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**Something In the Air**

by overworkedunderwhelmed

**Summary**

Chat Noir's heightened senses have often served him well in battle. At least, they did until he picked up on one tiny detail—one he couldn't possibly ignore.

**Notes**

Thank you so much to Kellarhi for the late night quick read and input!
Chapter 1

There were some days that Adrien regretted how sharp his senses were while transformed.

Like the days their path of battling Akuma brought him downwind of a dumpster.

On his scrambles across town, he was always a little too likely to catch an eyeful of something not meant to be noticed in the dark. He was a gentle chat for sure, always quick to look away. But he always wished he didn’t have to. People knew they were running the rooftops to keep Paris safe, so he’d thought drawing the blinds closed would have been more of a priority.

But now, it seemed like he couldn’t go anywhere without picking up that silly scent.

As Adrien, it was tested on him for months before his first ever run as Chat Noir. The perfumier had blended it for him specifically, before manufacturing and marketing had set to work.

His only saving grace while filming the commercial was that he didn’t actually have to wear the scent. It was ironic, Adrien supposed, considering he had even been given a sample of his own to take home afterward.

But now -- weeks after the first advertisement had aired -- it seemed like he just couldn’t escape it.

Even with normally muted senses, Adrien was noticing it everywhere.

He smelled it in the classroom. He smelled just the hint of it in the cafés as he walked by.

He had spent whole days just rolling his eyes. Even Nino had started to snicker whenever he would pick up on it.

In fact, he was pretty sure that someone in the class had bought a bottle just to prank him.

It was a point that had started to grate on his nerves, just the tiniest bit.

At least until the day, he noticed it on Ladybug.

He had caught the scent on the wind, just slightly altered from her usual scent. His otherwise canny nose could place the smell of generally anyone else, yet hers always remained elusive. It had to be some part of the Miraculous magic keeping her identity safe.

But, for better or worse, that particular scent was burned into his brain now.

The very same perfume scent had been driving him mad for weeks on end.

But on her? Chat bit back a whimper. He knew he could hardly deny that allure.

He hovered close, after they landed upon the roof of the Trocadero to split the patrol routes. He was desperate to make scents of what his nose was telling him.

Chat smirked to himself at the mental pun.

Ladybug smiled back at him enigmatically, question lingering in her crystal blue eyes. “That sound alright, Chat Noir?”

Automatically, he nodded, his eyes following her finger towards their normal route due west of the
Tower.

She grinned as her yo-yo spiraled out to catch purchase, flitting away into the night.

No… this wasn’t just his heightened senses. His Lady had definitely been very close to his perfume...close enough to possibly even be wearing it.

He gulped, jostling the bell at his neck as he tried to steady himself with his baton.

Just the thought alone was enough to drive him crazy.
Ladybug had told him to take the night off.

His nails dug into the metal arm rests, feeling the thrum of the sound reverberate through the venue, surrounding him. The flash of the too-bright stage lighting prompted his eyes to drift closed.

Here in the opening act before of a Jagged Stone concert -- his newest tour -- Adrien was not exactly seated in the cheap seats. Not with Nathalie getting the tickets and the Gorilla nearby for any potential threats.

His homework was done. Even if Nino hadn’t been able to join him tonight, he was at a concert for one of his favorite artists.

Even the opening act had been fun, if a little bit more metal than his usual tastes.

It should have been a pleasant feeling.

Instead, Adrien grimaced, focusing on her words.

Telling him he wasn’t needed or the night was one of the worst things she could ever tell him as Chat Noir.

Distracted as he was for the past few days, he knew he had been holding her back.

He knew Ladybug didn’t mean anything by it, but that hardly made it hurt any less.

Adrien grimaced. He wanted to be at her side. He wanted to know -- for sure -- that it was his scent that still lingered.

He had puzzled for several nights on end, and he suspected he knew why this unexpected discovery meant so much to him.

It gave him hope.

That maybe, just maybe Adrien Agreste meant something more to her than just a civilian or a celebrity. She had saved him often enough that she had to know who he was.

He shut his eyes tight against the flash of the lights, letting himself be pulled under the ebb and flow of the rhythm.

Almost as soon as he had voiced that hope, Plagg had been quick to douse it.

His kwami was quick to remind him that the scent was technically cologne and marketed to guys, it was highly unlikely that she’d be wearing it herself.

Maybe she was close to someone who did. Perhaps her father, or a brother. Or maybe it was a boyfriend she was snuggling.

Adrien flinched at the recollection.

Plagg had only shrugged, toxic, half closed green eyes smirking back at him. She does push you away a fair amount. Surely you must have considered that as a possibility. That it isn’t just a dedication to the cause of keeping Paris safe.
At the time, he had been floored. Even now, he still felt a little seasick.

Plagg seemed to have noticed he pushed a little too far at that and decided to point out that if she was in fact wearing it. Perhaps she wasn’t a she after all.

Adrien scrubbed a hand over his face. That had resulted in an hours long debate and a subsequent eye opening internet search.

It really only left him sure of two things:

Maybe she was simply hanging around people who used the perfume.

Maybe she even owned a bottle herself.

But if she was familiar enough with it, it had to mean she knew of his civilian self at least.

And regardless of whomever she, he, or they may be, his Ladybug still held his heart in her/his/their hand.

Sniffing the air had become an involuntary response, ever since that first day he had noticed it. His nose was still so plagued by recognition of the scent that the occasional whiff gave him pause so he could wonder if perhaps she might be near.

(He had decided he was still going to think of Ladybug as she until he knew otherwise. She had never corrected him thus far, and he would be respectful and follow her lead, as he had always done.)

But there was nothing he could tell for sure.

If he better understood just how much he could and couldn’t recognize it, then maybe he could push it more to the back of his mind.

The more hopeful part of him wondered if he’d actually figured out the means to find Ladybug.

He wasn’t trying to find her. Not really.

Not yet.

Not until she was ready to be found.

Jagged had only gotten through the end of his first set and was taking a bit of a break in between to talk to the audience about his newest piece, one he had planned to debut on stage tonight. And the set was being recorded.

Of course, Akuma always had the worst possible timing, so it seemed like the interruption had been inevitable.

Grimacing, Adrien clasped his hands over his ears as the sound got very suddenly, very painfully loud.

His seat was in the line of the camera so he was bound to have an awful time trying to get away.
The Gorilla still had eyes on him. But at least he hadn’t been in direct line of the speakers.

He had just enough time to hear the Akuma --Scream Machine-- shouting her name as a harsh, guttural punch. Her voice blasted like a shockwave out into the crowd. Those in her direct line of sight took the brunt of the hit, collapsing to the ground in pain with their hands over their ears. Those seated near the speakers hadn’t fared much better.

The stage lights behind him had shattered in a explosive blaze of glory, but at least Jagged himself was out of the range of the shards where he had ducked under the grand piano.

Adrien winced, slamming down hard onto his knees behind the seats to buffer whatever sounds he could, as he searched for a way out.

It was a challenge with the house lights down. He could see a flurry of movement towards the soft glow of the exits.

The sound was enough to cause tremors in the surrounding ground.

Adrien could barely hear himself think. He crouched as low to the ground as the tight space would allow, to keep safe for the moment, before daring to peer higher, searching for a way out.

He tried to keep one eye on the Akuma on the stage, but in this darkness, without his transformed senses, he was nearly flying blind.

He hadn’t even noticed that the Gorilla had gotten close to him until the larger man fell to the ground in the row in front of him, taking a hit from the wall of sound for him.

His ears were ringing from the last barrage, meaning his hearing was definitely out, provided he could actually escape. It was too risky to transform in the same place Adrien Agreste had just been filmed seated, there might be people -- or cameras -- still able to see.

He had no idea how he would actually be able to communicate with Ladybug whenever she arrived.

Suddenly deafened to any attacks and down too low to keep safe for the moment, he grit his teeth trying -- and failing to shake off the pain.

Even Plagg stayed hidden away huddled into his overshirt, vibrating against his chest.

Even if he could get out and transform, he wouldn’t be able to hear Ladybug, so he couldn’t relay what he did know. At least they were often on the same wavelength; but this time, he wasn’t sure that would be enough.

Salvation finally came -- as it usually did -- in the form of a red spotted glove.

He looked up, at Ladybug’s outstretched hand.

She smiled, crouching low to the seats. The darkness provided cover to mask her from the Akuma still on the stage, screaming out into the other side of the room.

Slowly, Adrien crept out, frowning back at his bodyguard’s still trembling form. He was still a bit dizzy and dazed, but he was anxious to transform so he could help her out.

She wrapped her arm around him, tugging him close to her, so she could get enough purchase to swing to the back of the auditorium.
Outside of the transformation, Adrien couldn’t really smell it much from several feet away, but with his other senses muted by the Akuma and his nose buried into her neck, it still permeated his awareness, almost as much as it ever did.

The blend was still unique, the mix of her familiar scent that he knew so well, even if he still struggled to puzzle it out, meshing so easily with the slightest hint of his.

It only heightened the allure of the soft smile she’d offered him in the dim light.

The way it tugged at his heart was no less powerful, even without his superpowered suit.

He wished he had paid more attention as the perfumier had rambled on about the science of scents all those months ago.

On others it smelled jarring and sharp...but on her it smelled like home.

The tips of his ears burned, as he got to relish the moment, breathing her in as she checked the hold of the yo-yo tension before swinging them both farther out of range.

His stomach felt the sharp rise and fall of her swing.

And just like that, her arms around him were gone.

They were out of the obvious blast radius, along the periphery of the back wall. Ladybug met his eyes, cracking the exit door just so, and mouthed to him, “get outside.”

Adrien slumped against the wall, exhausted but still technically vertical.

Her nose scrunched up in clear concern., but he smiled, waving her off.

Ladybug turned back to look at him once more, anxiousness clear in her eyes before they steeled, her fists balling up as she stood, squaring up to take another run at Scream Machine.

It took a while to shake sense into his head. Especially if hearing wasn’t going to be possible for this battle, he needed to be more together than this.

Peering around the entrance hall to confirm it was empty, Adrien tried to speak and hoped Plagg could hear his call.

His Lady needed him after all.

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