Breaking Point

by RoseThorne

Summary

"'For instance, being a superhero is not a viable career path,’” was what made her tune in, her attention fully pulled to Mme. Bustier, who seemed to be looking right at her.'

Notes

Disclaimer: Don’t own Miraculous Ladybug or make any money writing fanfiction.

See the end of the work for more notes

Marinette wasn’t really paying attention to Mme. Bustier’s lecture. To be fair, it was about career options and how to achieve them, something she had researched so completely she already had a list of universities she intended to apply to, along with possible companies to intern, all carefully tabbed in a binder at home that was also slowly filling with application and portfolio ideas.

Given that she was only fourteen and still had four more years before she reached the point of applying, she was ahead of the game. Perhaps she could be considering going to another lycée instead of the feeder for Collège Françoise Dupont, perhaps somewhere private that had a focus on fashion. But she didn’t want to put pressure on her parents, who would have to pay the tuition for
such an institution, when she was already winning awards and making a name for herself through designing for Jagged Stone and the up-and-coming Kitty Section, among others.

“For instance, being a superhero is not a viable career path,” was what made her tune in, her attention fully pulled to Mme. Bustier, who seemed to be looking right at her.

What.

The.

Fuck.

Marinette felt frozen by that stare, pinned like a ladybug by an entomologist. How could she know? Did other people notice her stare?

“Ladybug is almost certainly harming her civilian future through these superhero antics, which prevent her from fulfilling all her obligations.”

Alya snorted. “That’s not Ladybug’s fault—it’s Hawkmoth’s. Ladybug protects the city. And maybe Paris should pay her for her services!”

“Ladybug is a teenager who should be concentrating on school,” Mme. Bustier declared, still staring holes into Marinette.

“Ladybug has never released her age,” Adrien murmured, his voice sounding strained. “So that’s conjecture, Mme. Bustier. How does this have to do with our future careers?”

To her horror, he turned and followed her gaze to Marinette.

She felt as though she might hyperventilate, panic rising in her gut. If she was compromised, that put her family and friends at risk, put the Miracle Box at risk, played right into Hawkmoth’s hands. She’d never been good at a poker face, and she wasn’t sure whether she was managing now.

Adrien’s eyes widened, and she knew she’d failed, at least with him. Kwami, she hoped she could trust him.

“I’m glad you asked, Adrien. For instance, Marinette, would you please share your current preparation for your future career.”

All eyes were on her, and she could feel the thoughts swirling around them as she was called out. She swallowed, trying to push it all down.

“I—I… I have a binder. At home. F-fifteen different universities with fashion p-programs. In order of where I want to go most. Also c-companies that offer internships.” She took a deep breath, trying to calm her nerves—it helped a bit. “I’ve started my portfolio, including the b-bowler hat that won M. Agreste’s contest, and my work for Jagged Stone and Kitty Section, and p-pictures of clothing I’ve designed and made.”

She could hear murmurs around her, and Alya gave a low whistle beside her.

“Girl, no wonder you don’t sleep. You’re on top of this!”

Mme. Bustier’s mouth became a thin line, her lips pressed together as though she was irritated.

Marinette wished keenly that Master Fu was still around, could handle this situation. She’d come to realize Mme. Bustier was a terrible teacher, enabling bullying and shaming victims as though they
were at fault for their treatment. But this was a whole new level of awful.

“Still, the way you run off during Akuma attacks interrupts your daily life and prevents you from —”

“We all run away during Akuma attacks! They disrupt all our daily lives.”

Adrien stood, his back rigid from tension.

“Marinette has been personally targeted multiple times during Akuma attacks. So have I! A lot of this has been documented on the LadyBlog. It’s traumatizing—and we keep our memories of that because we’re not the Akuma. I run and hide, personally. Why would you shame Marinette for that?”

The class fell silent, and glancing around Marinette could see the tension in their faces, their own memories of being chased by Akuma.

Adrien had moved this away from the idea of Marinette being Ladybug to her being shamed for her reaction to Akumas. He was protecting her. And she loved him all the more for it.

“There was Evillustrator,” Marinette murmured, jumping on the red herring.

She glanced at Nathanaël apologetically. He offered a sad smile.

“I had to help Chat Noir with that. It was scary. André Glacier became Glaciator and came looking for me, and Chat Noir saved me from getting frozen. And Gamer was looking for me. Chat Noir saved me again.”

She could see Max wince across the aisle.

“Reflekta turned me into her clone because she was mad at me. And it was my fault.”

Marinette turned and mouthed ‘sorry’ to Juleka.

“It wasn’t your fault,” Juleka whispered, then cringed as she realized her voice had carried far enough for everyone to hear.

She smiled, then turned back to the front.

“My own grandmother tried to turn me into coal when she was Akumatized because she was upset I wasn’t like eight years old anymore—Chat Noir saved me again there, too. And then my dad was Akumatized and Chat Noir and Ladybug had to save me again.”

Marinette hadn’t been able to transform, needing to be saved as a civilian before she could get back as Ladybug. Too many of them had been so public she’d had to trust Chat Noir would be able to hold his own until she got there—and she did, but she was afraid sometime that would be fatal.

“And I saw footage when Adrien was dropped from a building and then when Volpina pretended to drop him from the Eiffel Tower. That’s terrifying!”

She didn’t turn around to look at Lila. Instead she looked at Adrien, who was still standing, alternating between glaring at Mme. Bustier and glancing back at her with concern in his eyes.

“And then there’s mind control Akumas, like with Miracle Queen. I’m scared of Akumas, Mme. Bustier. Even when they’re across the city, they won’t always stay there, and I want to hide. And I refuse to be ashamed of that!”
It wasn’t a lie, either. Civilian her absolutely wanted to hide—and did, just behind a mask.

She turned her attention to the teacher, keeping her back straight, remembering she had Adrien on her side, even if she wished he didn’t know—damn Bustier for that. Marinette steeled herself.

“I don’t understand why you’ve singled me out to try to imply I alone am somehow failing to perform because of Akumas, but you always seem to do this. I’m at fault for being bullied. I need to be an example and not react when my belongings are destroyed and my locker is broken into. Or when someone gets me expelled by somehow putting test answers in my bag and a new Gabriel-brand necklace—supposedly an heirloom—in my locker that’s been broken into before. I’ve spent the last year feeling I’m not allowed to have emotions. But this is the last straw.”

Marinette stood, picking up her bag. When she glanced down Tikki was giving her the Kwami version of a thumbs up.

“Frankly, Mme. Bustier, you have been toxic for my mental health for quite some time. Time I’ve spent researching to discover what you’re doing isn’t appropriate for the classroom; it’s abusive and reportable. If you’ll excuse me, I need to speak to the M. Damocles, as well as my parents. And perhaps the Board of Governors, as I am no longer willing to tolerate this treatment and its continued harm to my education.”

With that, she marched down the stairs, past an open-mouthed Bustier, and out of the classroom, holding her head high.

Once in the open hallway, clear of the windows, she deflated.

“Well, fuck,” she whispered. “I guess I get to do research on a new collège, too.”

She supposed, at least, she’d been successful at diverting Bustier from the Ladybug accusations; the last thing she needed was for Ladybug-hater Lila to know and come after her.

“You and me both.”

Adrien’s voice behind her nearly made her jump out of her skin. She was relieved to see no one else had followed him. She could hear the hullaballoo of the classroom behind her, all control having been lost.

He quirked a grin. “We’re in it together, Bugaboo. As always.”

She stared, feeling like there was a hamster lolling on the wheel of her thoughts instead of running to turn it.

Adrien took her arm. “Come on. I’ll support you. Let’s go talk to M. Damocles.”

“Ch-Chat?” Marinette managed in a hiss as her brain finally caught up.

He gently guided her forward. “My Lady.”

She wasn’t sure whether she wanted to laugh, cry, scream, or some combination of the three. But as they approached M. Damocles’ office, Marinette pushed the issue aside.

After all, she had work to do, and Ladybug didn’t leave work unfinished.
Norakwami caused this. Here I am, sick af, and she went and prompted this here: https://rosethornewritesfic.tumblr.com/post/190310135603/i-want-multiple-versions-and-resolutions-to-this

So, yes, I am working on the next chapter of Rebellion, but this plot tribble infiltrated and needed extermination first.

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