two faces, same coin

by Lee_Mix

Summary

Secrets were never a good thing, Marinette figured. From Ladybug, to her presentation at school, the fact that it was all hidden by those closest made that uneasy feeling become every day. But–maybe it was down to the luck-based powers–it was a blessing to the world that some people were willing to learn. - Aka: Genderfluid!Marinette, and the story that came with it.

Notes

So. It should be no secret that I have been dealing with a really, really shitty anon for the past few days. Truthfully, they haven’t bothered me since I blocked them. But their attacks on my OWN gender identity (or lackthereof, at the moment) spurred me into a bit of a shit mood. It was when I stumbled across the two pieces above that it occurred to me: I can WRITE about this. Anyhow, I hope you enjoy, everyone! ^__^ (Marinette in this is genderfluid. As Marinette, he usually presents himself as male in public (though not at home). As Ladybug, she presents herself as female.)

You’re fifteen years old, halfway through your second year at school, and carrying around the same weight on your chest as usual. You once described your life like a coin. Both sides were
equally valid, but whatever face you wore was decided at a random flick of the wrist from God. Your body’s a temple, but what offerings you show to the world and what you conceal ravage your thought process until barely any scrap remains.

“A good job as ever, my Lady.”

You grin, pulling your yo-yo back to your hip, and crane your head to look over at your partner-in-stopping-crime.

Chat Noir is what many would call an enigma. He’s like nobody you’ve ever met, and that works in his best and worst respects. You would trust your life with him, but not your heart. The cat’s cradle is a crowded nest, and you’re certain you could get lost in what is truly sincere, and what he hides with that cocky smirk of a gambler that he paints on his lips.

“I was pretty good.” You poke his nose as he takes your hand and subtly pulls it back. It’s a game he never pushes too far, but you like to put the mouse on a stick and drag it along, to see more of your street cat with a heart of gold and his interesting reactions.

“Pretty, good. But I am afraid all words would do you a sore injustice.” His hand presses to his heart. “You were magnificent and ethereal.” One eye opens to regard you, with your hands on your hips and a slow smirk playing on your lips, and you’re sure he’s concocting more of those inane pick-up lines.

“I’m not a Goddess, Chat.”

On the contrary, you think to yourself. I’d be both a God and a Goddess, but that’d be way too confusing.

“You are to me.”

“Then you’re blinded by faith. That’s not a good thing, Chat.”

“Blinded by the love I have for my Lady?”

You chuckle and poke his nose. “Enough with that, now. We’ve only got a little more time before we blink out.”

You turn on your heel, unclip your yo-yo from your waist, and you’re about to leave—when your arm is caught in a gentle grasp, and you turn, and you see his eyes pleading with heavy emotion almost welling up.

“Will you ever tell me who you are, Ladybug?”

You sigh a little and look down at the cityscape below with a guilty expression. Your refuge is a leap away, and yet your champion of an alleycat is anchoring your feet to the ground.

“…I don’t know, Chat.” You pat his hand, and it’s a poor attempt at solace. “I just think it’s best if we don’t. You don’t really know the first thing about me, and…”

“I could learn if you give me a chance.”

Whoever you are, you wonder, you’re probably so lonely.

“Chat,” your breathy laugh winds in cold mists around your masked face. “…I don’t think you could understand me. I’m not… I’m not exactly the simplest person around—there are things I
won’t even let my parents know.”

“What makes you think I wouldn’t accept the confusion anyway? You would be worth it all, my Lady.”

Worth it all.

The words scald your brain and leave your heart exposed and bleeding, and though the blood is invisible, the pain is white-hot in your chest and burning your skin and you know you’re going to catch fire.

Your mouth is gaping, and for a moment, he knows he’s caught you.

But you’re an ever-resilient Ladybug, and instead of being an adult and explaining, you break his heart and flee.

If he calls out for you, then you’re too much of a coward to allow yourself to hear it.

“Marinette Dupain-Cheng?”

“Here.”

Your name is called, but it does nothing to draw attention anymore. It did at the beginning, but there were far stranger names in strange lands and strange stories, so you suppose people over time became desensitized to it.

You rub the back of your head, to the mass amount of bobby-pins keeping the mop of black hair tucked underneath your red beanie, and sigh.

“Everything alright?” Alya nudges your side, ducking her head underneath her book. “You’ve been in a funk all morning. Is it Adrien again?” She gasps. “Did he reject you?”

Adrien, who is sitting in front of you barely turns his head, and you feel your neck growing hot. “No, no! Ssh, please, Alya!”

“Sorry, sorry. I didn’t mean to tease. You know I adore you, girl.” You sneak a glance back at Adrien, who shrugs and turns back to the board.

Looks like my luck hasn’t run out yet. He probably thinks he misheard.

“So,” she nudges your side. “Are you actually going to tell me what’s wrong?”

“The crushing guilt of secrecy?”

Alya frowns at you. “Mari…”

“Look, can we talk about it later? I don’t really want to talk about it in the middle of class.” You don’t mean to snap–and you’re sure that Alya knows that–but the ever-present screaming of “this is
what gender you feel like today” has never truly been a kind thing, and some days it feels more like another personality splitting off and yelling at you without an off-button than a chemical feeling inside your brain.

Couple that with “I broke my crime-fighting partner’s heart the other day and it’s eating me up inside”, and things aren’t exactly going the best for you.

“All right, dude.” You almost smile at Nino’s common lingo pouring from her mouth. “No need to get your boxers in a twist, but don’t keep me in the dark too much, okay?”

“…Yeah.” You flick your pen against the side of your notepad and close your eyes.

You know, you know, you know the bandages are dangerous.

But it’s getting closer to the summer months now, and they’re your only way of concealing the truth from the rest of the student body (save Alya and Rose) and keeping the hot weather at bay from making your skin sticky, and you’re so desperate at this point.

At the time, you don’t realize the door left slightly ajar. You’re too focused on the mirror, on getting the perfect measurements and layers down to cause you the least amount of damage.

It’s a routine you’ve never quite perfected, and your hands are trembling more so than usual.

You would be worth it all, my Lady.

Your face turns hot remembering the moment, and the pain in your chest beats tenfold over your scarred heart.

“Marinette?”

No.

“I just came to tell you—oh my god?!?

You don’t want to turn around.

Your mother’s shocked face takes up only a small section of the mirror, and it’s enough to unearth all those fears that you buried in a secret box in your head so long ago.

Shatter, shatter, shatter.

“I…” Your words turn to ash. “I…”

Shatter, shatter, and you feel the glass stabs the skin on the bottom of your feet.

“So, you… when did… all of this begin?”
You’ve called in sick today. Truth be told, you almost were sick to your stomach from the shock. You’re still feeling that way as your mother, your wonderful, loving Mama, sits across from you on the bed, looking down at her folded hands in her lap.

“I… I don’t know.” You shrug. “For a while now.”

“I see.”

Quiet overtakes her, a woman who always knows what to say. You don’t know if you’re amazed, or terrified, or both in some odd amalgamation of teenage angst and real-life struggles.

“Was it… was it our fault?”

You snap your head up. Tears are brimming in her eyes.

“What?”

“This. Pretending to be a boy.” The words sting. “Were we too hard on you? Were you trying to find a way to please us both, and this is how it manifested? Sweetheart, you know we love you, right?”

This… was not the direction you expected the conversation to go. She’s not outright rejecting you, but it’s hard to read her. “No, Mama, it’s not your fault! It’s never been your fault. It’s… it’s just something… it feels like I need to do this. I can’t…”

You mull over an explanation, and you sigh again. “Mama, sometimes I… I feel like I need to be a boy. It’s not pretending.”

“Do you feel like you were born in the wrong body? Is that it?”

“…Not exactly.” You shrug. “I don’t know what I am, or what I… I’m really trying to do. I just… sometimes feel like a girl, and sometimes feel like a boy.”

You hang your head. Your mother doesn’t reach out to comfort you, but that’s to be expected.

“This is… so confusing.”

“I’m living it, Mama.”

“Does your father know?”

You shake your head. “Only Alya know about… this. Well, I did tell another girl called Rose. But Alya’s the first person I told.”

Actually, you remember, Rose walked in on me changing. She’s been supportive by sending me men’s fashion magazines.

“Alya? Well, she’s… a good influence, at least.”

What’s that supposed to mean?

It goes quiet again. Your mother isn’t speaking, and you only know she hasn’t died from the shock by the minute breathing that spills from her nose. The dawn is streaming through the blinds of your room, and your mother has never looked so tragically beautiful.

“D…do you…” You gulp down any hesitation. “Do you think… it’s weird?”
“It’s certainly out of my experience, that’s for sure.” She’s rubbing her temples. “I need… I need to… to think.”

When she walks out of the room with little more than a sidewards glance, your heart hardens into stone.

(Can ice turn to stone? Either way, it goes brittle, until your eyes are leaking from the pain.)

("My Lady? You were rather sullen when we fought the Akuma tonight. Is everything alright?”

The kind touch on the shoulder was enough.

You break down in tears his arms, and he asks no questions.

I don’t deserve you, you think as he carries you home, or as close to home as your broken, shattered heart will allow him to remain. Even at your weakest moment, to the one person who cares about you no matter what, you’re still being so selfish.)

“Marinette? Can I come in?”

You’re brushing your hair into a sidewards ponytail as your father enters the room, his massive build almost comedically out of place for such a pink threshold. You swivel on your desk chair, and you know your face is pale.

He’s holding a tray of food.

“Yes…?”

“Your mother made you dinner.”

You blink in confusion and grab the blue tray. The smell of sweet and sour pork fills your nose, and your stomach rumbles. “Um, thank her for me?”

He gives a curt nod, an oddly warm look in his eyes, and leaves you be.

You pick up the bowl, only to notice a small piece of paper tucked away underneath. Curious, you place the warm food aside, pick it up, and unfold it.

I’m trying to understand. I want to understand. Please, give us time. In the meantime, I think these people can help you feel not so alone.

“Collège Françoise Dupont - GSA Meetings. Thursday afternoons at 4:30PM.”

You hold the piece of paper close to your heart, but no tears come.

Instead, you’re pretty sure you’re glowing.
(You remember the first time you came out to Alya:

“I… I sometimes feel like a guy, and sometimes a girl. I-I wasn’t trying to trick you, Alya, I… I just…”

“Hey Mari–Mari, it’s okay. We all have our unchecked tick boxes on what people think the idea of “normal” really is. You’re my best friend and I adore you! No matter what you call yourself.”

“R…Really?”

“Marinette, you feel like a guy and a girl? I like guys and girls. You’re not so alone in the confusion as people would want you to believe.”

…You hope it’ll go as well for you at the GSA meeting.)

The fourth time you’re there, you get there early.

Like your mother said, they were good at making you feel like you weren’t alone, and you’re so amazed at how expansive the community you belong to is, and how much you’ve learned in such a short time.

The term you’re most likely attributed to is genderfluid. A fluctuation of gender identity that isn’t just limited to the standard “male and female”, but also other identities you weren’t even aware were possible, but being fifteen years old and socially awkward and terrified lends itself to that ignorance.

But the best part? You’re not alone.

There’s magic in those words. You’re not alone. There are people who relate.

And people willing to learn.

(You think back to your mother, and when she held you for over an hour crying after she presented you with your first proper binder.

You think back to your father, who took one look at your male clothes made out of scraps of his old clothes, forked out some money, and took you to the best shops he could think of to get more materials for you to craft clothes from.

It can get better, you thought that day, and you’re still thinking it.)

You smile as you text Alya.

M - You should come next time! There’s a really cute girl here called Lila that I think you’d like…. ;)

(You think back to your mother, and when she held you for over an hour crying after she presented you with your first proper binder.

You think back to your father, who took one look at your male clothes made out of scraps of his old clothes, forked out some money, and took you to the best shops he could think of to get more materials for you to craft clothes from.

It can get better, you thought that day, and you’re still thinking it.)
"Don’t tempt me, girl. I’ll seduce ALL of them and leave none for you."

“U-Uh. Marinette?”

Your skin pricks, and you look up at a rather flustered Adrien. He’s looking at you like you just caught on fire.

Oh, right. You’re wearing a skirt today.

“Y-Yes?”

*Force the nonchalance. Force it, force it, force it…*

“Are… do you…” He rubs the back of his neck. “Is… is this where the GSA meetings are?”

*I… wasn’t expecting that.*

Truthfully, the mystery of the Agreste boy is what drew you in, and the loneliness in his eyes as he performs all those kind deeds is what captured a large portion of your heart. Now, he’s staring at you, red-faced and sweating, and…

Well. It hasn’t changed.

“It is.” You point to the door. “It’s a bit early yet, though.”

“O-Oh.” He tenses. “Maybe I should just go, then?”

“Hey, wait!” You lurch forward, and gently tug on his sleeve. He freezes, and doesn’t turn his head. “Hold on, please?”

Adrien doesn’t say anything.

“You made it this far, didn’t you? If you really want to leave, that’s fine, but…” You smile at him, and you *know* he can feel it through the warmth of the contact. “Did you want to talk to someone before you do leave? Maybe get whatever is bothering you off your chest?”

“I… yeah.” He breathes, laughs, and sinks to his knees, wrapped up in delirious relief. “Yeah, I really *would.*”

It takes some convincing, but you eventually do get Adrien to sit in on one of the GSA meetings, and you *know* it was the right choice in trying to help him out. You can tell he was nervous by his sweaty palms, but eventually, after a few sessions, he begins to ease into it.

As it turns out, Adrien doesn’t get romantic feelings very often. He doesn’t get *crushes* at all.

He’s demisexual. Or at least, you know he thinks he might be. He says he doesn’t quite want to put a label on it just you, but the only person he’s ever had deep feelings for is someone he connected with on a friendship level first. But he wasn’t so keen like you to try and define everything on the first go, which you think is just fine.

But what changes the most, is the way he eases himself into *your* life, and how natural it feels
to have him there.

He, along with Nino, sits with you and Alya at lunchtimes. Group projects become a no-brainer, and (not to toot your own horn all that much, except, well, you are because, let’s face it, you are smart as hell) and you produce some of the best works in the class. Study sessions become a weekly event, tucked in the corner of the coffee shop and watching in amazement as he downs the cream and sugar (”death warrant”, according to Nino) like it was a cat to the cream.

(Which reminds you too much of your champion alley cat, and the dangerous idea toys in your mind to reveal everything.)

But you finally found a clique. Nino found out about your fluidity not long after Adrien, and the only thing that annoys you is his insistence that you pass better than Adrien looks. But they don’t judge you, and that’s all you need. And it’s over these summer months that your celebrity crush on Agreste begins to fade, and your feelings for Adrien begin to replace that.

“Does anyone have the answer for question 7? Mari?”

You chew the end of your pen lid. (Habit.) “Sorry, I don’t know. Physics has never been my forte.”

A sly look crosses Nino’s face, one that makes you concerned. “Oh? I’m pretty sure Adrien is good at it.”

“Nino…” Alya’s dark warning went unheard.

You nearly choke on the lid. “So!?”

Why do I have to squeak?

“Well, I’m just saying. Maybe he could give you private lessons?”

Adrien—your poor, golden-haired boy—chokes into his coffee, and even though his cheeks are on fire, he grins over at her. “I’m pretty sure Mari can handle any kind of studying on their own.”

Shadows fall across his face, masking his eyes just like Chat Noir, and the way his eyes glisten is absolutely beautiful, and–

Oh.

Oh.

You grip your pen, look down without another word, and a mix of dread and excitement wash over you.

“Chat, please hold still. I need to clean up the wound!”

Perhaps it is an unlucky fortune that blesses you and Chat Noir to have a quaint, solitary moment, isolated with one another in the gentle light of the streetlamps. On the top of an apartment building, walls dusted over with the magic of graffiti that mixes together into an unreadable message, Chat Noir sits with Ladybug fussing over him.
You dab the handkerchief against his cheek, wincing as more red pours onto the cloth.

Tell him. He saved you. You want him to know who you are. It’s already been over a month since you broke his heart after he opened it up to you. You WANT him to know, and it’s not just out of pity or a sense of wanting to do the right thing.

You want Chat Noir in your life.

So tell him.

The words have been playing a mantra in your head for over a week. Now, all you want to do is duck and run, but you did that last time and you broke his heart. Anything you do to him now had better become paved in gold for anything to atone for that.

“Chat?”

He turns to look at you. “Yes, my Lady?”

“You…” You force yourself to try and gulp down the remaining fear sticking to sides of her throat. “You once said you would accept the confusion. No matter what, if I told you my identity. Right?”

Something in those poor, battered bones goes rigid. He can barely nod. “Yes, I did say that. Why?”

“Does it still… hold true?”

“Of course, it does.”

It was then, that the magic of Paris that so many people whisper about began to inject itself into your veins, and you didn’t feel so afraid anymore. The cityscape glows gold, pretty flagstones healing from the scars of the battle, and the whistling winds give you melodies that you are not alone, and many Ladybug’s and Chat Noir’s have walked the same paths of fear and doubt that you have right now.

You know Tikki will support you no matter what.

You’re just praying the hourglass of luck doesn’t smash and send the grains flying on the wind and blind you.

With a smile, you lean forward.

Chat Noir, predictably, flushes. “L-Ladybug?”

You hear the beeps. You don’t care.

You cup his cheek and press your forehead to his. “Keep your eyes on me, kitty.”

Ladybug bids her farewells in a small smile, and slowly, it is Marinette who comes back to life. You feel normality and limitations come back to your limbs, but also the wonderful feeling of no more secrets, and you can only hope that he’s okay with this, that you haven’t read this wonderful cat wrong–

“Marinette…”

It’s Adrien who’s speaking to you now, not Chat Noir, and he brushes a tender thumb under your jawline.
“I… I had my suspicions, but… I-I mean, not that you were obvious—maybe it was to *me* because I fought with you so much—a-and you were one of my best friends, so everything started to click together and—” He wheezes a laugh. “And it is you. How could it have been anyone else?”

Something in your throat catches, and you *know* you’re going to start crying. “I wasn’t exactly the first choice for guessing.”

“Neither was I. But you… I was starting to…” His arms wrap around your neck, and he’s gently pulling you closer to him.

*So warm…*

“I’m so happy I *found* you.”

You don’t hold back from the embrace, and you soon figure out that it is something you *both* have been craving.

Four people became two, and for a moment, they were so close, they became one.

Or, as you see it?

*Whole.*

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