When Your Feet Do Not Touch the Ground

by Celebrimbor1999

Summary

Most people would say that Marinette was horrible at any kind of sporting or physical activity. Most people would be wrong.

Inspired by numerous pieces of art/other fics with flexible or gymnast Marinette. Also my contribution for Writer’s Month 2019, day 7: Sports (yes it’s late)

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

People might expect Marinette to hate sports. With how often she falls over air, trips on her own feet, and generally just collides with the ground in various uncomfortable ways, one would assume that, at the very least, she’d be horrible at it.

For the most part, that was true. Marinette almost broke her nose trying to stop a soccer ball with her face. When doing the hundred metre spring, she tripped and took the skin off her knees. Kim still stays very, very far away whenever they play baseball, after that one time Marinette finally hit a ball, flung the bat behind her to start running, and hit him in a rather unfortunate place.

In fact, PE was her worst subject when it comes to her grades. Mr D’Argencourt dreamed (or had nightmares) of the day when Marinette would scrape by with more than a bare minimum pass.

So imagine her class’s confusion when, during a school talent show, Marinette’s name was called.

“Next up, Marinette Dupain-Cheng, performing to Bazzini’s Dance of the Goblins.”
In the audience, Nino leant over to whisper to Alya, “Babe, did you know she was performing?”

The girl shook her head. “She didn’t mention anything! She said she was working on a new design, but I didn’t think it had anything to do with the talent show!” She had been a little distant lately – Alya, that was, not Marinette. Between her relationship with Nino, school, the Ladyblog, babysitting… she hadn’t been able to spend as much time as she’d like with her bestie. And Marinette had been acting a little weird lately… not getting as flustered around Adrien, not trying to get a date or anything… Alya frowned to herself. Ever since Marinette had gone ice-skating with Adrien, Kagami and Luka, she’d been acting differently. Almost like she was hiding something…

Speaking of said model, Adrien caught sight of the class and moved quickly up the stairs towards them. He had not long finished his own performance – a piano piece chosen by his father. “You guy didn’t tell me Marinette was performing!” He said breathlessly as he sat down.

Rose shushed them from her seat behind the trio. “Look, she’s going on!”

Marinette walked out in a silvery-grey leotard with sleeves that hooked around her middle finger. Black embroidery formed a sweetheart neckline, trailing down her chest, splitting to go around her sides and meeting again in the small of her back, lining the low back. Pink and white accents formed cherry blossoms that shimmered under the lights. Her hair was pulled back into a high bun, decorated with more of the blossoms, and her eyes stood out with smoky eyeshadow. She gave a small bow to the judges (The school dance instructor, choir leader and music teacher, as well as Mayor Bourgeois) before moving to the back left corner of the open stage space.

Standing with one foot pointed before her, arms crossed in a soft X at her chest, and head down, Marinette waited. There was a small beep. The music began. Marinette moved.

As the piano rapidly leg the introduction, Marinette seemed to skip across the floor, arms stretched out behind her. As the violin joined in, she sprang into a dizzying array of spins, turns and twirls. Her legs formed perfectly straight lines in mid-air, spins forming leaps forming splits forming pirouettes, toes pointed to the sky. Then the piano returned, and Marinette flew. From one corner to the other she flipped. Sometimes she curled herself into a ball, stretching out just in time to touch the mat before flying once more. Twice she spun with her body perfectly straight, bouncing off the mat into a split leap, bouncing once more into an aerial cartwheel, then into a jump where she formed a perfect circle with her body, legs and back bent to meet each other. She landed on the floor and stayed them, rolling into and out of splits in ways that made people’s legs hurt with sympathy. From the floor she stood again, jumping from standing into the splits and out again. A series of flips led to another bounce, into a single flip with a landing in the splits. As in, no slide, no pause, just a split in mid-air that led straight to the floor. All the males winced. Between flips, in pauses in the music, Marinette would spin and pose – sometimes smiling out towards the audience, sometimes throwing her head to the sky. She would kick herself round into a simple twirl or fall into a roll across the ground before leaping once more. The hurried music, sliding from piano to violin and back again, matched to her movements perfectly, Marinette flitting around the space like a butterfly, or a breeze.

She was magnificent.

The piano returned with a few deep notes before stopping, and Marinette completed one last leap before freezing in place with one leg stretched straight up into the air behind her, arms extended upwards like wings, looking towards the ceiling.

There was silence. Then there was noise, as the entire gym burst into applause. Alya began to scream, “YES!! YOU GO GIRL!!!”
Rose and Mylene were even louder from their seats behind them – if Juleka was contributing, no one could tell. Kim held Alix under one arm, screaming their lungs out. Even Max and Nathanael had gotten into the spirit of things, though not as loudly as the others.

Adrien just sat there, heart pounding. “Wow.”

On the floor, Marinette relaxed, gave a shy smile and a bow to the judges, and made her way offstage. The class squirmed in their seats during a few more performances before the announcement was made for an intermission to allow the judges time to deliberate. As soon as the presenter stopped speaking, everyone stampeded down the stairs like a, well, stampede.

Marinette was sitting just outside with a bottle of water, still in her costume and chatting to Kagami, of all people.

Alya spoke up first. “Girl!” She exclaimed as she stormed closer, “What the hell was that!”


Nino placed a calming hand on his girlfriend’s shoulder. “What Alya meant to say, was that you were amazing Dudinette! I didn’t know you did gymnastics!” The class crowded around her to hear the answer.

Marinette blushed. “I kinda don’t, I mean, I don’t do it professionally anymore. I like making the costumes for it more than performing in them.”

Rose squirmed around to latch on Marinette’s waist, staring up at her adoringly. “You look beautiful Marinette! And you were so graceful!” She pulled away to press her hands to her cheeks. “I’ve never seen such an amazing performance!”

Behind her, Juleka nodded and said an almost silent, “Yeah.”

Alix hooked an arm around Marinette’s neck and pulled her in close. “You did a great job Marinette – you might have to join Kim and I on some of our dares!”

“No! No, I shouldn’t – I really don’t want – those dares are for you and Kim – just because I can do gymnastics doesn’t mean I’m any good at running or climbing or anything like that.” Marinette waved her hands desperately.

“I’m not too sure Marinette,” Max said as he adjusted his glasses. “Mr D’Argentcourt had to be escorted out of the building for some fresh air after your performance. Apparently he’d fainted in shock at the fact that you weren’t tripping over.”

(Actually, you could see the poor man from here. He was pale faced and shaking, muttering to himself. “She – that girl – she could do that ALL THIS TIME?!?!?!” A paramedic helped him calm his breathing before he started hyperventilating.)

Mylene waved a hand to be noticed. “Did you make your costume Marinette? It’s really pretty.”

Marinette latched onto the topic that didn’t involve her gymnastic prowess. “Yes! It took me a little while – spandex is so hard to work with – and the embroidery took forever, but I’m really proud of the end result!” She spun around on her toes to show it off. Inadvertently, she also showed off the length of her muscled legs in the leotard, the strength of her core through the clinging fabric, the subtle play of muscle through her arms.

Adrien felt his face heat up. Behind him, Kagami’s did the same.
Alya tugged Marinette out of Alix’s grip. “So how long have you been doing gymnastics girl? Because that couldn’t have been as effortless as it looked.”

“I started gymnastics when I was really little, about four, and I started ballet at the same time. I did a couple of competitions and stuff, but I stopped when I was 11. I didn’t have a passion for it like I do for fashion.” She rubbed the back of her neck. “I had more fun designing my costumes than I did performing in them. I still train, for fun, but I don’t really compete anymore.”

“I started gymnastics when I was really little, about four,” Marinette said, “Maman got me into ballet at the same time. I was really interested in their costumes, and I didn’t mind the dancing. It was after the competitions, when there was all this pressure to do something that I wasn’t passionate about, to dedicate my whole life to gymnastics, that I stopped. I was about 11. Maman and Papa were really supportive of it, thankfully.” She rubbed the back of her neck, “I had more fun designing my costumes than I did performing in them. I still do it for fun – I don’t want to let those years of training go to waste – and I help out with some of the younger classes, but I don’t compete anymore.”

“So why were you performing today then? Looking to impress a certain someone?” Alya asked slyly, glancing over at Adrien. If she was really trying to impress him, well, she succeeded! She’d never seen the perfect model boy look so shocked.

Marinette blushed. “Nothing like that! I just, I mentioned it to Kagami a few weeks back, and she said that she’d like to see me perform and I thought, well, why not?” She determinedly didn’t look at the girl standing just outside her circle of friends.

For a moment, Alya was dumbstruck. This… definitely was not what she was expecting. If it wasn’t Adrien, then she would have pegged her for Luka… But this was her girl, her best friend. And now, Alya had to play wingman. “Well girl, I’m pretty sure you knocked everyone’s socks off.”

She swung around to catch Kagami’s eye. “Kagami! We were going to have a picnic in the park after the places are announced. Do you wanna come with?” Alya ignored the elbow and whispered hiss of her name with the ease of long practice.

“Actually, Marinette and I are going to have lunch with my mother. She wants to meet her before we enter a relationship. I believe the judges are ready to announce the winners. Please excuse us.” And she tugged Marinette out of the group, tucking her against her side with the ease of practise, and began walking towards the door.

Jaw’s met the ground.

“Marinette’s… got a girlfriend?!”

End Notes

And that’s a wrap!! This fic was a long time coming – I hate being sick. The main source of inspiration was all the gymnastic/athletic Marinette fanart I found - they’re amazing! I was also inspired by Katelyn Ohashi’s 10.0 floor performance – a lot of what Marinette does in here is inspired by this! Also look up the song – It’s really fun paced, and actually really fun to dance to, if you’re into classical music.
Just a background note: Marinette and Kagami have been meeting up since the Ice-Skating debacle, and become really good friends. Kagami’s mother insists on meeting Marinette before allowing them to date, which is also why she hasn’t mentioned anything to her friends – she doesn’t want to tell them, and then not be accepted by Kagami’s mother. (Spoiler: She is accepted. Kagami’s mother loves her). I may continue this into a series, maybe add a prologue or something if enough people are interested.
Hope everyone’s enjoyed this!

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