’s advocating for lessening akuma attacks. Only someone who likes akumas would be against that. And...” Alix shifts uncomfortably in her seat, “I never said it aloud but...” She takes a deep breath, “after me and Marinette’s birthday party, Chloé pulled me aside and asked if I needed a place to stay.” Marinette’s jaw drops. “I know, I know! I should’ve told you. I figured if I never said it, I could pretend it never happened. She heard the rumors that my biological pain in the ass was trying to kill me for some weird ritual to bring back his wife.”

“But that was it, right? Just a rumor? We already have akumas, amoks, magical yellow ball creatures, we don’t need zombies and necromancy shit.” Alya says, “I do not fuck with horror.”

“Sorry Alya, it wasn’t a rumor.” With a groan, Alya snaps her fingers in disappointment. “But, as I’m still kicking, he didn’t get the opportunity.”

Zöé puts a hand on her chest, “Chloé and I made a vow yesterday that we’ll always love and support each other as we learn to be sisters, together. Chloé has this obnoxiously long list of rules on her bathroom mirror that she’s expected to follow. It was bad. Far worse than the garbage they taught us in finishing school and they were teaching us the ‘correct’ way to pee!”

“You can’t just say something like that and not explain.” Alix says.

Zöé chuckles, “fair enough. I only received two lessons as I was taken out of the school. The first is ladies **never** sit with their legs open. Your legs must be crossed at all times, even on

the toilet. No, *especially* on the toilet. Also, ladies never slouch so you have to sit up on the toilet but *never* touch your back to the toilet seat lid as that is ‘improper.’”

“That reminds me of this silent video my grandma made me watch about how to minimize sounds young ladies make on the toilet because they must never emit any ‘unwanted’ sounds or smells.”

Zöé gasps, “that was the next lesson before left!”

“What in the ever-loving fuck...” Alya says holding her hands to her head.

“Yeah. I really don’t want to go back there. But we were talking about Chloé. When it was just her, me, and Sabrina she was amazing. Ordered us mani-pedis at the hotel, had pillow fights... which messed up our nails. It was fun. As soon as maman’s voice carried through the walls Chloé’s body got rigid and her face became impassive. It was like maman could sniff out fun then snuff it out. And maman informed me that if I don’t maintain her image living in the hotel, she’ll find some way to re-enroll me at the finishing school.”

“We are writing that list, right?” Max asks.

Markov beeps, “compiling data now.” Another beep. “This is the incomplete list of unsavory adults who do more harm than good in the lives of the children they are around: Zöé’s papa, maman, step-papa, Alix’s birth papa, Alix’s birth brother, Marinette’s grandpa, Kagami’s grandma—”

“Whoa, whoa.” Fei interrupts, “isn’t your grandma the creator of Mirrorware and those new little bean-looking things?”

Kagami nods, “she is also a bitter narcissist who encouraged my and my maman’s worst qualities. Named me after her company just to sate her ego. Claims to create ‘assistance’ technology for the disabled when her ‘inventions’ are not even helpful to those with disabilities. Sent my maman to a correction clinic while she was pregnant with me.” Fei sucks in a breath, “and those are just a few of the things I know of!” Alya puts a comforting hand on Kagami’s back and she takes a deep breath. “She was also this morning’s akuma.” Markov’s face projects an overhead image of Azami Tsurugi swatting away Lady Luck’s hand.

“*Damn...*” The others chorus.

Markov beeps, “she is clearly in the top five and could very well be the worst person on the planet! There are tons of data to compile. Ooh. Back to the list... Nino and Chris’ step-maman, Adrien Agreste’s parents, Robert ‘Bob’ Roth, Caline Bustier, Roger Raincomprix, the ice cream man named André, Mite, Méfait, Tomo—Error.” Markov’s eyes turn into the loading symbol briefly then turn back to their black ovals. “Erasing Tomoe Tsurugi from the list. It is very unlikely that another name from this list will be removed. However, there are surely going to be multiple additions.”

“Now that I think about it, my maman’s situation mirrors Chloé’s. Collared and conditioned to their maman’s whims. The only difference is maman sent my grandma packing. Chloé has no way out. Even if she were to be in a different suite, her parents will still be there.”

“Then it’s up to us to give Chloé all the love and support she’s never had. That reminds me.” Alya stands, “Sabrina, come here for a sec?” Curious, Sabrina gets up and walks over to the group. “We’re having a party for Chloé and Zœé on Wednesday. Can you help us with decorations and stuff Chloé would like?”

“Yeah, I can—” Her eyebrows furrow, “wait. Why are you throwing Chloé a party? Her birthday was a few months ago.”

“Initially, we were having a welcome party for Zœé but we’re turning it into a support party for both of them and you—” Sabrina blushes, “and anyone else who needs some support.” Alya answers. “A support party! Support...” Alya hums sitting back down. “What’s another word for support?”

“Uh... I don’t think this should be a surprise. Chloé has... traumatic experiences with surprise parties.” Sabrina grimaces, “I’ll still help with the decorating but you have to let her know about this.”

“We will and you are gonna tell us that story later.” Alix says. Sabrina nods then goes back to her seat.

Chloé enters the classroom with her crutches and a cast on her foot instead of the boot. Once again, Doctor Savitri came to her aid. Right there in her office, she performed a minimally invasive surgery to realign Chloé’s – evidently broken – foot. Just had all the necessary tools in her office. She was hired as vice principal but she was also willing to double as the school’s doctor... considering the school didn’t have one. Just how did Damocles get away with this school being such a shitshow for as long as he has? “Chloé!” Hearing her name called, Chloé looks around the classroom until she spots Zœé waving her over. Chloé cautiously makes her way over. “Have a seat!” The only one standing, Zœé gently pushes Chloé into the seat in front of Juleka.

Chloé grabs Zöé's arm, yanking her closer. "What are you doing?" She grits out smiling.

"I'm helping you out." Zöé whispers.

Chloé lets go of Zöé's arm then looks around at everyone looking at her. "This feels like an intervention." Zöé takes the empty seat in front of Chloé. "No, it feels like a funeral. No need for a eulogy, I just broke my foot. Just due non-magical karma."

"Just due?" Kagami asks, "you're saying you deserved to have your foot broken?" Chloé nods. "Why would you think that?"

Chloé waves the concerned look off, "what would it matter? It already happened. In four to seven months, I'll be out of this cast. Ooh, in time for sandals."

Kagami frowns, "Chloé, you don't have to pretend." Chloé tilts her head at Kagami, "in fact, you no longer have to star in the world's most bizarre and over-the-top one-woman shitshow. We're here for you, Chloé. We like you for you. It's time you began to like you for you as well."

Chloé's face turns bright red, "w-what? I *love* myself!"

"Sure, but you don't *like* yourself." Marinette answers. "Plain as day for anyone who says they deserve injury."

"I did deserve it!" Chloé stops herself then scowls. "Look, it doesn't matter. Alright? What's done is done. Where the hell is the professeur?"

"We know this is tough and uncomfortable to talk about." Alya says, "but it needs to be said aloud."

"Nobody likes being around your maman," Alix continues, "not even you. Why continue to behave like her?"

Chloé's eyes widen then she turns to Zöé who does a double-take, "one day. You've been here *one day* and you blabbed everything! Is this how sisters are supposed to behave?" Zöé winces. "I didn't realize I had to tell you not to tell anyone else all of this! Just look at what you've done. Everyone pities poor, pathetic Chloé. Acts like someone nobody likes because

she deserves it. Her self-hatred is so strong she pretends to relish in it. Struts around like she doesn't care. Well, she does—"Chloé gasps putting her hands over her mouth. She feels nauseated, and that feeling increases when she sees the looks she's receiving. "This can't be happening." She clutches her head, "no, no. No, no, no. I didn't—I *couldn't*." She blinks back tears. "This is a nightmare." She whimpers shaking her head, "wake up, wake up."

"Chloé!" Zöé puts her hands on Chloé's shoulders, "you're already awake."

"That does it!" Chloé looks up wide eyed at Alix standing by her desk holding both of her hands. "There is a difference between pity and sympathy."

Chloé pulls one of her hands free, "bullshit. Sympathy *is* pity. Except it's worse because you now know just what makes the person you dislike so dislika... *unlikable*. And that makes you feel bad so you have to apologize. Well, I don't want apologies or sympathy!"

Marinette groans then gets up slamming a hand on Chloé's desk startling her, "shut the fuck up and listen!" Chloé gapes at her. Even Alix lets go of Chloé's other hand in surprise. "No one here pities you, Chloé. We *empathize* with you. Your parents are the worst. Hands down. They blatantly ignore you. You came to them about your akuma possession and they did nothing! Oh and let's not forget they cast Zöé off to another continent! Decent people don't do that shit. But *you* are a decent person. At least, I believe you are. No one truly knows anything about you because you've been your maman's little shadow. Except shadows don't exist without a corporal form. You've been conditioned to be an empty husk miserably toiling around making everyone else just as miserable. But we've seen bits of the real you behind your façade. I've seen you feel your own feelings. Have your own thoughts. Use *your* voice. Hell, you—" She gestures to Zöé, "came up with that! It doesn't completely suit Zöé but it is a killer aesthetic. Definitely not something Audrey Bourgeois would approve of. You aren't a mouthpiece for your maman, Chloé. You're your own person. And that's the person everyone here wants to get to know."

"Careful what you wish for. Whoever I am could be someone far worse than just an advertised Audrey Bourgeois mouthpiece."

Marinette scoffs, "if anyone here thought that, this conversation wouldn't be happening. You fought off an akuma, Chloé. You stared Mite in her face. No one who *enjoyed* wrecking lives would do those things. You are destined for great things, Charmainé Cloris Bourgeois. You just have to believe that. The world doesn't need a second Audrey Bourgeois, we were already unfortunate to get the one."

Chloé tears up, "w-why are you...? I thought you hated me?" She whispers.

Marinette's eyes soften and she shakes her head, "Admittedly, I disliked you, immensely, but I never hated you. Y-You didn't hate me, right?"

Tears fall from Chloé's eyes as she shakes her head, "no." She answers quietly. "I didn't—*couldn't* hate you. I mean, how can anyone hate you? I used my pettiness to mask my jealousy of you." Marinette stares at her, "don't look so surprised. You are everything I'm not. Taking out my anger at my shitty family on you because you have a great family was lower than low. It never would've made my family any less shitty and being mean never made me feel less shitty. I..." Chloé takes a shuddering breath, "I want to—I have to apologize for everything." More tears fall from her eyes. "Dammit! Why are you like this? Stop being nice to me. I don't deserve it. I don't deserve anything nice."

Marinette blinks back tears, "Chloé..." She hugs Chloé who stiffens briefly then breaks down crying. The others in the immediate area all get up to hug Chloé as well, and that makes her cry even harder.

□□

Tues, Dec 8th, 2020

With her bandaged foot resting on an extra fluffy pillow on the vanity, Chloé rummages through whatever parts of her closet she can reach without moving her foot. "What even is all this stuff?" Zoé asks, picking up a few articles of clothing Chloé tossed over her shoulder. "You have so much clothes. Why don't you donate some?"

Chloé pauses then looks over her shoulder, "what? Doughnut?"

"I said donate, not doughnut."

"Oh. Guess I'm hungry. Mmm. We definitely need to stop at that doughnut shop before school." She shakes her head, "lost my train of thought thinking of doughnuts." She shakes her head again, "I never understood the concept behind giving strangers your used, faded trash. Vomitrocious." She shudders. "The things I've seen just walking past thrift store display windows are gag-inducing." She shudders again.

"Just as there are bad thrift stores, there are good ones. The thrift store the school forced us to volunteer at was *real* nice. They didn't let us buy anything though."

"Probably for the best. The nicest ones are the most deceptive. Higher prices with lower

quality. Why don't we squeeze in a shopping trip this week? We need clothes for our school trip next week."

"I'll go shopping... if you donate some of your clothes."

Chloé fondly shakes her head, "alright. I'll donate but I get to decide where."

"Okay...?"

"With some of this stuff gone, I can actually coordinate my closet my way. Everything in the garment bags are outfits maman got at fashion gigs or wherever I was never invited to. They're not even my size. She just dumped them into my closet without asking. I don't even think she remembers they're here."

"Then those are at the top of the donation list."

"Do you have any idea how much thrift stores will charge for her clothes? We need to find a place that'll freely give the clothes away. Still not sold on having strangers pay for used clothing. They don't know where it came from. Or *who*."

"Let's donate them to a homeless shelter. That way you know they're freely going to people who really need them."

"Don't homeless people need more than just overpriced clothes? I'm nowhere near rich enough to end homelessness throughout the city, but I can donate money to make sure these places are always open."

Zoé beams, "that's a great idea. Everyone deserves someplace to lay their head, warm clothes, and at least two meals a day."

Chloé hums. "That settles it. I'll donate this month's shopping money to homeless shelters."

Zoé opens her mouth to agree but stops to backtrack what Chloé just said. "*This month's* shopping money? You mean, like an allowance?"

Chloé shakes her head, "I get a bi-weekly allowance like every other kid, speaking of which

we have to talk to papa about yours, but at the beginning of every month papa gives me a prepaid shopping card to, well, shop with.”

“I...I’m curious as to what that prepaid limit is?”

“Limit?” Chloé gasps, “cards have limits?!”

“U-Usually?”

“Whoa. Papa’s never given me a limit before. Not that I’ve been in much of a shopping mood after my first akuma possession.” Chloé clinches her fists, “not that papa *noticed*. He just handed me my card and sent me on my way.”

“Do the cards expire?” Chloé pauses, thinking, then shrugs. “If they don’t that means you’ll have, what, three months of semi-unlimited shopping money? Do you have any idea how much you can donate and still have enough to shop with?”

“With taxes included, I’d wager between sixty and seventy-five percent of however much there is.” Zöé gapes at her. Chloé chuckles. “Considering how much I love to shop, I can’t be bad at math. I’d get ripped off constantly. I know all the tax percentages for every arrondissement in the city.”

“Wow! Can you teach me that? Or is it something that can’t be taught? I’m *okay* with math but I have a bit of trouble with the difficult stuff. Especially fractions and percentages.”

“If I can learn it, you can learn it. I’ll help however I can.”

“Chloé is *really* good at math.” Chloé blushes as Sabrina leans against the closet doorframe holding a large box. “Helped me when I was struggling in sixième.” Both Zöé and Sabrina are temporarily staying in Chloé’s suite. There is no way any renovations will be done with them going on their class trip next week then Christmas and New Year’s the following weeks. So she hadn’t bothered to get anyone to start. It’s odd to share her space but it’s not a bad odd. Sabrina sleeps over monthly but this feels different. Feels like she should’ve always been here. Zöé too. “This parcel...” She walks over to the vanity and gently places the box on it. “Was in front of the suite. Your papa seemed surprised I was here. You *did* tell him you offered me a place here, right?”

“No. And I’m not gonna. If he isn’t going to listen what use is there in talking? And I *like* talking.”

“What’s in the box?” Zöé asks.

Sabrina rubs her hands together then opens it. She and Chloé both gasp as they loom over the box looking inside. “They’re here!” Sabrina squeals. She pulls out and subsequently caresses a dark green American 1950s-styled “poodle” dress; there is a bright red cursive S on the left side and the skirt portion is red with dark green polkadots. “Chloé, it’s so beautiful!”

“I know!” Chloé pulls out an identical, only much taller, dress with a C on the right side. “We made one for you too.” Zöé smiles then picks up her dress – *her dress* with a Z on the right side.

“Thanks.” Zöé cradles the dress, “it’s lovely... ooh and so soft.”

“We had them custom-made to celebrate Lady Luck.” Sabrina answers, “and we have Karma outfits too! Didn’t account for the new hero, because she showed up just yesterday, but once we get clearer pictures we’ll get outfits for her too.” Sabrina pulls from the box a black, green, and red vertical zigzag patterned flapper dress.

Zöé gasps, “that’s lovely too.” She squeals excitedly as Sabrina hands her a dress. “Can I wear this one now?” She lifts the Karma-styled dress in her hands.

“You can... but it might be a bit cold.” Sabrina answers, “unless you wear stockings.”

“I hope I have the accessories to go with these outfits. Damn, you know, I don’t think I have enough thigh-high boots.”

Sabrina sighs, “your foot is in a cast. You can’t wear boots.”

Chloé frowns, “I can wear *a* boot on the foot that isn’t broken. Besides, what do you expect me to wear?”

“I *expect* you to wear the shoe Doctor Savitri recommended.” Sabrina points to a shoebox under the vanity.

“Y-You can’t be serious, Sabrina. It’s a corrective shoe.” Chloé glowers, “and a hideous one at that.”

Sabrina picks up the box then takes out the black shoe inside, “it’ll help take the pressure off your non-broken foot while the broken one gets better.” Chloé makes a face, “don’t start. You told me to be more stern with you and I’m following through.”

Chloé huffs taking the shoe from Sabrina. “You’re enjoying this, aren’t you?”

Sabrina smirks, “a bit, yeah. Are you gonna wear your Lady Luck dress?”

“Nah. Not until after the new year.”

“Chloé, Sabrina, can you give me a hand?” They both stare at Zöé with a denim romper halfway on her, up to her waist.

Sabrina snickers, “it’s backwards.” Zöé looks down at the outfit in confusion then looks up at Sabrina. “Out of it and you’ll see. You two really are sisters. Chloé always puts her—” Sabrina yelps when Chloé elbows her.

Zöé lets the romper drop to the floor then steps out of. She then picks it up and turns it around then steps back into it. “Oh, *wow*.” She zips it all the way up. “Thanks, that would’ve been embarrassing.”

“We’d never let you leave the house a half-dressed mess.” Sabrina says and Chloé nods in agreement.

“Oh! Don’t forget an undershirt, that romper *moves*.” Chloé says with a grimace, “and denim is unforgiving on sensitive skin.”

“Got it.”

“We have to talk about redecorating the suite once we come back from our class trip.” Zöé and Sabrina exchange a glance before looking at Chloé. “You two are living here now. Unless you want your own suites, there’s plenty of space for all three of us here.”

Sabrina happily brings her hands together, “I’d love to share this suite with you.” Zöé nods in agreement beaming.

The suite door opens with a loud thud startling the three of them. “Charmainé Cloris! Zsöphyá! Present yourselves now!” Audrey angrily taps her foot against the floor. Sabrina gives the sisters an encouraging pat on the shoulders before they exit the closet and approach Audrey. “Took you both long enough.” Audrey lowers her sunglasses, “what in heaven’s name is that hideous thing on your foot?”

“You mean my cast? For my broken foot?”

Audrey puts her sunglasses back over her eyes, “I won’t even ask how you managed to break your fucking foot. That thing is an eyesore. Get a new one.”

“She can’t just get a new cast—”

“*You* will speak when spoken to, Zsöphyá.” Zöé grits her teeth. “She will do whatever I say because I am in charge. I don’t know or care about the shit your papas let you get away with but I’m not them. If I’m going to stay here, I will take an active role in running your lives. Because clearly you two are in desperate need of guidance. There is only one rule for my rule: what I say goes. Or you both will go.” They both gasp, “better yet, you won’t go. *Anywhere. Ever.* Again. Piss me off and you’ll be home-schooled so strictly that it’ll make Agreste Jr.’s life seem like paradise in comparison! Starting now, *I* will be selecting your outfits so make sure you are dressed to my standards.”

“You can’t just—” Chloé puts a hand over Zöé’s mouth and shakes her head.

Audrey walks past both of them and enters the closet. She screams when she sees Sabrina at the vanity. “What are you doing here, Sandy?”

“Sleepover.”

Audrey looks her up and down, “well, if you’re here. You will dress to my standards as well. Get out. I’m picking outfits.” Sabrina gets up and exits the closet walking over to Chloé and Zöé.

Sabrina hugs them, “are you two alright?”

Chloé shakes her head, “I’ve never been so grateful to have a breakdown. I... I could’ve turned into that.”

“Never.” Zöé hugs her tighter, “you are worlds different than her.” They let go of one another and Zöé balls up her fists, “who does she think she is anyway?”

Sabrina puts a hand on Zöé’s shoulder, “deep breaths, Zöé. Mite is already no doubt lurking waiting for a chance to get Chloé. She’s not gonna pass up the opportunity to possess you.”

“I know but I’m so angry! Years of ignoring us then comes in here demanding we obey her?”

“Forget about her.” Sabrina says, “we have each other.” They hug again then Sabrina and Chloé both gasp as they feel Zöé go rigid followed by that all-too-familiar chill. Sabrina shakily lets go then slumps to the floor holding her head. “Not again. Not again.” She mumbles crying.

Shaking, Chloé holds onto Zöé’s shoulders. “You listen to me, Mite. You can’t have her! I won’t let you.” The mask outline appears over Zöé’s face, turning her eyes purple, and she smiles cruelly. “Bitch.” Chloé growls.

“There is one simple solution, My Dear Chloé.” Zöé says, voice distorted. “Trade places. After all, you don’t want ‘me’ to suffer.”

“Fine.” Chloé says without hesitation, “give me the akuma and stay the fuck away from my sister!”

“You really are making the right call.” The akuma flies out of the romper’s zipper and Zöé falls backwards. Magic crackles around it as it flies into Chloé’s cast. Chloé grunts as the akuma mask outline forms over her eyes. Regaining consciousness, Zöé looks up then scrambles to her feet. “Chloé?” She tears up, “oh no. This is all my fault.” She hugs Chloé crying softly into her shoulder. “I’m so sorry, Chloé!”

“*Chloé, is that your name?*” Chloé opens her eyes and looks around. It’s pitch black but there is a small blue light floating toward her. “*Break through the chrysalis, Chloé. You’re halfway there. Trust your emotions and release the vestige of hatred from your heart. Only then will you be able to find me and my miraculous.*”

“Did none of you hear—” Audrey steps out of the closet then stops and rolls her eyes when she sees the akuma outline over Chloé’s face. “Seriously? Again! You are impossible, Charmainé Cloris. Utterly impossible.”

“Shut. Up!” Audrey looks taken aback seeing the raw anger on Zöé’s face as she holds onto Chloé. “*You* are the cause of this. That akuma was meant for me and Chloé took it. The way you’ve treated her. Expecting her to become you. I won’t stand for it! We aren’t going to cave to your demands.”

“Like hell you won’t! I can find a far stricter finishing school for you, Zsöphyá, so continue to test me.”

Chloé’s eyes open and the mask outline disintegrates. “You’re not going to touch my sister!” Magic crackles in the air as the akuma flies out of Chloé’s cast then disintegrates just as the mask did. She loses her balance but Sabrina and Zöé help steady her. “We aren’t your playthings. We’ll dress how we want to dress whether you ‘approve’ or not.”

“Are you still possessed by an akuma? You must be to talk back to me like this. I can just as easily put you in a finishing school as well, Charmainé Cloris.”

“Say whatever you want. Your threats are as empty as your heart.” Sabrina and Zöé still steady Chloé as the three of them walk past a stunned Audrey to the closet.

□□

“Good morning, François Dupont. Vice Principal Savitri here with our morning meditation. We don’t officially start until the new year but I figured I’d give a little sample. I’d like everyone to take a deep breath and hold it for four seconds counting to four backward and forward. Although I am a chiropractor, I am an overall student of knowledge and I believe in mindfulness wholeheartedly. Deep breaths now.” She takes a deep breath. Throughout and outside of the school, students and staff alike take deep breaths in time with the vice principal’s instructions.

Adrien’s townear pulls up to the school. The door opens and Adrien and Avril walk out with their arms linked. Adrien eyes his cousin warily, “you didn’t do anything strange yesterday, pretending to be me, did you?”

““Strange?”” Avril bats their eyelashes, “whatever do you mean, precious cousin of mine?” Adrien sighs heavily. Amélie and Émilie left early in the morning to do shopping for their birthday party on Friday. With Gabriel sequestered in his nook designing away, Nathalie allowed them to go to school. Well, Adrien go to school and Avril visit the school courtesy of a visitor’s pass. With Adrien here, there was no reason to portray him. Besides, experiencing this school through Adrien was not as glamorous as Avril figured. Everyone mostly left him

alone, greeting him from afar with starstruck looks on their faces. Like right now. Walking up the stairs, a few kids greet Adrien with silent waves and Adrien shyly greets them back.

“I would’ve expected a model to have a *presence* in a public school.” Avril grumbles.

“Did you say something?”

Avril beams, “not at all! Let’s go inside and get my visitor’s pass.” Avril pulls Adrien into the school.

Chloé’s red towncar pulls up to the school. The door opens and Sabrina exits first, next is Zöé, and lastly Chloé exits with the help of Zöé and Sabrina who each have one of her crutches in their hands. They help situate Chloé then the three of them walk up the stairs.

“I-Is Chloé Bourgeois wearing jeans?!” Someone exclaims. Gasping, all the students in the courtyard stop and stare. One student actually faints! Chloé is dressed in a plain black jacket, her jeans are light blue, her cast has a protective cover over it and on her other foot is a nondescript black shoe. There isn’t an ounce of makeup on her face. Zöé is wearing the same black jacket, as it’s unbuttoned you can see part of her off-white rainbow-lettered Arnie Armadillo sweater, she also has on black ripped jeans and pink thigh-high boots. Sabrina is wearing a faded blue denim romper with a pair of white sneakers. Everyone watches them enter the school.

As Lila arrives at the courtyard, she stops then does a double-take seeing Chloé enter the school. “The fuck? Am I seeing things?” Frowning, she runs up the stairs to catch up with them. “Good morning, Chloé!” She greets.

Chloé pauses mid-step and narrows her eyes in suspicion, “good morning.” Zöé and Sabrina stop and turn to Chloé in concern. She shakes her head then they hesitantly walk to their lockers.

“I can’t help but notice how different you look.” She gasps, “you didn’t go broke, did you?”

Chloé scoffs rolling her eyes, “I’m through playing bullshit petty mindgames.” Lila gapes. “I’m not entertaining your overdone ‘always the victim’ act. I let go of hatred and anger. Which you should be grateful for, since your presence alone pissed me off.” Lila frowns. “I’m warning you *once*, Lilyana, mess with me and I’ll do far worse than expose you.” Chloé smiles, “and I mean that in the nicest way possible.” She walks off.

Lila watches her go with a smile on her face. And here she thought school would be boring. She heads to her locker then sees an akuma on it, which morphs her smile into a scowl. She looks around the hallway and sees her schoolmates bunched up against the opposite wall waiting to bolt. “Are you lost, akuma?”

“*I’ve been waiting for you.*” Lila’s eyes widen considerably. D-Did that akuma just *talk* to her? The luckyblog says you only hear a voice when you’re possessed. Something in your possession the akuma interacts with. Lila hasn’t gone to her locker yet, therefore no akuma should be possessing *or talking* to her. But just to be sure, she feels around her face. Thankful when nothing feels out of place. “*Your emotions drew me—*”

Lila holds up a hand, “stop.” Lila hears murmurs behind her, especially as the akuma does stop flapping its wings. “Are you seriously trying to get me to get Chloé for you?” Lila laughs, “yeah, not happening. The whole city knows about your vendetta. I won’t be your pawn. I’m **no one’s** pawn, Mite, I’m a fucking queen. And I am on Team Chloé ready to knock you down.” She opens her locker slamming the akuma against the next locker. After getting her stuff, Lila closes her locker then walks away. The students stare up at the crushed akuma fluttering away.

□□

Doctor Savitri is sitting on Bustier’s desk when the students enter the classroom. “Morning, all. Professeur Bustier is absent, therefore I will be filling in for her today.” The class cheers. “I also come with news. Starting next year, physical education will return with a new sport. Fencing.” The class unenthusiastically stares at the brunette who shrugs. “Damocles seemed happy enough about it. He claims he’s been trying to get the entraîneur D’Argencourt since François Düpont opened but never had any luck.” Another shrug. “Who is this class’ representative?”

“Sabrina is.” Chloé answers. Gaping, Sabrina turns to her wide-eyed. “Why are you staring at me like that? You’ve been handling all the representative stuff since the school year began. Doctor, I resign and will like to transfer the title to Sabrina.”

“Very well. I will make a note of it for your professeur.” Savitri looks around the desk with a frown, “this desk is so messy.” She gets off the desk and looks through the drawers. “How does she grade anything? There’s nothing to write with.” She sighs, “I’m going to ask for stationery. Please do not go crazy while I’m gone?” The class collectively nods then Savitri exits the classroom and knocks on Mendeleviev’s classroom door.

Lila gets up from her seat and sits down at the shared desk Chloé is sitting at. “I feel like we

got off on the wrong foot, Chloé.” She pauses with a smile as Chloé narrows her eyes, “bad analogy.”

“What do you want?”

“I don’t want any bad blood between us.” She leans closer, “I have a plan to get Mite.” Chloé tries to turn but Lila keeps hold of her chin keeping her facing forward, “let’s keep this hush-hush, hm?” Chloé nods then Lila lets go of her face. “That bitch had the gall to try and use me to get to you.” Lila scoffs, “I plan on making her regret that. You and I aren’t so different, and I am into this cut-the-bullshit side of you. I say we leave the cattiness in the past and work together to find out just why Mite is so dreadfully afraid of you.”

Chloé turns to her, “that isn’t a plan.”

Lila frowns, “it’s the premise of a plan.” Chloé raises an eyebrow. “Look, I literally just thought of this when I entered the classroom. We can think of the plan together. Are you doing anything later?”

“Are you asking me out? Because you’re cute but I’m already interested in someone.”

Lila rolls her eyes with a scoff, “*everyone* knows you’re into Lady Luck. You’ve only proclaimed it a million times.” Chloé looks at her in surprise briefly then schools her features. Lila sees the look and leers, “oh my! Chloé Bourgeois, do you have a non-superhero crush?” Lila giggles, “so cute! I know you won’t tell me their identity. So, I’ll just keep naming names until I guess right.”

“Please don’t make me concuss you with my crutches.”

“Well, since you said *please*.”

□□

“Hello, hello all. Doctor Vice Principal Savitri here. I wasn’t expecting to have such a busy day. Principal Damocles has asked me to inform students that tryouts for your grade-wide and school-wide plays will begin next month. He also said that due to... unspecified reasons, the quatrième students will be having a redo of their grade-wide dance next month.”

Gasping, students look up at the loudspeaker in confusion. *“I know everyone is staring at me in confusion but let’s not forget I’m new here. I don’t have the foggiest idea what these*

unspecified reasons are. Anyway, all quatrième class representatives should get together to hash out the details of this do-over dance."

"Another dance?" Marinette sighs opening her locker, "I didn't even like the first one."

"Yeah..." Alix agrees, "not the best night of the year. So long as no one is tilting toward romance... or ice cream, everything should be golden." Marinette groans. "We went to the last one and we're going to this one."

"But why? You don't like dances or events where you have to dress fancy."

"I think this do-over will be a good experience." Marinette looks at her dubiously, "which is why we gotta convince the others to attend this time around."

"Alix!" Marc skids to a halt bumping into the pink-haired teen. "Oww. Sorry." Alix turns around steadying Marc. "Thanks. I... I will try my hardest not to offend you at this dance. And if I do, please feel free to beat some sense into me. Will you go to the dance with me?"

Alix eyes him suspiciously, "you want to coordinate outfits, don't you?" Marc nods sheepishly. "Fine." Marc pumps his fist in the air then quickly hugs Alix before scampering off.

"I'm surprised Marc isn't willing to coordinate outfits with Kim. We know Kim is basically fearless when it comes to over-the-top outfits. Remember his birthday party?"

Alix grimaces, "he dressed as a wedding cake, how could anyone forget that?"

Juleka stops at her locker next to Marinette's, "what about a wedding cake?"

"Kim's birthday party outfit." Alix explains. Juleka hums with a nod. "So, you planning on going to this dance?"

"No. Why?"

"Marinette and I—" Marinette quickly makes an x with her arms. Juleka catches the movement but Alix doesn't, "figured..." Alix turns to Marinette, eyeing her suspiciously before turning back to Juleka, "it would be fun for all of us to go."

“I’m not the dance type.” Juleka mumbles.

Before Alix can argue, Marinette begins pushing her along, “later, Juleka. Let’s go, Alix.” Alix protests as Marinette continues pushing her down the hall.

Chloé stops at her locker. Glowering, she places one of her crutches against the locker and tries to balance on the other and open her locker. The crutch slips from under her arm and Chloé loses her balance. She flails falling backwards right into Juleka’s arms. Both girls stare at each other until both of Chloé’s crutches loudly clatter to the ground startling them both. “T-Thanks.” Chloé mumbles blushing.

“No problem...” Juleka mumbles. She helps steady Chloé to her feet then picks up both of the blonde’s crutches and situates her. “You need help?”

Chloé frowns, “no... but thank you. I can handle things on my own.”

“You don’t have to do everything by yourself.” Chloé looks at Juleka who gives a one-shoulder shrug, “it’s okay to ask for help.”

“I-I know, but I’m fine. Really. No need to pester someone needlessly. It’s just a broken foot. I’m off-balanced but I’ll get the hang of—” Chloé yelps when Juleka picks her up suddenly. “H-Holy hell, why are you so strong?”

“I live on a boat. It’s not a bother to ask me... for help.” Chloé stares. “I mean it.” Smiling, she hugs Juleka and kisses her on the cheek.

“My Gothy Hero. I need to clear the air. I only picked on you because I think you’re hot. The parts of your face I can see anyway. Which the whole damn school knows now thanks to Zœ’s big mouth. Anyway, it was petty and immature of me. If I am to become my best self, I need to apologize for all the shitty things I did.”

“I forgive you. I noticed the way you singled me out was different from everyone else but I didn’t want to read too much into it.” Chloé winces, “by the way? Where did you get a picture of me?”

Chloé grimaces, “I took a picture of you taking that picture with Karma.”

“Then you saved that with my contact information under ‘Her Goth Hotness.’” Still grimacing, Chloé nods. “Where did you get my contact information?”

“As *former* class representative, I had everyone’s contact information.” Still holding Chloé, Juleka picks up her bag then puts Chloé’s crutches in Chloé’s arms. “I, um, I *would* ask you to the dance but I’m clearly not gonna be dancing any time soon. Do you want to maybe... go somewhere else whenever the dance is?”

“Like a date?”

“Yes...?”

Juleka nods with a small smile, “I’d like that.”

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“Kitty Section will be performing at Sabine & Tom Boulangerie Pâtisserie tomorrow!” Rose yells into the microphone. Zöé walks onto the houseboat in awe. There was a houseboat parked by the river near the school to catch any daring runaways, but it was half the size of this boat. “Welcome, Zöé!” Jessica snatches the microphone from Rose who pouts.

“Hey, did anyone else get a virtual cheque from Chloé with an apology?” Kim asks staring at his phone. The others nod. “Cool. So I can cash it, right?” More nods. “Sweet.”

“I have to say this. She does go all-in.”

Kim lowers his phone glancing at Alix and smiles, “you two have a lot in common.” Alix slowly turns to him and Kim slowly raises his phone back over his face.

“I didn’t even know virtual cheques were a thing.” Luka says, “I’m not the type to gloat...” Everyone groans, “but I was right about Chloé. Which means I have to apologize to Alix.” Alix tilts her head to the left, “we were both wrong and right. I mean, I was obviously wrong about you. Your heart is enormous. Filled with platonic and familial love. What I mistook as hatred was just anger. Anger at a lot of things but bringing all that up will make us all a giant akuma and we don’t want that.”

“Not that Mite was even able to control you all.” Aurore scoffs, “what a gyp.”

“Uh, is that why XY is here?” Ivan asks. Everyone else turns to the blond seated on the floor tuning a guitar.

“Everyone deserves a second chance, right?”

“Do you have the hots for XY?” *Adrien* of all people asks.

Luka chuckles, “valid question... but no. I’m into—well, that doesn’t matter. I saw someone who needed a friend and I became that friend.”

“I will give him that *one* chance, but the minute he starts his entitled bullshit, I’ll knock him out.”

“Don’t worry, Alix, I’ll keep him from running.” Laughing, Alix and Luka fist bump.
“Alright, let’s practice.”

“Um, where’s Juleka?” Adrien asks. Everyone turns to Adrien who blushes slightly, “w-why are you all looking at me like that?”

“Adrien, do *you* have the hots for Juleka?” Luka asks. Adrien’s already red face gets a few shades redder. “That answers that.” Luka sighs, “Oh, Sunbeam. I’m sure she’ll be flattered but nothing’s ever gonna happen. How do I lower the rating of this? My sister is only into a particular flavor of soda, we’ll say. You get it?” Adrien shakes his head. “Whew boy. Thought that was a good one. Someone help me out?”

“She’s pitching for the other team?” Ivan adds.

“She’s wlw.” Aurore says with a shrug.

“Wool?” Kim asks then Alix elbows him. “What?”

“W.L.W., Kim.” The brunet nods in understanding. Adrien still looks at everyone in confusion. “Still nothing.” Alix sighs.

“Her closet is fully open.” Jessica pauses with a frown. “Wait.”

“She prefers ice cream cups instead of ice cream cones.” Kim suggests. Everyone turns to him. “What? It’s clever.” The others murmur their agreements.

“Sorry, I’m... still not getting it.”

“Well, we tried. Unfortunately, we aren’t qualified to just blurt it out so you’ll just have to wait until Juleka arrives.” Luka says, “let’s get our instruments.” Adrien sighs watching everyone head to the other side of the boat toward XY. Shoulders slumped, he drags his feet after them.

Lila steps in front of him, out of nowhere, startling him. “Hi, Adrien. I couldn’t help overhearing your conversation with the others. And I can tell you... without actually telling you.” Adrien perks up. “Oh. You actually want me to. Alright then. I will give you one clue. Sapphire.” Adrien tilts his head to the left. The smile slowly slips from Lila’s face. “Sapphire.” She says again and his expression remains the same. “Question. How long were you sheltered in your house?”

“My whole life except for gigs.”

“But you have access to the internet, yes?”

“My parents limit my internet usage.”

“I—” Lila throws her hands in the air, “sorry!” She turns around and walks off. Adrien groans with a heavy sigh.

Adrien slumps in a seat in front of the makeshift stage as everyone prepares for practice. “Poor guy.” Ivan says shaking his head. “I feel for him but we can’t just go blurting out things that we were told. Think of how that’ll hurt Juleka.”

“Jules is tougher than you think. She can kick my ass in a fight.” The others turn to Luka who nods in confirmation. “Watch out for her roundhouse kick.” Luka rubs his jaw reflexively at the memory alone.

“And with her long legs, she’ll knock someone on their ass for sure.” Alix rubs her hands together, “I wonder if she’ll teach me?”

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As Juleka was leaving François Düpont, she sees Karma leaning against the staircase. “Hey!” She greets. “Got a second to talk?” Juleka nods then they both take a seat on the staircase. “Thanks. Lady Luck and I wanted to extend an invitation to you to join our forming team.” Karma holds her baton which shoots out confetti like a popper.

“Wow. You... want *me* to be part of your team?”

“Hell yeah.” Karma answers beaming, “you were a natural with the miraculous. Now, the fox is still available but there are other versatile miraculouses from the group you can pick from.”

Juleka nods in understanding. “I’m in. I want to...” She balls up her fists. “I *have to* protect the people I care about. Make sure they’re never victims of Mite again.”

“There you go. That’s why we want you on the team. I know you’ll succeed.” Juleka smiles softly. Karma presses the paw button on her baton and more confetti shoots out. “Oops.” She presses it again then a screen pops up. The loading symbol appears before it cuts out to Lady Luck. “Hey!” Lady Luck waves. Karma and Juleka wave back. “Guess what. Juleka has agreed to help us out.”

“That’s wonderful. I look forward to working with you more. We’ll have to set aside some time to let you get comfortable with the miraculouses and introduce you to the kwamis.”

“Thank goodness we’re going on the school trip. We definitely need a breather dealing with all Mite’s shit.” Karma’s eyes widen then she facepalms. “Dammit.”

“You felt it too? That you jinxed us?” Lady Luck asks. Wincing, Karma nods. Lady Luck smiles, “it’s alright. We take the bad luck with the good.”

□□

With Tomoe and Anarka’s relationship out in the open, thanks to Azami’s akuma form, Anarka came to pick up Tomoe and head to Liberty. What she picked her up *on*, Kagami cannot say. Nor will she think about it. Kagami enters her bedroom closing the door behind her. Alya paces the room and the kwamis follow her movement.

“How’d it go?” Alya asks. Kagami gives her a thumbs up. “Awesome. Don’t quote me or anything but I believe got it all down.” Kagami sits on her bed as Alya continues to pace while talking. “There were nineteen spaces in this box that are based on Chinese beliefs and culture.” Kagami nods. “Twelve represent the zodiac, you and Karma are the balance that is yin and yang. Neither of us are certain what the other five are. The snake miraculous is missing. There is an empty space for a miraculous you have neither encountered nor heard of, which is part of the five I have no idea what they represent. The bunny miraculous is in the hands of a time-jumper who is someone we know but has yet to power up in this timeline. Mite and Méfait, obviously, have their stolen miraculouses; the moth slash butterfly and peafowl, respectively. Then, and I almost forgot, the cow – I think – and the horse miraculous holders were the former guardians who gave you and Karma your miraculouses, separately, with zero explanation as to why or what you had to do. Thankfully, your kwamis filled you in and Bunnyx picked up the slack.” The kwamis all applaud Alya.

“You’re already an invaluable member of the team and you haven’t selected a miraculous yet.” Tikki floats over to Kagami. “Do you have other individuals you’d like to consider giving miraculouses to?”

“Yes... but I haven’t discussed them with Karma. I need to know how many is too many and what she thinks of my choices. What her choices are.”

Alya takes a seat next to Kagami, patting her shoulder. “Don’t overthink it. You two are an incredible kickass synced-up duo and with the additional help you’ll only get more kickass.” Smiling, Kagami rests her head on Alya’s shoulder.

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