

## Cirque de la Cocinelle - Miraculous Ladybug Circus AU

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# **Cirque de la Cocinelle - Miraculous Ladybug Circus AU**

by [Leavemealone42](#)

## Summary

Ring Leader, Marinette Dupain-Cheng has gathered the best talent throughout the country, creating Cirque de la Coccinelle (Circus of the Ladybug.) Travelling from town to town, their performance has dazzled fans with clowns, trapeze acts, magicians, and other stunt-related artists. Come and see things your mind could never encompass!

\*Warning: There will be a few chapters involving alcohol. I do not own Miraculous: Tales of Ladybug and Cat Noir, any of the characters, etc.

## A/N

Yes, I did think to call this story Cirque de la Miraculeuse, but that was already taken.

I want to keep the time period ambiguous, (somewhere between 1960 - 2000,) so I'm using French francs (F) for currency instead of euros (€.) Although I know the F symbol was never really used outside of accounting purposes, but instead FF or FRF. In spite of that, I'm sticking with F because it's easier for most to understand as a currency symbol. Also, given inflation and exchange rate, the prices of everything in this story will look really cheap (compared to today.)

There will be a few mentions of alcohol, as the characters are all adults (20+) in this story. There will also be a lot of shippy moments, but nothing more than kissing. This story is going to stay PG-13. Ships involved will be: Adrienette, Juleroose, Marcthaniel, Lukagami, Alyno, Kimdine, Myvan, and most likely Chlobrina.

This is also gonna be a pretty long story (at least ten chapters,) and I probably won't be able to get all the chapters out very quickly. I'll try not to put too many A/Ns in the story, but if I need to, I'll keep them at the end of the chapters.

Requests are not open for this story, however, they are open for my Miraculous Assorted Ships book. So if you want to see something specific, feel free to go check that out. I hope you enjoy!

# Arrival

Flyers began to spring up around town, the circus would be there soon and everyone was anticipating its arrival. On every street corner, every lamp-post, every bulletin board, flyers read:

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## *Cirque de la Coccinelle !*

*The Circus of the Ladybug is coming to your town, and its artists are so thrilled to perform for you! Among the group are some of the best talent in the entire country. Gathered from the streets, these performers have dedicated their lives to their acts. Come and see:*

*Marinette Dupain-Cheng , the Ring Leader:* *Naming the circus after her childhood affinity for the beetles, she's traveled across the world to gather the best of talents. Loving her job as it's her life, she's found family in her performers. Though she may not seem extraordinary, she has the biggest role in the show. Announcing each performer, organizing their acts, and keeping the audience's attention to just the right parts of the show, she is truly what holds Crique de la Coccinelle together.*

*Adrien Agreste , the Lion Tamer:* *This handsome man tangles with the fiercest of predators. Without a single accident in his career, rumors circulate that he can secretly talk to animals. The biggest indicator of this being the rare black lion he's raised from a cub. He's named the animal, Plagg , after the disease racking the land that he adopted the orphaned cub from. It's become his trademark of sorts; no other lion tamer has ever tamed any creature so unique.*

*Alya Cesaire & Nino \_ Lahiffe , the Acrobats:* *A circus classic, these performers have walked the tightrope, free flown through the air, and landed on their feet each time. Balance, coordination, and agility are performed - all in perfect synchronicity. Honing their skills from childhood, through to their marriage, they are constantly building their expertise.*

*Juleka \_ Couffaine , the Magician:* *This beautiful sorceress is even more than meets the eye. Dazzling the crowd with her act, the entire circus seems to arise from her sleeve. Her routine is what sets the show in motion, the audience giving her their full attention. She's trained herself since she was a child so that she could join the circus with her older brother.*

*Nathaniel Kurtzberg , the Fire-Breather:* *Adding a dance routine into his pyrotechnics, he's the most dangerous - yet beautiful performances in the circus. With such risk comes a huge reward of flaming plumes emerging from his face into the air. Flames dance in the forms of stars, hearts, even animals. Ending his performance with a back-flip fire shot in the shape of Cirque de la Coccinelle's ladybug logo, it's become Kurtzberg's signature.*

*Rose Lavillant , the Clown:* *This adorable ditz never fails to earn a laugh from each member of the audience. Acting with the ring leader and a special assistant, her antics are*

*sure to bring laughter through your chest and a tear to your eye. A favorite among children, the circus wouldn't be the same without her.*

Marc Enciel, the Mime: *His act is a visual spectacle and an auditory wonder. Committed to his act, it's rumored he never speaks – even after the show. Even his footsteps make no sound as he seems to block out any noise his body could emanate. What he lacks in audibility, he makes up for in eloquent theatrics. No matter where you sit in the audience, his rhetoric is impossible to miss.*

Lê Chiến Kim, the Strong Man: *Capable of lifting 130 kgs above his head, this performer defies the limits of the human body. He's carried a horse on his shoulders, taken cannonball fire to the gut, and even broken metal chains with his bare hands. With one of the most difficult to maintain statures, the Strong Man has earned his fame from the adoring spectators.*

Max Kante, the Sage: *A favorite among audience participation, this artist can be found gathering a crowd before the show. Though originally a street performance exclusive, he has become a regular part of the circus. With an IQ of 203, this young man can tell you the weather, humidity, and phase of the moon on the day you were born. Step right up and have him scope out astonishing information about you, some you may not even know yourself.*

Alix Kubdel, the Stunt Woman: *Though small in stature, this woman has ascended to heights that make the rest of the circus seem tame. From dodging knives thrown at her, to being shot out of a canon, there's no risk she won't take. A high-stakes favorite, her final motorcycle act is something that needs to be seen to be believed.*

Luka Couffaine, the Dragon Man: *His skin has been tattooed to the point where he's entirely green, streaks and designs made in black are the only contrast to his emerald skin. Along with his pet cobra, Sass resting on his shoulders, rings of silver, black, and gold adorn his face and arms; he's lost track of how many piercings he now has. His tongue forked to resemble a snake's. He's even had horn implants in the front of his skull to add to his "look," as he calls it. Tattoo artists and piercing specialists in every town they hit hang his autograph in their parlors. They proudly brag about how they've had the honor of working on the Dragon Man.*

Kagami Tsurugi, the Sword Eater: *A young woman who is much more than meets the eye. Knowing the odds of miscalculations, she has trained herself to have complete focus when performing, as to avoid injury. The circus tent could catch fire, and she wouldn't notice if she were in the middle of her act. Originally an independent street performer, she has become one of the most astounding acts of the show.*

*These performing artists have collected to put on the best show you'll ever see! Nowhere else will talent this unique be found. Come and tell the tale of how you saw the amazing crew of Cirque de la Coccinelle ! **Tickets are £6 at the door. £3 for children.***

*Performance Dates:*

*Friday, August 26th, 7 p.m. - 10 p.m. Saturday, August 27th, 7 p.m. - 10 p.m. Sunday, August 28th, 5 p.m. - 8 p.m.*

*Stagehands: Ivan Bruel & Mylène Harprèle*

*Produced by Chloe Bourgeois & Sabrina Raincomprix*

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Whispers traveled through the carts at night, the entire circus crew muttering about what they might see in this next town. They never stayed in one place for long, so they had to make the most of it while they were there.

"I want to see the beach!"

"I've heard there's a lot of good bars."

"We'll *have* to check out the bakery."

"I wonder what shops they'll have?"

Crew members talked amongst themselves, unable to sleep due to their excitement. Despite the ring leader's warning that they would need their rest, they stayed up talking about the things they would see in this new town. A wonderful show was ahead of them; what was a regular week for them would leave the locals dazzled and amazed. Rumors of their show would travel throughout the country, their outlandish feats leaving their mark across the map.

But that wasn't what mattered to them. They did this show for themselves, to unite as those who fit in nowhere else but with each other. They had left their lives behind to create a new one, finding family and a sense of belonging in each other. It wasn't the path all of them knew they would take, but it was the life they had all come to love.

# Opening Night

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Chatter from the audience filled the darkened tent, slowly dying down as the spotlight came on. Shining on the ring leader, she held her microphone up to speak. "Welcome, one and all," she began. "We have gathered from all over the country to perform for you tonight, Cirque de la Cocinelle!" Applause erupted from the crowd, excitement building as the ring leader hyped them up. "You've come to see those beyond the title of human. From stunts and performances, to complete oddities. Famously, we have a very special character of nature, never before seen in any other circus."

The lion tamer readied himself from backstage - she was leading into his entrance. He gently stroked his pet's mane, listening to the ring mistress's speech. The crowd began to scream as they anticipated his appearance. She's done it a thousand times before, but each recital always stirred his heart like it was the first.

"Let's start the show!" the ring leader called out. "Esteemed guests," she turned, motioning to the stage entrance. "Give it up for lion tamer, Adrien Agreste and his black lion, Plagg!"

Stepping out to the stage, Plagg followed behind him. The crowd lost it as Adrien led the creature into the spotlight. The ring leader continuing her narration:

"A rare melanistic lion," she described. "Found abandoned as a cub and raised for this specific performance!"

Adrien's mind drowned out all outside noise as he focused on Plagg. The lion's amber eyes centered on him, waiting for his command. They had been doing this long enough, they had their own language. A smile from the lion tamer, and Plagg stepped forward. Adrien held his hand out, guiding Plagg to the course. They both picked up speed as they sprinted to the first obstacle.

Adrien's arm quickly shot up into the air, Plagg jumping through the first hoop on that command. The audience cheered as Adrien tossed the lion a chunk of meat from the bag strapped to his side. One treat for each trick, that's their deal. Plagg ran through the rest of the course, Adrien running along his side. The crowd shouted and cheered for the duo up until they left the stage.

The ring leader smirked as she watched them leave. What a way to start the show.

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"We had a great performance tonight, everyone!" Marinette announced. "Fantastic first impression on this town. But remember, we have to keep that energy up until we leave." She looked around to see no one was listening - save for Adrien, maybe. Everyone was talking amongst themselves, some passing around town maps.

"Hey!" the manager shouted, grabbing their attention. "She's talking to you!"

"I've got this, Chloé," Marinette motioned her hand in front of her. "We did well tonight, you guys! But let's not get lazy, okay?" The group responded back monotonously before going right back to their conversations. Marinette rolled her eyes, stepping up to a group of crewmates. "What are you guys looking at?"

"We're checking out what's around town," the fire-breather opened the map wider for her to see. "There's a bunch of cool stuff in this place, and now that everyone knows we're here, we can go check it all out."

"Don't forget, Nathaniel," Marinette started. "If anyone goes out, you have to take either Ivan or Kim with you for protection. We don't know how temperamental these townsfolk are."

"Yeah, we all know," he sighed. "We just wanted to plan things for the weekend."

"There's a butcher in this town!" Adrien blurted suddenly, pointing to the location on the map. "I have to go tonight!"

"What do you need to go to a butcher for?" Nathaniel asked.

"Plagg!" he said as though it were obvious. "I need to get him some fresh meat, maybe I can even get a few bones for a treat."

"I doubt they'll be open this late, Adrien," Marinette said. "You'll have to go in the morning."

"Aw," Adrien groaned. "What time do they open?"

On the other side of the room, the strongman looked over his own map with the stunt woman and sage by his side. "I'm not seeing anything all that cool," he yawned.

"Kim, you never think anything is cool," the stunt woman sneered. "Max and I can probably find something to keep you busy while we're here."

"Actually Alix, I'm not seeing much, either," the sage rubbed the back of his neck. "I mean, I'll definitely spend most of the weekend at their library. But I don't see anything you two would like."

Alix turned on her heel to face Max. "You mean you're ditching me with him for the entire time we're in this town?"

"Whatever," Kim sighed. "The next town will be better - I've heard there's a beach there!"

Alix slouched. "But we just got here!"

The crew chattered over what they might see, the things they would do, and the fun they would - or wouldn't - have. Slowly, they dispersed back to their trailers to rest or practice their routines. "Everything okay?" Adrien asked. He and Marinette were the last to leave.



"Yeah," Marinette mumbled as she looked over her clipboard. "I think I'm gonna schedule a meeting after tomorrow night's performance. Chloé gave me a ton of notes, and I've had a few requests from the crew members, too."

Adrien shook his head. "I don't know how you do it, Marinette," he chuckled. "I'd go crazy trying to keep this bunch organized."

Marinette laughed with him. "Yeah," she sighed. "Maybe I can worry about it tomorrow. Have you eaten, yet? Alya, Nino, and I were gonna go out to get dinner."

"I'd love to come with!"

Marinette smiled. "Awesome!"

## Chapter End Notes

[Sorry this was a short chapter, I jumped around a lot on this story, so I'm trying to fill in the story between what I've already written. Next one will be longer and better.]

# Matchmaker

The small café was near empty, save for the four performers sitting by the window. The group laughed and chatted over their food, taking a break and rewarding themselves for a show well done. Alya carried the conversation, leaning on her husband's arm. The muscles in his arms and hers were toned from supporting their weight in the air all these years.

"So tell me," Nino leaned in, questioning Marinette. "Are the rumors true?"

Marinette didn't answer. Adrien and Alya looked perplexed as well.

"About the 'matchmaker' thing?" he clarified.

Adrien and Alya burst into laughter as Marinette grinned, hiding her face in embarrassment. "To an extent, yes," she admitted. The crew had nicknamed her Matchmaker-Marinette. Her pension for setting people up together rarely ever failed. When she picked out a couple in her mind, she always set them into motion. "I don't push them together," she joked. "I just help them get moving in the right direction... towards each other." She sipped her coffee awkwardly, the other three laughing at her explanation.

"So how many couples have you set up?" Nino prodded.

A silence fell across the table. Marinette raised her eyebrows in disbelief at his question. Adrien chuckled before realizing that Nino was serious. "Well," Alya said. "In case you haven't noticed, Nino-

"Wait- US?!" he gasped. "Alya and I got together because of you?!"

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When Marinette recruited Nino into the circus, there was already an acrobat in the show: Alya. She wasn't keen on sharing her spotlight with another person, but it was her job to show him the ropes. Literally.

"I think the tightrope may be moving too fast for me," Nino gulped. "Maybe you could show me something else?"

"Kid, you're an acrobat," Alya groaned. "The tightrope is half of what we do. You did say you were an acrobat, didn't you?"

Nino shifted awkwardly, too shy to answer the question. Seeing his discomfort, Marinette offered her suggestion. "Nino, didn't you say you had experience with aerial hoops?" Alya raised an eyebrow at Marinette's words.

"Th-that and silks," Nino explained further. "Have you done those before, Alya?"

"I haven't," she turned to face him. "How do the hoops work? Because I've always thought those would be a cool addition to my performance."

Marinette walked away, content that her suggestion gave them some common ground. Within the hour, Nino was showing Alya his performance, walking her through by giving a commentary on his techniques. "You're going to pull yourself up with your knees," Nino showed Alya as he slid forward into the hoop, his legs propelling him upright. "And this is called the Queen's sit."

"Fitting name for me," Alya commented. Nino chuckled to himself. She was confident, it was cute. Well, now that she wasn't berating him at the same time.

"Then you turn into side-saddle," Nino pulled one leg up, resting his knee on the hoop. "You want to make sure you have one cheek on either side." Alya snickered. "Grow up."

Thirty minutes passed as Nino showed her the basics of aerial hoops. "You able to support yourself on that thing with just one leg?" Alya asked as Nino readied himself to step back on the ground.

"What, like my whole body hanging off of the hoop by just a leg?"

"Yeah!"

Nino jumped down from the hoop. "I don't know. S'pose I could." He was about to step away for Alya to show him her act when he remembered. "Oh - actually!"

Nino stepped back up to the hoop, he set both hands on it before stopping. "Er, were you ready to move on?"

"No no," Alya shook her head. "Show me what you were about to do!"

Nino grinned, Alya was actually interested in his routine. "Well," he rubbed his neck. "There's a way to do what you said, but you have to kind of hold onto your ankle as you do it."

Nino stepped back, thinking Alya was getting bored. She was supposed to be teaching him, anyway. He didn't want to waste her time any more than he already had.

"Like this?"

Stepping up to the hoop, Alya put both hands on the bottom of the ring. She pulled herself up, tucking her knees to her chest and flipping backwards. She extended her legs out, hanging her knees over the hoop. As she reached behind herself, grabbing her ankle with one hand, she stretched her other leg out, putting it behind the ring. Just for show, she reached out her free arm, as though offering her hand to the (imaginary) audience, her free leg still straight in the air.

Nino's jaw dropped. He hadn't even demonstrated it for her, she had picked it up just from hearing the description. But had he described it? he wondered. All he said was that she would have to hold her ankle, and she filled in the rest of the blanks on her own. "Like this, Nino?" Alya's words broke his thoughts.

"Y-yes! You're a natural!"

Alya quickly sat herself up in the Queen's Sit. "Of course I am," she held her head high. "But, I'm sure you still have plenty to teach me."

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"Was that really all it took?" Nino asked in disbelief.

"We used to spend hours trying to perfect the aerial hoops," Alya laughed. "Remember, it kept smacking me in the nose instead of going over my head?" The two laughed over their drinks.

"The first night you did the Mermaid position was during the show," Nino continued. "You reached out to me on the ground and kissed me."

"And it was me who told you both to stick to the script!" Adrien interrupted.

"I thought it was sweet," Marinette giggled. "The audience thought so, too." The friends chatted and reminisced over their drinks, the summer rain tapping on the window.

# Magical

Rose, Marc, and Nathaniel stood at the curtain, peaking out to watch the lion tamer do his performance.

"Should we make room for him to come through?" Nathaniel asked.

"No, he'll be leaving through the other side of the stage," Rose explained. "Any idea where Juleka is? She's on right after him."

"How do I look?"

Rose turned to see Juleka in her magician's uniform: a black long-sleeved leotard with white frills along the collar, fishnet stockings along her thighs which didn't go down far considering her boots came up past her knees, and of course, her magic top hat with a bright purple stripe. She was stunning.

"Looks great, Jules," Nathaniel commented. Marc gave her two thumbs up, nodding his head with a big grin on his face. Rose was speechless, but thankful for the two boys for filling up the space she left.

"Thanks!" Juleka flicked her bangs out of her face. "You all did a great job with your make-up."

Rose blushed under the white face-paint. Marc, flattered, silently turned his head, waving Juleka off. "You really think so?" Nathaniel asked. "I wasn't sure if I used too much red."

"Nope," Juleka stepped past him. "Perfect ratio with the orange and yellow. Oh, and Rose-

*Oh goodness*, Rose thought - her heart racing.

"Your costume looks really cute." Juleka smiled, a genuine smile. Rose knew she meant it. Of course, the others called her cute, but in the way that a clown is cute. Funny, silly, un-threatening to children; that kind of cute. But the look in Juleka's eyes said something else.

"Th-thanks, Juleka," Rose choked out.

Juleka giggled at her, stepping out as the ring went dark. "Wish me luck!"

Juleka strode out into the ring. It was still dark, but she knew where she needed to be. Standing in the center of the ring, the spotlight flashed on above her. "Esteemed guests," she spoke, tipping her hat. "You've come to will see things you won't believe. Things you've only dreamed of before, and tonight I welcome you all to open your minds to new realities." The crowd cheered as Juleka raised her hat off her head, holding it out in front of herself as doves fluttered out into the air.

"Wow," Rose whispered to herself. "She's amazing." She always watched from the curtain as Juleka did her performance. Rose herself was up next, and was almost too nervous to share

the same stage as the magician.

"Yeah, she's really good at her act," Nathaniel said. He would be Juleka's assistant tonight, much to Rose's chagrin. She was always jealous of Juleka's assistants; clowns rarely ever shared the spotlight with magicians. But Nathaniel was a firebreather, naturally he fit Juleka's act.

"You're a lucky guy," Rose sighed.

"I suppose," he shrugged, walking past Rose. Looking over his shoulder he whispered, "But you ended up partnered with the cute one, didn't you?" He grinned as he walked out to perform with Juleka.

The cute one? Rose wondered. She went on after Marc, but she considered herself to be her own act, what partner could Nathaniel have meant?

Behind her, Marc blushed heavily, covering his face in a flustered mess.

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After the show ended, Juleka went back to her trailer to clean up. As she was washing her make-up off, she thought about how the show had gone. Once she left the stage, she watched Marc and Rose do their routine. Marc's mime act was great, but Rose's clumsiness was always what sent the audience into laughter. Juleka giggled just thinking about it, she loved to watch Rose perform.

Rose.

Juleka remembered the look in her eyes just before they performed. Marc and Nathaniel were just being friendly, but Rose really seemed captivated by Juleka's presence. She decided to visit Rose in the clown's quarters.

Rose, meanwhile spoke with – er, to – Marc about the situation. "I mean, Juleka is really pretty, you know?" she explained as Marc listened intently. "You've heard the way people cheer for her before she's even started her magic act. I don't want her to think I'm just infatuated with her, it's more than that." Rose brushed out her hair, fixing it after taking her wig off. "I really like Juleka, but I'm too shy to say much to her. I don't know how I'm supposed to get through to her."

Marc looked pensive; he wanted to help Rose out, but wasn't sure how to. "Marc?" Rose asked. "Don't you want to take all that make-up off?"

Marc shook his head, smiling at her.

"It isn't uncomfortable?" she laughed.

Before Marc could answer, Nathaniel poked his head in the door, knocking on it to get their attention. "Yo, the magician's here to see you," he said, Juleka stepping in behind him.

"Huh?" Rose blurted.

Marc gasped, placing his hand over his mouth before turning to see Rose's reaction.

"I think she just wanted to see Rose, Marc," Nathaniel explained. "You should give them some privacy."

Marc smiled, patting Rose on the back as he got up. Nathaniel took Marc's hand to help him down the steps, raising his eyebrows with a smirk. Marc looked flustered, but neither girls noticed as he shut the door behind him.

"You did great during your performance tonight," Juleka smiled, a faint blush on her cheeks.

"So did you," Rose grinned. "I think the audience liked you the most out of any of us." The two girls laughed together.

Juleka leaned on the wall. "Well, I don't think we would even have a show without you," she sighed. Taking a few steps toward Rose, Juleka seemed to tower over her. She was already a foot taller, but her heels made it all the more prominent. She held her arms crossed over her stomach, giving her an unusually shy demeanor.

Rose leaned back on her desk, trying to look cool, but intimidated by beautiful Juleka actually standing in her trailer right now. "I'm glad you liked my routine," she giggled. "But you really did steal the show, Juleka."

Juleka chuckled, taking another step toward Rose. "I don't really know how to say this," Juleka began. "So, I'm just gonna come out with it: I really like you, Rose."

Rose looked stunned, she gulped before responding. "I like you, too Juleka. But what drew you to me?"

Juleka blushed deeper. "You're just really sweet, and funny – not just because of your act," she laughed. "But you just really stand out to me."

Rose's heart fluttered in her chest, she felt it would burst as Juleka leaned in closer to her face.

Suddenly, the door swung open. Rose and Juleka jumped at the sudden interruption. "Jules!" It was Luka, the dragon man. Juleka's older brother.

Rose cursed him in her mind for ruining their moment.

"Ring Leader Marinette called a meeting. They're looking for you. Rose, you too."

"Be right there, Luka," Juleka said. Luka turned and left, Juleka following behind – much to Rose's dismay. Before she could lament the moment, Juleka quickly turned to face her, cupping her hand to Rose's face. Rose gasped as Juleka kissed her. Rose shut her eyes, enjoying the kiss while she still could before Juleka broke away. A smirk decorated Juleka's face as she walked out to the meeting, Rose grinning behind her.

# Incandescence

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Nathaniel had amazed the crowd that night, smoke still lingering in the air after each breath. Flames danced through the sky, almost too close to the audience. But Nathaniel knew his limits, he knew the exact distance he needed to be from them to perform safely. With practice, (and some mathematical help from Max,) he'd even figured out the best angles for all his tricks. Streaks of fire swirled in the air, Juleka helping the flare on that front. But once she was gone, the crowd knew it was all him.

After his performance, Nathaniel disappeared behind the curtain – Rose going out in his place. Juleka had already gone back to her trailer, leaving him alone with Marc. "Hey cutie," he half-joked. Marc, blushing under his make-up. "Knock'em dead out there. I'll be waiting for you after the show." With that, the fire-breather was gone.

*I'll be waiting for you after the show.* What did that mean? Marc wondered. Nathaniel was flirty, but that was just his personality, wasn't it? *Although*, Marc thought, *I've never seen him flirt with anyone else.* He could have easily flirted with Juleka if he wanted to. She was gorgeous, not to mention dressed to the nines. But Nathaniel just gave her a simple compliment, more concerned about the costume itself rather than her appearance.

Of course, Marc could tell that Rose had a crush on Juleka. He had hoped that Nathaniel wouldn't come between them. But was that all that it was? Just concern for a friend?

Marc always found Nathaniel attractive, but they had never made any serious moves toward each other. He was hoping this would be it, but he was cautious not to get his hopes up. Being a mime, it wasn't always easy to communicate. He could always talk backstage, obviously. But he was committed to his work. He wanted to stay in character for as long as he could. That was part of the reason Marinette chose him for the show, she had never seen such dedication to the role.

Unbeknownst to him, that was also what Nathaniel loved about him. He loved that Marc devoted his life to the show, that he was passionate about what he does. Most of the troupe agreed that Luka or Kim had put the most of themselves into their act, but Nathaniel knew that it was really Marc. Because Marc had the choice to be something else – to "pass as a normie," as they worded it. Luka couldn't undo his body modification without serious scars being left all over himself, and it would take Kim a minimum of a few years to tone down his muscle mass. However, Marc could always just take off his face paint and speak up. Yet he chose not to, because he was committed to the circus and would never lie about who he was, even if it meant being disapproved of by outsiders.

Marc took a deep breath, trying to refocus on the show. Rose was already giving him his cue. Passing through the curtain, the music shifted in tone as Marc appeared in the ring. The audience cheered for his presence, still riding off the gaiety from Rose's performance. She



reacted eloquently as Marc did his own routine before having him join her.

Laughter and cries of joy erupted from onlookers. Even the Ring Leader couldn't suppress a few giggles as she watched from afar. Back behind the stage curtain, Nathaniel watched with a smile he couldn't control.

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Nathaniel had hoped Marc would come to see him once the show was over, but Rose needed him more. It wasn't subtle how hopelessly she had fallen for Juleka, and Nathaniel respected that Marc took it upon himself to guide her through her feelings. He chuckled to himself thinking of that; he and Marc had always helped the girls try and build their relationship, but they never had time to work on their own.

*That's it*, Nathaniel thought.

He rushed to the magician's trailer, knowing that giving her the push she needed might just help him with his own. "Juleka?" he poked his head in the open door.

"Hey, come in."

Nathaniel shut the door behind him. "I need your help with something."

"Sure, what's up?"

Nathaniel paused, realizing he hadn't thought this through. Before he knew it, the two of them were standing outside Rose's trailer. Juleka took a deep breath, trying to calm herself before talking to Rose. "I don't know what to say to her," she groaned, rubbing her temples.

"Then don't beat around the bush," Nathaniel said. "Just be straight forward with her, get it over with."

"Easier said than done," Juleka sighed.

Nathaniel furrowed his brow, growing impatient. "Okay, then I'll help you get started."

"Nathaniel!" Juleka scolded as he reached for the door. He pushed it open, only knocking afterward.

"Yo, the magician's here to see you," he said to Rose, pushing Juleka into the clown's trailer. Juleka smiled to cover her apprehension from the situation.

"Huh?" Rose sounded dumbfounded.

As expected, Marc was there with her, looking to Rose for her response. "I think she just wanted to see Rose, Marc," Nathaniel said. "You should give them some privacy."

As Marc got up, Juleka stomped on Nathaniel's foot - without anyone else noticing.

Nathaniel was grateful that he was still wearing his work boots; Juleka's platforms looked like they would hurt otherwise. Nathaniel took Marc's hand to help him down the steps, giving the mime his usual flirty smirk. Marc shut the door behind them, looking away from Nathaniel, but unable to hide his nervous smile.

"I want to show you something," Nathaniel said, right away.

Marc looked surprised.

"Are you okay with going back to my trailer?"

Marc's eyes widened even more. He hadn't expected Nathaniel to ask for a moment alone with him, much less in either of their trailers. He looked back at Rose's door, unsure of what to do in the situation.

"You don't have to," Nathaniel clarified. "I just wanted to show you something I set up, it won't take more than a few minutes."

Marc felt slightly calmer, being given more of an option. Thinking about it for a moment, he finally nodded his head. Nathaniel smiled before realizing he still hadn't let go of Marc's hand. The two paused for a moment, looking down at their hands, then back at each other. Nathaniel chuckled awkwardly before reluctantly letting go. "F-follow me."

Reaching Nathaniel's trailer, Marc noticed the faint light coming from the windows. It looked dark inside, but something was radiating a faint warm glow. Nathaniel paused, looking at Marc nervously before holding the door open for him. Marc walked in to find tea light candles all around the room. They were aligned in a circle with an empty path down the middle, almost leading Marc to the center.

Marc didn't move - still in awe of the sight - as Nathaniel walked past him, sitting in the center of the circle and patting the ground for Marc to sit next to him. Marc gulped, slowly taking his place next to Nathaniel. He expected the fire-breather to make a move right there, but Nathaniel instead turned away, picking up a box of different colored powders.

Marc's first thought was that it was make-up, but why would he need that after the show was over for the night? "What I wanted to show you was this," Nathaniel said, taking a pinch of one powder and sprinkling it over a candle. The orange flame flickered as it turned a bright purple. Marc raised his eyebrows, studying the fire before looking back at the box in Nathaniel's lap.

Nathaniel laughed softly at Marc's reaction. "They're just some household chemicals," he explained, taking another pinch of one and using it on the next candle. "I haven't figured out how to work them into my act quite yet." The second flame turned a pure blue, continuing to pique Marc's interest.

"I also have to be careful with how I use them," Nathaniel continued. The next chemical he threw on a flame turned the fire green. "I mean, I already risk burning my face off each night," he laughed. "I don't want to end up accidentally inhaling something that could make

me sick, too." He continued to change the color of the flames: yellow, leaving one orange, then finally a deep red.

Setting the box aside, Nathaniel grabbed a small liquor bottle from the side. "But I can show you what I've worked out so far." Taking a small sip from the glass jug, he picked up one tea light, and breathed fire into it. The flame flew faster than Marc had expected, catching each candle after the next. A rainbow-colored ring quickly ran around the two of them, connecting all of the candles before going back to their individual flames just as soon as they had caught.

Marc had unintentionally jumped back from the flames, now sitting closer to Nathaniel. He hadn't realized it, being entranced in the sparks. Nathaniel smiled at the look in Marc's eyes, completely enamored with the mini light show he had put on. A silence fell upon them for a moment as Nathaniel searched for the right words. *Be forward*, he thought. *Like you told Juleka*.

"I really admire how much work you put into your act."

He grabbed Marc's attention from the flames.

"I know that you don't have to do all this, like some of us. But, I feel like that makes it more meaningful. Y'know? Like," Nathaniel paused, realizing that he was rambling, but unable to stop himself. "You could walk away from all this whenever you want, but you don't. A-and I think that makes it more special that you chose to do all this with all of us."

Nathaniel looked up at Marc, seeing him smile warmly. Nathaniel felt his face turn hotter than it ever had, quickly having switched roles to become the shy one. "I-I don't know if I'm making any sense," he shook his head. "I'm sorry. I just wanted to show off my schtick, and now-" He stumbled over his words. "Ugh, you won't talk and I won't shut up, so I don't know if I'm getting anywhere but-"

Marc's hand brushed Nathaniel's auburn hair behind his ear. Never speaking, he was the best listener in the entire circus. He understood what the fire-breather was trying to say. Nathaniel caught on, chuckling nervously. Marc leaned in slightly, prompting Nathaniel to jump. Marc noticed this, pulling away as he thought Nathaniel had changed his mind.

Nathaniel shook his head without a word, grabbing Marc's hand again. Not needing to speak, the two knew what each other wanted. Slowly but smoothly, they met each other halfway. Their lips softly met as Marc rested his hand on Nathaniel's cheek. Nathaniel ran a hand through Marc's hair, losing his senses as the kiss was all that mattered to him at the moment.

**\*knock knock\*** "Crew meeting!"

The two boys jumped quickly as a stagehand knocked on the door, unaware of the moment happening inside the trailer.

"Just a second!" Nathaniel shouted, realizing he had knocked over a candle. The carpeting

in the trailer caught fire, Marc stumbling back from it and knocking more onto the ground, catching the curtains. Nathaniel snatched Marc, holding him to his chest as they fell back into the corner: right where he kept his emergency fire extinguishers.

He grabbed one, quickly and blindly spraying it away from himself and Marc. The candles were put out - probably permanently - but safely. Marc's heart pounded against Nathaniel's as the two caught their breath from the sudden dangerous situation having begun and passed so quickly. They still clung to each other, both to protect themselves and each other.

"Don't tell Marinette," Nathaniel managed out. "She already gets on me about my candles being a fire hazard."

Marc laughed - an actual laugh - actually making a sound instead of just a gesture. Nathaniel's face lit up, he was sure he was the first to hear Marc's voice.

## Chapter End Notes

[Didn't realize how long it had been since I updated, sorry about that but also you're welcome for posting this at 3 am when I have a final exam in less than two days. The next chapter has already been typed up, but I still need to proof-read it. I'll try to get it out soon.]

## Crew Meeting

Ring leader Marinette looked over the notes she had received from her manager. "You're not doing that bad," Chloé said. "I just think that the show is a bit of a mess. Surely, you could organize some of the acts that correspond with each other so that it's more streamlined."

"Chloé," Marinette said. "Do you think you could record the show tonight so that I could get a better idea of what you mean? I think if I saw the show the way the audience does, I could figure out how to best arrange the acts."

Chloé thought over it for a moment. "I suppose so," she shrugged. "Sabrina, think you can find a camera for us to use tonight?"

"Of course!" Chloé's assistant assured, turning to leave.

"Sabrina!" Marinette called after her. "Be sure to bring Ivan with you if you're going out." Sabrina nodded in agreement before leaving.

"Does she really need him?" Chloé asked. "We only hired a bodyguard for the freaks to go out in public."

"Better safe than sorry," Marinette shrugged. "Also, they prefer the word, 'carnies.' "

"Right, but, y'know," Chloé rolled her eyes. "The ones who don't pass as non-circus acts."

"Normies," Marinette corrected her.

Chloé shook her head. "I don't know how you keep up with all this lingo – Anyway, we'll record the show, Sabrina and I will take our usual notes, then we'll compare them with yours when you watch it. Got it?"

"Sure thing!" Marinette nodded.

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Sending Adrien to spread the message around, Marinette called a crew meeting after the show. Her review of the acts with Chloé and Sabrina was an eye-opener. The manager and her assistant were right about their initial concerns, and Marinette was the best person to communicate the new changes to the crew. Everyone gathered at the common area, talking amongst themselves before the meeting began.

"Thank you for gathering, everybody!" Marinette announced, everyone's conversations dying down at the sound of her voice. "Let's get straight to business: we've been doing pretty well recently. However, Chloé and I have been talking –" Quiet, exasperated sighs came from the group just at the manager's name being spoken. The ring mistress didn't seem to notice.

"And we're both in agreement that the show would benefit from some rearrangement of our routines."

As the group muttered amongst themselves, the lion tamer raised his hand. "Adrien?" Marinette called on him.

"Will I still be on first?"

"I'm thinking no," Marinette explained. "Juleka's act seems to get the crowd's attention more than any of us, so we're going to put her on first. But you should still come in right after her, Adrien."

"Does that mean I'll be after him?" Nathaniel asked.

Marinette finished writing down her notes before answering. "Well... No, you should still be lumped in with Juleka's act. That, or we could make you your own segment. What do you think?"

Juleka and Nathaniel looked at each other. "I think having someone else on stage for at least part of my act really spices things up," Juleka explained. "If Nathaniel becomes his own act, I may need someone else to work with."

"That's true," Marinette stared pensively at her clipboard. "Rose, how long does make-up take for you? You could be her assistant if you can do your make-up afterwards."

"I'd love to," Rose smiled at Juleka. "But I'm usually in the chair hours before the show even starts. I don't think I could pull it off in time."

"You're right," Marinette scratched Rose's name out next to Juleka's. "Your act has to stay in the middle of the show. Nathaniel, if you're alright with it, you'll have to remain as part of Juleka's act."

"I'm cool with that," Nathaniel said, leaning back on his palms.

The meeting went along as Marinette coordinated with all the performers. Each person's name on her clipboard was filled with notes by the end of the thirty minutes. "I think we can pull this off," the ring leader declared, optimistically. "So, it will go Juleka and Nathaniel, Adrien, Alya and Nino, Kim, Rose and Marc, Luka, Kagami, then we'll close the show out with Alix and Max. Perfect! While we're all here, does anyone else have anything to add? Any suggestions or concerns?"

"I'd like to have an assistant," Kagami declared, raising her hand up. Everyone's attention went straight to her.

Marinette turned to the sword-eater. "Why is that, Kagami?"

"It's just," Kagami waved her hand, searching for the right words. "It's a little awkward for me to come out on stage, pushing my cart instead of, y'know, making an entrance."

"Flaunting, you mean?" Luka hissed. Kagami glared at him as hushed giggles erupted from the others.

"Luka!" Adrien scolded, trying to keep the peace.

Marinette pressed her pen to her lips, pondering the idea. "I see where you're coming from, Kagami," she turned on her heels to the dragon man, pointing her pen at him. "Luka! You come out at the same time as her, would you be willing to do it?"

"What?!" Luka and Kagami gasped at the same time.

Kagami was the first to protest, "I-I don't know about that!"

"Yeah, I need to make my entrance as well!" Luka added.

"Luka," Marinette began. "Look at you, you're your own entrance. Besides, you don't have to push the cart in first, you can pull it behind you. Or, you come out, do your thing, then help Kagami bring her cart out. How's that sound?"

Luka was skeptical, but thought about the offer. "When I said I wanted an assistant," Kagami spoke up. "I didn't mean someone who already had an act. I was thinking – for lack of a better term – a normie? What about one of the stagehands?"

"Kagami," Marinette glared at her. "These people are here to help us, but they can't be in the show itself. It's too dangerous."

"All they have to do is push the cart out and hand me a sword!"

"It's not their job."

"But it's the same as what Max does for Kim!"

Luka raised his hand up. "If I may," he called across the room. "I think I could make it work. Swords could add a bit of flair to my act as well."

"Alright, great!" Marinette scribbled notes on her clipboard, not noticing Kagami roll her eyes. "So, Luka will end his act by helping Kagami with hers. Perfect! Any other business we need to attend to?"

As Marinette continued the discussion, Kagami glanced at her new assistant. The dragon man stuck his forked tongue out at her, satisfied with himself. Kagami scoffed at him, unhappy with her new arrangement.

Marinette knew what she had done, as did Adrien. *Matchmaker*. That's what he had called her. It worked for Alya and Nino, Rose and Juleka, even for Marc and Nathaniel. So why wouldn't it work for Luka and Kagami? All Marinette did was set things in motion, now it was up to the two of them to work it out for themselves.





# Confrontation

## Chapter Summary

[This chapter was originally posted on Wattpad along with the previous chapters, but I was unable to recover it. So I ended up re-writing this altogether. But I'm pretty sure it's close enough to the original. Sorry about slow updates, I have no motivation or self-discipline. Hope you enjoy, let me know in the comments if you have any pointers.]

Luka sat at his desk, removing each piercing for cleaning. The man in the mirror was familiar to him, despite the shock it would have given most. His skin was black and green, tattoos leaving no part of it uncovered. Gold and silver piercings adorned his face and body, lines of rings trailing down his forearms and all over his face. He even had two horn implants in his head, sticking out just under his black and dyed cobalt hair. It wasn't an easy look to achieve - or maintain - but he knew what he was getting into when he joined this circus.

Kagami suddenly burst into his trailer, ready to give him an earful.

"Dragon man!" she growled.

"Oh, hey Kagami," Luka said, without looking away from the mirror. "What's up?"

"What was that at the meeting?" Kagami slammed the door behind her. "You and I both know you don't want anything to do with my act!"

Luka turned around in his chair. "It was Marinette's idea, and I thought I should give you a chance." Kagami rolled her eyes as Luka turned back to his vanity mirror. "Adrien tells me you're pretty cool. Who knows? You and I might have a lot in common."

Kagami prepared to chew him out before noticing the contents of his desk. There were things to be expected: the tank that he kept his pet snake in, its pet supplies next to it, hooks and racks to hold his piercings along with cleaning equipment. But there was more she didn't understand: handwritten letters - both in his handwriting and someone else's - strewn along his desk. A desk drawer had been left open, with organized containers full of envelopes and stamps.

"Why do you have stationary?" Kagami asked.

"To write to my mom?" Luka said, plainly. "Juleka has some in her trailer, too."

*His mom?* "Wait," Kagami shook her head. "You still keep in contact with your family?"

"Yeah," Luka shrugged. "I'm not the only one."

"I know," Kagami agreed. "It's just that those of us who do usually aren't so-"

"Freakish?"

"I was going to say *extreme*," Kagami stressed. "But freakish works just as well. Most of us joined to get away from our old lives. We don't usually keep in contact with those we left behind."

Luka chuckled, before explaining, "My mom was always real supportive of Juleka and me. She actually paid for my first tattoo - my first piercing too! I don't think she knew it would lead to, well, this," he gestured broadly to himself. "But she kind of knew what direction Juleka and I were going in when we wouldn't stop talking about the circus. When we told her we were joining, she was just happy the two of us were sticking together. Growing up, we were always close. It's hard not being a protective older brother to a younger sister. Especially in a business like this, haha. Plus, we both send our mom some money from our profits now and then, just to help support her as much as she has us."

Kagami couldn't suppress a smile. "That's really sweet."

"Eh, I guess," Luka shrugged. "What about you? How'd your parents react to you joining?"

Kagami frowned, trying to turn away, but too late for Luka to miss. "I'm sorry," he said. "Too personal?"

"No, it's just," Kagami started. "I... Wasn't as lucky. My mom was pretty strict. She wanted me to live by her exact blueprint. She never let me leave the house for anything other than school, and the only extracurriculars I was allowed to do were the ones she considered 'esteemed.' So I was stuck never doing things for fun. Just for her."

"I can see why you'd want to get away from that," Luka said.

"Yeah," Kagami shrugged it off. "But I have to give her credit, if it weren't for her signing me up for fencing, I may never have found my current talent."

"Well, that's something!"

The two shared an awkward laugh. "You want to go grab a drink?" Luka asked.

Kagami was taken aback. No one had offered to hang out with her outside of the circus yet. In fact, she had hardly even spent time with anyone other than Marinette and Adrien. But Marinette never had time to go out, and Adrien was never interested in leaving.

"We don't have to if you aren't up to it," Luka said.

"No - That sounds nice," Kagami clarified. "Maybe we'll even find a tattoo parlor to add to your collection."

"Collection?" Luka chuckled.

“Whatever you call it, haha.”

“Not sure if they’ll work on me if I’ve been drinking,” Luka rubbed the back of his neck.  
“But we’ll see.”

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