Running Between the Raindrops
by overworkedunderwhelmed

Summary

Life as a secret superhero was tough enough. Without warning, you’d be thrown into battle with the fiercest of villains, deflecting attacks at the last second and spending fraught minutes carefully weaving through the subtlest of powder kegs.

Of course, there were also fleeting moments of joy, where life was sweet and couldn’t be easier. Where you could bound and leap through the skies enjoying the full extent of your powers without a care.

But sometimes, on those rare, quiet days, the combustion would happen before the masks could slip into place.

Notes

Thanks to Enberlight and Kellarhi who helped out with my talk-typed nonsense into shape.

Alya beamed over at Nino. He was cheering just as loudly as she was.

Then again, Nino had been on the same page with her almost since the moment they were first
locked in that cage.

After so many plans and so many close calls, Marinette had finally, finally acted.

She hadn’t stumbled over her words... but she had stumbled into Adrien.

And then, the girl cupped his face and kissed him on the cheek. Her words might have failed her, but when she’d made up her mind, Marinette definitely followed through.

The tips of Marinette’s ears burned bright red, as she watched Adrien climb into the car and drive off.

He had looked back over his shoulder at the class just once.

Marinette still hadn’t said anything, but it was clear enough to Alya that Marinette had hoped for more. That she was willing him to understand the words that she couldn’t manage to say.

The cheers of the class still rang out across the park, but then again most everyone had been silently cheering for the pair of them for at least a few months now.

Nino was a gentleman to his fingertips-- jumping to his feet to help Marinette climb out of the dish she’d stepped right into.

Practically on his heels, Alya tugged her still-flustered friend into her arms. “Atta girl!”

Marinette flushed at the attention, but her focus was on the sedan pull away with Adrien inside.

And -- points to Adrien -- he really had knocked it out of the park. The boy had enough of a way with words for the pair of them. Rose might have planted the seeds with her own kind words, but Adrien’s eloquence had been pitch-perfect: it was exactly what Marinette needed to hear. It was exactly how the entire class (well, okay... most of the class) had felt about how much she had done for all of them in both big and small ways.

Honestly, that boy was going to be a hazard to her friend’s health, once he realized his own power.

Luckily, at least for now, he was still remarkably oblivious.

Much of the class was still beaming once the raucous cheers died down, dimmed only fleetingly by the fireworks sparkling across the skies near the Eiffel Tower.

Rose and Juleka, Mylene and Ivan were exchanging knowing looks. Nath looked a little confused as Marc’s lips quirked upwards.

But the silent, still moment, after everyone settled, didn’t linger for long.

Alix grinned and hopped up to distract Kim and Max before either could ask any dumb questions. At least most of the other boys in the class were a little bit cannier, if not a little more mature.

Chloe had been remarkably subdued, simply rolling her eyes at the growing noise as Alix skated in loops around the picnic blankets. Finishing off her tray of sushi, she snapped her fingers at Jean… well, whatever her Butler’s name was…and headed off as her car was brought around. Without hesitation, Sabrina had trailed after her, leaving the tray of cookies behind, sad and forgotten.

Alya shook her head. Chloe had been boasting of other plans tonight, anyways. She might have been an excellent hand in the heat of battle…but the girl behind the mask still left a lot to be desired.
Nibbling at one of the macaron’s her parents had scrambled to pull together for her, Marinette appeared to be a little dazed by it all.

The only other person who was nearly as quiet was Juleka, frowning down at her phone.

“You alright, Juleka?” Rose’s voice carried as she’d cuddled in close.

“Mmm.” Juleka murmured, her lips lifting as she peered over at Rose through her deep violet bangs. Her silence was a little bit more expected.

Alya quirked her lips. It was obvious that after today, everyone had a lot to be proud of, between fending off more Akuma than Paris had ever faced in a month and how quickly this had all come together. With as much as everyone had chipped in, there was far more food than anyone could have eaten in one sitting, even discounting the quiche that Marinette had ruined.

But that didn’t keep Kim and Alix from trying to eliminate every remaining platter—dodging and weaving through the picnic blankets, Kim tried to play keep away with the precariously balanced plate of forgotten cookies.

“Hey! Kim!”

“Nope!” Kim grinned darkly. “You’ve been stealing like half of these! I’ve gotta save some of them for the rest of us!”

Alix growled, leaping at him and barely missing where Juleka and Rose were leaning against one another at the edge of a blanket.

Nino chuckled at their antics, tugging Alya a bit closer to him when the pair of mischief-makers wove past.

“Did you really think you could catch me, shorty?” Kim taunted, impressively hopping over Marc and Nathaniel. The pair’s heads hovered mere inches from one another, wide-eyed at the sudden interruption to their impromptu brainstorming session— a spate of new ideas for their Ladybug comics.

Alix snorted. “Is that a challenge, Kim?”

“Not for another ninety-eight point five days, Kim.” Max chided, in between sedate bites from where he sat in his place beside Kim’s abandoned plate.

Kim snickered, leaping and scrambling up onto a light post, even higher out of Alix’s reach.

“Doesn’t count if she’s the one issuing it.”

Alya sighed. She was glad at least that someone had bothered to try Sabrina’s cookies, anyway. It seemed a shame to let them go to waste on Chloe’s ungrateful account.

Honestly, she was also glad that Alix was running interference; the last thing they needed was for Kim to start picking on Marinette over her bold decision.

Alya blanched. Marinette had fallen deceptively quiet, tucked safely near the center blanket, far away from the mad chase circling the edge of their picnic. But Alya couldn’t help but worry. She’d seen far too often how Marinette could go from zero to panic with very little provocation. It was only a matter of time before she’d think about something related to Adrien -- and her little kiss -- that would leave her second-guessing herself.
At least for now, Marinette was busy enough, trying to quiet the blush still staining her cheeks and trying to focus on scraping greasy bits of bread and egg off of tops of her shoes—they were probably a lost cause. But by the lingering soft smile on her best friend’s face, Alya was pretty sure that the sacrifice was totally worth it.

They were all—in their own ways—smiling and happy, lingering close to their friends and their paramours, enjoying the big and small victories of the day.

And even though she hadn’t been up with her, taking on Hawkmoth himself, Alya was pretty sure that no one felt quite as victorious today as Marinette.

It had taken almost half an hour for the excitement to settle into a lull—and for Kim to make the mistake of letting Alix pull Mylene into their melee. Ivan’s scowl was a surprisingly effective deterrent. Alya started to pack up plates, calling for the others to start to pack it in for the day and to take a bit of the food that Adrien and Chloe had left behind. Their parents had understood to a point, but tomorrow was still a school day, and many of them had special plans themselves for the evening of their new city holiday.

Chloe’s butler must have called in for a team from Le Grand Paris to come out and retrieve the tables not long after she and Sabrina left. Once the truck arrived, Mylene, Rose, and Juleka had jumped up to help, clearing the last of the plates off the tables so they could be hauled away, while the boys started to re-pack up the remains of the dishes into plates for everyone to take home.

The skies were darkening just a little, and though it was hard to tell if it was from the clouds or the later hour, the darkness had spurred everyone to head out a bit faster.

Alya sighed as she folded up one of the blankets. Marinette had stuck around, too, chattering away with Nino as she helped fold up another that Alya had snagged from home. She still kind of wanted to steal a few minutes with Nino before they needed to part for the day.

With one (or maybe two!) plan(s) settled, Alya turned her mind to more pressing superhero matters.

Her eyes narrowed. She knew all of the Akumas’ powers by heart…but Volpina held a special place of esteem. Volpina was the only one who had used visions before. She’d recognized every other Akuma on the footage that Prime Queen captured. So a new Akuma seemed unlikely.

Marinette had to have been right: clearly, Lila had to be in town, or else her visions wouldn’t have been used to sow chaos and fear in Paris.

Marinette didn’t know that she’d scored that point, but she would. Marinette had been right after all: Lila had still been in town. Clearly she had been more than willing to stir up trouble. None of the other crimson Akuma had appeared until after that ill-fated video hit the airwaves.

Marinette might be boy crazy for one too-good-for-this-world model to function. But when it came to calling out wrongs…no one was as level-headed.

It hadn’t taken Alya much digging once the others had taken off running the with party plans to figure out just where Lila’s mother had been staying, even if Lila was busy pretending to be somewhere else.

It also hadn’t escaped her notice just how often the blinds kept fluttering around one window in particular. None of the others had even moved the slightest bit. Most everyone else was either still at work or starting to make dinner, so the shifting movement of the blinds kept drawing her eye.
But not enough to make her miss the kiss heard around the park.

It wasn’t like Alya hadn’t thought about Volpina and her powers long and hard, not with as similar as they had been to her own Miraculous powers. She’d needed to consider every advantage, so Ladybug could rely on her as much as she required.

But she had failed Ladybug…she had been the first to fall, even though she’d tried to fight the hate off with everything she’d had. Even with as much as she’d fought, she ended up dragging Nino down with her.

She and Nino couldn’t really talk now -- not with anyone else around -- but they would both need to, so they could figure out how they could be better. And they could definitely manage to put their heads together to come up with a plan and do it.

Today’s picnic was just practice for saving the day-- coming to Marinette’s much-deserved rescue.

Alya smirked. Oddly, it had been Adrien who mentioned that Marinette had been weirdly down and skittish about the bakery tasting itself.

He might not have understood why, but it didn’t take much for Alya to piece it together. A short phone call to Sabine was all that she needed to figure out Marinette wouldn’t be able to deliver on all that she had promised. And considering how many people of Paris had shown up in force to hold back all the Akuma who had succumbed to Hawkmoth’s ploy out of fear and desperation... Alya was sure that Marinette would have been in their number-- there was no way she would have had time to prepare for a picnic.

She’d fired off a group text, and they had started to plan, right in that chat window. Alya had organized the food, with Nino helping to rally the troops.

Chloe might not have offered her own help, but with a little convincing on Adrien’s part, at least her butler had been a fantastic boon in providing tables and coverings to be dropped off at the park at the last moment. It hadn’t hurt that Adrien had asked for her to attend.

Alya beamed at the memory, picking up another blanket to shake out and fold. Her mother had plenty of leftovers on hand; they just had to swoop over to the Hotel to pick them up. Juleka and Rose, Mylene and Ivan were quick to step in with additional food with very little notice. Alix had whipped the rest into bringing drinks, plates, and more blankets in a hurry.

It hadn’t been hard for any of them to explain to their parents about wanting to spend a bit of time on this day with their class, even after classes had been let out for the evening. Nearly every one of them had been Akumatized -- or otherwise targeted. And Ladybug and Chat Noir had rescued them every time.

Not that the new heroes were anything to sneeze at, she preened to herself. But they were still learning…and were far more vulnerable to Hawkmoth’s manipulations. The villain was willing to press any advantage he could find.

They had known he’d take advantage of anyone’s negative emotions whenever it suited him, but it was fast becoming clear that he was growing far more desperate...

Far more willing to try new things to gain the upper hand.

As she picked up the last of the blankets -- aside from the one beneath the picnic basket -- Marinette simply needed something to keep her mind busy.
“Honestly, Alya.” Marinette bit her lower lip, frowning down at the greasy stain marring the pink fabric of her shoe. “I wasn’t exactly planning to do that. It just happened…”

With a rueful smile, she’d handed the other edge of the blanket to Marinette. “Sometimes, that is the best way, Marinette.”

Alya peered over at Nino, as he packed away the last of her mother’s large baskets. “To not think, or get stuck in your own head. Just do, and roll with the punches…”

“How about you— are you alright?” Marinette pressed her shoulder against Alya’s, a half-quirked smile lifting her lips. “You’ve been a little quiet today yourself?”

Alya smiled softly. How was Marinette so good at noticing when she was feeling a little off...and yet somehow so blind when it came to Adrien? “I’ll be alright. I was a little sad earlier, but you really did just make my day.”

Marinette smiled at that, placing her folded edge of the blanket back in Alya’s hands. The smile was short lived though, as she wrinkled her nose, and peered down at her still-stained shoes. It was more than a little amusing how in stepping up to the plate, she had actually stepped in a plate.

“Don’t worry, Marinette.” Alya’s eyes narrowed, as she tried to guess what Marinette might be mulling over. “And don’t pretend that it’s not making you worry. I mean, it’s hard to say exactly what Adrien’s is thinking… but it didn’t look like it was bad.”

No one else knew better just how much Marinette had struggled to admit her feelings for Adrien to the boy himself.

Of course, the rest of the class got it, even if Adrien did not. It was not unexpected…just maybe a little disappointing after she’d finally taken her chance.

“If you want, I can try to see if Nino can press him on it.”

“No...I think it’s alright.” One hand crossed over her chest, fidgeting with the cuff of her sleeve. Marinette rocked back and forth on her heels, her anxious habit betraying her. “For now anyway. But I can’t stay for too much longer. Mom and Dad will be looking for me, soon. And with Nonna Gina in town…”

“Ah! I didn’t know your Grandmother had stopped in!” Alya bumped her shoulder with her own, nodding back to Nino who had already started to replace the dishes into the picnic basket she’d borrowed from her mom. “Not to worry. We can handle the rest of this cleanup.”

“Thank you!” Marinette grinned, hugging her fiercely. “I’ll tell her you both said ‘Hi!’”

Alya snickered, waving as Marinette turned to sprint out of the park.

Not that she got all that far before Alya heard her friend’s high-pitched squeak of dismay. Gaping up at the sky, Marinette wrestled out of her jacket on the far side of the fence, holding it over her head to keep from getting wet. Mostly.

_That girl never has an umbrella... I swear._

Shaking her head, Alya chuckled as she dove back towards Nino to snag the last picnic blanket out from under the basket.

Nino’s eyes widened, but his gaze had followed hers, swooping up the basket in one swift motion.
Alya snickered, tugging the blanket out from under his feet, and swinging it up over their heads to shelter them both from the oncoming storm.

A chuckle bubbled past Nino’s lips, as Alya tried to get the last of the blanket over the brim of his hat. He bent down a little, so it was easier for her to adjust the cloth.

It was convenient that Alya could also press a slightly damp, breathless kiss to his lips, and take one of the baskets from his hands before they raced for shelter.

The raindrops started falling…far earlier than they’d expected.

But Alya was sure: that next time, they’d be ready.

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