Sunshine and Shadows (Lukadrien June)

by steampunkcircus

Summary

My attempt at following the Lukadrien June 2018 prompts for the month. Formerly just titled "Lukadrien June".

Notes

These prompt responses are going to vary in length. I'll do my best to get something out for every day, but this is my first time doing this and I'm also doing Ladrien June.
Chapter Notes

I don't know anything about boats, docks, rivers, or if the supersuits are supposed to be waterproof. Just go with it, please?

Cats don't like water.

Chat Noir was, in part, a cat.

So when an akuma chased Ladybug and Chat Noir towards the Seine, Chat's priorities shifted from "keep everyone safe from the living, moving pile of blankets and pillows called The Cuddler" to "do not, under any circumstances, fall in the river again". Ladybug was giving him the side-eye that meant she knew he was getting nervous, and really, what was he supposed to do about that? He wanted to keep her safe, he wanted to get to the electric blue pillow on top of The Cuddler's head that probably held the akuma, he wanted to do his part. But the idea of cold water clinging to him, that clammy sensation, his hair sticking to his face and feeling the inside of his boots get wet-well, he was going to do whatever he could to prevent that.

"Chat, you circle behind him, and I'll-"

Whatever Ladybug was about to propose was lost as a pile of pillows shot out to smash her into the pavement. Chat swiped at the pile on top of Ladybug with his staff as she clawed her way out from underneath. By the time she was freed, they had to chase the akuma down to a shipyard where he was hurling pillows at the people around the moored boats, knocking them over. Chat froze at the edge of the dock. With his bad luck, he would be in the water in under three minutes.

"We have to stop him!" Ladybug yelled. "Circle behind him while I distract him so you can get the pillow."

She swung her yoyo around the akuma, trapping his pillow-shooting arm to his cushioned side for a minute. It gave Chat his opening to circle around. As he passed one of the boats, a familiar voice called out to him.

"You get 'em, Chat Noir!"

Luka Couffaine, Juleka's brother, Adrien's bandmate. He was standing on the deck of the Liberty, cheering them on. Chat Noir shot him a finger gun and continued his sneaking around the akuma.

One thing that the superheroes didn't account for was that there really was no set connection between fluffy things in the blanket pile's "body". It created new arms away from the strings of the yoyo and shot a stream of pillows, burying Ladybug. It then turned on Chat Noir and-

Yup, he knew he'd end up in the river. His mind was resigned, but his limbs were panicked. He thrashed at the water and very quickly lost track of which way was up.

Arms circled him and he knew immediately it wasn't Ladybug. He fought this new person until his head broke the surface. He was being towed towards one of the boats as he gasped and spluttered. A second pair of hands reached for him and he was on the deck of a boat, shivering and hissing and
coughing. It wasn't until Ladybug landed next to him that he really took stock of where he was.

"I got you a towel," Juleka said, handing it to Chat.

"Didn't think to get one for me?" Luka asked. Luka was drenched. He must have been the one to grab me, Chat realized.

"No," Juleka said, reaching over to rub the towel against Chat's head, obscuring his vision.

"At least those lifeguarding classes paid off," Luka said.

"Chat, are you alright?" Ladybug asked. He felt her hand fall on his shoulder, and he reached up to pat it with his own.

"I'll be fine," he said. The towel was removed from his hair and handed to him. He wrapped it around his shoulders and tried to suppress his shivering. "Thanks for the save, uh-"

"Luka," he said, stripping his wet hoodie off.

"Thanks for the save, Luka," Chat said, standing and shaking Luka's hand.

"How you doing?" Ladybug asked. "Ready to get revenge for your dip in the Seine?"

"Lead the way," Chat said, bowing. He handed the towel back and saluted the Couffaine siblings. "See you later!"

Despite the miserable sensation of water clinging to his body and suit, Chat used his annoyance to make short work of the rest of the battle. A lucky charm of a box of toothpicks, a cataclysm, and a fist bump later, and a soggy Adrien Agreste was making his way home with a grouchy and equally wet Plagg.

"I'm wet and hungry, Adrien," Plagg whined from inside his shirt. "I'll never be warm and dry again!"

"I'm going to have an interesting time explaining this to Nathalie," Adrien said.

Nathalie did ask why Adrien was dripping river water all over the house, but didn't question further when he said he fell. Adrien appeased Plagg and took a shower to warm up. After he did his homework and played some video games, he had an idea. It took some convincing to get Plagg to go back out that night, but Adrien was raised to make sure that people who saved his life knew how much he appreciated it.

"Hi," Chat said, dropping from the mast of the Liberty to land next to Luka on the deck. Luka startled and almost threw his guitar before figuring out who was there in the dark with him.

"Chat Noir? What are you doing here?"

"I came to say thank you," Chat said. "I swear, I can swim when I'm not transformed, but the cat instincts are pretty strong when I am. So, I really appreciate you interrupting your day to jump in the water for a cat you don't know. So, I got you a thank you gift."

He held out a mug that said "Thanks a latte" to Luka.

"You didn't need to do this," Luka said. "I could sense how scared you were. I'm just glad you're okay."
"Please take it," Chat said, pressing the gift into Luka's hands. "Not everyone would do what you did. You were the hero today."

Luka took the mug and smiled at Chat Noir. "I had good examples to follow."

"Well, just wanted to drop that off," Chat said. "Have a good night!"

Chat jumped to the edge of the boat and crouched, preparing to leap to the dock.

"Chat Noir?" Luka called.

"Yeah?"

"It was nice meeting you. Drop by any time."

"Maybe I will," Chat said.

With a smile and a wave, he was off.
"Happy birthday, dear Rose, happy birthday to you!"

Four of the members of Kitty Section hit their last notes and watched Rose nearly combust with happiness. She ran up on stage to give each of them a hug until she got to Julieka, who pulled her into a dip and a dramatic kiss. Everyone was whooping and laughing and the girls were blushing and everything was great. This is what birthday parties were supposed to be.

Adrien powered off the keyboard and gathered around where Rose was being dragged to blow out the candles on her cake. He ended up between Luka and Marinette with Ivan looming behind him.

In true Marinette style, Marinette's piece of cake went from Mr. Lavillant's hands to hers to the side of Ivan's head in record time.

"I'm so sorry, Ivan!" Marinette said, making a grab for napkins and falling on her face. She scrambled back up and managed to hand Ivan the napkins.

"It's fine, Marinette," Ivan said, laughing.

"Here I thought you were the clumsy one," Luka said, turning to Adrien.

"No, what? Adrien? Clumsy? No!" Marinette defended as she tried to reach Ivan's shoulder where half the cake had dropped.

"I tripped the first time I met Luka, remember?" Adrien asked, grabbing a new plate of cake for Marinette. "Sometimes I just have bad luck."

"Or good luck," Luka said. "If you hadn't tripped, you wouldn't have found the keyboard, and then you wouldn't have been in the band."

"The band is great," Marinette said, taking the cake from Adrien. "You good really play. I mean! You plood really- ugh, no, I mean-"

"Are you boys hogging my bestie?" Alya shouted as she slammed into Marinette with a hug. The new piece of cake almost went flying, Luka catching the plate before it could go far.

"Just getting to know everyone," Luka said. "Apparently I've had it backwards, Adrien's not the clumsy one, Marinette is."

"Luka, you have no idea," Alya said. She giggled and dragged Marinette off, stealing a bite of cake as they went.
"Guess I'll have to spend more time with you, if I'm going to learn these kinds of things," Luka said, smiling at Adrien. "I have to head out. See you at band practice."

Luka shrugged on his coat as he headed over to hug Rose goodbye.

"He's so cool, Plagg," Adrien said.

"Oh great, not another one," Plagg muttered from inside Adrien's shirt. "Can you snag me something with cheese from the snacks? I need cheese to deal with you and your crushes."

"What? Ladybug's not here," Adrien said, heading to the snack table anyway.

"One of these days, kid, it'll come to you."

Plagg used that moment in many an "I told you so" for years to come.

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)


Empathy (Band Practice)

Chapter Summary

Luka isn't going to let Adrien's anxiety spiral out of control. Call it hearing people's heart music, call it empathy, but Luka knows he can use what he can sense about people to help.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Band practice. Kitty Section (a name Adrien secretly loved) was practicing for the school talent show. Adrien still wasn't sure how this had become an approved activity (he suspected Nathalie had something to do with it). It was nice working with classmates he didn't hang out with often. It was nice playing for an audience larger than two or three people. It was nice playing for fun.

That’s how it felt at first, anyway. Being added to the band last minute and not being expected to sight-read perfectly the piece he played was exciting. Practicing and messing up in front of people, letting down the rest of the band with his mistakes? Adrien had a few too many bad experiences with things like that for his mistakes to be seen in the right context. They were a big deal to him. He practiced at home until he had trouble seeing the notes on the page but he could never be perfect.

But he stayed. It was time with friends. It was time out of the house for something that didn't feel like work. And they had a lot of fun during breaks. But every time Adrien made a mistake his heart clenched, it was a little harder to breathe, he felt a little like crying. And each mistake made another mistake more likely.

One band practice, the day after a particularly long akuma battle that had lasted late into the night (meaning little sleep for Adrien) he couldn't play to save his life. And as his wrong notes piled up, Adrien started to feel like his life did, in fact, depend on how well he played, even as the irrationality of that thought was as loud in his head as the thought itself.

When the song they were on ended, Luka turned to the rest of the band and said, "Do you all mind if we take a break? I'm just not feeling it right now."

The others nodded and dispersed from the practice area of the boat. Rose and Juleka went towards Juleka's room and Ivan sat down to text Mylene. Adrien went to sit next to a cardboard box (and investigate if it was empty and big enough to hold him). Luka disappeared to somewhere else in the ship. Adrien closed his eyes and leaned back against the side of the ship. He just needed a minute to calm down. Then maybe he could play well enough not to ruin everyone else's hard work.

"It's old clothes we haven't gotten around to donating," Luka said, sitting next to Adrien and handing him a bottle of water. "In the box. I saw you looking at it."

"Oh, no, I was- I didn't mean to, uh-"

"Relax," Luka said. "If it's out here, it's fair game for anyone to get into."
They were quiet for a minute and then Luka was bumping his shoulder into Adrien’s. "Music isn't about getting everything right. It's not about technical skill. There's no measure of 'good enough' playing. None of us want you to be perfect. We want you to have fun. You were so happy that first time you played with us, and it made me really excited to meet such a... shining person. I'd like to see more of that person in the band, if you can."

Adrien gave Luka a tired smile. "I think that's the most I've ever heard you say at one time."

"Words aren't my thing," he said with a shrug. "But you needed to hear all that, so I hope I got it right."

"Why did you think I needed to hear that?" Adrien asked. It was nice to hear, but how upset must he have looked to make Luka decide to give him a pep talk?

"The music in your heart. I could hear it. It was discordant and stuttering."

Adrien wondered briefly if Luka was messing with him. He looked sincere, but he had never heard anyone talk about things like this before.

"It sounds a little better now," Luka said, climbing to his feet. "Whenever you're ready to try again without so much pressure on you, call the rest of the band together."

Adrien nodded and got to his feet. "I'm ready now."

It wasn’t instant, it took a while for the anxiety to recede and allow the fun back in, but that’s what band practice is for, right?

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Adrien stepped out of the car parked in front of the Liberty with a cringe on his face.

“I’m so sorry,” he said as soon as he was close enough that Luka could hear him.

“Hey, Adrien,” Luka said, fiddling with the sound settings for their instruments. “What’s up?”

Nathalie followed Adrien onto the boat holding a tablet bearing the face of one Gabriel Agreste.

“Young man, where are your parents? Why are you unsupervised on the deck of a ship?” Gabriel demanded from the tablet.

“Father, this is Luka. He's lived on a boat his whole life, so it's totally safe for him to be here.”

“Be that as it may, I am letting my only son practice here, and I must be assured that you will be safe.”

Nathalie hunted down Mr. and Mrs. Couffaine who took being interrogated by an angry man who wouldn't leave his house pretty well. They eventually convinced Gabriel to let Nathalie join them below deck for coffee while he grilled them and Adrien was left with Luka and the instruments on deck.

"He can be a little, uh, overprotective?" Adrien said with a shrug and a half smile. "He worries a lot. I know it's not cool the way he's going about it, but sometimes it's nice that he goes to all the trouble over me."

"It's cool," Luka said, pulling his guitar strap over his shoulder. "My dad once shamed my first grade teacher into tears for telling me that I wasn't allowed to bring in a doll for show and tell because I'm a boy."

"My dad once got Nino akumatized because he wouldn't let him throw me a birthday party."

"My dad once cried over a kitten stuck in a tree."

"My dad hired Nathalie because I said I trusted her most out of the assistants he interviewed."

"My dad once yelled at an old lady who glared at Juleka and Rose holding hands. Turns out, the lady didn't like Juleka's dyed hair and had no problem with lesbians."

"Where is Juleka?" Adrien asked. "I thought the three of us were practicing today?"

"Alix and Mylene showed up and dragged her off somewhere. Possibly something to do with Alya
and Nino, but I don't know for sure."

Nathalie came upstairs a few minutes later, tablet off and tucked under her arm. She said goodbye to Adrien and that she would be back soon.

"Can I ask a question?" Luka asked while shuffling through sheet music for the one he wanted.

"Of course."

"What does Nathalie do?"

Adrien couldn't stop his laugh.

"What doesn't Nathalie do?"

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)}
Luka kept interrupting band practice. He hated to do it, but it was really hard to keep playing through a sneeze attack. His eyes itched and his nose was runny and he had that tired feeling that made him think he was getting a cold, except this had come on very quickly. Right after band practice started, in fact.

"Okay, who brought the cat hair?" Luka joked, stopping playing to grab a tissue again.

"Are you allergic?" Adrien asked, looking uncomfortable. "I was just at the animal shelter. I didn't have time to change. I can go try and brush some of it off."

"It's cat hair," Juleka said. "It's not going to just brush off." She looked between Luka, who was on his fifth sneeze in a row, and Adrien, who looked like she had just told him that he was the reason Christmas was cancelled.

"Luka can loan you a pair of clothes to practice in," Juleka said.

"Thanks for asking me, Jules," Luka said, fake-glaring through watery eyes.

"I don't want to be a bother," Adrien said.

"It's more of a bother to have Luka stopping us every few minutes," Juleka said. "Go on." She made a shooing motion and Luka led Adrien below deck.

"I'm really sorry about this," Adrien said as Luka hunted around his room for something for Adrien to borrow.

"It's cool, you didn't know," Luka said. He held out a purple Jagged Stone shirt and a pair of jeans. "You know where the bathroom is. Leave your clothes in there and you can change back before you leave."

Adrien felt miserable as he changed. Luka was a new friend, but had they really not talked about something as basic as "we can't hang out after you have contact with cats or I quickly lose my ability to do anything but sneeze"? Had Adrien mentioned his feather allergy? What else didn't he
The second practice was over and the others had moved away to chat before going home, Adrien approached Luka.

"I'm so sorry I didn't know about your allergy," Adrien said. "I'll remember from now on, I promise."

"It's cool," Luka said. "You're a chill dude, Adrien, I know you wouldn't do anything like that on purpose. And it was an easy fix. Purple's a good color on you."

"You know what we should do?" Adrien said, suddenly inspired. "We should go get coffee some time so we can get to know each other better."

Luka looked surprised. Had Adrien done something wrong? Were they not good enough friends for coffee?

"You're asking me...?" Luka trailed off, looking to Adrien for further information.

"To coffee," Adrien said, starting to worry. Luka was so nice and cool and had taught him a lot about music and being in a band. Maybe he just saw Adrien as someone he mentored. Maybe he saw him as just Juleka's classmate. Maybe-

"Uh, yeah. Yeah, I'd like that. I'd like that a lot."

"Great! I'll text you when I know my schedule."

Adrien went and changed. Luka stared in the direction he had gone until Rose started calling his name.

"Yeah, what's up, Rose?" he asked, still not turning from where he stared.

"What are you doing?"

"Um, processing?"

"Processing what?"

"Can you keep a secret?"

"Nope!"

Luka turned to her in surprise. "Well, at least you know that about yourself?"

"Yeah, it helps. So, what's up?"

He decided to try to gather information without giving too much away. "How much do you know about Adrien?"

"Lots of stuff! His favorite color is red, he likes to write poetry, his favorite subject is science, his favorite extracurricular is fencing, he's been modeling since he was eight, his favorite food is-"

"Rose?" Luka interrupted, fiddling with the handle on his guitar case. "Is he into guys?"

"Oh!" Rose tapped a finger against her lip, thinking. "I don't know. He likes Ladybug. Other than that, I have no idea."
"Okay," Luka said, disappointment and relief fighting for the forefront of his mind. "Thanks, Rose."

"Why do you ask?" Rose blinked up at him. There was something in the water at Francoise-Dupont School making them oblivious. There had to be.

"No reason. I'm going to help Ivan pack up the drums."

Luka spent the next three days trying to figure out if Adrien had asked him on a date or not. The bubbling nervousness and confusion was at least good for fueling his music.

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Adrien and Luka get coffee, which is nice. Then they talk, which is awkward. Then Plagg points out the obvious.

This is a continuation of the story started in chapter 5

Adrien was excited to get to know his new friend better. Plagg even helped him pick out an outfit. He was looking forward to this.

Adrien got to the cafe first and insisted on paying for Luka's coffee when he got there. Luka was fidgeting and his eyes hadn't left his coffee cup since they had found a table. Adrien again felt the doubt from when he had asked Luka to get coffee. Had he done something wrong? Was Luka uncomfortable? Were they not good enough friends for this?

Whatever was wrong, Luka relaxed after a few minutes of conversation. They talked about music, about books, about school. Luka also liked physics but his favorite subject was programming. He had a few music related programs he had written that he offered to show Adrien after band practice sometime. They went through silly basics like favorite color and food and best vacation ever taken and what their families were like. Adrien even told Luka a bit about what it was like before his mom went missing.

Their time ended much too soon. Adrien needed to get to a photoshoot.

"Want to walk with me? The shoot is in the same direction as your house."

Luka nodded and they set off in the scorching summer heat in companionable quiet.

"So, I didn't want to ask, because I feel like I should know the answer," Luka said a few blocks from the photoshoot location. "Was this a date? I really can't tell."

Adrien's step faltered just enough to be noticeable.

It took a full minute for Adrien to form an answer. "That's why you seemed uncomfortable?" he asked.

"I'll take that as a 'no' then," Luka said, chuckling.

"Well, that's not what I meant it as," Adrien said, scratching at the back of his head for a moment. "You're fun and I've liked getting to know you. I just wanted to hang out with you more. I guess I should have been more clear."
"It's fine," Luka said.

They were outside the building but Adrien didn't want to go until he knew he hadn't messed things up with Luka.

"If it's not fine you can say so," he said. "I don't want to make you uncomfortable. I don't have a lot of friends, so those I do have, I want them to know that I'm doing my best and I want to know if I've done something wrong."

"Really, it's cool, Adrien," Luka said. "I had fun. I'll see you this weekend for band practice, okay?"

They said their goodbyes and Adrien went into the over-air-conditioned building. He found his way to the outfit and makeup people and was directed to where to change.

"Plagg, I feel like I did something wrong," Adrien said as he buttoned the plain purple Oxford shirt the first set of photos required. "I don't know how I mixed up so badly that Luka didn't know what we were doing today."

"Adrien, you asked him to coffee to get to know him better, picked out a special outfit for the occasion, and laughed more in that meeting than some entire school days," Plagg said. "Are you sure it wasn't a date?"

"Don't be silly, Plagg," Adrien said. "Luka's just a friend!"

Plagg sighed. "One of these days, we're going to talk about what that phrase means. But until then, consider- Luka still agreed to show up, thinking it might be a date. How does that make you feel?"

Adrien didn't stop to really think about what Plagg had said before responding, "It doesn't make me feel anything? It means he's a good friend and still wanted to hang out."

"Are you sure about that, kid?"

"Of course I am!"

Someone came to collect Adrien a moment later, so the conversation was on hold until the shoot ended.

The thing about photoshoots is that generally, beyond following directions, there isn't much to think about and focus on. Most days, Adrien found this relaxing, a good time to let his mind wander and be in the moment. That day, he kept coming back to what Plagg had said.

"Are you sure?"

Of course he was sure. Luka was his friend. His friend wanted to hang out. His friend might not have been sure if it was a date or not, but that didn't mean Luka wanted it to be a date. Right? If Adrien had thought that Luka had maybe asked him on a date, he would have gone through with the plans, too, so he could see his friend. Right? And if it had been a date, Luka would have asked sooner to clarify, because that wasn't what Luka wanted. Right? And it wasn't what Adrien wanted either. Right?

"Are you sure?"
Talk with me over at cheeseatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)}
Awkward (Gentle)

Chapter Summary

Luka falls asleep somewhere weird. The boys talk to try and make things less weird. A wild rock star appears. This continues from chapter 6.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Adrien was a mess the rest of the week after his conversation with Plagg about the not-really-a-date with Luka. Plagg was wrong. That was the only explanation. Plagg tried to talk to him about Luka after a couple days of watching Adrien stare into space at random times during the day, but Adrien would brush him off and change the topic to cheese. Adrien had convinced himself that all he had to do was see Luka again, laugh about the mixup with him, and move on.

He didn't account for Luka napping on the deck of the houseboat and looking impossibly cute. He was curled up in a poolside lounge chair, his hoodie drawn as low over his eyes as it would go. His hands were pulled inside the sleeves, one cushioning his head, the other hanging off the side of the chair. Luka was a peaceful person, but asleep he looked like there was a layer of mischief under the calm. It was a side of him that Adrien hadn't expected, but now that he saw it, it made perfect sense.

Adrien wasn't sure if he should wake him or not, so he headed to find Juleka. Rose's voice carried from the direction of Juleka's room, so he called out to the girls. Everyone in the band had accidentally walked in on the pair of them making out a few times. He wasn't eager to repeat it.

"Over here, Adrien," Rose called. She gave him a hug when he opened the door and pulled him over to see the color she was using to paint Juleka's nails. It could not have been more pink, nor clashed more with what Juleka was wearing that day. Juleka looked thrilled though.

"Luka’s asleep upstairs," Adrien said. “Should someone wake him up?"

"He does that,” Juleka said, holding out one hand of painted fingernails to look at them better. “Just finds a weird spot and conks out. You can go get him up if you want. Then by the time Ivan gets here and we’re done with this he’ll be past the groggy post-nap thing.”

“Oh,” Adrien said, looking down at his shoes. “I didn’t want to disturb him.” Or further confuse myself, he thought.

“He won’t mind. You’ll be doing him a favor,” Juleka said. “Go on, we’ll be right behind you.”

Adrien could have sworn that when he closed the door he heard Rose say, “Double the stakes!”

Odd.

Luka was dreaming about band practice taking place in an aquarium. Everyone was playing beautifully, they sounded great, but when he tried to read the music it would shift to another song so he had to play by memory.

When Luka woke he wasn’t sure what had pulled him awake at first. But before he opened his eyes
he felt the softest touch on his shoulder. The fingers on his sleeve were so gentle he thought for a moment that it was a lingering sensation from his dream. It was only when a quiet voice joined the touch on his arm that Luka was brought fully awake and able to piece together his surroundings.

“Luka, Juleka said to tell you to wake up. Band practice starts soon.”

Luka looked up to see Adrien with the sun behind him, giving him a glowing halo and putting his face in shadow. He had a soft smile and it did a poor job of covering the worry scrunching his eyebrows. Adrien's hand lingered on his arm for just a moment before it withdrew to the back of his neck, an awkward tic. Luka couldn't speak for a second, and if keeping quiet prolonged the moment, he didn't mind.

He had a feeling that he would be writing a song or two about this moment.

“Hey,” he said when he found his words. He slowly uncurled from his sleeping position.

Adrien flinched when their eyes met. So that answered the “does he still feel as awkward as I do?” question.

“Band practice,” Adrien said, pointing over his shoulder at the half-assembled practice area.

"Yeah, be right there," Luka said. He stood and headed for his room to grab his guitar.

After practice, Luka and Adrien turned to each other before the other three had even left the practice area.

"I'm sorry-"

"I didn't mean to-"

They laughed.

"I made things awkward," Luka said. "I didn't mean to. You're a cool guy, Adrien, and I don't want you to be uncomfortable around me."

"I'm not!" Adrien said. "Really. I just didn't want you to think that I had said or done something wrong. I had fun hanging out. I thought that I made it awkward."

"Maybe we can just accept the awkward and stay friends?" Luka suggested.

"Yeah, I'd like that."

The band decided to get ice cream together before all heading their separate ways. Rose and Juleka were going shopping and Ivan was meeting Mylene. Luka and Adrien were headed back in the same direction and walked together, trying to balance awkward silence with awkward conversation.

And then Jagged Stone ran up to them.

Chapter End Notes

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“Oh thank goodness!” Jagged Stone said when he saw Adrien and Luka. He ran up to them and had to stop to catch his breath. The boys exchanged a confused look before jumping straight to excitement. Jagged Stone had just run up to them!

“Mr. Stone, I’m a big fan,” Luka said, pulling his hoodie open a little to show off his Jagged Stone t-shirt.

“Even better!” Jagged said, taking another deep breath and looking them over closely. “You,” he said, pointing at Adrien. “You’re friends with Marinette. She’s a cool kid, really smart.”

“Oh, yeah,” Adrien said. “We go to school together. How did you know-”

“That’s not important. What’s important is that Marinette would never be friends with someone who wasn’t trustworthy. And you-” He turned to Luka. “You’re a fan, and you’re friends with this guy, so you’re probably a pretty good person.”

“Thank you?” Luka said. He was confused, but still enthusiastic about this meeting.

“Come with me,” he said.

“What?” Adrien said. There was nothing about this encounter that wasn’t weird.

“I need a babysitter for Fang!”

Jagged Stone started walking, leaving Adrien and Luka standing stunned in the middle of the sidewalk.

“Come on! No time to waste!”

Somehow that broke them out of their surprise enough to do as he said, but not enough to question why.

“Fang, I found you a couple of friends,” Jagged Stone said as they entered his suite at Le Grand Paris. “They’ll stay with you while I take your Aunt Penny to the doctor.”

“Is Ms. Rolling okay?” Adrien asked, looking at the crocodile lounging on the couch.

“Yeah, all good. My regular croc sitter fell through. But you two look like responsible kids. Keep Fang out of the mini bar. I’ll be back in an hour. If he wants to take a bath, help him with that, but don’t put anything in the water, like bubble bath or soap. It’s bad for his scales. See ya!”

Before either could ask a single question, Jagged Stone had left the building.
“How, exactly, does one babysit a crocodile?” Luka asked, taking a step closer to Fang. He got a happy tail wag in response.

“I think,” Adrien said, reaching out a careful hand to pat Fang on the nose, “it traditionally starts with the taking of selfies with the crocodile.”

“Makes sense,” Luka said.

They took crocodile selfies. They took pictures of each other with Fang. They helped Fang into the bath and let him splash them both. When Fang started to look annoyed they found where the crocodile food was and took turns feeding him (with more pictures, of course). When Jagged and Penny returned two hours later, the three of them were watching a movie Fang had picked out.

“I told you they’d be fine!” Jagged said as he closed the door.

“Boys, what are your names?” Penny Rolling asked, fishing around in her purse.

“I’m Adrien Agreste.”

“Luka Couffaine.”

“And he really pulled you off the street to Fang-sit?” she asked, pulling out a check book.

They nodded.

She sighed. “Well, I’ll pay you both the going rate for crocodile sitters. Thank you for doing this. I told him that I could have gone alone.”

“Mr. Stone said you were going to the doctor,” Adrien said. “I hope everything’s alright.”

“Boys, you’re the first fans to know!” Jagged said, putting a hand on Penny’s shoulder. “We’re having a mini rockstar!”

“Otherwise known as a baby,” Penny said with a smile.

“Congratulations!” Luka and Adrien said.

Jagged and Penny thanked them and accompanied them down to the hotel lobby. They were asked to keep the news a secret until an official press release went out.

“Want to get a picture with us so you can tell everyone you two knew first?” Jagged asked.

More selfies were taken and Luka and Adrien were sent on their way.

“My house is right here,” Adrien said on the sidewalk.

“Your house is enormous,” Luka said.

“You should come by sometime,” Adrien said. “I’m always over at your house, I’d like you to see mine, too. My father doesn’t usually like my friends, but I’m sure he just needs to meet more of them.”

“Cool,” Luka said. “Would it be weird if I went back and offered to be a backup crocodile sitter?”

“Can’t hurt to ask,” Adrien said. “Good luck!”
In the house Adrien hunted down Nathalie.

“I have a question,” he said when he found her. “What do you think it would take to get father to like one of my friends?”

She looked up from her tablet and smiled. “I think I know just the thing.”

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)


Shopping Trip (Style Swap)

Chapter Summary

Nathalie helps Adrien find something for Luka to wear to impress Gabriel.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Nathalie had been around as long as he remembered. She had only started working as his father's assistant about ten years prior, but she had been a family friend since before his parents were married. So it wasn't surprising that Adrien felt he knew Nathalie pretty well. Definitely not everything, but he knew her general interests, talents, preferences, sense of humor, things like that.

He did not know she had such an accurate eye for fashion. He didn't know she could tell anyone's measurements within five minutes of meeting them. He had thought she just assisted with the practical side of the business. Her outfits were fashionable, but not particularly bold. Mostly classics like her pantsuits. Adrien had never seen her make a single suggestion or participate in the creative process in the slightest. He had seen her actively avoid answering when his father asked her opinion on a work in progress more than once. She had crafted a narrative around herself that she didn't have an opinion on fashion.

But here she was, talking his ear off (which was weird enough on its own) about the history of men's dress shirts and her preferred styles while leading him around the mall, picking up and examining clothes for Luka to wear to dinner with his father. They weren't all Gabriel brand, but they were all Gabriel brand's quality, and a wide array of styles. After picking out a few pieces, she had Adrien follow her to a changing room where he would hold up pieces of an outfit together and she would analyze them together before making him swap them out for the next set.

"That's the one," she said after they had gone through five or six outfit combinations. "Get that one and have him wear it tomorrow evening. His hair should be neat and gelled out of his face. I'd suggest losing the nail polish, but a little eyeliner would probably be fine. No jewelry, unless he has a nice watch. He seems like a nice boy, and a good friend. I hope this helps."

She took the rest of the clothes to an attendant but came back with a soft ocean blue-green sweater and held it out to Adrien. "For the next time Nino has to interact with your father."

Nathalie and Adrien got in line to pay. It was taking a little longer than expected because there was a sale or something going on, so Adrien had a chance to look around while waiting. There were a lot of warmer clothes in preparation for winter and a row of hoodies caught his eye.

"I'll be right back," Adrien said, handing Nathalie the clothes to hold. He headed for the rack and slid color after color right to left. He paused on a red hoodie, looking at the black detailing and running his hand down the sleeve. It looked comfortable, and definitely would be a good color on him. He pulled the hanger off the rack and held it out for a moment. He could see himself in this hoodie.

He put it back and kept browsing. A light blue caught his eye. It had the same black detailing and he tugged at the hood drawstring for a second, wondering what drew him to this hoodie. Before he
had an answer he unzipped it and slid it on over his clothes. It fit. He moved his arms around a little, checking the sleeve length. It was soft and warm. He slid it back off and returned to Nathalie, fumbling to zip it back on the hanger again.

"You have a closet full of appropriate outerwear," Nathalie said.

"I won't wear it out and besmirch the Agreste name, Nathalie," Adrien said, suppressing a smile. "I just... like it. I'll wear it at home. But I'm getting it."

Nathalie pursed her lips but didn't say anything more. They reached the front of the line, paid, and headed home.

Adrien took the bags from Nathalie in the foyer, thanking her for her help and heading for the stairs.

"Adrien?"

"Yeah, Nathalie?"

"That blue is a good color on you."

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Song In Your Heart (Song In Your Heart)

Chapter Summary

Luka has dinner with the Agrestes and it's overwhelming. He then shows Adrien a bit more of what he means when he says he can hear music related to people's feelings.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"You're nervous," Juleka said, not pausing in her drawing. "I can't believe you thought he asked you out, he didn't, he bought you clothes to meet his father, and you two still haven't figured out you're already basically dating."

"We also babysat a crocodile," Luka said, holding up two ties in front of his sister's work in progress of a princess in a field of flowers. "Pick for me."

"Not the red. Go with black," Juleka said, brushing his ties off her present for Rose.

"And we're not 'basically dating', Jules," Luka said. "We're just hanging out. It's nice. If that changes, that'll be nice, too, but I doubt it will."

"And why ever not? Pink or yellow for the princess's dress?" she asked, holding up two pencils.

"Yellow, most of the flowers are pink." Luka discarded the ties and grabbed a bowtie. If he was going to do this, he was going to do it his way. And right now, his way involved a bowtie. "And he's Adrien Agreste, you know? We're friends and all, but he's literally a celebrity. He tells cute anecdotes about being chased down the street by fans. I'm cool, but I'm not that cool."

"He's a dork."

"He might be straight."

"Debatable."

"His father will probably hate me."

"He hates Nino, Marinette, and Alya. He hasn't even met Alya and he hates her. Don't worry about him hating you."

"I'm older than you guys."

"You're literally just making excuses now," Juleka said. "Go, you'll be late and I need to finish this before Rose gets here."

"Jules?"

"Yeah?" She looked up.

"I'm nervous."
"A new emotion for you, I'm sure, Mr. Cool As A Cucumber."

Luka stared at her for a couple seconds. Juleka rolled her eyes.

"You'll be fine."

Luka grinned. "Thank you." He pulled on his blazer and went to the door. "The shading on that unicorn is great, by the way. Rose'll love it."

/***

"Mr. Couffaine, come in."

Luka followed Nathalie from the front door to the dining room. He wasn't sure why, but he didn't completely trust Nathalie. She seemed like a decent enough person, but something about her made him question anything she said.

All thoughts of Nathalie and whether or not she was a liar or untrustworthy left Luka's head the second he set eyes on Adrien. He sat at his father’s right near the head of the table. He was dressed even more formally than Luka was and looked like he had shrunk five inches. He wasn’t slouching, his posture was perfect, but everything else about Adrien showed insecurity. No, something more.

Fear.

Luka wasn’t exaggerating when he said he could hear the songs in people’s hearts. This room was overpoweringly loud in its silence. He almost turned around and left. He could make an excuse, he wasn’t feeling well, he had to take a phone call, he forgot to do something. He took a single step back, and then Adrien looked up at him.

“Luka,” Adrien said.

The music changed dramatically.

First it was a slow, rising sound, like a violin as Adrien gave a genuine smile. Then it was the quiet, high notes of a piano as Adrien blushed. Then, a throbbing baseline as their eyes met. Luka had every plan to compose this piece as soon as he got home.

Adrien stood and rushed around the table to guide Luka to stand before the seat opposite his at Gabriel’s left hand.

“Father, this is Luka Couffaine, the guitarist from our band. Luka, this is my father, Mr. Agreste.”

“Nice to meet you, sir.”

Gabriel took another second to finish swiping at something on his tablet before looking up.

“Mr. Couffaine. Please, have a seat.”

The music changed. Adrien’s became muted, lower, slower as he returned to his place. Gabriel’s music, which Luka had been trying to block out since entering the room, was loud and crashing. Cymbals, trumpets, drums, minor piano chords, all perfectly synchronized, perfectly conducted to bring together a man of power and immense sadness. Luka felt a weight on his chest and knew it wasn’t his own. Not even five minutes in and Luka was exhausted. All he wanted to do was find some way to quiet the music or help the Agrestes find a new melody.
Gabriel was distracted and unimpressed, Adrien was tense and anxious, and Luka was therefore distracted, unimpressed, tense, anxious, and exhausted and trying to hide all that. The conversation was mostly around music styles and full of uncomfortable pauses.

"Sir, phone call for you," Nathalie said about twenty minutes into the meal.

"You'll have to excuse me. It was nice meeting you, Mr. Couffaine," Gabriel said as he stood.

When the door closed behind Nathalie and Gabriel, both boys let out a sigh. Adrien looked across the table, trying to gauge how his guest felt about the dinner.

"Sorry, I know he can be a bit... much."

"I don't think I made a very good impression," Luka said with a sad smile. "Everything was just loud."

Luka froze, realizing too late that this was not Juleka or his mom who were both familiar with how Luka saw the world, but Adrien, who had looked at him like he was crazy last time he had mentioned hearing Adrien's heart's song.

"I thought it was too quiet," Adrien said, looking curious.

"Yeah, that's what I meant," Luka said. He tugged at his collar before returning to poking at his food.

The boys finished eating and Adrien invited Luka up to his room. The ridiculous athletic equipment and excessive video game collection had Luka suppressing a laugh. Why did he even have half this stuff?

"You meant the music in me, or something, right?" Adrien said, sitting on the couch facing the blank television screen. "That's what was too loud?"

"Yeah," Luka said, sitting next to him. "Not just you. Your dad's... he's kind of broken, isn't he?"

Adrien nodded.

"You don't seem comfortable around him," Luka said. He glanced at Adrien and realized he probably shouldn't pry. "Sorry, we don't have to talk about it."

"Can you hear anyone's music?" Adrien asked instead of responding.

"Uh, yeah," Luka said. "Some people easier than others. And strong feelings are easier to hear. Not necessarily louder, if that makes sense."

"What does it sound like?"

He tried to find a way to describe it, but really, how could he explain something that only existed in his head?

"You have a piano, right?" Luka asked. "Can I just show you?"

Adrien led Luka down the hall and into a room with a piano. Luka had taken piano lessons when he was little and remembered enough that after a few scales to warm up he was ready to let Adrien hear what he heard.

"This is Juleka," Luka said, playing low chords with a high melody, slow and in a minor key. The
high notes got a bit playful at times, but most of the song was steady and sure.

"This is Rose," Luka said, shifting right on the bench, a few octaves higher for her staccato notes.

"And here's the two of them when they're together." He blended the melodies, lowered the chords, shifted the key and Adrien was nodding after a moment. It sounded like the two girls looked together.

"What does yours sound like?" Adrien asked.

"You've heard me play guitar," Luka said, turning around on the bench. "Most of that is pieces of me. Some of other people who catch my interest. But most pieces I write myself are me."

"This is kinda cool," Adrien said. He smiled as he said it, but it was how his posture had relaxed that showed Luka that this meant as much to Adrien as it did to himself.

Nathalie knocked on the open door. "Adrien? Your father needs you. I'm afraid Mr. Couffaine will need to go home."

The boys followed Nathalie to the office where Luka said a quick thank you to Gabriel before following Nathalie back out to the front door.

"How do you think I did?" Luka asked.

"I can't believe you wore a bow tie with the outfit I went to the trouble of picking out," Nathalie said. Luka wasn't sure if she was kidding or not. "I believe you made a neutral to good impression. I'll be sure to follow up with Mr. Agreste and find out if he has any concerns about your friendship with Adrien so that they can be addressed in a timely manner."

Luka thanked her and started the walk home. Before he got there, however, he had an idea. He pulled out his phone and dialed a friend with a grin.

"Hey. I have something I want to try. Would you want to give some technical assistance?"

Chapter End Notes

Hint: Luka's not calling Max.
Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Chapter Summary

Alya is concerned that Adrien might have a new best friend. Nino has a different perspective.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Nino and Alya were hanging out at her house (technically babysitting, but the girls had fallen asleep watching a movie so they almost had the house to themselves). Nino was half listening to a track he was editing and making notes on his phone of what to change while Alya lounged with her head in his lap as she scrolled through pictures on social media.

"Jagged Stone is having a baby, Adrien babysat a crocodile, Gabriel brand is releasing an akuma themed fashion line- it's been a weird week," she said, looking up at Nino.

"I'm still waiting to see the royalties for the Bubbler inspired pieces," Nino grumbled.

"He didn't even make anything related to Lady Wifi."

They lapsed into silence again as Alya flipped through more pictures. Adrien with Fang. Luka with Fang. Adrien and Luka, leaning up against each other to fit in the frame with Fang together. Luka grinning up at the camera as he got Fang to high-five him. Adrien looking shyly away from the camera (and Luka behind it). Luka reaching out a hand to grab the camera from Adrien, an embarrassed smile on his face.

"Hey, Nino?" Alya started before she had even decided if asking was a good idea. "Do you worry about how much Luka and Adrien are hanging out? Isn't Luka over at Adrien's house right now?"

"Why would I worry about that?" Nino asked. "He's a good dude. They have a lot in common. Do you not like Luka?"

"No, I'm fine with him," Alya said, sitting up to see Nino better. "But you're not worried about your status as best bro? I know how close you guys are, I wouldn't want to see someone come between that."

Nino tried not to, but he started laughing. Alya crossed her arms and poked his shin with her foot.

"What? What's so funny about that? What do you know that I don't?"

"Alya, Adrien's not replacing me," Nino said, still chuckling. "Marinette's losing her shot."

"What do you mean?"

Ooh boy, Nino had activated Bloodhound Alya Mode.

"Nothing."
"You know that's not gonna cut it. Spill, Nino."

"You haven't noticed?"

"Noticed what Lahiffe?"

"Nope," Nino said, crossing his arms. "You need to figure this one out yourself. I'm loyal to my bro. I don't think he's even figured it out."

"Argh, Nino!" Alya threw her hands in the air. "You know the only way to get me off your case is to tell me that I can figure it out myself. Sometimes I just want to know!"

"No, you don't," Nino said.

"No, I don't," Alya agreed with a sigh.

Alya's parents came home and basically kicked Nino out. He had barely walked through his front door when he received a call from Luka. Nino was a little surprised when Luka called him. They had been "text each other memes" friends for a while, but they didn't hang out often.

"Hey. I have something I want to try. Would you want to give some technical assistance?"

"What kind of technical assistance?" Nino asked.

"Recording music and compiling it," Luka said. He explained the kinds of instruments he wanted to work with and suggested a few people he knew could play them.

“Yeah, dude, that sounds awesome!” Nino said when Luka had outlined his plan. "I can totally keep this on the down low. But you're gonna have to tell Alya, and she can’t keep a secret. But she's the only person I know who plays the flute."

“Well, not just yet, okay?” Luka asked.

“Alright. Send me what you've got and I'll work my magic.”

They hung up and Nino started to set up a new folder on his computer for the project. He didn't know all the details of Luka's plan, but he had a sneaking suspicion that, given the level of secrecy Luka was asking for, this was going to end up being a present for Adrien.

Yeah, Marinette was definitely losing her shot with his bro.

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Ladynoir Talk Crushes (You're Cute)

Chapter Summary

Ladybug finds Chat Noir one night and he's acting a little odd. Then Chat pays Luka a quick visit.

Chapter Notes

I play a little piano and was an alto in choir. I know literally nothing about guitars. Please forgive any musical inaccuracy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

"Hey, Kitty."

Ladybug landed beside her partner on a roof overlooking the Seine. It was a beautiful, clear night, exactly the kind of night that tended to be akuma-free.

"Hi, Ladybug. What are you doing out? It's my patrol night."

"No, it's Tuesday," she said.

"It's Tuesday? Wow, yeah, it's Tuesday."

"You doing okay?" Ladybug asked, scratching behind one cat ear.

"Yeah, just distracted."

"Doesn't your patrol route take you away from the river, since you hate water?" Ladybug asked.

"Ah, yeah, I was just... trying something different."

Ladybug glanced again at the scene before them, noticing the Couffaine's boat in front of them.

"Akumatized boat," Ladybug said, shaking her head. "Definitely one of the weirder objects we've had to break."

"O-oh, is that the same boat? I, uh, didn't notice!"

"You're lying," Ladybug said with a smirk. "What's going on, kitty cat?"

Chat sighed and lowered himself to sit on the roof. Ladybug joined him, trying to give off an aura of patience. Chat could be skittish when he was like this.

"Have you ever liked two people even when you really only want to like one?"

He really couldn’t deny it any more. It had crept up on him, but Plagg had been right from the start. Adrien was falling for Luka, and he was worried that “falling” would be immediately followed by
"crashing and burning".

"What do you mean? Like crushes?"

Chat was glad his mask covered so much of his face as he felt his skin start to heat up. "Yeah, like that."

Ladybug thought for a moment, trying to figure out if this discussion had the potential to reveal too much about who she was. She decided it was safe enough so long as no names were mentioned. "It's happened to me before."

"What did you do about it?"

Ladybug shrugged. "Waited for my feelings to sort themselves out, I guess. I'm sort of too shy to do much else than that."


"Well, it's true," she said stretching her arms out behind her head. "You've got two people on your heart then?"

Chat sighed. "I don't know. They're such different people, and they have different feelings that go along with them. One was sudden and strong and it just felt like it was supposed to be that way. The other's been... slow, but surprising. I didn't know liking someone could feel this way. But I don't want to just give up on the first person. My feelings for them are still real."

"That sounds tough," Ladybug said, patting Chat's shoulder. "Do you know how either of them feel about you?"

Chat gave a short laugh, but it didn't sound happy. "That makes it even more complicated."

"Well, I'm always here to help you sort out the complicated, if you need it," Ladybug said.

"Thanks, Ladybug." You're one of them so that's never happening, but thanks, he thought."

They sat in silence, watching the nighttime lights reflect off the water.

"Since you're already out, do you want to patrol tonight?" Ladybug asked. "I have a lot of homework waiting for me, and you look like a good run could clear your head."

Chat nodded and they said their goodbyes. He sat there a while longer, watching the river and the Liberty.

Luka walked out onto the deck with his guitar after a while. He sat with blank sheet music in front of him, adding notes every now and then as he played, experimenting with a new song. Adrien didn't know he was working on something knew. Luka loved talking about his music. Adrien looked forward to hearing about this piece from him at their next band practice. He listened to the chords and watched Luka make comments on the side of the page, scrunching his nose in annoyance. It was such a simple moment, an artist deeply involved in his art. Adrien felt like he was seeing something he shouldn't, a private moment between artist and subject. Luka played for almost a full minute off of his sheet music and when he finished he grinned. A goofy smile that slid into a concentrated furrowing of his brow as he made changes to the papers in front of him. Before Chat Noir could stop himself, he had jumped from the roof to the mast of the Liberty and used his staff to lower himself to the deck.
"I didn't mean to spy on you, but you're very cute when you're engrossed in your music," Chat said when Luka looked up in surprise.

"Chat Noir!"

"Hope you don't mind me dropping in," Chat said, scratching the back of his neck.

"No, I don't mind. Surprised, but I don't mind. Here, sit down," Luka said, clearing a spot next to him. "What are you doing on this side of town? I usually see Ladybug swing by this time of night on a Tuesday."

"Yeah, I got my days mixed up. What are you working on?" Chat asked.

"It's just an idea right now," Luka said. He looked down at his sheet music and shuffled it around a little.

"It sounded nice, what I heard. You're very talented."

"Thank you," Luka said, smiling. "You should come to one of my band's shows. We have one in a couple weeks. I can get you a flyer."

Chat Noir knew exactly when his band's next show was, because he was the pianist. He couldn't come to the show. This was awkward.

"Quick, make an excuse, Agreste!"

"Oh, I, uh, I'm not sure it would be a good idea. People would think there was an akuma if they saw me. I don't want your audience running away in a panic."

Luka laughed. He was almost as cute when he laughed as when he worked on his music. "Yeah, that would be bad. Well, maybe if you can watch it without anyone seeing you, you should give it a listen. You might like it."

"Sure, we'll see," Chat Noir said. "Would... if you want to, would you play me what you have here?" He gestured to the piece on which Luka was working.

"Sure. I'm going for a specific sound, and I think I'm finally on the right track."

Luka played what he had. It was a little rough still, but the song was strong and sweet and there were hints of sadness. Adrien couldn't tear his eyes from Luka's lips. He smiled through most of it, frowning once or twice at parts that had a lot of crossed out marks on his sheet music. Ladybug's advice about letting his feelings sort themselves out was making less sense as Chat Noir felt his heart twist in his chest at the look on Luka's face as he finished playing in the moment before he looked up at Chat again.

"It's hard to tell what all of it will sound like from that," Luka said when he finished. "But I have it all in my head. I just have to get it down on paper."

"It's great," Chat said. "You're great. Talented, I mean!" He jumped to his feet. "Well, I've taken up enough of your time. Good luck writing the rest of that. Good night!"

Luka watched the flustered superhero vault himself across the river and wave at him from the other side. Luka waved back and bit his lip, wondering how he had never noticed that Chat Noir was so cute.

Chapter End Notes
Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Plummeting (Secret)

Chapter Summary

Luka is keeping something from Adrien and Rose's theory as to what it is hurts a little.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Adrien went to the next band practice excited to hear what progress Luka had made on his new song. When he got there Luka was talking with Ivan, and weirdly enough, the two of them stopped talking for a second the moment they saw Adrien.

"How's it going?" Adrien asked, fiddling with the controls to the keyboard.

"Good. Did you hear Chat Noir dropped by the other night?"

Adrien let Luka recount his visit from one of Paris's superheroes and reveled in that awful, heavy-light feeling of being near your crush. He tried to remember if he felt this way around Ladybug or not, but quickly realized that making comparisons between the two objects of his affection would only make his brain more of a mess.

"-and I played him some music and he liked it, which was really cool," Luka said as Adrien tuned back in to the story.

"What did you play for him?" Adrien asked.

"Oh, just a thing. Hey, are you almost ready? I can get the girls."

That was odd. Luka usually jumped at the chance to talk about or play new music. Adrien shrugged it off and figured Luka was just anxious to get practicing. They did have a show soon, after all.

During a break Adrien saw Juleka, Luka, and Ivan whispering and pointing to something on Luka's phone. Adrien wandered over and suddenly the phone was in Luka's pocket and Juleka was talking about the factual evidence in favor of the existence of ghosts in a too-loud voice that was jarring coming from his soft spoken friend.

"What's going on?" Adrien asked.

"You should hear these sound recordings I made on my last ghost hunt," Juleka said, pulling out her phone. Before Adrien could in any way communicate that he: 1. did not want to hear about ghosts, ever, under any circumstances, 2. knew something was up and just wanted answers, or 3. was feeling a bit left out, Juleka was pulling him over to sit and listen to some creepy sounding recordings that he knew would give him nightmares for a month. Luka and Ivan disappeared below deck for a few minutes and when they returned, Luka was stuffing sheet music into his pocket.

What was going on?

Adrien finally cornered got a second with Luka at their next break. "So, working on any new music?"
Luka's eyes widened for a moment, looking at where the other three from the band and Mylene were talking before looking back at Adrien.

"N-nothing. Nothing special. It's not done yet. It doesn't..."

"Is something wrong?" Adrien asked.

Luka shook his head. "I'm working on something, but I'm not ready to share it with you yet."

"Oh. Okay." It looked like Luka was sharing whatever this was with everyone except him.

As practice ended, Adrien pulled Rose aside. Curiosity killed the cat, sure, but this cat was willing to risk it, and Rose couldn't keep a secret to save her life.

"Rose, what is Luka working on that he's being all weird about?"

"I don't know!" she said, putting her hands on her hips. "They wouldn't tell me because I can't keep a secret and it's supposed to be a secret for someone." She gasped. "Maybe it's a surprise! Maybe Luka's working on a new song that's a gift for someone! That's so sweet! Romantic, even!"

Adrien felt his heart drop and hoped it wouldn't shatter. Luka was writing a song for someone and didn't want him to know about it? Did Luka like someone? Was he not telling him because things were still weird after the accidental not-date?

Adrien managed to somehow say goodbye to everyone and find Nathalie and the car waiting for him.

"You look tired, Adrien," Nathalie said, brushing his bangs aside to feel his forehead. "Are you feeling well?"

"I'm fine."

*Nothing Camembert can't solve, I'm sure Plagg would say,* Adrien thought as he stared out the window on the ride home.

"Are things with your friends alright? No fighting within the band, is there?"

"Nothing like that."

They were almost home before Nathalie spoke again.

"Broken heart?"

Adrien looked at Nathalie, wondering how much she knew.

"Not broken."

And it was true. His heart was plummeting, but it hadn't hit bottom yet.

Chapter End Notes

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“Plagg?” Adrien was lying on his couch and staring at the ceiling. “When I told Ladybug how I felt about her and she told me she liked someone else, I was just happy she knew how I felt and glad we were friends. It didn't hurt like this.”

“Ladybug and Luka are two different people,” Plagg said, landing on his forehead to look down into his eyes. “You can't expect your feelings for them to be the same.”

“I guess,” he said, crossing his arms. “But it's not fair of me to feel jealous in this case but not with Ladybug. It's not fair of me to feel jealous at all.”

“It's not like you know for sure that he likes someone else,” Plagg said.

“But Rose said…” Adrien thought back to exactly what Rose had said. He picked Plagg off his head and sat up. “Rose said it might be romantic. She said she didn't know. There's tons of reasons he wouldn't want to tell me.”

“Exactly. Why jump to conclusions? Just let whatever happens happen and focus on the important things in life: cheese.”

“I should call him,” Adrien said, jumping to his feet. It had been a few days since he had seen Luka, and he was antsy to hear his voice anyway. “We’ll talk and I'll tell him how I feel and it'll be fine.”

“What about Ladybug?”

Adrien stopped. What about Ladybug?

“I’ll talk to her next.”

He couldn’t admit, even to Plagg, that he hadn’t even considered her.

Adrien pushed that thought away and reached for his phone. As he unlocked the screen a new call popped up.

“Hi! I was just about to text you,” Adrien said.

”Good timing then," Luka said. "Can you come over for a little while tonight?"

Adrien glanced at the clock. His homework was done already but he had a photo shoot in the morning.

"Yeah, but I can't stay too late, I have an early morning."
"That's fine. Text me when you're headed over, okay?"

"Yeah, will do."

Adrien told Nathalie where he was going and headed over. He must have gotten there faster than Luka expected because when he arrived, Luka was shoving Juleka and Rose down the street in front of the Liberty and looking annoyed.

"You promised you'd leave and I wouldn't have to do this in front of you, so go," Luka said, trying to block Juleka from returning to the boat.

"Adrien!" Rose greeted, grabbing her girlfriend's wrist with one hand and waving with the other. "I know what Luka was working on now!"

"Wow, you really can't keep a secret," Luka said, pushing Juleka towards Rose.

"No, I can't!"

Rose finally managed to drag Juleka away, both of them giggling, and Adrien was standing in front of a very flustered Luka.

"Getting us some time alone, huh?"

*Note to self,* Adrien thought as he watched Luka turn bright red. *Maybe tone down the flirting level so Luka's not incapable of flirting back if he so chooses.*

"So, what's up?" Adrien asked, putting his hands in his pockets and giving his best model-level eye-smile.

"Come with me," Luka said. He led them down to his room where he settled on his bed with his guitar.

"Are you planning on serenading me?" Adrien asked. *Nope, level still too high,* Adrien thought as Luka ducked his head so his hair hid most of his returning blush. "Sorry. Is this the thing you were working on before?"

"Yeah, it is," Luka said. He started to set something up on his phone, then looked up to see Adrien still standing. He patted the spot next to him and went back to his phone when Adrien sat next to him.

Whatever Luka was doing on his phone involved music because it started playing for a moment before Luka rapidly hit pause until it obeyed.

"Are you going to tell me what this is yet?" Adrien asked.

Luka took a breath and looked up at him. "This is you."

Before Adrien could ask, Luka hit play on the phone and pulled his guitar into position. Luka had played for over a minute when it hit Adrien what he was hearing. This is what Luka heard when he saw Adrien. These were his own emotions, seen by Luka and filtered through music. And Luka had taken the time to compose and record not just his own guitar, but the piano, flute, drums, violin, and another stringed instrument Adrien couldn't place by ear. At parts it was sweet and playful, at others it was dark and low and tremulous. Adrien had never thought of himself this way before. It meant the world that Luka had.
When it ended, Adrien didn't move. He barely breathed. He didn't want the moment to end.

"What did you think?" Luka asked, setting the guitar aside.

"No one has ever known me like that," Adrien said, the words coming heavy and slow from his tongue.

"I've enjoyed getting to know you, Adrien," Luka said. "And I get it, you didn't ask me out when you asked me to coffee, and you don't have to feel like you're rejecting me. I'm not asking for anything. I just wanted you to know how I see you."

Adrien looked into Luka's eyes and all he really wanted was to skip all the talking and kiss him, let him know that he might not be asking, but Adrien was happy to give him what he wanted anyway.

But they had to talk. Adrien had to be honest. Luka was sweet and awkward and funny and had written him a song.

"I like you," Adrien said. He looked down before he could see the hope rise in Luka's eyes and added, "But I like someone else, too."

"You- really?"

Adrien looked back up and nodded. "I wanted you to know, too. To know all of it. I don't know for sure how I feel about either of you, but whatever I do feel for you, it's here to stay, so you should know."

"I don't know what to say to that," Luka said. "I never thought you'd like me, so this is farther than I expected to get."

"I don't want to be unfair to you," Adrien said quickly. "It's not a competition."

"That didn't even enter my mind," Luka said. He grabbed Adrien's hand and squeezed. "You have a wonderful heart, Adrien. Follow it, and it'll steer you right. I said that I'm not asking for anything, and I'm still not. I'll just be happy that you're happy, whoever you're supposed to be with."

Adrien squeezed his hand back. "Thank you."

They sat like that, leaning against the wall and holding hands in silence for a while. When Mrs. Couffaine was heard on the deck they jumped apart, hands returning to their laps.

"Luka me dear, where's that sister o' yours?"

"She and Rose went to the movies," Luka said.

"Adrien, be ye staying for dinner?"

"No, I have to get home."

"Alright then. Just you and me tonight, Luka. Takeout it is!"

Luka walked Adrien to the corner of the street before they said their goodbyes.

"Could I- I know you played part of it live, but the recording was-"

"I have a copy of the recording with the guitar piece, too," Luka said. "I'll email it to you in a minute."
"Thanks. I'll see you soon."

Adrien walked home and let Nathalie know he was back. He didn't know for sure where his father was.

"Did you have a nice time?" Nathalie asked.

"Yeah."

"Things are better than the other day?"

"Yeah."

"Good. You deserve something that makes you happy."

Adrien nodded and went to his room and thought about what Nathalie had said. It wasn't that happy was the wrong word. He was very happy. But confusion still clung to him.

"Plagg, I need to talk to Ladybug."

"Finally! I think I deserve some cheese for being right about this."

"Cheese when we get back. Plagg, claws out!"

Chapter End Notes

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"There you are!" Ladybug landed next to Chat Noir on top of a playground at a park. It was dark out, but Chat knew Ladybug would be there sooner or later.

"Hey, Bugaboo."

"Your message said you wanted to talk," she said, sitting down to dangle her legs off the small platform. She sat close enough to bump into him as she settled.

"You knew, the other night, that one of the people I was talking about was you, right?"

Ladybug watched Chat's face closely, hoping for the grace to ensure this conversation was handled well. "I figured."

Chat nodded. "I talked to the other person. Let them know how I felt, and that I liked someone else, too. They were the only one that didn't know, out of you, me, and them."

"You like this person a lot?" Ladybug asked.

She watched his face light up. He had a serene smile on his face as he nodded enthusiastically.

"And she-" She paused to see his reaction, and it was delayed enough that she continued, "-or he, is good to you?"

The way he relaxed when she changed pronouns told Ladybug she was managing to make him a little more comfortable. This conversation couldn't be easy for him, and she had a feeling he would get around to the one question she didn't want to answer sooner or later.

"He understands me. He sees me. He knows when I'm getting upset or anxious and is just... there. He doesn't get upset that I'm upset, doesn't expect me to feel anything other than what I'm already feeling." He looked up at her, his eyes reflecting every spare bit of light around them. "He makes me feel safe and happy and all I want to do is make him feel the same."

Ladybug threw her arms around him and held tight. She wanted to bubble wrap his heart. She wanted to put the fear of God into the boy that had stolen Chat's heart. She wanted to clone him and create a bunch more people as good as him. He was too precious, and she loved him.

But what she felt for him wasn't the same. And she didn't think it ever would be.

"What's this for?" Chat asked, squirming around until he could free his arms to hug her back.

“Kitty, I don't think I can love you like you need to be loved.”
He went quiet, but not overly still as she had feared. After a minute, he gave a dry chuckle. "I didn't expect that to feel so freeing."

She pulled back to see him properly but ran a hand over his hair, scratching behind his cat ear. "Freeing?"

"I love you, Ladybug. And you know that, and you were clear that you didn't feel the same way. But feelings aren't the same thing as love, I don't think. Love is something you do. And if you can't do it, then you can't."

"I do love you," she said. "But not the same way. Not the way you need. Not what he can give you."

He looked down at the rest of the playground before meeting Ladybug's eyes again. "And that hurts, but I expected that. I didn't expect to feel like a weight had been lifted. No more trying to figure out if I like one of you better than the other. No more worrying I'm not being fair to either of you. I love you both, but only one of you loves me the same way. And like I said, love and feelings aren't the same. I can still love you and let go of the feelings."

"I'm sorry you have to go through giving up feelings," Ladybug said. "You deserve for love to be easy with how much good you give to the world."

Chat laughed. "I don't think it works like that, My Lady, but thank you."

They sat a few more minutes before Ladybug stood.

"I think I'm going to do a quick patrol before heading home."

Chat stood too, stretching as he nodded at her. "I think I'll just head home then."

Chat pulled out his staff to leave when Ladybug's hand landed on his shoulder.

"Are we okay?" she asked.

Chat kissed her cheek, feeling something very different, but in other ways very similar to what he had felt the last time he had kissed her there. He didn't have a rose for her this time, though. "We'll be different, but it will still be good."

"Different but still good," she echoed. "See you later, kitty cat."

"Good night, My Lady."

/****/

Luka was distracted while eating dinner, and Anarka noticed immediately.

"What did he think o' your composition?"

"He liked it," Luka said, poking food around his plate.

"And when's the wedding?"

"Mom!"

"I just be teasing, dear. How did it go? Does he feel the same?"
"You know what? I'm gonna go for a walk."

"Now, you don't have to go. I can keep me trap shut if ye don't want to talk. I just want ye t' feel like ye can say anything to yer ol' mum."

Luka kissed her head as he took his plate to the sink. "I know I can. I just don't have the words to say it yet."

"Don't get lost!" Anarka called as Luka pulled on a hoodie and grabbed his phone.

"Thanks, mom."

As Luka walked, his nerves from showing Adrien his song finally fully dissipated. He had just started heading home when he saw Chat Noir jumping from rooftop to rooftop nearby. He waved, but it looked like Chat Noir didn't see him. Luka snapped a picture and sent it to a few people, captioned "Spotted a stray!"

A few minutes later, Adrien replied, "You should have taken him home, I bet he's a very cuddly cat."

"I don't know how to take that," Luka said out loud as he stepped back onto the Liberty.

"How did it go?" Juleka asked from the lounge chair she and Rose were sharing on the deck.

"I'll tell you tomorrow. I'm headed to bed."

That night, Luka dreamed Adrien got him Chat Noir as a pet. A few weeks later, Luka had Plagg in stitches as he told him how Dream Chat clawed the furniture and turned up his nose at anything but the finest cat food.

Chapter End Notes

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Nino Called It (I Want To Kiss You)

Chapter Summary

Nino is anything but surprised by what Adrien has to say. In fact, he can predict the words about to come from his best bro's mouth.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Plagg?"

"No," Plagg said. "No more of this. Stop talking to me. Talk to your boyfriend. Talk to Nino. Please, just give me a break. It's been a week since you talked to Ladybug. Stop avoiding this and do something."

Adrien decided not to risk asking permission to see Nino and went out the window as Chat Noir. Once a few streets away from his home, Adrien detransformed and walked the rest of the way to Nino's.

"Dude, how are you out this late on a weekend?" Nino asked as he guided Adrien to the kitchen.

"I snuck out," he said, taking the piece of pie Nino's mom handed him. "But I needed to talk to you, and you'd said you were home, so I hope you don't-"

"Of course I don't mind, dude," Nino said. "Mom, we don't mind Adrien being here, right?"

"Of course not," she said. "Maybe don't sneak out, but you're welcome here even when you do."

Adrien was practically vibrating with excitement and nerves by the time he and Nino were alone in his room. He sat on the bed, trying not to bounce as Nino sat at his desk chair.

"So, what's up?" Nino asked, taking his headphones from his neck and putting them on his desk.

"I like someone," he said. "And they like me. And I don't know what to do."

"That's great!" Nino said, leaning over for a fist bump. Adrien returned it and couldn't suppress a grin. "Who is it? Are you dating? What does your old man think? What does Nathalie think?"

"It's, ah... you know them." Adrien's smile fell a little. He had never had this conversation with Nino before.

"Okay, I have three guesses, and I'm going to go in the order of least likely in my mind to most, okay?"

Adrien nodded, not having the slightest clue who Nino was about to guess.

"Chloe?"

"No! Why would you think that?"
"Good, good," Nino muttered. "Marinette?"

"What? No. Marinette doesn't even like me."

Nino shrugged. "If it's not her, then it's Luka?"

Adrien froze. He gave a jerky nod of his head and looked down at his hands, twisting together in his lap. A wrist with colorful bands and the hand attached to it reached over to pull his twined fingers apart.

"I'm glad, dude. You two just seem to fit, you know? It's fun to watch you guys when you perform, one of you is always looking at the other."

"We do that?" Adrien asked.

"Oh yeah. Even Kim noticed eventually. He also thinks you two would be cute together."

"Who else knows?" Adrien asked.

"Everyone who helped him with that song for you," Nino said. "And let me tell you, Alya almost backed out when she found out what the project was for." Nino saw Adrien's eyes widen and he threw both his hands up. "Because one of her friends likes you. That friend doesn't exactly know about the whole Luka making you a song thing."

"Oh," Adrien whispered. "I didn't think about where all the extra instruments came from."

"Yeah, and I put the recording together," Nino said. "Anything for my best bro."

"I really like him," Adrien said. "I don't know what to do."

"Does he know you like him?"

"Sort of?"

"Explain?"

"I told him I like him but I liked someone else too."

"Hold on a sec," Nino said. He turned to his desk, wrote something on a scrap of paper, folded it and put it on his nightstand. "I know where this conversation is going, and it's written on that paper. When you get there, you can read it and prove me right."

"What does that even mean?" Adrien asked, reaching for the paper. Nino slapped his hand away.

"Just, keep talking. You told him you like someone else, but you didn't come here and smile like your face is gonna fall off while telling me about someone else."

"I really like him," Adrien said again, giving the same smile. "Things were never going to work out with the other person, and she and I talked a few days ago and it made me realize that even if she had said she wanted to be with me, I would want to be with Luka. But I don't think he knows that. I need him to know that he really is my first choice. I don't want him thinking that the only reason I want to ask him out is because he's the only person who likes me back."

Nino nodded. "You could just tell him that."

"I know, but that doesn't seem like enough. He wrote a song to show me how well he sees me, that
he understands what I feel. I have to do something... big."

"Hmm," Nino said, sitting back in his chair. He had a look on his face that Adrien thought for a second was him hiding laughter, but it disappeared before he was sure. "Big like what?"

"Big like..." Adrien stared out the window for a moment, trying to find the right words. "Like a grand romantic gesture. Something to show him how much I care."

Nino nodded. "Okay, look at the paper."

Adrien unfolded the paper on the nightstand to read "Grand romantic gesture" written there. Nino had known exactly what Adrien would want to do before Adrien knew it himself.

"I'm a little predictable, huh?" Adrien asked, scratching the back of his head.

"I just know you, bro. So, what kind of romantic gesture were you thinking of?"

"I'm not entirely sure yet," he said, flopping back to lay across the the bed the short way, his arms over his head dangling over the other side. "I do know I need to write him a poem."

"Okay, I volunteer to not help with that part," Nino said. "You need a playlist? I can do playlists."

"Yeah, that would be great," Adrien said. "Hand me your notebook, please? I need to write down some ideas for this poem."

Nino handed it over along with a pen. Adrien rolled over on the bed and opened to a blank page. At the top he wrote the title.

"I Want To Kiss You."

Chapter End Notes

I'm sorry that the Lukadrien kiss wasn't in this chapter. I definitely planned for it to be. It's coming soon though!
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Raining

Chapter Summary

Adrien has a miserable photoshoot.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Adrien felt the rain was the perfect thing to set the mood to write poetry. He and Nino had come up with a plan, and until Monday, the only thing Adrien could do to further said plan was to write his poem. It was the afternoon after his talk with Nino and the rain was beautiful and his poem was coming together and Luka had texted him about a new song he and Rose were writing and everything was wonderful and-

"Adrien, your father wants to see you."

_I knew it couldn't last_, Adrien thought. He followed Nathalie to his father's office where she left him, closing the door as she did. What was she even doing here on a Sunday?

"You wanted to see me, Father?"

"Yes. We're trying something new with one of the photo ads. The natural lighting and predicted levels of rain today are perfect for the project. You will be monitored so that you aren't exposed to the cold and damp enough that it would affect your health, but I do regret to say this won't be a pleasant photoshoot for you. Please take frequent breaks and keep track of how you're feeling so you can stop if you need to. Nathalie will accompany you."

"I'm doing a photoshoot in the rain?" Adrien asked. This sounded like it would be awful.

"You are. It's just an experiment, so don't worry if you can't complete it. That will just tell us the experiment has failed."

Adrien didn't know what to do. The one thing about his father he would bet money on was his intolerance for failure. So even with that statement, Adrien was pretty sure not completing the photoshoot was not an option.

"I'll do my best, Father."

"Good."

Gabriel returned to his work and Adrien took that as a dismissal. He returned to the hall to find Nathalie waiting for him.

"I grabbed you a change of clothes in case the ones you're wearing get wet, though you should be in the clothes you're modeling most of the time," she said. They each grabbed an umbrella (did Marinette still have one of his?) and headed for the car.

The photoshoot took place in the park. It was cold and windy and wet. Adrien was soaked through within minutes of each outfit change. The frequent breaks and freely supplied hot drinks helped,
but even under the small tent that had been set up, the wind bit right through him.

"You need to be happier in this set," the photographer (one of the ones that didn't speak in food metaphors all the time) said. "I know it's not great conditions, but it's a good chance to practice your acting, right? So give me a smile."

Adrien tried. Oh boy did he try. But when he wasn't frowning he was shivering and the photographer was trying to hide her frustration soon enough.

"Think of something, anything, that makes you happy," she said. "Puppies, chocolate cake, movies with friends, your crush, the thought of this disaster of an experimental shoot ending. But I need some genuine-looking smiles from you or this thing will never end, okay?"

Adrien tried thinking of puppies and chocolate cake. He tried thinking of video games with friends. None of those worked for more than a minute or two. He thought about running around as Chat Noir, hanging out with Ladybug, and that brought a genuine smile to his face. But then the wind picked up and the rain fell harder and the photographer got more impatient and even that couldn't keep him smiling.

"Okay, you were doing good for a few minutes there, kid," the photographer said during a break. "I need you to dig deep, and find something to carry you through the next forty five minutes, okay? You can do this. You're the best we've got."

Adrien spent the next few minutes of the break flipping through photo albums that made him happy, hoping that would do it. He was thinking of closing out of the app when he landed on a picture the band. Nino was right, he and Luka really did look at each other a lot while they played. Adrien thought of Luka, and the half finished poem on his desk. He couldn't help texting him. He took a selfie of his bedraggled, rain-soaked self and sent it to him.

Adrien: so we're "experimenting" at this photoshoot

Luka replied almost immediately.

Luka: Experimenting with dumping buckets of water you???

Adrien: experimenting with pictures in the rain

Adrien: it saves time on hair and makeup at least?

Luka: this sounds like a war crime. some kind of torture. "go stand in the rain and look miserable while we take pictures to document how awful it is"

Adrien: im not even allowed to look miserable

Luka: i thought you liked modeling? is it always like this?

Adrien: no, usually it's great. not too much longer til we're done

Luka: okay, please take care of yourself

Adrien: of course! if i catch a cold, i can't visit you, now can i?

Luka sent a string of blushy face emojis and Adrien was just formulating a reply when he was called back.

Thoughts of Luka and their conversation and the poem and the song and band practice filled
Adrien's heart with enough warmth that he got through the next thirty minutes in fairly good spirits. The photographer was thrilled and things were going fairly quickly, but it was getting later in the day so it was getting colder rather quickly. Adrien was starting to struggle with keeping up his happy facade when a fantastic sight greeted him.

Luka was standing with Nathalie under the tent. He had brought coffee or tea. Luka offered one to Nathalie from the tray he carried and then took one for himself, leaving one on the tray. Luka nodded at him and smiled.

Luka had showed up to his miserable photoshoot with warm beverages because he knew Adrien wasn't having fun. Adrien couldn't have stopped grinning if he had tried.

"How did you even know where I was?" Adrien asked when the shoot ended and he was allowed to go change. He stood holding the bag of dry clothes Nathalie had handed him and caught a towel that an assistant tossed to him.

"The fountain was in the background of your selfie. Go change, Nathalie and I were in the middle of something anyway."

Adrien disappeared and Luka turned back to Nathalie. "So you really didn't mind that I wore a bowtie with the outfit you chose for me to wear to dinner? Because next time I can wear a real tie if you think that will make a difference."

"It showed a bit of personality, a reluctance to follow the crowd," Nathalie said, sipping her tea. "That's a good thing, to some extent, in the world of fashion. I wouldn't have chosen it, but you would have, so that made it good."

"Thanks," Luka said. "And thanks again for helping with the outfit and just... being on Adrien's side."

"I'm on no one's side," Nathalie said.

Luka didn't like the change in her when she said that. It made her seem darker, and he didn't want the music in her heart to distract him from cheering up Adrien, so he let silence fall as they waited for Adrien to return.

"Adrien, if you would like to walk home with Luka so you can spend some time together, the driver and I can head back without you," Nathalie said when Adrien returned, still buttoning his shirt.

"Really? Thanks, Nathalie!"

Nathalie left and the boys shared an umbrella as they walked.

"You still look cold," Luka said, rubbing a hand over Adrien's back. "Do you want my hoodie?"

"I want to kiss you," Adrien blurted.

They stopped walking.

"I- um. Okay?" Luka was realizing just how small this umbrella was. He couldn't move far from Adrien without getting water down his back.

"No, it... I do want to," Adrien said, grinning. "But I wrote you a poem. It's half done, anyway. It's titled 'I Want To Kiss You' and I'm going to give it to you this weekend, but really, I can't wait that
long. I like you, Luka, and talking with my other friend made me realize that if I chose her, I'd regret not choosing you, but if I chose you," Adrien grabbed Luka's hand. "If I chose you, then it might take a little while to rewrite all those places in my head that she used to be, but I wouldn't regret it. I really like you, Luka, and if you still like me, would you want to go get coffee with me sometime? As a date this time?"

Luka laughed. "I'm never going to live down assuming that was a date, am I?"

"I'm never going to live down phrasing it so badly that you couldn't tell," Adrien said.

"Adrien?" Luka said, pulling him a little closer.

"Yeah?"

"I want to kiss you, too."

Adrien leaned forward and pressed his lips to Luka's. It lasted barely a couple seconds, just long enough to shock them both. They pulled back, hearts racing and looking to the other to confirm that they had done the right thing.

"Is that a yes on the coffee date?" Adrien asked.

"Yeah," Luka said, his smile shy. "Definitely."

They stood there, both hoping for a second kiss but too nervous to initiate it until someone brushed past them on the sidewalk, reminding them of their surroundings.

"We should get you home," Luka said. "I believe you said something about not being able to visit if you caught a cold, and I like it when you visit."

They resumed walking, Adrien holding the umbrella with one hand and Luka's hand with his other.

"That would be a shame," Adrien said. "I only recently realized how fun it is to flirt with you. I'd hate to give up seeing you blush in person for the duration of a cold."

They flirted and bumped into each other under their umbrella all the way to the mansion's front gates.

"Adrien, your driver will take Luka home so he doesn't have to walk in the rain," Nathalie said over the gate's intercom.

"I guess this is goodbye," Adrien said.

"Stay warm, Adrien."

Another very long moment passed where they both failed to kiss the other. Adrien went in the house and took a long time putting the umbrella away so that he could watch Luka get in the car through the front window. Adrien felt lighter than air, like he could float to the top of the high ceiling and get stuck there like a helium balloon. He headed towards his room to curl up with some blankets and more hot tea when his father spoke from the doorway of his office.

"Adrien?"

He turned back from the first landing of the stairs. "Yes, Father?"

"You are to come directly home from school this week. No wasting time with your classmates or
after school activities. Do you understand me?"

Now Adrien was worried. The most miserable photoshoot ever and now no friends or clubs or- or band?

But there was no arguing with the blank look that Gabriel Agreste was giving his son.

"Yes, Father."

Gabriel returned to his office and Adrien went to his room.

The rain had stopped.

Chapter End Notes

There, you have your kiss, and only a date after the kiss prompt :P
I write sins not poetry. Actually, I don't write Sin either. I am the Shy(tm).
But seriously I'm not writing that poem, please don't expect to read it lol
Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Adrien arrived at school the next day an anxious mess. What had he done? Was his father mad about Luka? How could he have even found out? Even if Nathalie had said something, up until five minutes before his father said he couldn't go anywhere anymore, there really wasn't much to tell. Something else, then? Did his father know about his Miraculous?

Adrien had barely slept, despite the comforting purring that Plagg had kept up most of the night to calm him down. He had been too stressed to answer most of Luka's texts. He didn't want Luka to worry about him, but he also didn't want to get his hopes up, so he said he had a good time but needed to go and spend the rest of the night avoiding looking at his phone.

Nino hadn't even reached their row of seats in the classroom before he was giving Adrien an excited update of their plan. "Dude, I got you a rickshaw and Alix said she has a backpack full of rose petals for some reason, so- bro, what happened to you?"

"We have to cancel the plan," Adrien said, slumping into his seat. "My dad said no going out with friends or to after school activities for a while."

"That sucks, dude! Why is he like this? Did he give a reason for the house arrest?" Nino threw an arm around Adrien's shoulder and tried to squeeze into him that this wasn't normal parental behavior.

"No reason. I don't know what I did."

"Then you probably didn't do anything wrong. This sucks."

"Thanks, Nino," Adrien said, leaning against him for a moment before slumping onto his desk, his arms folded under his head. Something else occurred to him, and he found himself burying a smile in his arms.

"I might not need the whole plan anyway," Adrien said. "I kissed him yesterday."

"What?" Nino almost dropped his phone as he turned to Adrien with a grin. "You didn't tell me this last night! We played video games together for almost two hours!"

"It was too new," Adrien said. "And I was trying to distract myself from the fact that I'm basically grounded."

"That's awesome though, dude! Was it nice? Did he like it? Wait, when did you even see him?"

Adrien told Nino about the photoshoot and the kiss in whispers until the teacher called class to a start. It cheered him up a little but school was long and Adrien was sad and it was too sunny.
outside to properly mope. Adrien's anxiety had spiked again by the time he got home for the day.

"How was your day?" Nathalie asked when they crossed paths in the kitchen. She didn't look up from her tablet.

"School was fine. I'm missing fencing right now."

"Your father said you needed some time off."

"But I'm going to fall behind," Adrien said. "What about Chinese lessons tomorrow? And I'm going to let the band down if I can't practice with them. What's going on, Nathalie?"

Nathalie put her tablet down and shut off the screen.

"You don't want time off."

It wasn't a question, it was a realization.

"I don't know why he did this, but it's not on my request," Adrien said.

Nathalie sighed. "I will do my best to find out why he did this. For now, don't worry about it. Let the band know you might miss a few practices but are doing your best at home, and I had already told your Chinese tutor that you needed time off."

"Thank you," Adrien said.

"You could have come to me with this, you know," Nathalie said.

"It was Sunday night and you were probably headed home when it happened," Adrien said. "And sometimes it's best to let Father forget things like this for a little while before asking again."

She nodded and picked her tablet back up. "I'll let you know what I find out."

Adrien went and practiced piano since he had finished his homework already. When he got bored of piano, he went to his room and watched anime while starting an essay that wasn't due for a few days. When he got bored of that, he started texting everyone he thought would respond. He was in the middle of flirting with Luka, theorizing about Ladybug's identity with Alya, and sending memes to Nino and Marinette when there was a knock at the door.

"Come in," he called over his shoulder, assuming it was Nathalie. It wasn't a great assumption because that's how his father found him lying so that his head and arms hung off the couch with a picture of a dog with its head through a lawn chair captioned "It's called fashion, look it up" on his phone screen.

"Adrien? What are you doing?"

Adrien slid the rest of the way off the couch, shoved his phone in his pocket, and stood to face his father.

"I'm done with my homework and already practiced piano, so I didn't have anything to do," Adrien said, letting a little bit of his annoyance and fear out through passive aggression.

"Nathalie suggested that I speak with you."

They stood in silence, half a room apart, for a good minute before Gabriel sighed and gestured to the couch. They sat, both facing the TV screen as Gabriel finally started to talk.
"You have grown up faster than I could have ever imagined."

Adrien peeked at his father out of the corner of his eye. What did that have to do with anything?

"And I have missed much, I know. So it came as a surprise to me when one of the assistants at the photoshoot said that a blue haired boy had shown up and considerably improved your mood with his presence alone."

It was about Luka. Adrien felt like his chest was too small for his lungs, like his every muscle was preparing him to run, but he was frozen and unable to say a single word before Gabriel spoke again.

"I finally put together that bringing a friend home for dinner with your father might be a little more significant than just another meal." Gabriel turned to Adrien and put a hand on his shoulder. He never spoke of it to anyone, but the small flinch Adrien tried to suppress at his touch would be the biggest regret of his life. "I cancelled your after school activities because I felt I was missing too much of you growing up. This may have been misguided of me. Nathalie seems to think so, and she doesn't usually speak up unless she feels I really need to hear it. This was not intended as a punishment for you, but as a means to free up your time so we can connect again."

Adrien tried to figure out what this meant. It should have surprised him more that his father thought cancelling his activities without telling him why (and without setting up any time for the two of them to be together) was for the good of their relationship, not a punishment. But it wouldn't be the first time that Adrien had a completely different view of his father's actions than his father did.

"Adrien?" Gabriel asked, trying to be as still as possible so Adrien wouldn't flinch again. "Do you like this boy?"

He didn't flinch, but Adrien's eyes dropped to his knees immediately. "Yes," he whispered.

"And he's a good person? Kind, supportive, patient?"

"Yes," he said again, this time a little louder.

"He makes you happy?"

"He wrote me a song," Adrien said, smiling at his knees. "He keeps me from getting nervous before the band goes on stage. I didn't know I could feel this way, but it's so far beyond happy."

Gabriel gave his son's shoulder a squeeze.

"Then I'd like to meet him. Properly, this time."

"Okay," Adrien said. "I'll let him know."

They sat in awkward, but less tense silence for a moment until Gabriel cleared his throat and removed his hand.

"Nathalie seems to like him. That's usually a good sign. She's an excellent judge of character."

"Didn't Nathalie try to punch you when you met or something?"

Gabriel stood and looked down at his son. "She did not try, she succeeded. Like I said, she's a good judge of character."

Gabriel was almost to the door when Adrien turned to ask, "So, can I have my activities back?"
"I will work it out with Nathalie, but yes. I will arrange my own schedule better instead."

It was a promise Adrien had heard before, so he tried not to hope that this time it would really happen.

"Thank you, Father."

"I love you, Adrien."

Plagg flew out from under the couch when the door clicked closed. "See? All that worrying for nothing!"

"Not quite nothing," Adrien said. "If I hadn't bumped into Nathalie, this might have gone very differently. And if Father doesn't approve of Luka when he meets him again, that won't be good either."

"Eh, worry about that only if it happens, I say. I've got a plan, you text Luka and be all sappy and teenager-y and gross and then tell Nino the plan's back on, and I'll have some Camembert. Sound good?"

Adrien laughed. "Sounds good."

Adrien did just that, and when Nathalie found him hanging upside-down from the side of his bed to tell him his activities were back on, he was grinning again. And really, that was all Nathalie had been trying to do.

/*****/

[Two Hours Earlier]

"You can't lock him up forever." Nathalie hadn't even greeted Gabriel in his office.

"He needs a break, Nathalie. I'm not 'locking him up' at all," Gabriel had said. "We can spend more time together if he's home."

"You have cancelled sixteen of the last eighteen dinners you scheduled with him, sir. His availability is not the issue here."

"Fine, then we'll arrange my schedule as well."

"Right, sir. Does that mean you'll be putting the time you spend akumatizing on your calendar so I can help arrange it, or are you cutting into the time you spend on fashion?"

"You're treading a fine line, Nathalie," Gabriel said, frowning at his computer screen instead of at her.

"What is this really about, sir? What good does it do, keeping him from his friends?"

"They're distractions. He needs to focus on what's important."

"Why make him model in the rain? I know you won't use more than three or four of those shots."

"Merely an experiment."

"Why are you punishing the boy? What could he have possibly done?"
Gabriel hadn't noticed Nathalie getting closer as she interrogated him. When her hand reached over to shut off his computer screen, he was surprised she wasn't still across the room.

"Why, sir?"

"Did you know about this Couffaine boy?"

"You're punishing him for having a friend?" Nathalie was very close, and the urge to back away from her was growing.

"I'm punishing him for hiding this from me. I realized what it meant that he made me sit through dinner with that boy who barely spoke. He likes the boy enough to bring him home, but not to tell me why? He likes him enough to make it through that miserable photoshoot, but not enough to bring him inside and say hello?"

"Are you punishing him for growing up? Or are you punishing him because you've made him fear you, fear letting you into-"

"My son does not fear me, Nathalie!" He roared this at her, leaning in to try and-

To try and scare her.

This was ridiculous, because scaring Nathalie wasn't difficult. But if that was how he tried to control her... was that what he did with Adrien too? Could she be right?

Gabriel turned so his back was to Nathalie, hiding his expression from her.

Nathalie knew there was a good chance that Gabriel would turn his anger from his son to her. But Adrien was a child, and powerless. Nathalie was scared, but still had a few cards left to play.

"Then go speak to him. Let him know that he has nothing to fear."

Gabriel pretended to glance at his watch before saying, "It's late enough. You're dismissed for the day."

"Yes, sir."

Chapter End Notes

So uh more Nathalie I guess?

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"What are you doing here?" Luka asked, grinning ear to ear.

Adrien stood on the dock holding a to-go cup in each hand, grinning back. The sun was out, only a handful of fluffy clouds in the sky, the temperature perfect and the wind just enough to remind you it was there. Luka wasn't a morning person, but the sight before him might make him a convert.

"I wanted to repay you for making my day this weekend," Adrien said, holding out a cup as Luka join him. "And walk you to school, if you want."

"You drive to school though," Luka said, taking a sip of his drink. It was tea, made exactly as he liked it. How did Adrien even know how he took his tea?

"Usually, yeah, but I convinced my driver to drop me off here, and my school is only a couple blocks past yours. Plus, I couldn't wait to see you again." Adrien's smile hurt his face a little, but he just couldn't stop. "Is this okay?"

"This is nice," Luka said. He gathered his courage and slid his hand into Adrien's as they walked down the street. "You didn't have to pay me back for the coffee the other day, but seeing you first thing in the morning is not something I plan to complain about."

"That's good," Adrien said, squeezing his hand. "If I have my way, you'll be seeing me a lot."

They arrived at the front of Luka's school, and Luka didn't want to let go of Adrien's hand.

"Let me know when you want to hang out again," Adrien said. "I had some... scheduling issues, but I'm hoping they've cleared up now."

"Yeah, I'd like that."

Adrien started to pull away before he remembered something.

"Oh, right, and my dad wants to meet you."
"Your dad already met me," Luka said, raising an eyebrow.

"He said that didn't count. It was a whole thing, I don't want to get into it now. I'll tell you next time we hang out. But would that be... I don't know, too much to ask? I know you got sort of overwhelmed last time."

Luka shook his head. "Getting to know you means getting to know the people close to you. Let me know when and I'll be there." He took a small step closer to Adrien and said, "I'll always be there."

Adrien went bright red, but he managed to smirk and say, "Is that right? I'll keep that in mind," and it was Luka's turn to blush at the tone of Adrien's voice.

"I should go," Adrien said. "I won't be allowed to do this again if I'm late the first time I try it. But I'd like to meet your friends soon, if you want."

Luka nodded. "They usually show up right before the bell rings, so you'd definitely be late if you waited for them, but... yeah, it would mean a lot to me if you met them."

Adrien looked around quickly to check that no one was watching them and leaned over to peck a kiss onto Luka's cheek.

"See you later," Adrien said, walking backwards down the sidewalk away from Luka. He saw Luka slowly raise a hand to touch his cheek and Adrien smirked again before turning around and jogging out of sight.

Adrien Agreste had lit up Luka's morning so much the sun seemed duller the rest of the day.

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Luka was sitting on the deck of the boat working on homework when Chat Noir dropped from the sky, the moonlight adding a silver cast to his hair. He smirked and leaned against this staff like it was at all normal that this was the third time he had shown up unprompted and without an akuma to worry about.

"Hi," Chat Noir said, swaggering closer. "You looked a little bored, and it's my job to protect the citizens of Paris, even from-" he glanced at the open textbook next to Luka and saw geometry symbols. "Well who finds math boring? Math is fun!"

"We have very different opinions on geometry," Luka said, clearing a spot for Chat Noir to sit. "Algebra was fun, geometry is just weird shapes."

"Agree to disagree," Chat said, waving a hand. "So, no fun plans tonight to distract you from homework?"

"Nothing tonight," he said. "Can I ask you a question?"

"You can ask, but to keep us both safe, I might not be able to answer," Chat said, looking serious.

Luka nodded. "Should I be worried that you're hanging around so much? Are we in danger?"

"No! No, of course not! Wow, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to worry you."

"I wasn't too worried, I just wanted to be sure. So, why are you here, then?"

Chat smiled the softest smile, looking Luka in the eye. "I think you're talented and interesting and kind and I like the times I run into you."
Luka frowned. Chat's expression morphed into worry.

"I have a- I have someone I- It seems like you're flirting with me,” Luka said.

"I didn't mean to make you uncomfortable," Chat said, shifting away a little.

"No, I just... I have someone. And you're a superhero. And what about Ladybug?"

"I should go," Chat said, standing and looking around for the best place to jump to from the boat. "I'm sorry."

"You don't have to," Luka said, reaching up to grab Chat Noir's wrist. "You seem lonely, so I don't want you to go, but I don't want there to be any confusion."

Chat looked lost, scanning the buildings around the river. Luka wasn't sure why he could only hear parts of Chat Noir's song in his heart, but the pieces he heard were bright, clear, sharp, but mixed with loneliness, stubbornness, a clanging crash that he was sure must be loud enough to distract Chat Noir, even if he didn't experience it as music like Luka did.

"No confusion," Chat said, turning to face Luka better but not moving to break his wrist free. "I have a someone too."

Luka let go of Chat's wrist to pat the deck next to him. "Want to tell me about her?"

Chat Noir settled next to him again and pulled the geometry book towards himself. "That's one of those things I can't answer for safety reasons. So, what geometry topics are on your homework today? Maybe I can explain why they're fun to you."

So they talked about math. Juleka came on the deck to see her brother sitting with one of Paris's superheroes and arguing about Pythagoras. The moon had slid behind a cloud so they were only visible by the string of Christmas lights around the deck. Juleka took her phone out and snapped a quick picture before returning below without a sound.

Chapter End Notes

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Crushed (Rewrite The Stars)

Chapter Summary

Luka wants to spend more time with Adrien's friends, but neither predicted that doing so would hurt someone.

Chapter Notes

I don't know how this tuned into The Marinette Chapter, but here you go.

"This sounds like a double date, dude," Nino said, his glance bouncing between Alya across the room and Adrien.

"It's not a date of any kind," Adrien said. "Luka just wants to spend more time with my friends, and you and Alya are my friends. I met his friends this weekend and they're great. I promise it'll be fun."

"Okay, but you and Luka are together-"

"Not really?" Adrien said with a shrug. "We're... kinda waiting on my dad to say it's okay, and still hanging out until then."

"Dude," Nino said, giving him The Stare that meant he was missing something. Usually the stare had to do with something Marinette or Alya said or did.

"Listen, you don't have to," Adrien said. "I can bring Chl-"

"Don't you dare say Chloe. Don't do it." Nino had a finger raised, held between them to hold off Adrien's comments.

"But if you or Alya would be uncomf-"

"I said! Don't say anything."

"You really didn't say-"

"Adrien?" Nino's hands were on each of Adrien's shoulders, pulling him a half step closer. "Alya may murder me. I know you don't understand why, but she might. So know that going over there and explaining this to her could be my last actions on this earth. So I want you to know that I love you, you're a good person, and you deserve to be free and happy. Like, really, truly happy, not pretending so everyone else thinks you're fine."

Before Adrien could laugh or burst into tears (and he wasn't sure which), Nino hugged him, patted his arm, and said, "I hope your next best friend is half as cool as me."
Nino pulled Alya into the hallway to talk so Adrien continued to set up plans with Luka. When Nino returned with Alya (who did look a little murder-y), they finalized the plans for the next afternoon.

The next day at school, Marinette seemed off. Adrien had almost invited her along to the coffee outing, but she had been quieter than usual around him, and he was worried he was making her uncomfortable again. He had just decided to ask Alya what was going on when Marinette leaned over during literature class and whispered to Alya, loud enough for him to hear.

"Will you take notes for me? I think I'm just going to go home."

"You not feeling well?" Adrien whispered, leaning back in his chair and turning just enough to see Marinette.

She burst into tears.

Adrien tried to fix it, tried to apologize, tried to ask what was wrong, offered to walk her to the nurse, walk her home, get her water. The whole class was staring and Adrien was horrified that somehow he had managed to hurt someone so kind and good.

Nino reached over and pulled Adrien back into his seat (he hadn't even realized he had gotten up) and Ms. Bustier stopped the class to take Marinette to the nurse.

"What did I do?" Adrien whispered to Nino, feeling his classmates' eyes on him still, feeling like he was about to cry himself.

"Dude," Alix said, throwing her arms in the air. "Put it together. Word of you and Luka has spread through the school. Marinette's been acting weird since the rumors started. As soon as Alya, her best friend, knows for sure that something's going on with you and Luka, Marinette's upset. Please, don't drag us through you not knowing any more. It's just painful at this point."

Adrien's heart sunk.

"She doesn't like me because I'm-"

"No, dude," Alix said. "Woah, sorry, I can see how you got that from what I said. It's not that, we're all cool with you liking dudes, and I'll beat up anyone who isn't."

"She likes you, Adrien," Alya said. She sighed. "I expected to be more mad at you, but you really didn't know, did you?"

"I had no idea." Adrien heard his voice speaking, but he was too caught up in his own mind to consciously decide to say it. Marinette liked him? That explained a lot, really, but why hadn't she ever said anything? Why hide it? She had never given him the chance to talk to her about it, to be open and move past it and be friends. And now he'd hurt her.

"I need to apologize to her," Adrien said, trying to stand again. Nino's hand on his shoulder kept him in place.

"Give her space," Alya and Nino said at the same time.

"Right. Okay," Adrien said, slouching in his seat. Maybe if he didn't move or say anything the class would stop focusing on him and how badly he had messed up.

Ms. Bustier returned and continued the lesson and Adrien threw all his focus into class, wanting
not to think about what he had just found out. He was doing a decent job distracting himself until Nino leaned over to whisper to him.

"It wasn't your fault," he said. "You didn't mean any harm. So let it go for now, and when she's ready she'll talk to you."

Adrien nodded, but the urge to cry came back. He squashed it and returned to the lesson.

/*****

It was Alya who insisted they still go to coffee with Luka after school.

"You two are kinda cute, and even Marinette agreed when I told her about this that you should be with someone who makes you happy."

So the three of them set off to meet Luka. It was fun, and Adrien got to hear a bit more about the making of his song.

"He didn't tell you its title is 'Sunshine'?" Alya said. "That was the best part!"

It was nice, and it was a good distraction from Adrien's guilty conscience. When Nino and Alya headed home, Luka asked to walk Adrien home, too.

"Why was everyone sad?" Luka asked.

Adrien chuckled. "Sometimes I forget you can do that." He squeezed Luka's hand and told him about Marinette, how he hadn't know about her crush, how awful he felt, how she had cried and left for the day.

"That sucks," Luka said, leaning against the fence with Adrien a few feet from the gate into the Agreste property. "I'm sorry you're both hurting, but she's so strong, Adrien. It's bad right now because she's letting herself feel it instead of pushing it down. She'll face how she feels, let it go, and be even stronger for it."

"I just... I wish I could change everything so that no one got hurt from something that makes me so happy."

Luka hugged Adrien and felt some of the guilt and tension leave him.

"Me, too, Adrien."

Chapter End Notes

Bonus: what Alya said to Nino when he asked her to go on a not-double-date with Luka and Adrien.

WHO IS GOING TO EXPLAIN TO MARINETTE THAT ADRIEN IS GAY OR BI, NINO? IS IT GOING TO BE YOU? NO. IT'LL HAVE TO BE ME. AND I DON'T WANT TO. I DON'T LIKE WHEN SHE CRIES, NINO. AND THE TWO OF THEM TOGETHER IS YOUR FAULT FOR MAKING ME PLAY THE FLUTE FOR LUKA'S SONG FOR ADRIEN. SO YOU ARE THE ONE MAKING HER CRY
AND I WILL HATE YOU. DO YOU WANT ME TO HATE YOU?

****/

Bonus bonus: Adrien talks with Nathalie.

"Hey, Nathalie?"

"Yes, Adrien?" Nathalie glanced over her shoulder at him while sorting a box of fabric samples by material and color.

"What do you do when you hurt someone but you didn't mean to?"

Nathalie became unnaturally still for a moment before she spoke.

"Did you know what you were doing could hurt this person before you hurt them?"

"No," Adrien said, feeling a little relief but also not wanting to be let off the hook too easily.

"Did you find out part way in that you would hurt them, and keep going?" She had stopped sorting, but hadn't turned the ninety degrees to face him.

"Sort of?"

"Then stop and evaluate. Decide if what you're doing is more important than feelings. Because sometimes it is. But you'll still be responsible for what you do, and you'll still bear the weight of all the pain you've caused."

Adrien had that feeling that he was missing something, like Nino should be here giving him The Stare.

"Okay," Adrien said, heading to the door. "Thanks, Nathalie."

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Chapter Summary

Luka gives spending time with Gabriel a second try. They garden and eat lunch. After, Adrien gets his father's ruling on their relationship.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Did you know my dad likes gardening?"

During a break in band practice Adrien and Luka were sitting on Luka's bed looking at memes.

"I never would have suspected that, no," Luka said.

"He likes flowers that attract bees and butterflies."

"Why are you telling me this?" Luka asked.

"He's been in a gardening phase. When you come over tomorrow there's a high likelihood he'll want us to help garden."

"I can't garden in a suit."

"I think that's why he wants to," Adrien said. "He asked that you wear something more casual. Nathalie sent outfit suggestions or said, and I quote, 'Have Ms. Lavillant pick out his outfit, I have faith in her.'"

Luka laughed and called Rose into the room. Juleka came with her, and Ivan and Mylene found them all a minute later, making Luka try on his clothes for them. Band practice was never resumed. Ivan had the most helpful comments out of the group and Luka found himself with a pair of dark wash jeans, a red t-shirt, and one of Mr. Couffaine's dark blue button up shirts.

"I look like Adrien," Luka objected as he stepped into the bathroom to change back into the outfit he'd had on all day. "Was that the goal?"

"Yes," Rose and Ivan answered.

"I still think the shirt with the skulls would have been a nice touch," Juleka said.

"Luka, can I pick out what color your nails are for tomorrow?" Rose asked, looking through a shoe box full of nail polish bottles.

"I was going to take the nail polish off, actually," Luka said, squeezing on the bed between Adrien and Mylene.

"You can pick out a color for me," Adrien said.

Rose was delighted. Adrien ended up with a carrot orange. Mylene challenged Adrien to paint her nails, and he failed spectacularly. From there, everyone except Luka had their nails done.
"Argh, moments like this're how bands truly bond, and that makes yer music reach new heights!"

Anarka had her phone in her hand, taking pictures of the kids sitting all over the room with nail polish bottles spread out among them.

"Mom, really?" Luka said.

"Twas too cute to resist."

With that, "band practice" ended and the group split into couples that each headed in a different direction. Luka and Adrien walked to the halfway point between the Liberty and Adrien's house.

"So, is it bad I'm even more nervous for tomorrow than I was last time?" Luka asked.

"No, I understand," Adrien said. "I'm nervous, too. But he wouldn't be setting this up if he already planned on disapproving of you, so that's a better shot than I ever thought I'd have with my father approving of me dating anyone."

With a quick squeeze to their joined hands, they separated and went home to worry alone.

The next afternoon, Luka showed up exactly three minutes early and rang the bell at the front gate.

"Come in, Mr. Couffaine," Nathalie's disembodied voice said as the gates buzzed open.

"Luka! Over here!"

Luka walked around the side of the house towards Adrien who peeked around the corner. He was smiling, and it was genuine, but the tightness around his eyes showed that Adrien was just as nervous as he had been the day before. Adrien led him to his father, who was kneeling on a foam pad to work on planting something leafy from little pots.

"Hello, Mr. Agreste."

Gabriel looked up and nodded. "Hello, Luka."

"So, we're gardening?"

"For a little while, until lunch is prepared. Have you gardened before?"

"I live on a boat and my mom has killed every house plant that has ever been within ten feet of her." He sat on the ground next to the line of pots. "But I'm sure I can learn. How can I help?"

Luka proved himself a half-decent gardener, and Adrien proved that the sight of Luka concentrating on treating small plants with care could distract him easily. Not much was said beyond Gabriel instructing the boys, and the peace and sunshine and earth helped them all relax.

"Sir, lunch is ready."

After they had cleaned up, Gabriel settled at the head of the large dining room table with Adrien on his right and Luka on his left.

And then the questions started.

"What are your plans after high school?"

"I'm not sure yet," Luka said.
"Do you plan to formally pursue music, or are garage bands the extent of your ambitions?"

"Father, he's-"]

"I did not ask you, Adrien," Gabriel said, voice and face neutral. "We are here so I may learn more of Mr. Couffaine, get to know him beyond the report Nathalie wrote up for me."

"Nathalie wrote a report on Luka?"

"I asked her to for all your friends." Gabriel returned his attention to Luka. "I don't believe you answered my question."

"I don't know if I want to pursue music. I'm still trying to experience as many things as I can so I can know what kinds of things I like best."

"But you don't have much time left in high school."

It wasn't a question, but Luka responded, "Not a lot, but I still have time."

Gabriel made a noncommittal noise and returned to his meal for a minute. Adrien brought up the newest public art exhibit he had seen as a way to cover the silence. Luka lagged behind in his answers and Adrien could see how drained he already felt.

"Do you plan to stay local for university, Luka?"

There was a long moment of silence. Luka looked confused for a moment before answering. "If I go to university, I'm keeping my options open. I wouldn't rule a place in or out based on location."

"How serious are you about having a relationship with my son?" Gabriel asked.

Adrien was worried if he tried to swallow the mouthful of food he had he would choke.

"Very serious." Luka looked at Adrien as he said it, and there was no hesitation.

"But you plan to leave for university?"

"I don't have any plans yet," Luka said. "When the time comes, Adrien and I can decide together what will and won't work for us."

"That time is sooner than you seem to realize," Gabriel said. "You really don't have any plans for the future? No goals, nothing definitive in your life?"

"I don't... I don't see why there needs to be," Luka said. "I don't see what's wrong with focusing on now."

"Without goals to guide your actions now, how can you possibly prioritize?"

Adrien did choke on that mouthful then, and only 20% to distract his father from his attack.

"Adrien, what are you doing?" Gabriel asked, sliding his son's glass a little closer to his hand.

"Sorry," Adrien gasped before taking a sip of water. "But Father, didn't you decide on fashion when you were already in university working towards an economics degree?"

Luka watched Adrien steer the conversation for the rest of the meal. It was an art form, and it broke Luka's heart that Adrien knew every specific question to derail his father's train of thought
back to himself. Either way, Luka got away with only three more questions the entire meal.

"Luka needs to be home in the next half hour," Adrien said as the plates were being cleared. "Would it be okay for me to show him an art project I've been working on for school?"

"Alright," Gabriel said. He looked like he was about to say more, so Adrien ran around the table to grab Luka's wrist and all but yank him to his feet.

"Thanks for lunch, Father."

"Thank you," Luka repeated, barely above a whisper. "If I don't see you before I leave, it was nice getting to garden with you today, sir."

"That was quite pleasant. Have a nice afternoon, Luka."

Adrien didn't let up his grip on Luka's wrist until they were in his room with the door closed.

"I know you don't have to be home in half an hour," Adrien said. "But you looked like you needed to get out of there."

Luka sank onto the couch and leaned his head against its back. "Yeah."

"I'm sorry," Adrien said, sitting on the opposite end of the couch as if he was afraid to touch Luka. "I'm sorry he gets like that. I had hoped it wouldn't be this bad."

"The questions themselves weren't awful," Luka said, rolling his head towards Adrien. "Feeling everything exhausts me. And for some reason, your family's feelings are really easy to feel." He sighed. "It makes me tired and slow and sometimes I don't react right." He rolled his head back to stare at the ceiling before closing his eyes. "Will you mind if I go home when that half hour is up?"

Adrien realized he should have expected Luka to want to leave after that meal, but a small part of himself felt like Luka was leaving him. He pushed it down and shook his head. "Of course not. You're tired. And I have no idea how to help with this whole... feelings, music... thing using your energy up."

Luka reached over and placed his hand on Adrien's knee. "Neither do I."

Adrien placed his hand over Luka's, watching his face to see if it was okay. They sat like this in silence until the half hour had passed.

"Want me to walk you home?" Adrien asked.

"No," Luka said. "I'm sure your dad wants to talk to you."

Adrien walked Luka to the gate and gave him a hug.

"I'm sorry," Adrien said. He wasn't sure for what he was apologizing, but he felt like he had to say it.

"I'm sorry," Luka said, hugging back just as tight. "Text me later?" He didn't add, "and let me know how your dad ruled on our relationship," but they both felt the words.

Adrien agreed and they parted. Adrien couldn't bring himself to watch Luka walk away, so he went back in the house. Nathalie didn't even get a full word out to tell Adrien to go to his father's office. Adrien was already headed there.
"Yes, Father?"

"I don't approve."

Resignation hit first. Sadness and anger second.

"I'm sure you were both aware of that. You were raised to be productive, successful. Mr. Couffaine does not share these values, and dissonant values in a couple can never lead to a happy relationship. His family is too different from ours. Your mother would..." Gabriel took a breath before continuing. "Your mother would never have wanted that for you."

Adrien did not say, "It's unfair of you to speak for mom." He did not say, "You and mom disagreed on almost everything." He did not say, "Productivity and success are your values, not mine." He did not say, "Luka is good and kind and supportive and peaceful. Those are values we share."

He said, "Please."

Gabriel looked at his son. He wasn't begging, he wasn't fighting, he wasn't rebelling or misbehaving. He was... sad. Without hope. But he had asked anyway.

"I will..." Gabriel wasn't sure why he was doing this. "I will allow you a relationship with him. Within guidelines with strict consequences."

Gabriel watched the slow progression of the news through his son. Hearing the words had Adrien dutifully nodding. Registering them made his eyebrows pull together and his eyes squint. They then widened and his mouth pulled into soundless shapes for a second. He took a quick breath and asked, "You're saying I can date him?"

"I don't want you sneaking around behind my back," Gabriel said. He wondered if it sounded like as much of a lie to Adrien as it did to himself. "If you cannot understand why this is a mistake without living through it, then the best course of action is to allow you to try and see for yourself in a way that will cause the least damage to you in the long run. I still have many reservations, but it seems this is what must happen."

"I can ask him out? Ask him to be my boyfriend? Take him to the movies and the arcade and hold his hand and tell people that I like him?"

"There will be limits placed on your relationship, but most of that will be fine."

"This can really happen?"

Gabriel sighed. Adrien wasn't going to hear any of his warnings now. "Yes. You may go tell him now, if you like."

Adrien beamed. "Thank you, Father!" He had to restrain himself from running to the door, but there was no stopping the bounce in his step.

"Adrien?"

"Yes, Father?"

"He will either change you or disappoint you."

Adrien's smile only widened. "We'll change together."

Before Gabriel could say another word, Adrien was out the door. He blew past Nathalie and out to
the yard. He fumbled with the gate access code a few times before he got it open and ran the streets of Paris (as himself, but the feeling was similar) until he reached the dock.

"Luka!"

Adrien was yelling before he even spotted the boat. He didn't care, he wanted the whole world to know that he really, really liked Luka Couffaine and wanted to spend as much time with him as Luka could stand.

"Luka!"

He found the Liberty and saw that there was no way aboard at the moment. He had a mad wish that Luka lived in a house and he could throw pebbles at his window, but he brushed it aside.

"Luka, my dad said yes!"

Juleka came on deck first, her arms crossed and her usually rounded shoulders back.

"Adrien, Luka came back more tired than I've seen him after our biggest shows, and he said lunch was just you and your dad. What did you do?"

"It wasn't me," he said, trying not to bounce on the balls of his feet. "Or, I hope it wasn't. But it's over now, that part, and I have permission- not that I would have stopped if I didn't have it, he was right about that- and I need to see him, Juleka, please?"

"He fell asleep right after telling me what happened," Juleka said. "He didn't even move to his own room, he fell asleep in the chair in my room."

"I'm sorry," Adrien said. He wanted to feel bad, but he had gotten a yes, he didn't have to hide how much he liked Luka any more. "Please let me on board?"

"Adrien, you can't hurt him," Juleka said. "He looks calm and acts like he understands everything, but he breaks just like everyone else. He's tired and crabby and I just want to protect him."

"Juleka, I will do everything in my power to keep my father from exhausting him ever again," Adrien said. "But please let us talk. Please?"

"You are so loud."

Luka stuck his head around the doorway to see Adrien standing on the dock and Juleka looking like she would like to slap Adrien and then cry.

"He said I could ask you out, I don't have to pretend anymore, please let me in. Please?"

Luka gave Juleka a look and the two of them set up access to the boat. Adrien bounded on board and wrapped Luka in a hug.

"Disgusting," Juleka muttered as she went back downstairs.

"Will you go out with me?" Adrien asked, keeping his arms around Luka but pulling back to take in his bedhead and how his eyeliner had smudged on one eye. He memorized the details of the face before him as Luka blinked at him, trying to catch up.

"You're asking me out?"

"Luka, I like you. Romantically. Please go on a date with me on Wednesday after school. I haven't
planned what we'll do yet, but it's my first free afternoon this week."

"Wow," Luka said, letting his fingers fiddle with the back of Adrien's popped collar. "You aren't ambiguous when you ask someone out. Would have been nice to know that before the coffee not-date incident."

Adrien shook his head hard, grinning harder. "No. If you had known, you wouldn't have asked me if it was a date, and I never would have thought about all the ways it pretty much was a date, and Pl- uh, a friend wouldn't have asked me if I was sure I didn't want it to be a date." Adrien couldn't believe he had almost slipped and said Plagg's name. Being excited was fine. Blowing his secret identity before he was even officially dating Luka was not.

"That's how you figured it out?" Luka smiled at him.

"It doesn't matter," Adrien said. "Will you go out with me? Do you want to? Will you, please?"

Luka kissed him. His hands slid up into Adrien's hair, finally letting himself feel that Adrien's hair was just as soft as it looked. Adrien kissed him back, tightening his grip around Luka's middle and grabbing a fistful of his shirt in the process.

"Encouraging," Adrien said when they pulled away just enough to catch their breath. "But I'd like to hear you say it."

Luka rested his forehead against Adrien's. "I would love to go on a date with you."

Adrien pulled him back in to kiss him again. He all but sighed as the fingers on Luka's one hand slid through his hair and scratched at his scalp with a light touch as the other hand slid down his back to pull him closer.

"I don't have to sneak around," Adrien said a few minutes later, resting his forehead on Luka's shoulder. "I don't have to pretend or minimize or... I don't know. But this... this is right." He pulled back to look at Luka, who was grinning. "This is right, and I can feel it."

"I can, too," Luka said.

They found a corner of the deck in the sun and sat talking and kissing for as long as they could. Nathalie eventually showed up with the car and Adrien had to go.

"I'll still text you tonight," Adrien said.

"You better," Luka said.

Nathalie didn't say a word on the ride home. She just let Adrien stare out the window and smile.

Chapter End Notes

Talk with me over at cheeseatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
Talk To Me (Movie Date)

Chapter Summary

Adrien and Luka's first date is interrupted.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"-and that is the extent to which you are permitted a physical relationship," Gabriel said, as bright red as his son. "Now, as for how frequently you two may see each other-"

"I read the entire thing, Father," Adrien said, holding up the printed list of rules for his relationship with Luka. "I'll follow them, I promise. Now may I please go? I'm going to be late."

"Yes, fine," Gabriel said. "Be home by-"

"By ten thirty, I know," Adrien said with a smile. "Thank you, Father."

He all but skipped out of his father's office and up to his room. Thankfully he had planned his outfit the night before, or he would definitely be late to pick up Luka. He changed, grabbed some cheese for Plagg in an air-tight container, and ran out the door holding his shoes, putting them on after he jumped down the stairs.

"You didn't tell me to expect flowers," Luka said, grinning at the bouquet in his hands. "We're just going to the movies. I don't even know if we have a vase."

"Oh, yer ole mum'll take care o' that," Anarka said. "Now, stand together an' smile pretty," she said, holding up her phone.

"Mom!" Luka was embarrassed enough that his mom was there for his first moments with Adrien on their first date, but the pictures were really pushing him into mortification.

"It's fine," Adrien said, looping an arm around his waist and smiling for the camera. "This is exactly what my mom would have done, too. We would have had both of them here, cooing over us and embarrassing us and saying 'my baby's all grown up' over and over. It's kinda nice that I get to experience that on my first-ever date, even though she's not here for it."

Luka tightened his hold on Adrien, his smile for the camera a little sad. He didn't have to say anything, because Adrien knew he could sense that the feeling of connection to his mother was stronger than the feeling of sadness that she wasn't there.

"Alright," Anarka said. "I'll send these shots on to you an' yer pop then, Adrien?"

"Actually, send them to me and Nathalie?" he asked. He wasn't sure what his father would do with them, but Nathalie would make sure they were saved somewhere for him.

The boys said their goodbyes and climbed into the car where the Gorilla waited. He took them to the theater and Adrien reminded him of what time to pick them up. He hadn't let go of Luka's hand from the second they got in the car.
"So, what are we seeing?" Luka asked.

Adrien stood blinking up at the list of movies.

"How... did I not know..." Adrien whispered, shaking his head.

"Know what?" Luka asked.

"That I have no idea what movies are out right now."

Luka laughed. "I thought you had a whole plan! You told the Gorilla when to get us!"

"Yeah, and if you were listening, it's four hours from now so we have time to wander around after," Adrien said with a laugh. "I didn't think to pick a movie! I don't even have suggestions. I have no idea what most of these are." He gestured broadly to the listings.

"Neither do I," Luka said. "I know one of them is about an army of tiny robots. Other than that, nothing."

Somehow they decided to just see the one that was starting next. Adrien insisted on buying the tickets and popcorn. Luka blushed and thanked him, which Adrien shushed.

"I like you," Adrien said. "And I'm definitely liking taking you out and watching you blush."

Luka blushed harder.

The movie sucked. It was a horror movie, much to Adrien's, well, horror. Luka cringed and jumped as he watched and was just thinking of suggesting something more lighthearted for the next date when he noticed that Adrien's eyes were screwed shut.

"How you doing?" Luka asked, leaning over to whisper despite the fact that the theater was mostly empty.

"Fine," Adrien said, his eyes popping open. As soon as his vision focused on the screen though, he cringed and shut them again. "I'm fine, how are you?"

"You're scared?" Luka asked, leaning a little closer.

"No," he said. "I just don't like movies like this. There's a difference."

The sound of the movie alone, the ominous soundtrack and beating heart sound effect made Adrien wince and let out a strangled whimper.

"Talk to me," Luka said, hoping that his voice didn't betray the smile on his face he couldn't squash. "What can I do?"

"It's fine," Adrien said. "The movie will calm down or I'll get desensitized or something and it'll be fine."

Luka glanced at the screen. There was no sign of the movie calming down any time soon. Not without being a setup for a jump scare.

"Do you want to leave?" Luka asked.

"But I took you to the movies," Adrien said.
"You did," Luka said, still trying not to laugh. He felt bad that Adrien was scared, but he was too cute. "Mission accomplished. But maybe let's move on to the part where we wander around? I liked how that sounded."

"You don't have to pretend for me," Adrien said. "I really will be fine."

"Adrien," Luka said, growing as serious as he could manage. "This movie sucks, you're terrified, and I don't particularly like it. Can we go?"

Adrien opened one eye to look at Luka. He nodded enthusiastically.

They gathered up their popcorn bowl and made their way out of the theater. The hallway was empty, so Luka pulled Adrien over to kiss him.

"Someday I will get it into your head that your feelings are important to me," he said. "But until then, please at least be honest with me if I ask if you're scared or upset or angry. I already know the answer, I'm asking so we can have a conversation about it."

Adrien sagged against him for a second, nodding. "Sorry. I'll work on it."

Luka kissed the top of his head and grabbed his hand, heading down the hallway towards the lobby.

And then the roof caved in.

"I am Sunbeam! I was forced to 'go enjoy the sunlight' instead of working on my thesis, so all of you will enjoy the sun, too!"

Adrien managed to pull Luka back towards the wall as the ceiling fell, but a piece clipped Luka's calf as they fell. They were blocked in, a wall at their backs, rubble before them, and a sliver of roof above.

Adrien had the worst luck.

"Are you okay?" he asked Luka, seeing blood staining the area around them.

"My leg," Luka said, holding it awkwardly away from the rest of his body, which was curled up as tightly as he could in the small alcove.

Adrien knelt to look at the damage. Most of the back of his calf was scraped up, and he couldn't tell how deep it was. He pulled off his jacket to press against the area, making Luka cry out in pain.

"I'm sorry," Adrien said, putting pressure on the wound. "There's no way you can walk on this, even if we get out of here, is there?"

Luka shook his head, his eyes shut and his breathing shallow.

There was no choice to make. Luka was hurt, they were trapped, an akuma was nearby. There was no way Adrien could shift enough rubble to get them out, and it was unlikely they'd find the help they needed for Luka before Adrien could sneak off to transform. Even then, he couldn't just leave Luka for seemingly no reason while he was hurt.

"It'll be fine," Luka said between gritted teeth. "Ladybug and Chat Noir will defeat the akuma, everything will be fixed, and I'll be fine."

Adrien didn't know his heart had any lower it could sink, but hearing the faith Luka had in his
superhero self made it find new depths.

"I'm sorry," Adrien said again.

"Not your fault," Luka said, grabbing one of Adrien's wrists.

Every second that passed felt like hours as Adrien sat there, trying to think of a way out. He kept analyzing the area around them, wondering if there might be a way to escape. There was barely room to move, the boys' limbs overlapping, so it was unlikely even if Adrien could find a weak spot in the rubble that he could get enough leverage to take advantage of it. There was also the concern of the pile falling on them instead of away, and Adrien had no idea how to keep that from happening.

There really was no choice to make, but Adrien delayed making it anyway. He had hope for a moment that maybe Ladybug would rescue them, but he thought of all the times the two of them had blown past destruction and injured citizens to focus on finding the akuma and making everything right. She would never look twice at a pile of fallen ceiling.

Plagg shifted around in Adrien's shirt. He ignored him. Plagg shifted more. Adrien didn't have a hand free to swat at him.

"What is it?" Luka asked. "Something's up. What is it?"

"I can't," Adrien whispered.

"Just tell me," Luka said. "You can tell me anything."

Adrien stared at him, wondering if anyone really meant those words when they said them.

"No. It's fine. We'll wait here. Like you said, the Cure will fix everything."

Barely a second of silence passed before Plagg had had enough.

"Adrien, we have to go," Plagg said, flying out of his collar to hover between the boys.

Luka's eyes widened. "Can blood loss make you see things?"

Adrien took a hand away from the jacket on Luka's leg to swipe at Plagg but Plagg dodged out of the way.

"We have to go," Plagg said. "We'll get Luka to safety and then help Ladybug set everything right."

Adrien shook his head, both hands on Luka's leg again. "I can't believe you would reveal yourself like this. My identity is important!"

"Adrien," Plagg said, looking between Adrien and Luka. "You would have had to tell him soon anyway. It's too big a risk to date a hero and not know."

Adrien let out a sound somewhere between a sigh and a growl.

"I know," he said. "But I wanted more time."

"I know," Plagg said.

"What's going on, Adrien?" Luka asked, sitting up as best he could.
"I'm Chat Noir."

Luka looked... scared. Adrien felt shame wash over him.

"I'm sorry, I have to help Ladybug," he said. He pulled Luka's hands over to hold the jacket to his own leg.

Adrien stood and called up his transformation. Chat Noir stood in the small space with Luka.

"I'm going to try to kick out the wall behind you," Adrien said. "Can you shift away from it a little?"

Luka nodded and slid aside. Adrien sat and positioned his heels before pulling back and kicking out as hard as he could. The wall gave easily, and it didn't take long to widen it enough to let them crawl through, saving Chat Noir from having to use Cataclysm before he even reached the battle. Luka had tears streaming down his face by the time he got through and he was white as a sheet.

"Are you okay with me carrying you to safety?" he asked Luka. Luka nodded and Chat slid his arms under him as gently as he could. Once he had a firm hold on him, he ran as fast as he could out of the theater and to the nearest group of Akuma Protection Volunteers. Luka was taken to join a few other injured and be cared for until the Miraculous Cure fixed them. Chat Noir knelt next to Luka for a second.

"Can we talk later?" he whispered.

"Maybe," Luka said. He laid his head down and closed his eyes. Chat felt it like the closing of a door in his face.

The battle was short and annoying. Neither Ladybug nor Chat talked much throughout the battle, each lost in their own fears and sadness.

When it was over, Adrien returned to where he had left Luka. A few volunteers were still there, so he asked and was informed that Luka had headed home the moment his leg was fixed. Adrien yelled "thanks" over his shoulder and raced towards the river.

"Luka!" Adrien ran onto the boat and looked around, trying to find any of the Couffaines. No one seemed to be home, so he knocked on the door to below deck before heading down without waiting for a response.

"Luka?"

It was eerie, the ship being so empty and quiet. Usually there was music, there were people everywhere. Now it felt like his own house.

"Luka?"

Luka opened the door to his room and stared at Adrien.

"No one else is home," Luka said.

"Are you okay?" Adrien restrained himself, only taking a few steps forward as he watched Luka's expression grow in fear and discomfort.

"My leg's fine."

"No, I mean, with what... what you know about me now."
Luka sighed. "I can't do this right now."

Adrien froze. "Can't talk about my secret?" He hoped it was that. He hoped Luka didn't mean them, their barely-started relationship.

"I need to be alone right now," Luka said.

"Talk to me," Adrien said, unable to keep from taking another step forward even as Luka jerked three steps back in response. "What can I do?"

Luka shook his head, tears shining in his eyes. "Please go."

"Luka." Adrien said his name like a plea. Don't make me go, don't shut me out, don't leave things like this.

"Go."

He went.

Chapter End Notes

My beta reader has not forgiven me for this chapter.

Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
I Love You

Chapter Summary

Juleka talks Luka into talking things out with Adrien.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Adrien didn't remember how he got home that night, but he did remember that no one asked him how his date went. He was glad, because it let him curl up in bed and cry undisturbed.

Undisturbed except for Plagg.

"It's going to be fine," Plagg said. "I've been doing this for ages, remember? I've seen more reveals than the number of weeks you've lived. This will all turn out fine, so there's no reason to be upset."

"Plagg, you didn't see the way he looked at me," Adrien said, hugging a pillow to his chest, leaning forward to bury his face in it. "He's never going to forgive me. I lied to him. I tried to hang out with him as Chat Noir and Adrien. And the worst part? I didn't even want to tell him."

"I'm telling you, it's going to be fine. But if you really think it won't, I still think cheese is your best bet. Good for the soul, and broken hearts."

Adrien cried harder.

/*****/

Luka closed himself in his room and tried not to think. He should have known. He hadn't even suspected, but he felt like he should have known. Did Adrien think he was stupid for not realizing? Did he visit as Chat Noir to see if Luka would recognize him? Or worse, did he visit as Chat Noir to see if he really was serious about them or if he would flirt back with someone who was practically a stranger? Was that a test of some kind?

He really should have known.

"How'd it go, m'dear?" Anarka called through the closed door. "I hear there was an attack! Not as fabulous as mine, I'll wager, but did y'get close enough t'see the action?"

"Yeah, Mom," Luka said, staring at his ceiling. "I was hurt."

Anarka burst in the room to fuss over her son. She insisted on looking over the spot that had been injured even though he assured her it was fine, Ladybug's magic never fails. She interrogated him about what happened, how he escaped, what Adrien did. He covered as best he could, letting his mom make assumptions wherever necessary. Juleka and his dad joined them a few minutes later and he had to recount the whole thing again, giving fewer details in the hopes that he wouldn't give anything away or cover his tracks wrong.

"Y'look tired, m'boy," Anarka said, brushing Luka's hair away from his face. "Do y'need us t'leave ye be?"
"Sorry, yeah, I am pretty tired. I have some homework to finish, too."

Mr. and Mrs. Couffaine left and Juleka settled on the bed next to her brother. He slouched against the wall.

"So, what really happened?"

Luka sighed. Juleka wasn't much of an empath, but she could tell when someone was lying. Especially if that someone was her brother.

"I don't want to talk about it."

"But I'm the person you talk to about things you don't want to talk about," Juleka said. "Normally I'd tell you to just pick up your guitar and play through it, but this doesn't seem like one of those times."

"Really, I can't." Luka didn't know where to begin, but he couldn't reveal Adrien's secret and he was too tired to think up a decent cover story to disguise the issue while still talking about it.

"Can I guess?"

"No."

"Okay, you tell me when I'm right."

"Go back to your room," Luka said, poking her knee with his foot.

"Adrien is one of those rich people who are mean to people like movie theater attendants?"

"Of course he isn't, but I really don't want to talk about this."

"Adrien tried something and made you uncomfortable?"

"No!"

"Adrien lied to you about something?"

Luka sighed. "Kind of? But it's not really my business so it's definitely not your business."

"Does this have anything to do with it?" She pulled out her phone and handed it to him. On the screen was the picture of him talking with Chat Noir about math.

"When did you take this?" Luka asked, sitting fully upright.

"Has there been more than one time Chat Noir's stopped by that I could have taken that picture?"

"I recognize my math stuff, I know what night it was taken, but I didn't see you at all, so how did you get it?"

"I've mastered the art of invisibility."

"Since when? You and Rose are so loud watching a movie that my noise cancelling headphones can't block out the screaming from above deck."

"You're getting off track on purpose," Juleka said. "I'm not asking you to confirm or deny that Adrien is Chat Noir."
Luka had to stop himself from sighing in relief.

"But if it was about him being Chat Noir," Juleka continued, "I'd hope that you would know that this just makes him even more perfect for you."

"How do you figure?"

"You spend so much time trying to take care of people's feelings, helping people understand and accept them. You help heal and keep safe and guide people to good decisions. Chat Noir takes care of people, too. Not in the same way, but it means he has the same values, the same thing driving him. You both keep people safe."

"But why would he-" Luka stopped abruptly. Juleka needed plausible deniability.

"Whatever he did, go talk to him about it."

"Yeah, I guess. We do have band practice on Friday."

"I meant now."

"He's not allowed to be out past-"

"Yes, I know." She walked over to Luka's computer and typed something into his browser. "I'm sure you'll figure something out."

She went to her own room and Luka went to check what she had left on his computer. It was the Ladyblog. A page titled "Spot The Hero" where people sent in pictures of Ladybug and/or Chat Noir with date and location stamps when they saw them around the city. There was a picture of Chat Noir, looking more serious than Luka had ever seen him, jumping across the gap between two buildings. He recognized the part of town and knew what he had to do.

Luka threw on his running shoes and grabbed his hoodie and phone, shouting, "I'll be back later!" to the rest of the family as he tore up to the deck and all but leaped from the side of the boat to the dock. While he ran, Luka tried to determine which direction Chat Noir had been heading, how fast he probably was, and how fast Luka himself could get there. He fixed that point in his mind and ran. (Maybe Geometry was useful after all.) When he reached it, he started yelling.

"Chat Noir!"

He felt like an idiot, screaming for a superhero in the middle of the street. What if Chat Noir had turned off in a different direction after the picture was taken?

"Chat Noir!"

Maybe he should walk in concentric circles from this spot, widen the area methodically and see if he could find the hero? Chat Noir had super hearing, right? So even if he was a little ways away, he could hear Luka, right? Or maybe that was a myth.

"Chat Noir!"

He stood at the corner of two streets, staring at the crosswalk signal and couldn't decide if he should keep walking or stay still. He was determined to find him though, no matter how long it took.

"Hey."
Chat Noir dropped from the shadows to land next to Luka.

"We need to talk," Luka said immediately.

Chat shrunk in on himself, his ears moving back a bit but not enough to lie flat.

"Okay." He looked around. "Not here though. It's suspicious enough that someone was running through the streets yelling for me and I actually stopped."

"Whatever you want," Luka said.

Chat Noir glanced around, figuring out where he was. "Meet me two blocks over, there's a cafe."

Luka nodded and headed in that direction. The cafe was small and cozy and Luka ordered tea before settling at a table towards the back. He sat with his back to the door, hoping that having a view of the restaurant would make Adrien more comfortable.

"Hey," Adrien said, sliding into the chair across from him.

"I have a couple questions."

"Anything."

"You've been... him... this whole time?" Luka asked.

Adrien nodded.

"Does anyone else know?"

Adrien shook his head.

"It's just me?"

He nodded again.

"Why did you visit me? The night with the mug, and when I was composing, and the math?"

"I like to see you," Adrien whispered. "The first time was a thank you, exactly like I said. The second time... I had just figured out that I had feelings for you. The third time, I couldn't stay away."

Luka groaned and covered his face with his hands. "I played you your song."

"And then you wouldn't tell me what you were working on at band practice," Adrien said, a small smile on his face at last. "I thought you were writing someone else a love song and didn't want to make things awkward between us again."

"Well, way to spoil my own surprise," Luka said, his hands returning to his mug. "Why flirt with me though?"

"Luka," Adrien said. "I can't not flirt with you. That's ridiculous. No matter who I am, it is my deepest need to make sure you know that I think you're fun and attractive and have fully captured my attention."

Luka laughed, but his smile dropped quickly. "So you weren't testing me? Seeing if I would flirt with someone else even though we were working towards something?"
Adrien shook his head, his hair flying in his eyes. "Of course not! I actually forgot you didn't know for a minute. It never would have occurred to me to have a problem with you flirting with other people. We weren't anything official then. We barely are now. And flirting is fun. So long as you tell me you're with me, I won't have a problem with you flirting with other people." He glanced around to check that no one was listening in before adding, "Especially Chat Noir."

Luka smiled and reached for Adrien's hand. Adrien grabbed his hand back with the strength all the fear and sadness that had been filling him up to bursting.

"Luka, I didn't tell you because it's not safe to know. What if you get akumatized and Hawkmoth figures out that you know who I am? What if someone overhears us and tries to blackmail you to get to me? I've thought of a million reasons it's not safe. My kwami insists that it's better you know though."

"I'd like to meet him," Luka said. "If you want. If he wants. She? It? They?"

"He. His name is Plagg. He's probably asleep right now." Adrien looked down at the table, fiddling with his miraculous before looking back up. "Does that mean you still want to be friends?"

Luka stood and pulled Adrien to his feet.

"I don't want to be just friends," Luka said. "Please be my boyfriend."

Adrien took a deep, shuddering breath and nodded, grabbing Luka's hands in his.

"Thank you," Adrien said, squeezing Luka's hands to punctuate his words. "Thank you, thank you, thank you. I'm so sorry."

"No, Adrien, I'm sorry. I shut down and didn't let you in. That wasn't fair."

"Yes it was," Adrien said. "I hid something from you and-"

"Adrien," Luka cut in. "How I acted was not fair. Just trust me on that."

Adrien nodded, blinking hard to keep tears from forming. "Are we okay?"

Luka nodded. "Can we walk outside for a bit? Just a little bit?"

Adrien checked his phone's clock and nodded. Outside, Adrien put his arm around Luka's waist and curled into his side as much as he could while they walked.

"We're really okay?" Adrien asked.

"I'm okay, and I hope you're okay, and from my end, we are okay."

"Good," Adrien said, relaxing a little more as he let out a sigh.

They walked in silence for a little while. Luka had more questions (the fun kind, like what does it feel like to transform, how does it work, how high can you jump), but he kept them to himself, letting everything sink in.

"Hey, Adrien?"

"Yeah?"

"I love you."
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Chapter End Notes
Dynamic (Luka And Plagg)

Chapter Summary

Adrien has dinner with the Couffaine family. Luka meets Plagg. Luka talks with Juleka.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Adrien pulled Luka to a stop, grabbed his face, and kissed him hard. Luka’s arms went around him on instinct, all his attention on the wonderful guy kissing him like he had made his wildest dreams come true.

“I love you, too,” he said, grinning.

They stood there, kissing and laughing and full of love and relief and that feeling you get when you’ve had a nice meal and have nothing to do for the rest of the night.

Except they did have things to do that night. Adrien pulled back first and put his forehead in the crook of Luka’s neck and shoulder.

“I should probably go home,” he said. “I doubt anyone’s missed me yet, but they’ll notice if I’m not back soon.”

“I have homework I haven’t even started,” Luka said, not liking the cold splash of reality.

“Text me?” Adrien asked.

Luka answered with a kiss.

/*****/

After somehow surviving Thursday apart, Adrien got permission to stay for dinner with the Couffaine family after band practice that Friday. There was family and food and conversation and teasing and so much love. At first it overwhelmed him. He excused himself to the bathroom a few minutes in and tried to figure out what was wrong.

"You haven't had this in a long time, huh?" Plagg asked.

And that was it. It may have been just Adrien, Gabriel, and Emilie (and sometimes Nathalie), but they had filled the large dining room with their love at one time. They had let the food go cold because they were talking too much. Adrien couldn't remember the last time he had eaten with his father minus the times with Luka in the past month or two.

"It reminds me of something I miss, so much."

"Don't think of it like that," Plagg said. "Think of it like... like this is you getting that back. These people like you."
"So what you're saying is..." Adrien paused, frowning. "Sometimes a family is three bandmates, two adults who live on a houseboat, and a floating cat god?"


When Adrien returned, everyone was kind enough not to comment on his disappearance, though Luka squeezed his hand under the table. Adrien tried to think about this dinner the way Plagg meant, like he was gaining a family, and it was a warm feeling. Adrien the extrovert basked in the happy people around him like a cat in the sun.

After the table was cleared, Adrien and Luka went up to the deck. Luka started idly playing his guitar and Adrien wondered if Plagg had seen enough bad television to tease them for the "cute boy who plays guitar" trope. And then he realized, this was the perfect opportunity for Luka to meet Plagg.

"Hey, Plagg," Adrien said, putting his hand over the kwami under his shirt. "It's pretty dark out here, and there's some boxes between us and the near side of the river bank. Would you like to meet Luka?"

Plagg stuck his head out of Adrien's collar and looked around. He agreed with Adrien's assessment and floated out to sit on Adrien's knee.

"Hi."

"Hi. This is cool. What are you, exactly?"

"Uh, Luka, I wouldn't-"

"No, it's fine," Plagg said. "I get asked 'what' I am more often than 'who' during reveals. I'm a kwami, I'm the source of Chat Noir's power."

"That's so cool," Luka said. "How does it work?"

Plagg and Adrien (mostly Adrien, Plagg got bored and started exploring the boat) explained miraculous magic, the limits on it, and anything else they could think of and Luka looked like he wanted to take notes on it all.

"How long have you been doing this?" Luka asked.

"A long time," Plagg said from inside the cardboard box of clothes to be donated.

"How do you choose who becomes your miraculous holder?"

"It's very boring and technical," Plagg said. "I like this box. It's nice in here. I think I'll take a nap."

"The deck is my favorite spot to nap, too," Luka said.

Plagg followed through on his decision to nap, so the boys took advantage of the quiet to curl up and look at the sky (the light pollution making it impossible to see the stars, but it was pretty anyway). Adrien's head was pillowed on Luka's right arm and his right hand was joined with Luka's left.

"What was it like, having all this power and freedom all of the sudden?" Luka asked.

"It was like... I don't know how to explain it. I can deal with everything else better now because I have Chat Noir. When I feel like I'm not doing enough, not being enough, I remember that side of
me. I don't know."

Luka nodded and leaned so his lips brushed Adrien's hair.

"What was it like, suddenly having this giant secret?"

Adrien laughed. "A lot of my life is secrets."

"And this wasn't any different?"

"I guess not. I've done a good job hiding it, up until now. Ladybug and I don't know each other's identities, even though there have been times it was difficult to keep her from finding out."

"After all this time, you two don't know each other?"

"I know her," he said. "I know how she reacts and what she thinks about and her priorities and values. I know what she looks like when she's worn out and wants to give up. I know what she's like when she hasn't gotten enough sleep or has a cold that's making her grouchy. I'd like to know all of her, but that's enough if it keeps us safe."

Luka was quiet for a while, but Adrien felt him taking a quick breath like he was about to say something two or three times. Adrien let him take his time, not wanting to rush. They had all the time in the world to talk about these things, hopefully.

"Will I put you in danger?" Luka asked. "What if I'm akumatized? What if you have to fight me? What if I call you 'Adrien' in the middle of that fight? What if I call you 'Adrien' at any point when you're Chat Noir?"

"I doubt you'll be akumatized." Plagg flew over to land on Luka's stomach. He had dragged one of Juleka's old t-shirts with him and settled it on Luka to create a makeshift bed for himself. "You've spent your whole life feeling strong emotions. You know how to handle them. You know how to distance yourself from them. They don't take you over any more. Most people don't have that."

"It's a lot of energy to keep them from taking me over, though," Luka said. "What if I'm tired and-"

"There's a lot of people in the city," Plagg said. "And empaths make terrible akuma victims. They also make terrible butterfly miraculous holders, for the same reason. You'd think it'd be the other way, but really it makes you too sensitive to it."

Luka nodded.

"So, what miraculous would be a good fit for me?"

"None, keep out of this stuff," Plagg said. "Non-magical lives involve more cheese."

"That has not been my experience," Adrien said.

"You're one of the lucky ones," Plagg said.

Slowly, all three drifted off to sleep. They might have stayed that way all night had the Gorilla not texted Adrien that he was waiting in the car around the corner.

"It was nice meeting you, Plagg," Luka said.

"You're a good fit for Adrien," Plagg said. "So I guess I like you."
"Plagg!" Adrien said, embarrassed. "You could be a little nicer."

"I'm too hungry for that."

"And so it begins again," Adrien said with a sigh.

"Thank you for trusting me," Luka said, walking Adrien to the car. They stopped just out of sight and, like magnets, wrapped their arms around each other.

"Thank you," Adrien said.

They kissed goodbye until the Gorilla texted again. Luka returned to his home and found himself curling into the chair in Juleka's room.

"You seem happy," she said, mixing paint colors for the canvas before her.

"I really am."

"Talking helped?"

"So much."

"I'm glad."

Luka watched his sister paint a pink Pegasus with silver wings in silence, trying to decide if he should fall asleep where he was or take over his sister's bed to annoy her.

"If you wanted to talk about hypothetical situations where Adrien was Chat Noir- which he's not, I'm sure- then you could," Juleka said. "But I'll understand if you don't."

"If that hypothetical were true," Luka said, moving to the bed and stretching out, "then I couldn’t actually talk about it, even hypothetically with you. And I would feel really awful that there was something we couldn't talk about."

"But you'd be keeping a lot of people safe by not talking about it," Juleka said.

"Yeah, but you're my best friend. We tell each other everything."

"I think we both knew that had to end at some point."

Another silence fell until Juleka said, "But maybe we keep telling each other almost everything. I don't want that part to end."

"Me either, Jules."

She let him sleep in her bed while she finished painting and then yanked the pillow out from under his head when she had cleaned up her art supplies.

Because some dynamics will never really change.

Chapter End Notes

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Gabriel's rules for how often Luka and Adrien could hang out alone were complicated and annoying. There was even a double date corollary. Add to that Adrien's schedule of activities and photoshoots, and the couple didn't see each other for a week, minus one morning when Adrien managed to convince his driver to let him walk Luka to school again. So when band practice was rained out the next weekend, Adrien immediately, politely, patiently begged.

"Please? We'll be quiet and won't be in the way and all my homework's done and we both really wanted to see this movie, and-"

"Adrien," Nathalie said, raising a hand to hold him off. She had a slight squint to her eyes that Adrien knew meant she was getting a headache. "This is fine. Of course you can have Luka over. You can even order pizza for dinner."

"Really?"

The amount Adrien perked up at the mention of pizza concerned Nathalie, but she pressed on.

"Yes. Please follow the rest of your father's rules. And if you don't, be safe. Now, if you don't mind, I now have to hunt down whoever botched drawing up this contract and fire them. And that means I'm about to have to take over their entire workload, so I trust you can handle arranging the rest of the night without me."

Adrien left before he could be caught in the blast zone of Nathalie's rage and tried very hard not to think about what she had implied about not following his father's rules.

Luka arrived a few minutes later. He had something hidden behind his back, and even after he entered the front hall he shifted so that whatever he had wasn't visible to Adrien.

"What'cha got there?" Adrien asked, making an attempt to grab whatever it was from him.

"I just... it's dumb, okay?"

"I doubt that," Adrien said, leaning to the side to try and peek, making Luka dodge backwards. "What is it?"

"Don't laugh," Luka said. When Adrien nodded he shifted a bucket of movie theater popcorn into view.

"I dropped our popcorn during the akuma attack, and the kind from the theater always tastes better than the kind you make yourself, so..."
"You are too cute," Adrien said with a grin. He pecked a kiss on on Luka's lips and pulled him up the stairs.

They settled on the couch and Adrien thought back to after that disastrous lunch when he wasn't sure Luka would think he was worth the effort that came with his family. It was nice to know he was.

"I'm glad you're here," Adrien said, staring a little too deeply into Luka's eyes.

"Me, too, Adrien," he said, reaching over to pull Adrien into his side.

Adrien fell asleep less than ten minutes into the movie. Luka made sure he was comfortable and definitely asleep before he whispered, "Hey, Plagg? How much danger is he in? How much should I be worrying about him?"

"He's a very good Chat Noir."

"But not every hero gets to retire."

Plagg sighed and sat on Luka’s arm. “My holder survival rate isn't one hundred percent, that's true. But you need to know that there's nothing worse to me than losing a kitten. So I only choose the very best to keep that from happening. There are no guarantees, but the chances are better than you think.”

Luka was quiet for a moment, staring at the screen, but Plagg knew he was thinking.

"That helps, I think. Thank you."

"I've never seen him this happy," Plagg said, settling down on the arm of the couch in a patch of sunlight. "Keep this up and you two will be insufferable."

Luka chuckled and went back to watching the movie and letting himself play with Adrien's hair. It was so soft and he had wanted to run his fingers through it since the first time they had met. Luka was close to falling asleep himself when he noticed a noise. It was familiar, but not immediately identifiable. When it finally hit him, Luka laughed out loud.

The sound cut off. "I fell asleep," Adrien said, turning his face into Luka's chest.

"You purr in your sleep."

"Nooo," Adrien whined with a laugh. "I was hoping to hide the embarrassing things until you'd been with me long enough."

"Long enough for what?"

"Long enough that you're too emotionally invested in our relationship to think they're weird."

"Adrien," Luka said, sliding down until their faces were inches apart. "Weird or not, all it makes me want to do is see what else makes you purr."

It was rare that Luka could make Adrien turn that red that fast, so he savored the moment with a kiss. That kiss quickly led to many more until the movie was completely forgotten except as background noise while they made out on the couch.

A knock sounded at the door the moment before it opened.
"Adrien, do you have a physical copy of your modeling contract with-"

Nathalie sighed at the disheveled boys jumping apart on the couch.

"If I find that contract for you right now," Adrien asked, patting his hair back into place, "can this be one of those things you don't mention to Father?"

"If this was any other day, I wouldn't agree to that," Nathalie said, rubbing at her temple. "But if you actually have that contract and promise me you will behave the rest of the night, I could be convinced."

Adrien jumped up and went to his desk, finding the paper after a minute.

"You can have some of our pizza when it gets here?" Adrien said as he handed her the paper.

"Is that you convincing me?" she asked.

"It was an attempt," he said.

She sighed. "I'll steal a few pieces when it arrives." She reached over and fixed Adrien's crooked collar. "Now be good."

Both boys nodded and Nathalie left.

"Where were we?" Adrien asked with a smirk as he returned to the couch.

"She scares me," Luka said. "Let's at least wait until we're sure she's gone?"

Adrien nodded and snuggled against Luka again. He glanced at the movie and realized he had no idea what was going on.

"Mind if we restart this?" he asked, picking up the remote.

"Probably for the best."

/****/

Nathalie hadn't seen Gabriel in a few hours, which wasn't unusual. She wasn't expecting him to be in the office when she returned from bringing the pizza up to the boys, so hearing a voice made her pause.

"Why is this so hard for me?"

She waited at the cracked door. Something in Gabriel's tone made her not want to interrupt. It also made it impossible for her to walk away and give him privacy.

"I need you back. I need you to help me understand him. He's so much like you, Emilie. It wasn't until I saw how happy he's been the past few weeks with his new boyfriend that I realized he's been getting sadder since you left us. How did I not realize?"

"Oh Gabriel," Nathalie whispered, closing her eyes. Had he really not seen?

"I'm doing this to him... Aren't I?"

The painting did not answer.
Nathalie waited for a count of two hundred before entering the office. Gabriel was at his desk, absorbed in his work again.

Chapter End Notes

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A Party, A Scarf, And Kisses (So, We Should Make Out)

Chapter Summary

Chloe throws a party, Adrien finally talks with Marinette, and an akuma is a sign of bad sportsmanship.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“So… how do you feel about Chloe Bourgeois?”

The cringe on Adrien’s face told Luka more than the question did.

“How do you feel about her?”

“She’s difficult, but she’s my oldest friend, and she was there for me when I had no one else.”

“Oh. Why are my feelings on Chloe important right now?”

“She’s… throwing us a party?”

Luka put down his coffee cup and tilted his head, trying to decide if this was as funny as he thought it was.

“Love, why is the most self absorbed person I’ve ever heard of throwing a party for us? She and I haven’t even met each other.”

“She somehow missed all of us getting together. She feels like she was left out of crucial gossip about her best friend, so she’s creating something to talk about. I think it’s also an indirect way for her to show Rose and Juleka that she supports them. She told me that she wanted to say something when they started dating but didn’t think anyone would take her seriously.”

Luka found drama to be exhausting. But he also knew what a pain Chloe was to his sister and Rose. If going to the party could help the girls and make Adrien happy? Of course he would do it. But maybe there was a way to make it a little more enjoyable...

“How much control do you think we have on the guest list?” Luka asked.

“Send me names, I’ll forward them to Chloe.”

The party arrived. Adrien was basking in the attention, dragging Luka around with him to talk to everyone. Everyone. Chloe threw two fits in the first hour, but the rest of the people at the party seemed to think that was a record low, so Luka brushed it off and focused on the cute boy holding his hand.

Once Adrien had talked to almost everyone at least once, he slowed down his hopping from group to group and soon they found themselves standing with a group of their friends. Adrien, Nath, and Alix were talking about the latest spy thriller movie coming out soon while Luka and Ondine talked about how oblivious the boys at Adrien and Kim’s school could be when Luka spotted
"Hey, can I borrow you for a minute?" Luka said, putting a hand on Adrien's arm.

"Of course," Adrien said. He made sure Ondine knew Nath and Alix before following Luka into a quiet hallway.

"Have you and Marinette talked yet?" he asked.

"No," Adrien said, his whole body slumping. "She moved seats for a few days to the back with Nath, but she moved back yesterday. I've been waiting until she at least stops looking like she's going to cry when I say 'hi' in the morning."

"Well, she came to our party," Luka said.

"She did?" Adrien peeked back into the main room. "Should I talk to her? Do you think she'd want to? Or maybe I should let her come to me when she's ready. I don't want to upset her at a party with heavy conversation like that."

"Adrien," Luka said, pulling him away from the door and close enough to kiss his cheek. "She came to party thrown for us as a couple. I think that means she's ready to talk."

Adrien nodded. "Do you want to talk with us?"

"I think this is between you two," he said. "If she wants to talk to me, text me and I'll join you, okay?"

"Thank you," Adrien said, putting his hands on either side of his face and kissing him quickly. "I love you."

Luka grinned. He would never tire of hearing those words. "I love you."

Adrien found Marinette with Nino and Alya. He hadn't even reached them when Alya tapped Marinette's shoulder and pointed him out.

"Marinette, can we talk?"

She nodded and followed him to the empty hallway.

"I'm so sorry I hurt you," Adrien said. "It doesn't matter how it happened, I'm just sorry that it did. Your friendship means a lot to me, and I'd like to try to stay friends, if that's what you want. If that's too much for you though, I understand, and I'll miss you, but you shouldn't feel like you have to stay if you don't want to."

Marinette threw her arms around his neck and Adrien froze, his arms up but not around her.

"You are so happy with Luka," Marinette said, her voice quiet but audible since she was right next to his ear. "All I wanted was to make you happy. The day you gave me your umbrella I fell in love with the idea of making you as happy as you were when you laughed at it closing on me. And I see that you have that now, but it's not with me. I think that's enough for me. Knowing you're happy. I haven't moved on yet, but I will. I know I will, because if you're that happy with Luka, then someday I'll be that happy with someone else."

She pulled away but kept her hands on his shoulders.

"Thank you," Adrien said, finally raising his arms to pull her back into a proper hug. "Thank you. I
wish we were all as good as you."

Marinette laughed. "I think we're all doing our best. That should be enough, right?"

"I don't think it works like that, but we can hope." They pulled away again and an awkwardness descended.

"Will we be okay?" Adrien asked.

"I think so," Marinette said, fiddling with her purse strap. "Do you think so?"

Adrien nodded. "We'll be different, but it will still be good." It was what he had said to Ladybug, and it seemed to fit here, too.

Marinette smiled. "Silly ki-" She jerked away, covering her mouth. "Kid. Silly kid."

"Aren't I older than you?"

"You're still a silly kid," she said, reaching out to ruffle his hair. "I made you something." She pulled something long and soft out of her purse. "Nino wasn't sure how you identify, so I went with rainbows, because that covers all of us, right?"

She held out a blue scarf, the color of Luka's hair dye when it was fresh. On it were little rainbows with clouds at each end of the half circle.

"You made this?" Adrien asked as she placed it in his hands. "You made this for me?"

"I wanted to make sure you felt supported," she said.

"Thank you," Adrien said. He looped it around his neck and arranged it to sit right. "How's it look?"

Marinette giggled. "You perfectly arranged it so it hangs perfectly."

"I'm a model, Marinette," he said, striking a pose. "It's what I do."

Their laughter as they rejoined the party lifted a weight that Adrien hadn't realized had been on him. Things were okay. Marinette was okay. The party was okay. Adrien and Luka were... so much more than okay.

"She looks happy again," Luka said when Adrien found him again with Aurore, Mylene, and Ivan.

"Talking was a good idea," Adrien said, leaning up against him and stealing his soda for a sip. "Someone smart suggested it."

"I'm glad that Max is such a good influence on you," Luka said, blinking innocently.

"Yeah, I definitely meant Max," Adrien said, slipping an arm around Luka's waist and moving to whisper in his ear. "But it's not Max I'd like to thank."

Luka tried not to blush, and Adrien turned back to the group's conversation like nothing had happened. Luka could tease, but Adrien took it to a completely different level.

"So, having a good time?" Chloe asked, joining the group as Ivan and Mylene left to head home. "I've barely gotten to see you, Adrikins."
"You've been such a good hostess," Adrien said. "I know you've been talking to other people."

"Yes, ugh, I'm trying, but like, why? I don't even like everyone here."

"She really has been trying," Sabrina said.

"I know, I was serious," Adrien said.

"Well, good," Chloe said. "Now, what was Marinette bothering you about earlier? She's not crying and making you feel guilty again, is she?"

"She gave me this!" Adrien said, unwinding one side of the scarf so Chloe could see the pattern on it.

Chloe spent the next twenty minutes fuming that Marinette had made something so cute. It was unfair to Chloe on a personal level that Marinette was so talented and creative, apparently. Adrien started tuning her out about fifteen minutes in and noticed that Luka had also checked out, and probably much earlier than he had. Adrien made sure to distract Luka with squeezes to his hand, quick kisses to his cheek, and the occasional bump of their feet under the table. Each touch brought out a smile that was more than reward enough for Adrien to keep going. When Chloe had ranted herself out, Adrien decided he was more than done with the limits being at a party put on his flirting.

"Hey Chloe, I'm getting tired," Adrien said. "I think we're gonna head home. The party seems to be winding down anyway. You don't mind, do you?"

Chloe whined for a bit, but agreed after many, many selfies were taken. The boys said goodbye to those who were left and walked out into the cool night air.

"You got quiet towards the end," Adrien said. "You doing okay?"

"I'm great," Luka said, pulling Adrien against him and kissing him hard. "You were getting distracting though."

"Distracting? Me?" Adrien smirked. "I was just trying to enjoy the party."

"Sure you were," Luka said. He glanced around and found a corner of the outside of the fence around the Agreste mansion that was mostly in shadow. He guided Adrien over to it and backed him up until Adrien was pinned between the wall and Luka. "So, I enjoyed the party, and it was nice to see everyone together, but I think we should make out now."

"No arguments here," Adrien said.

"Good," Luka said right before his lips captured Adrien's.

Time didn't exist, but it still felt too short when Luka's phone started ringing, interrupting them.

"Ignore it," Luka said, returning to kissing.

"Don't ignore it," Adrien said between kisses. "It could be important."

Luka sighed and pulled his phone from his pocket, leaning his forehead against Adrien's.

"Hello?"

"Hi, Luka, it's Marinette. I forgot to give you your scarf. I don't know how far you are from the
party, but I can drop it off tomorrow if you aren't close."

Luka suppressed a second sigh as Adrien gave him kitten eyes. He wasn't sure if the look was supposed to make him go meet Marinette right then or make him get off the phone faster, but he could always resume this after meeting Marinette.

"I'm right outside, I'll see you in a sec?"

"Sure!"

Luka and Adrien walked back over to the front doors of Le Grand Paris and Marinette met them with the scarf in hand.

"I can't believe I forgot this," she said. "I hope you like it."

Marinette had made rainbows with the colors of the pansexual flag for Luka on a light yellow background. She had matched Adrien's hair for Luka's scarf.

"It's amazing, Marinette."

"Okay, I have to get Alya before she and Nino sneak off again, have a good night!"

They said their goodbyes and Luka walked Adrien to the front gate.

"Here, how do I wear this?" Luka asked, holding the scarf out to his fashion-knowledgeable boyfriend.

Adrien showed Luka how to wrap the scarf a few different ways before using it to pull Luka close again. Their lips had just touched when Adrien's phone went off with an Akuma alert.

"Oh for- Hawkmoth is gonna get it when I find him," Adrien said. "How dare he? Interrupting a moment like this? Bad sportsmanship. Bad manners. We are very cute, and I, for one, think the world is a better place when I'm kissing you."

"I'm sure Hawkmoth did this specifically to annoy you, sure," Luka said, disentangling from Adrien's grasp. "But either way, you get to go do super things, and I get to go obsessively watch the news and the Ladyblog to make sure you're okay."

"Hey," Adrien said, catching Luka's hand. "I'll always do my best to come home to you. I promise."

Luka squeezed his hand. "Thanks. I love you."

"I love you."

Ladybug seemed to be in a better mood than the past few weeks, and Chat Noir was more focused than the past few weeks as well.

"You did good today, Kitty," Ladybug said after their fistbump. "I like you not taking so many needless risks and thinking a second longer before you act. Why the change?"

"I have someone to go home to," he said.

He texted Luka as soon as he was detransformed and at the front gates of his house again.

"Home, safe, and I love you."
Those were the only things in life Adrien needed, really.

Chapter End Notes

Marinette decides that she needs to make these scarves every time someone in her life comes out from now on. Rose and Juleka get theirs the next week at school and never want to take them off again. Chloe gets hers soon after the story ends.

Talk with me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like 😊
Moments (Mutual Support)

Chapter Summary

Little moments with the boyfriends.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Adrien slow down!" Nathalie called across the foyer. Adrien slid to a stop and ran to the door of the office where she stood.

"Hi, Nathalie. Did you need something?"

"Don't run in the house," she said.

"But I have to change and shower before Luka gets here."

"You look fine," Nathalie said.

"I was just at the animal shelter," Adrien said. "Luka's allergic to cats."

"Fine. Don't run in the house."

/*****/

"I'd like to be clear," Adrien said with a smirk. "Just because I tell you I have a photoshoot does not mean I'm fishing for you to stop by with coffee."

"I didn't think that you were," Luka said. "I just like seeing you."

"If you two aren't careful, no amount of makeup is gonna cover that blush," the makeup artist working on Adrien between shots said.

"I brought you coffee, too, Nicole," Luka said, holding out the cup to the makeup artist.

"Keep him," she said to Adrien, taking the cup and downing a gulp before setting it down to finish her work.

"I'd like to," Adrien said.

It was Luka who blushed that time.

/*****/

"You're here!" Luka said, grinning. He was slouching as he sat at a booth for his school's club fair. The room was packed and loud and hot and Adrien could see on Luka's face how much he didn't want to be there.

"I brought you tea and a croissant from Tom and Sabine's," Adrien said, setting both on the table covered in Robotics Club pamphlets, fliers, and diagrams. A little robot walked around beside the
table, one of Luka's classmates controlling it with a remote.

"You're great," Luka said. "Definitely one of my favorite people of all time."

"You look like you could use a break," Adrien said.

"I'm waiting for Anna to come back," Luka said. "She started her fifteen minute break a good-" he glanced at the clock on his phone, sighed and said, "forty minutes ago."

"What does she look like?" Adrien asked.

"Why?"

"Just tell me."

Luka described Anna and Adrien leaned over to kiss Luka's cheek before backing up and scanning the room.

"I'm gonna find her so I can steal you away for a few minutes until your eyes don't have that pinchy look they get when you're people'd out."

Adrien all but skipped off and Luka tried not to sigh like the lovesick fool he was.

"So, that's the boyfriend?" the kid with the remote asked.

"Yes he is."

"So, he gets you pretty well."

"Better than I ever dreamed."

/****/

Adrien paced back and forth, trying to take deep breaths. He wasn't sure why his heart was beating so fast, but it was annoying and painful and scary in and of itself. His stomach felt like someone was grabbing handfuls of his insides and his head was just a little light on his shoulders. Adrien didn't know what to do, how to make it stop. Pacing at least made him feel like he was doing something, so he kept walking back and forth in the dark of his room while Plagg stared at him with large eyes that didn't give much away.

"Why am I like this?" Adrien whispered, coming to stand in front of Plagg.

Plagg didn't respond. He flew over to Adrien's bed and hunted around in it until he found Adrien's cell phone, which he dropped in his hand. Adrien stared at it for a moment, then with a few swipes it was ringing before he knew for sure who he had called.

"Adrien?"

It was Luka. Of course it was Luka.

"I'm sorry." He had probably woken him up. It sounded like he had woken him up.

"You okay?"

The shaky breath Adrien drew was enough of an answer.
"Can you talk to me? Tell me what's wrong?"

"I don't know," he said. "I don't know why I feel like this and everything's too much and I don't know why it won't stop."

"You're going to be okay," Luka said. "Is there anything you can think of that I can do to help you calm down?"

Adrien shook his head as he said, "I don't know. I'm sorry."

"That's okay," Luka said. There was some background noise for a moment and then Luka asked, "Do you want me to just play my guitar and sit here on the phone with you?"

"Yeah," Adrien said.

It took a while, but Adrien eventually felt his nerves dial back the intensity enough that he could sit on the side of his bed, and eventually enough to lay down and curl up with the phone to his ear.

"Sorry I woke you," Adrien said.

"Please don't be," Luka said, not even pausing in his guitar playing. "I just wish I was there with you so I could help more."

/*****/

"So I'm applying for a summer music program," Luka said, lying with his head on Adrien's lap while Adrien scrolled through his phone with one hand, the other resting on Luka's hair.

"That's so cool!" Adrien said, setting his phone aside. "For guitar or composing?"

"Composing," Luka said. "But there are fewer composing slots open this year. I probably won't get in."

"You'll get in," Adrien said. "Just look at how popular the band has gotten."

"That's nice of you to say," Luka said. "Actually, I have a favor to ask."

"What's up?"

"I have to audition to get in," he said. "Send in a sample of something I composed."

"You want me to help you record something?"

"I want to send in a version of the song I wrote for you."

"You don't need my permission for that," Adrien said, his hand stroking Luka's hair back from his forehead. "It's yours, you wrote it."

"I wrote it for you," Luka said. "It's yours. I made it, but it was never mine."

"Then fine, I give you my permission," Adrien said. "What did you mean by 'a version' of Sunshine?"

"Oh, that," Luka said. "Sunshine is only one side of you. I'm adding a little because you're also Chat Noir. I'm calling it Sunshine and Shadows."
"I... thank you," Adrien said, leaning down to kiss him. "I can't wait to hear it."

"I haven't seen my father in eight days," Adrien said, letting Luka through the front door. "Nathalie said she saw him twice. I think even she's getting worried. She also seems worried about the increase in akuma attacks. She usually tries so hard to hide when she feels anything. If I can tell she’s worried…”

"This whole giant place and the only person in it you can find is Nathalie?" Luka asked, reaching for Adrien's hand on instinct.

"I guess. It's seemed bigger since... since it got emptier."

Luka looked around the giant foyer with the horrifying painting at the split between the stairs. Gabriel Agreste might be a big name in fashion, but he needed to stop assuming that talent applied to home decorating as well.

"What if you showed me the rest of the house?" Luka said. "I've pretty much just seen the dining room, your room, and the room with the piano."

"The piano's not always in that room," Adrien said.

"You know what I meant," Luka said. "Would you want to? I'm a little curious."

The afternoon was spent running around, sliding down the hallways in their socks as fast as they could, putting sticky notes on all the doors they’d explored, opening every closet door, and eventually bringing quite a few pillows and blankets found in the guest rooms to pile them in the dining room and make a giant blanket fort. It became one of Adrien's favorite memories. The moment that cemented the afternoon the top of the list was when someone tripped over a stray blanket and started looking for the entrance.

"Adrien? What in the world possessed you to do this to the dining room?"

"Father?"

Adrien tried to jump to his feet, only to get the "ceiling" of the fort to collapse on him.

"You made a fort?" Gabriel asked, reaching to pull the roof back into place. "You haven't done this in years."

"I'm sorry, we can put it back, I'll do the laundry myself, but I wanted to-"

"This is wonderful," Gabriel said, crouching between two chairs with the blanket between them held over his head. "May I join you for a minute?"

Gabriel looked exhausted and really only did stay a couple minutes, but he was there. He was there.

"I'm holding you to the laundry you promised," Gabriel said as he exited the fort. "The thing about growing up is that you can still have blanket forts, but now you're the one dealing with the cleanup, too."

When they heard the dining room door close again, Adrien realized he was on the verge of tears.

"Hey," Luka said, reaching out to run a hand in a slow pattern up and down Adrien's back. "You're
okay."

"No, I know I am," Adrien said, taking a breath. "I was right, something's going on with him. But he... Luka, he hasn't done something like that in years."

"I know," Luka said.

He didn't say more, because there wasn't more to say.

Chapter End Notes

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Chapter Summary

Akuma battles have been more frequent, more violent, more cunning. Luka tries to take care of Adrien during this time. Nathalie, on the other side of the fight, finds herself with a similar task.

Chapter Notes

I do not apologize for this having nothing to do with the prompt title. I also do not apologize for anything else.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Adrien fell asleep in class. He sat in the front row, there was no way the teacher didn't notice, but no one disturbed him. After class, Nino held up his notebook and said he'd go make photocopies for Adrien of his notes. The teacher called Adrien aside and asked if everything was okay at home. It wasn't, but he blamed the increased frequency of akumas, saying it made him anxious. The teacher pushed the school counseling services on him until he managed to smile and nod his way out of the conversation and the room.

"How you doing?" Adrien overheard Alya ask Marinette. "You look like a zombie."

"I'll be fine. Just up late... designing."

Well, at least Adrien wasn't alone in his lack of sleep. And Ladybug. She was pretty tired, too.

Adrien was halfway to the Couffaines' when his phone rang.

"Nino told me you fell asleep in class. I'm cancelling band practice and you're taking a nap until the next attack," Luka said.

"Hello to you, too."

"I mean it," he said. The agitation in his voice made Adrien smile.

"So, 'take a nap' is code, right?"

"It absolutely is not. You need sleep."

"Not as much as I need to spend some time with you, alone, snuggled on your bed, kissing you-"

"You will be asleep within minutes."

"We'll see," Adrien said.

Adrien didn't even get as far as "snuggled on your bed" before he was asleep. Luka pushed him on
his bed, went to get an extra blanket, and came back to a sleeping Adrien. Luka threw the blanket over Adrien and turned his laptop on to a news station with headphones while he worked on homework. He heard a story about the new hero, Carapace, and another about how Rena Rouge seemed to be a full time hero as well now. Halfway through two newscasters speculating as to why Hawkmoth had suddenly increased his attacks in frequency and intensity, news broke of another attack.

"Are you sure I can't go for him?" Luka asked Plagg.

"Don't offer," Plagg said. "He might just be tired enough to take you up on it and you're a little too soft hearted for this kind of thing."

Luka sighed.

"Adrien, you have to go," Luka said, shaking his shoulder.

"I hate Hawkmoth," Adrien said, turning his face into the pillow for a moment. "Plagg, claws out."

Chat Noir climbed out Luka's window. Luka settled down with the news again.

Adrien had left his things there, so Luka expected him to come back after the fight to get them, but the fight lasted hours. Luka finally had to give up and go to bed, leaving the news playing on his laptop and hoping that if something went wrong, he would hear a change in the newscaster's tone and wake up.

Adrien came crawling back through the window around two in the morning. He gently shut Luka's laptop and sat on the edge of the bed, just watching Luka sleep.

"You're back," Luka said a minute later, rolling to see Adrien better. "You're okay."

"A few close calls, but I'm okay."

"You going home?"

"Do I have to?"

Luka struggled to sit up. "You want to stay?"

"I don't know where my father is. Nathalie has stopped trying to cover for him at work. The house is empty and it makes me feel like a little kid, but I'm terrified of it. I'll be gone before your parents notice me in the morning, and Nathalie probably won't even say anything, if she notices that I was gone."

"You don't have to rationalize," Luka said, pulling Adrien against his bare chest. "Please stay, if it would help."

Adrien set an alarm, kicked off most of his clothes, and crawled under the covers.

"You don't mind?" Adrien asked, holding himself on the edge of the bed so he wasn't touching Luka.

Luka curled an arm around his back and tugged until Adrien relaxed against him and tucked his head under Luka's chin.

"I'd do anything to fix this," Luka whispered.
Adrien was already asleep.

"I have to get her back."

"You can't get her back if you don't eat something, sir."

Nathalie guided Gabriel to his desk where a sandwich waited for him. His hands were shaking and she knew he would ask for coffee, and she would give it to him, but maybe, if she was lucky, he would fall asleep before it kicked in.

"I need her back now, Nathalie."

"I know, sir."

"I've missed so much," Gabriel said. "Suddenly he's dating and that was bad enough, but realizing how long it had been since he had stopped making blanket forts? I'm missing so much."

"He misses you, too."

"But Emilie has missed even more," Gabriel said, taking a bite of the sandwich. "I've missed too much through my own failings. She's missing even more and it's not her fault."

"You miss her."

"I need her."

He ate in silence for a while as Nathalie checked her watch. She was glad she had asked her neighbor to feed the cat for the foreseeable future because she should have been home hours ago.

"You're always here," Gabriel said.

Nathalie was shocked. Gabriel had talked about nothing but his quest to gain the miraculouses for over two weeks. Had glancing at her watch made him think she didn't want to be there?

"I'm sorry," she said, failing to keep the confusion and worry out of her voice. "Am I disturbing you? I can leave and return tomorrow morning."

"You're always here," he said, reaching out a mustard stained hand to squeeze hers where it rested on his desk.

"I always will be, sir."

"Am I doing the right thing?"

Nathalie froze. He had never asked her opinion on his actions. When he had told her of his quest originally, he had even said that he didn't expect her to care if what he was doing was right or wrong, and she hadn't. What did this mean? Was he just so tired he was rambling?

"I'm not your conscience."

"No, but you're my friend. My partner. My right-hand man."

"Yes," she said slowly. "But as all of those, we both make our own decisions and trust the other to make theirs."
Gabriel finished his sandwich and placed his glasses on the desk. He looked even more tired without them.

"Maybe you shouldn't," he said.

Nathalie ignored the comment and picked up a napkin. She took Gabriel's hand in hers and removed the mustard and tomato drippings from his fingers with gentle strokes.

"You know this is yours to decide," she said. She placed his hand on the table, tossed the napkin, and headed to the door. Before exiting, she turned back and said, "I'll be waiting for you either way."

Gabriel stared at the door long after she had left. She was waiting for him? Why did those words seem so significant? What was his tired mind missing?

"One more," he whispered to himself, shaking his head to rid it of thoughts of Nathalie. "Just one more akuma."

It was never "just one more".

/****/

There was a lull. Adrien got to sleep through the night without his phone blaring another akuma alert. He got through the whole school day. He got through his homework on the Liberty with Juleka and Rose to help him. He got through walking to a coffee shop with Luka, ordering, finding a table, and hearing his name called for their drinks before the alert went off again.

"Gotta go," Adrien said, standing up to kiss Luka's cheek quickly. "Stay safe."

"I'm in a coffee shop," Luka said. "You stay safe."

Luka watched Adrien sneak into the alley beside the coffee shop through the window. He watched Chat Noir bound back out of the alley on his extended baton. He watched Chat Noir knocked from the sky by an invisible force.

He watched Chat Noir hit the ground, hard. He watched him not moving.

Luka tried to run to the door, but his legs gave out on him and he fell to his knees, knocking into the table next to him. Other people noticed what he was looking at then. The invisible attacker flickered into view. A blue and black akuma that changed shape every few seconds. Someone screamed.

At the last second, Carapace and a new hero in yellow landed in front of Chat Noir. Carapace used his one-use superpower, Shield, to create a bubble around the heroes. He held it in place while the new hero checked on Chat Noir. After a few horrifying seconds, Chat Noir started to move.

The battle raged on from there. The shapeshifter drove the heroes all over the city. Each swapped in and out multiple times. Luka found himself following the fight on foot from a reasonable distance. He couldn't stay away from the battle, not with the hit Adrien took at the start. He felt someone else nearby, but didn't think much of it. Lots of people followed and recorded fights, even brutal ones like this.

The heroes won. Luka followed them to a parking garage and stood outside, waiting for signs of where they would go next. When he saw a white butterfly flap off into the sky, he knew the worst was over. Next he saw a swarm of magic ladybugs fluttering around fixing everything. A
detransformed Adrien was on the bottom floor of the parking garage, within sight of Luka and walking towards him, grinning.

And then he heard the crack. And the ground started rumbling. And the parking garage crumbled and fell.

Chapter End Notes

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Hawkmoth waited. He waited and listened to the city, to the people and their feelings. This was always how he felt strongest, surest in his quest. It was power, feeling everything yet feeling nothing. In this power, he waited.

Until the right feeling came along.

His new champion was fueled by such pure rage, unshakeable in their feeling of rightness. This gave them power beyond what Hawkmoth could bestow. And then, he did what he had never done before.

He followed the battle. He stuck to rooftops, taking advantage of the strength his miraculous gave him, running and leaping, and he felt a certain kinship with those children he was watching. *Look, I can run and jump and fly like you, too.*

It was nice to know the children wouldn’t ever experience any of this once he remade time.

He noticed his son’s boyfriend trailing the fight as well. The boy hadn’t seemed stupid, if unmotivated and a bit too relaxed. Who would be stupid enough to follow after the fights that had waged the past two weeks?

He put it out of his mind. He had a job to do. He waited again. Patience was the key, though he had very little left. The second the white butterfly was released from Ladybug’s yoyo, he pulled a new one from the small cage on his belt, and created his second champion, a man in the building next to the parking garage who was terrified and worn out from all the akuma battles around him recently. He wanted to be strong. Hawkmoth gave him that strength.

And then the only thing in the world that mattered went wrong.

Adrien walking out of the building, waving to Luka. Adrien’s face showing shock as the building around him started to rip apart. Adrien’s terror. Adrien yelling something, not audible over the rumbling.

No.
No.

Not my son. Not my son, too! Please, Adrien!

Luka was running towards the destruction, and Gabriel couldn’t care enough to try and keep him from the danger. He was reaching out with his powers, trying to feel for Adrien, but there was nothing. He could feel nothing but Luka, and Luka’s feelings were too strong and too many. It was like a reflection of his own powers, empathy sensing empathy. Gabriel pulled his mind away sharply. It gave him a headache.

Shutting off his powers made Gabriel numb. He dropped his transformation and sat on the roof. Emergency personnel were arriving, the heroes were pursuing the akuma away. The turtle hero came back a minute later and went into the rubble in the direction of Luka who was shouting for Adrien. Why was he still shouting? It was hopeless. Emilie, gone. Adrien, gone. Gabriel, gone too, without them.

Gabriel took off his miraculous, held it in his hand and tilted it back and forth, catching the fading light. He was about to toss it into the street when there was motion at the edge of the pile of rubble that used to be a parking garage.

Chat Noir. Carapace and Luka had pulled Chat Noir from the wreckage. Except, the moment he was free...

Adrien.

All this time.

Gabriel couldn't process this news. He transformed again and left.

/*****/

"I'm fine, Carapace," Adrien said, choking on dust (as were the other two). "Go help. I have to go feed Plagg."

Adrien had transformed just as the building had fallen on him. He survived being buried and dug his way out as far as he could. When he couldn't get farther, he had used Cataclysm on a boulder of concrete that wouldn't budge. Carapace and Luka had reached him after that and helped him climb out.

"Be careful, dude," Carapace said.

"You too."

Luka reached a shaking hand for a gash on Adrien's forehead.

"You're bleeding."

"I'll be fine," Adrien said. "What are you doing here?"

"I saw you get hit outside the cafe. I had to follow you."

Adrien sighed, shaking his head. "It's dangerous! I told you to be safe!"

Luka put a hand on each of Adrien's shoulders and, with slow, gentle movements, leaned in enough to give him the lightest, most hesitant kiss with trembling lips.
"I've been so scared for you," Luka whispered. "If I had my way, I'd never leave your side, even knowing the danger."

Adrien pulled Luka against him, arms tight and steady as Luka shook, tears making tracks in the cement dust all over both of them.

"You don't happen to have Camembert on you, do you?" Adrien asked.

"No. We're not far from your house, though."

Luka managed to stop crying about halfway to the house, but his death grip on Adrien didn't lighten up.

"You can shower at my place instead of waiting for the Cure, if you want," Adrien said.

"I don't even care," Luka said. "I saw a building fall on you. I might just watch the news and pace."

Adrien's phone beeped with a news alert. He unlocked the screen out of habit, despite the fact that he couldn't do anything to help with whatever the news had to say until he fed Plagg.

Adrien stopped in the middle of the sidewalk.

"What? What could possibly be worse than everything else that's happened?" Luka asked.

"Hawkmoth recalled his akuma," Adrien said. "Someone caught the purple butterfly coming back out of the object and flying away. Their akumatization reverted and the guy's normal again."

They stood on the street watching the news story until Plagg from inside Adrien's pocket demanded they return to the house.

"I wasn't even sure he could deakumatize people," Adrien said. "I know he's threatened it before, but he's never done it."

"Does this mean no Cure, since there was no Lucky Charm?"

Adrien shrugged. "I'm sure she'll try it."

In the house they turned on the news to see an interview with Ladybug.

"I did try Lucky Charm, yes," she was saying. "It has not reversed the damage, however. The team will-"

Luka didn't catch the rest because Adrien sort of collapsed, catching himself halfway to the floor with a hand on his desk.

"What's wrong?" Luka asked, racing over to help Adrien sit on the floor with his back against the leg of the desk.

"Overwhelmed," Adrien whispered, putting his hands over his face. "I was just going to ignore the dust and the cuts and the aching and the headache because I was going to transform and then the Cure would fix it all."

Luka ran cautious hands over every part of Adrien's head, neck, shoulders, arms, finding all the places with bumps, gashes, and scrapes and logging them in his mind. Hawkmoth had done this. Hawkmoth had done this to Adrien, the sweetest guy on earth. And to so many more, so many times.
"We should probably get you to the hospital," Luka said.

Adrien shook his head. "No. I hate hospitals. Please no."

Luka was willing to let it go until Adrien stood up and tried to walk across the room to get clean clothes and he lost his balance again.

"Hospital," Luka said.

"No."

They fought until they were both on the verge of tears. Plagg dragged himself from his cheese to mediate.

"Let him shower first," Plagg said to Luka. "If he still doesn't feel well after that, then go to the hospital."

Luka nodded. Adrien grumbled but agreed.

"Good. Call me if I need to make more decisions for you."

Plagg went back to his cheese and Luka stood.

“Stay there until everything’s set, I don’t want you falling again.”

Adrien responded by laying on his back on the floor with his eyes closed.

Luka grabbed clothes and towels and turned on the water in the giant shower. Once the temperature was good he went back for Adrien.

“I have a plan,” Luka said, helping Adrien to his feet. “You can’t be trusted not to fall in there, so we both get in our underwear and rinse off and make sure your cuts are clean.”

“We’re already at showering together?” Adrien asked with a smirk. “I would have thought that before that we’d-”

Adrien didn’t finish his thought, most of his weight dropping onto Luka as the room spun, his hands going to his head.

“Please let’s just get you to a doctor,” Luka whispered.

“I’d have to be unconscious for you to get me there,” Adrien said through gritted teeth.

“You’re in pain.”

“I’ll be fine.”

Luka all but carried Adrien to the shower. He stripped them both of their clothes, Adrien being very little help because his eyes were tightly shut. Luka turned off the light and that made it a little easier for him, but he still didn’t keep his eyes open long.

“Are you sure you want to do this?” Luka asked.

“Yes. Please.”

Luka guided Adrien to the floor of the shower and sat with him, using a washcloth to clean the dirt
and grime from Adrien. The warm water and gentle touch seemed to relax him and some of the creasing in his forehead and around his eyes evened out.

“Adrien!” Nathalie shrieked from the doorway.

“Hi, Nathalie,” Adrien called. “You can come in, we aren’t naked.”

“You aren’t? Then why is the shower running? Why are your clothes in a pile on the floor? You know there’s a major crisis going on in the city, right? Now is not the time to use the empty house to your advantage.”

“Yeah, I know there is,” Adrien said. “We got caught near the parking garage collapse. We’re getting rid of the layer of cement dust.”

Adrien got to his feet and grabbed a towel, wrapping it around himself to speak to Nathalie face to face instead of shouting over the shower. Luka quickly rinsed himself a bit more thoroughly and grabbed a towel as well, shutting off the shower.

“Adrien, half your face is bruised and you’re covered in cuts.”

Luka listened from inside the shower to Adrien and Nathalie argue about the definition of “near” from Adrien’s statement of being “near the parking garage collapse”. He was a bit too shy to step out in basically just a towel.

Luka heard Adrien stop arguing to start retching. At the same moment that Luka called, "You probably have a concussion," Nathalie said, "I'm getting the car, you have a concussion."

Nathalie ordered Luka to stay with Adrien and help him dress while she went to find the driver. Luka waited until he was sure she was gone to step out and dress himself in Adrien's clothes. They didn't fit quite right, but it was better than putting on his dusty and ripped clothes from earlier.

"How you doing?" Luka asked, seeing Adrien sitting on the floor next to the toilet.

"I don't want to go," Adrien said.

"Why do you hate hospitals so much?" he asked, taking Adrien's towel to dry his hair.

"We spent a lot of time in them when my mom was first missing," Adrien said. "Sometimes looking for her. Sometimes for Father. Once because I burned my hand trying to make myself dinner."

"If it helps any, I'll be there the whole time," Luka said.

Adrien slid down the wall to put his head on Luka's lap. "It helps."

Adrien was dressed and Plagg was fetched before Nathalie returned. She guided Adrien through the house like she thought he'd break.

"I know where the door is, Nathalie," Adrien said.

"I get to worry about you," she said, opening the front door for him without ever losing contact with his arm with her other hand. "I worry about you and your father all day, it's part of my job. You know better by now than to try to tell me not to do my job."

"Does Father know we're heading to the hospital?" Adrien asked, laying his head on Luka's lap again the second he was in the car.
"I couldn't reach him. He actually left the house today."

"That's good, I guess?" Adrien said. "Can you keep calling him?"

"Of course."

The hospital wasn't as full as Luka would have expected after an akuma battle without the use of Lucky Charm. Adrien was seen after an indeterminate amount of time. Long enough that Gabriel should have picked up his phone already though.

Adrien was waiting for his test results and getting stitches in a few of the larger gashes when Nathalie finally got through. She stepped outside the curtain around Adrien's bed, but they still heard the hissed, "your son"s and the "at the hospital, Gabriel"s. She returned a minute later with a blank face.

"He's not coming, is he?"

"He's on his way."

Gabriel Agreste showed up demanding to see his son not fifteen minutes later. He then almost walked into a wall and was accused of drinking. Then someone insisted on seeing Adrien alone and asked if he felt safe at home. When Adrien was finally allowed his odd little family back, his only thought other than, "I wish they would turn off these lights" was "I didn't expect the one time Father showed up to be the time his parenting was questioned."

Gabriel sat with Adrien in near silence for the rest of their wait. He didn't ask how the injury had happened. He didn't ask why Adrien was out getting injured when he should have been home for his Chinese lesson. He didn't ask why Luka was clearly not wearing his own clothes, or why both boy's hair had that particular look of being improperly dried, not brushed, and lacking any product. He asked if Adrien needed anything and if Luka was okay and then just sat. He didn't read or sketch or fidget, he simply watched Adrien and Luka talk quietly until the doctor came to give Adrien the diagnosis of "moderate concussion" and instructions on what to avoid until all symptoms went away.

"Luka, we can drop you at home on the way," Nathalie said.

"Can't he stay?" Adrien asked.

"You were just told to take it easy," she said.

"I'm more relaxed with Luka around than any other time," Adrien said, giving her the kitten eyes.

"It's late," Gabriel said. "I will be sleeping on the couch in Adrien's room, so there will be nowhere for you to stay, Luka. You may come over tomorrow as early as you like."

Adrien's surprise and confusion hit Luka hard, along with a warmth that Luka assumed was a feeling of being cared for when he didn't expect it. Luka was tired, so filtering out other people's emotions was getting more difficult. Feeling Adrien’s so strongly made Luka wonder why he felt nothing from Gabriel for once. He looked up at him on the car ride to the Liberty and he looked.... tired. Numb. Luka wasn't sure what to make of it. He felt a little guilty, but it was nice right at that moment not to have to deal with the ocean of grief that was Gabriel's usual aura.

At home, Luka explained to his family the bits he had left out over the text messages he had been sending them since Adrien had been pulled from the rubble. They wanted to ask more, he could see it, but it was getting difficult to keep his eyes open. He sent one final text to Adrien before crashing
on his bed, dreaming of the sound the parking garage made as it fell, over and over.

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The next morning, Nathalie found Gabriel's office empty. She checked Adrien's room, but only found sleeping Adrien. She went to the dining room on a hunch and found him there, sitting at the head of the table, something held in his cupped hands.

"Sir?" she asked, walking over to him.

"I have a task for you, Nathalie."

“You said you wouldn’t,” Nathalie whispered.

Chapter End Notes

Remember when this was about babysitting crocodiles and Marinette throwing cake at Ivan?
Yell at me over at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com if you like :)
The next morning, Adrien’s head already felt better, if not one hundred percent. His father was gone, but he knew he had been there most of the night because he had seen the glow of his tablet every time he woke. Adrien wasn’t sure what had woken him up until he saw his phone screen glowing next to him.

Luka: If you’re awake i’m heading over with herbal tea and pastries
Luka; if you’re not awake i’m heading over anyway, i worry less when we're together

Adrien grinned. He could never count himself unlucky so long as he had Luka.

He went about getting dressed and appeasing Plagg’s unending hunger and by the time he was ready, Luka was at the front gate. He came to the door with a paper bag of pastries, drink tray with four hot drinks, and his guitar.

"Hello, Luka," Gabriel said, standing in the doorway of the office. "I'm sorry Nathalie wasn't there to let you in, she had to step out for a moment. I hope you weren't waiting long, I didn't hear the doorbell at first."

"Barely a minute, sir," Luka said.

"You don't need to call me 'sir', Luka. You may call me Mr. um... Mr. Ag... Mr. Gabriel? Yes. You may call me Mr. Gabriel."

All three of them drowned in awkwardness for a moment.

"Okay, Mr.... Gabriel."

Gabriel nodded. "Please stay off screens as much as you can, Adrien," Gabriel said. "I'll understand if you want to check the news periodically though, but be careful."

"It'll be a chill day," Luka said. "Oh, I almost forgot. Coffee? I don't know how you take it, but there's cream and sugar in the little middle thing." He held out the tray to Gabriel, who stared at it like he didn't understand the concept of coffee. "I figured you were up even later than I was, and I'm exhausted. I got one for Nathalie, too. I can leave it on her desk."

"I'll take it," Gabriel said, lifting both coffees from the tray. "She'll find me before she would find a coffee on her desk. Enjoy your morning, boys. And leave your door open, Adrien."

"He's going to drink that second coffee himself," Adrien said, stretching out on the couch when
they got to his room. "If he was really going to give it to Nathalie, he would have taken sugar for hers."

"Nothing we can do about that now," Luka said. "So, wanna hear the song I was working on a few days ago?"

It was a nice, calm morning until all the screens in the room flickered on to show Nathalie wearing a butterfly mask.

"Ladybug and Chat Noir. I apologize for interrupting your day, but I have an urgent matter to discuss with you and I do not know of a more efficient way to contact you to schedule our meeting. I will wait at the Eiffel Tower for you to send a messenger. I mean no harm. Please let me know through them where you would feel comfortable meeting. Thank you for your time."

The screens all went back to what they had been doing.

"So... Nathalie's an akuma," Luka said.

"This has to be a trap," Adrien said.

"Oh, yeah, I'd say it sounds like one," Luka said.

"Plagg? Is it safe to transform?" Adrien called over his shoulder to where Plagg was pretending to nap on his desk.

"Yeah, you'll be fine."

Chat Noir transformed and looked to Luka.

"I know you have to go," Luka said.

"Do you also know that I'm worried you're going to follow me again?"

"Yes. I won't. I'll stay here and cover for you if your father needs you."

"Thank you," Adrien said, leaning down to kiss him. "I'll be back as soon as I can."

"Be safe."

When Chat Noir had leaped out the window, Luka muttered to himself, "I never did fully trust her."

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Ladybug, Carapace, Rena, and Queen Bee met up with Chat Noir a few blocks from the Tower.

"What's the plan?" Chat asked.

"Why are you here? Weren't you like, crushed to death?" Queen Bee asked.

"My kwami said I'm good to fight," he said.

"Are you sure, Kitty?" Ladybug asked, putting a hand on his arm.

"Ready to follow you anywhere, My Lady."

"Ugh, you two are adorable. Okay, so, I'll be the messenger. Where am I sending her?"
"Do you know where Francois Dupont School is?" Ladybug asked.

Queen Bee walked up to a very bored looking Nathalie Sancoeur. Her suit had not changed, her hair had not changed, but her glasses were replaced with the standard butterfly shaped mask in red.

"Go ahead," Queen Bee said. "Spring your trap. I'm basically expendable anyway."

"I'm aware you won't believe this, but this is not a trap. Let's get on our way to the meeting place, if you don't mind. Where are we headed?"

"I'm not leading you anywhere until you finally play your bit, so stop wasting everyone's time."

Nathalie paused, probably repressing a sigh or eye roll. She said, "A show of faith, then," and reached in her pocket. She produced a box and placed it in Queen Bee's hand.

"This is a weird trap," Queen Bee said, holding the box at arm's length.

"You don't recognize the box?"

"No. Should- Oh. Is this-"

Queen Bee flipped the box open and saw the Peacock Miraculous.

"You were aware this was missing, correct?"

"I don't want to admit it," Queen Bee said, "But I'm starting to believe that you might truly mean no harm."

"That would be encouraging if you weren't brand new to all of this," Nathalie said, clasping her hands behind her back.

"Oh, just shut up and follow me."

At the school the rest of the team got into hiding places after a quick sweep to ensure the building was empty. While they waited, Adrien thought. He had always assumed Nathalie was unakumatizable. She never seemed to have emotions at all, much less strong negative ones. He had never prepared to fight her because he had never thought he would need to.

Ladybug dropped through the open roof and landed in the middle of the courtyard. Chat Noir left his hiding spot to join her.

"Whatever this is," Ladybug said, "I'm facing it head on. No more running, no more hiding, no more waiting for this to end."

"I'm with you 'til the end, Bugaboo."

"Such a sweet sentiment," Ladybug said, playfully shoving his shoulder. "And then you ruin it with that name."

"I do what I can," he said.

Nathalie and Queen Bee arrived. Nathalie handed Queen Bee her tablet and approached Ladybug and Chat Noir with her hands raised.

"What do you want?" Ladybug asked when Nathalie was about five yards away.
"I have something for you," she said. With one hand still raised, she slowly reached in her inner jacket pocket and pulled out another miraculous box. She set it on the ground and backed up another fifteen feet, both hands raised again.

"She gave me the Peacock," Queen Bee said, holding up the box.

"Then what is this?" Ladybug said. She took a step forward.

"Be careful," Chat said.

"I am," she said.

Ladybug kept a wary eye on Nathalie, who seemed perfectly content to stand in plain sight with her hands above her head for as long as it took. Ladybug finally reached the box. Her glance bounced between Nathalie and the box as she picked it up. When she opened it, she almost dropped it again, gasping.

"Chat," she whispered. It was only his super hearing that allowed him to hear her.

"Yes, My Lady?"

"Come here."

He did, and when he saw what she had, his knees buckled for a second. She reached out to catch him without taking her eyes off the contents of the box.

Nathalie Sancoeur had delivered the Butterfly Miraculous.

"How did you get this?" she demanded.

"Hawkmoth gave it to me."

"Well he couldn't be Hawkmoth if he gave this to you," she said, snapping the box closed. "Rena?" Rena popped out of her hiding spot. "Make yourself invisible and take both of these to the Guardian."

Rena did as she was told, collecting the boxes from Ladybug and Queen Bee and vanishing on the spot.

"Why did he stop?" Adrien asked.

"He did not explain his motives to me," Nathalie said. "I would assume that he realized his goal wasn't worth the damage he was doing."

"And we're supposed to just trust that those were real miraculouses, that Hawkmoth is just giving up?"

"Miss Bee holds my tablet," she said. "I have no more answers for you. If you would be so kind as to break it and restore me, I would appreciate it."

Carapace stepped out of his hiding spot and he, Chat, Bee, and Ladybug had a hurried, whispered conversation before Queen Bee got frustrated and snapped the tablet over her knee.

"You are part of a team," Ladybug snarled as she caught and purified the butterfly.

"Yeah, I'll work on that," Bee said. "Assuming we still have jobs."
"Where the hell am I?"

The three heroes turned to Nathalie Sancoeur. She was sitting on the floor with a blank look on her face.

"You were akumatized," Chat said, falling immediately into the familiar role of Victim Support. "Do you remember what happened before this? Who you were with?"

"What did he make me do?" she asked, ignoring Chat's questions and looking straight at Ladybug.

"Supposedly, you just delivered his miraculous to us," Ladybug said.

"What?"

Nathalie's shock was nothing compared to Adrien's when a few tears escaped her eyes.

"No, don't... it's okay, it's over," Chat said, absolutely floundering as he carefully patted her shoulder with one hand.

She covered her mouth with a shaking hand. "It's actually over," she said. "No more akumas. We're free."

"Only if this wasn't a trick," Ladybug said, crossing her arms.

Nathalie quickly composed herself and stood.

"I apologize," she said. "The attacks have been a source of stress for me. If you don't need anything more, I have to get back to work."

"Wait, we need to know-"

Chat held Ladybug back, letting Nathalie leave.

"He wouldn't let her know anything, Bug," he said. "He had to be Hawkmoth to akumatize her. If she saw him, it was while she was akumatized, and she probably doesn't remember. But I doubt that he showed himself to her at all. He's hidden from us for years. He wouldn't blow it just as he was getting out."

Ladybug shook her head. "I wanted to get him. I wanted him to face what he had done."

"Me too."

The news came from Rena: the miraculouses were real. Hawkmoth was gone. The second Rena returned, Ladybug dropped her transformation. Everyone else followed suit. It was the reveal everyone had been waiting for, and so much stranger than any of them expected, with every face being a familiar one. The rest of the team left, and Adrien and Marinette were left standing on the stairs of the school.

"I'm glad it's you," Adrien said.

"Don't take this the wrong way, Kitty," Marinette said, "but I'm glad things worked out the way they did."

"What do you mean?" he asked, tilting his head to the side.

"I mean exactly what I said right before you and Luka got together," she said. "I love you, but not
in the way you need. Not for either side of you. I can see that now that I see both of you as one."

"You're a good friend, Marinette," he said, reaching out to squeeze her hand.

She laughed. "Those words stung once upon a time. Now they mean the world."

"I feel the same about you," he said. "Now, I have a special someone covering for me at home." He winked. "I'll see you for patrol tomorrow, My Lady."

"Get out of here, you old tomcat."

Chat Noir climbed through the window to see Luka on his computer, refreshing the same page over and over.

"What are you doing?" Adrien asked as his transformation dropped.

Luka jumped. "You're back!" He jumped up and pulled Adrien into a hug, shifting from gripping him tightly to slightly less tight when Adrien failed to suppress a whimper of pain.

"Right, a building fell on you," Luka said into his shoulder. "Which is exactly why I'm on edge right now."

"Why are you on edge?" Adrien asked. "And how can I help you with that?" He wagged his eyebrows in case his meaning wasn't clear enough.

"There was no news. None. The newscasters gave up on trying to figure out where you guys went from the Tower. There was nothing to follow, no way to know if you were okay."

"Everyone's okay," Adrien said. "Sit down with me and I'll tell you everything."

They cuddled on the couch and Adrien recounted the akumatization of Nathalie Sancoeur, the "defeat" of Hawkmoth, and the reveal. He didn't name names, but he could see that Luka had his suspicions.

"So why did Hawkmoth choose Nathalie?"

"I didn't think about that," Adrien said. "Maybe because her feelings aren't usually very strong, so she wouldn't be a violent or unpredictable akuma."

"I guess," Luka said.

"You don't seem happy," Adrien said. "Hawkmoth is gone! The city is safe. I'm in significantly less danger and won't have to disappear on you as often. What's the downside?"

"I just wonder why," Luka said. "Why recall the previous akuma? Why quit now, after all those awful battles recently? What happened?"

"I don't even care right now," Adrien said. "I'm happy, I'm excited, and it's real." He leaned closer, running his fingers through Luka's hair. "And I have you."

Luka broke the "no screens" rule to put on a movie, knowing by now that Adrien would be asleep within minutes of it starting. When he was sure Adrien was out, he spoke to Plagg.

"It's Gabriel, isn't it?"

Plagg sighed. "I don't know for sure."
"He chose Nathalie as his last akuma. He withdrew from the fight yesterday after Adrien was hurt. And he was all but numb, emotionally, when he was at the hospital yesterday."

"Nathalie's pretty well known. And maybe it was something later in the battle, or the strain of having done two akumas back to back, that made him retreat. And Gabriel's kid was hospitalized for an injury he received miles from where he was supposed to be. That could cause some shock in a parent. Everything's explainable."

"What about the Collector? He was akumatized, so he can't be Hawkmoth, right?" Luka wasn't sure which side he was on, if he wanted it to be true or not.

"Well..."

"Plagg, I'll get you cheese if that's what you need to tell me, but I have to know. For him." He ran a hand over Adrien's hair and Adrien nuzzled into the touch even in his sleep.

"He could have done it to himself."

They discussed it a bit longer, until there really was nothing more they could say.

"I have to know."

"Why?" Plagg asked.

Luka looked down at Adrien's head resting with his face smashed into Luka's side. He didn't answer.

But he got up.

Downstairs, Luka headed to the dining room first, since that was where he had last seen Gabriel. Nathalie was in there, her work in neat piles on the dining room table. She looked calm for someone who had been akumatized less than two hours ago. He waved at her when she looked up before returning to the main hall. There was one other obvious place to look.

The belly of the beast.

"Mr. Gabriel?" Luka called as he opened the office door.

"Not now, Luka."

"Not now, Luka." Luka stepped in the room anyway.

"I have something I have to ask you," he said, closing the door. Gabriel was sitting at Nathalie's mostly empty desk, for some reason, and looking sadder than Luka had ever seen him. Resounding violins and crashing cymbals of grief made it hard to concentrate, but Luka pressed on.

"Luka, where is Adrien?"

"He fell asleep. I have to ask this, because it won't occur to him."

Gabriel sighed and straightened, placing his folded hands on the desk.

"I was visiting a friend of his mothers," Gabriel said. "Yesterday when he was taken to the hospital. I hadn't checked on her in a while and was feeling guilty. Nothing compared to the guilt of finding out my son was hurt and I had missed the first few calls, I assure you."
"Not that," Luka said. "Are you- were you Hawkmoth?"

There's no lying to an empath. Gabriel probably knew that if he had been Hawkmoth.

"Why would you ask that?"

"There are signs," Luka said. "And I'd rather ask and be wrong than not find out."

"And why would you want to find out?"

"Because Adrien should know."

"Isn't that the kind of thing a parent should spare their child from knowing?"

"Not this child."

Luka was surprised at the lack of anger he faced. Gabriel was grieving, he was resigned, but from a man so angry at the world he possessed people to hurt others? Very little anger.

"Luka," Gabriel said. "You are a guest in this house. Please remember that."

Luka knew he was giving up, retreating when he could push, but maybe planting the idea was all he really could do right now. "I will, sir."

Luka headed for the door. Gabriel stopped him halfway there.

"You may still call me Mr. Gabriel."

Luka turned around. "No, I can't, sir."

Luka was halfway up the stairs before something else occurred to him. He returned to the dining room.

"You knew, didn't you?" he asked Nathalie.

She didn't look up from her tablet.

"I did."

There was nothing more to say.

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Luka waited. He waited for Adrien to recover fully. He waited for news to spread that Hawkmoth was gone. He waited for more news on Jagged Stone and Penny Rolling's pregnancy. Mostly he waited for Adrien to know, one way or another, who his enemy had been.

He didn't have to wait long. Adrien showed up at the boat in tears with his backpack and three wheels of Camembert.

"Can I stay here for a little while?" he asked in the smallest voice Luka had ever heard.

"Of course," Luka said, taking Adrien's things to his room. He yelled down the hall, "Mom, Adrien needs to stay with us for a little while!"

Anarka arrived in the doorway and scooped Adrien into her arms. "Child, anything y'need, y'let ole Anarka know. Stay as long as y'need. What'd ya bring with ye? Not near enough, child. I'll call me
that Nathalie person and get ye what ye need."

She left the boys alone and Adrien sank onto the floor, leaning against the wall with his head tipped back to stare at the display of guitar picks across from him. Luka had the urge to take a picture of the unconscious model pose Adrien was doing, but it was very definitely not the time.

"I think I know what happened," Luka said, sitting next to him. "Can we talk about it?"

Luka had been afraid that Adrien would be mad that he had suspected Gabriel and not told Adrien. As soon as Luka had said that he had confronted Gabriel, Adrien already knew why.

"You wanted him to tell me himself. It was always supposed to come from him, not you."

"Yeah. If he hadn't told you soon, I would have."

"Did he tell you why?"

"No."

"My mom."

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Whether it was guilt or professionalism, Nathalie was accommodating of Adrien's flight from the Agreste mansion. She brought him clothes and toiletries that first night. She brought him anything he told her he forgot within a day. She updated the school on the situation. She started looking into Adrien's options if he decided not to return home and went over them with him. She never mentioned Gabriel directly unless Adrien asked. It was about two weeks later when Luka realized something had changed.

"How does Nathalie feel about your dad?" Luka asked, practicing juggling with Juleka while Adrien worked on homework.

"Oh, they're dating," Adrien said. "Or, 'involved' was the phrase she used. As of yesterday. She wanted me to know that she was still going to put my needs first, but I should know, or whatever."

"She's trying to show you that he's moving on," Juleka said. Adrien had felt relief when he realized just how much Juleka knew, and was more than happy to let her in on most of the secrets. She had a good perspective for this kind of situation. Morbid and cheerful, all at once.

"Maybe he is," Adrien said. "I still think he should turn himself in."

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Adrien found Luka asleep in the lawn chair on the deck one evening. Luka was curled up in almost the same way as that first time before band practice when he had found him and realized he couldn't deny how attractive he was any longer. This time he knew exactly what to do when he found him.

"You have the boniest elbows," Luka said as Adrien squirmed his way onto the chair with him. He shifted so they would both almost fit and tried to go back to sleep.

"You're really cute when you sleep," Adrien said, running a finger over the ridges of Luka's hand.

"So are you. So let's both be cute and continue this nap I was in the middle of."
"If you keep napping you're going to be up until five in the morning playing mystery games on your laptop again."

"A terrible plan, yes," Luka said, stretching, "but it's a lot of fun until seven or eight in the morning."

They were quiet for a moment and Adrien realized he had to speak up before Luka felt he needed to ask why his mood had shifted.

"I think I'm going to stay with Chloe for a little while," he said. "And then decide what I'm doing long term, either go home or get emancipated or find somewhere permanent or whatever."

Luka sat up to look at him better. "Why? We love having you here. We all want to make sure you're okay."

"You don't have room for me," Adrien said. "You have room for me to visit, but I feel like I'm in the way."

"You're not," Luka said, brushing Adrien's hair back. "You know you're not, right?"

"I know none of you feel that way," Adrien said. "But I feel that way. This is something I have to do. I need to make this decision on my own, and I can't do that if I'm letting myself assimilate into this fantasy family. I'm not leaving you, you'll still see me every day, but... Can you understand why I have to do this? That it has nothing to do with us?"

Luka hated that he did understand, and then he hated that he didn't feel more supportive.

"You're allowed to feel however you feel," Adrien said, squeezing his hand where it rested in his hair. "I'm not asking you to magically be okay with this, or telling you you're not allowed to take it personally that I'm leaving even though I promise it's not that. It's okay if you don't like this."

"I thought feelings and how to deal with them was my domain," Luka said with a small smile.

"Well, I do have a good teacher," Adrien said. He pulled Luka down for a kiss and it didn't take long for Luka to put aside the feelings of being left in favor of the evidence that Adrien wanted him.

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"Where are we going?" Luka asked, his eyes screwed shut and his arms around Chat Noir's neck.

"You'll see."

They landed on a rooftop balcony and Chat gestured towards a small entrance in the floor.

"We're breaking and entering? This was not on my list of good date ideas," Luka said.

"We're invited. C'mon!"

They dropped onto a very pink bed in a very pink room. Below the loft holding the bed sat the rest of the heroes of Paris.

"I don't think I'm dressed right for this party," Luka said, joining the heroes.

"No, you're dressed just right," Rena said. "We're overdressed."
And then she was Alya.

"Did you put them up to this?" Luka whispered to Adrien as the rest of the heroes detransformed in front of him.

"It was either Nino or Marinette's idea," he whispered back, putting his arms around Luka's waist and his chin on Luka's shoulder. "The two of them cornered me the other day and suggested it."

"And we all supported it, right, Chloe?" Marinette said, crossing her arms and glaring at Chloe.

"I threw them a party already, I support everything."

"So, I was thinking superhero movie marathon?" Marinette said. "My parents are already asleep, so as long as we don't make too much noise, we have my room and the living room to ourselves."

Maybe it was because they were feeling left out with Adrien and Luka cuddling and Nino and Alya cuddling, but Marinette and Chloe seemed to be sitting close together and whispering a lot. Or maybe they had bonded over being superheroes and had a new understand of each other. Or maybe Chloe had finally realized that pulling pigtails wasn't the way to get what she wants and Marinette had realized that love and hate are sometimes very similar feelings.

Either way, it was a nice night of superheroes and superhero movies. Adrien hadn't felt this good since his father had confessed to him.

"They're really okay with your dad and everything?" Luka whispered to Adrien when the other four had stepped into the kitchen to grab more snacks.

"They're more upset for me than anything," Adrien said. "I was surprised that none of them blame me for not knowing."

"And I'd like it if you stopped blaming yourself for that," Luka said, resting his head on Adrien's shoulder.

"I'm working on it," Adrien said.

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"I have to tell you something," Luka said. "And I don't know what I'm going to do about it yet, but... It's easier for me when I talk these things out with you, even if this time it involves you and you're going to be biased."

"I hate when you look worried," Adrien said, shifting closer on the bed to wrap his arms around Luka.

"I was accepted to the music program. The exclusive composing program that would last all summer."

"That's amazing!" Adrien attacked Luka's face with kisses. "When did you find out? Do you know who will be in your cabin? Do you know anyone else in the composers group? What did your family say?"

"I haven't told them," Luka said. "You've just started talking with your dad again, and where you move next will be decided soon, and I don't want to disappear for weeks in the middle of that."

"You're going," Adrien said.
"See, this is the bias I was talking about," Luka teased.

"I'm serious," Adrien said. "And I have something to confess."

"I hate how dramatic our conversations get sometimes," Luka said, quirking an eyebrow at Adrien.

"If your problem with going to an awesome camp that'll be really good for you and a fantastic opportunity is leaving me behind for a few weeks... then take me along."

"How? Sneak you along in my luggage?"

"Here's the confession part," Adrien said. "When you mentioned applying, I looked it up and applied to the piano program. It has a lot more spots open, so I didn't have any problem getting in. So... If you don't feel like I'd be butting in on something you're doing for yourself... there's one option to your issue with the camp."

"You really wanted to come with me even then, didn't you?" Luka asked.

"If you haven't figured out by now that I want to be by your side as often as is healthy, then I haven't done my job right and obviously need to prove this to you better," Adrien said, a growl in his voice as his eyes took on a predatory gleam.

"I might let you prove it to me anyway," Luka said. "But what about your dad? You want to just leave? Right as you two are making progress?"

"Not a lot of progress," Adrien said. "I'll be more than happy to speak to him over the phone every couple days instead of in person with my mom's portrait behind him, staring at me the whole time. I think it'd be good to get out of town and put some physical distance between us so we can focus on what the other is saying instead of focusing on trying not to make the other feel bad and reacting to and over-analyzing every little facial tic and shift in posture."

Luka looked at Adrien and saw how ready he was for this. It made him realize he was just as ready.

"So, we're doing this?"

"I'd follow you anywhere," Adrien said.

It was one of the best summers of their lives. It came in third behind the summer they married and the summer they adopted twins.

They didn't live without difficulty, but because they had each other, they lived happily, ever after.

Chapter End Notes

I can't believe it's OVER! I'm starting LadyNoir July tomorrow though, so keep an eye out for that, and I have some Felix/Nino stuff in the works. (And you can always look at the other stuff I have up already, if you like.) Thanks so much for all the support, this has been the warmest welcome I've had to anything. Thanks for coming along on this crazy ride.
Big shout out to enbyred (sorry, can’t get the link to work?), my lovely sister and beta reader. You are insane to have helped me with this project. If you have anything to say, or suggestions for LadyNoir or other stuff (no promises on me doing it tho lol), or just wanna say hi, I'm at cheeseeatingtrashmonster.tumblr.com and my ask box and messages are always open <3

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!