Small Victories

by Baneismydragon

Summary

Chat Noir has long been making a point of checking in on the akuma victims after the fact. But this visit is somehow feels more important than the others. After all, how does one approach comforting a victimized six year old girl? But still, he can do his best to try and help those who hawkmoth has left scared and ashamed in his wake. Even if it's only a little comfort, that is still a victory.

Notes

This was my piece for the @Meowculouschatnoir Zine ^_^ It was a lot of fun to write, and I wanted to really explore the idea of chat dealing with something on his own, without Ladybug being involved or without it being about the Lovesquare romance. This was the end result ^_^ Hope you enjoy!

Chat Noir sat waiting, hidden in the branches of the tree. Below him, the precocious little girl settled herself down beside the small courtyard fountain. Her mother had disappeared back into the townhome a few minutes before with her cell phone, but he waited until she was safely absorbed in the conversation with her colleagues before venturing forth from his hiding place. He really wasn’t in the mood for an interview today.

The girl didn’t notice as he leapt silently to the ground, too caught up in waving her magic wand
over a stuffed unicorn.

Chat took a steadying breath and tried to relax. He knew he could probably turn around and disappear without anyone being the wiser. No one was expecting him. His follow up visits to the akuma victims was hardly public knowledge after all. Alya had never even posted anything about it on the Ladyblog, despite her firsthand knowledge of his extracurricular habit.

Still, he had already put off this particular visit for longer than he should have due to his own hesitance.

He took a few steps closer and let out a practiced cough, hoping that his nervousness didn’t show.

The girl spun around to look at him with wide, owlish eyes. She was so young. Far too young.

He bit his lip and forced his worries to the back of his mind. Maybe he didn’t have a lot of experience dealing with children, but that was no excuse not to follow through with his mission.

“Manon, right?” he said, coming the rest of the way forward and dropping down unto his haunches beside her.

“Chat Noir?” she asked, fidgeting nervously with her wand, “What are you doing here?”

“I came to see you,” he said with his most reassuring smile. It didn’t have the desired effect and he had to fight to keep the expression from waverin as she seemed to cower back away from him, panic in her eyes.

“Are you here to take me away and lock me up?” she said, the combination of fear and resignation making his blood boil in anger.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” he said as calmly as he could, “I am here to make sure you are doing better, like I do for all of my friends.”

She gazed at him thoughtfully. “Do… do you think I am going to turn evil again?”

“Of course not,” he replied, horrified that this girl, who couldn’t be more than six or seven years old, even had to ask such a question.

She dropped her gaze to the ground, her wand clenched in her trembling fingers like a lifeline. “All the other kids are making fun of me,” she confessed, “only grownups get turned into akumas. So they think I must be extra bad.”

“Well that’s just silly,” Chat said, “One of my best friends got turned into an akuma, and he’s the nicest person I know.” He put his hand on her shoulder comfortingly but she shrugged him off, flopping down to the ground as she let out a miserable little sniffle.

“I’m not bad, I just wanted to win. What’s so wrong with that?” she choked, looking at him with large tear filled eyes. “And now everyone is looking at me funny, and telling me that I am bad, and even mama…” she let the sentence die off, clutching her toy closer to her chest. “I just wanted to win,” she whispered.

Chat Noir was careful to keep his expression neutral, even as he felt his heart break for this girl. She reminded him of Chloe when they were both that age. A little spoiled, and a little selfish perhaps, but so full of energy and life and potential. Far too young to be branded as irredeemable by something out of her own control, especially in her own mind.
He carefully reached out and grabbed onto the wand, looking at her for silent permission before plucking it out of her hands and twirling it gently between his fingers.

“If you think about it,” he said as he looked down at it thoughtfully, “technically, you did beat me.” He looked up at her. Her mouth was pursed into a guilty pout, but the slightest tinge of hopeful pride danced behind her eyes.

“There aren’t many akumas who have done that you know,” he said holding back his own smile as she tried not to preen in excitement, “only the most powerful and most determined ones.”

“Really?” she breathed.

“Really,” he replied, without hesitation, “Hawkmoth doesn’t choose akumas because they’re bad. He can already make people bad. He chooses the people who are the strongest because how else is he going to defeat Ladybug and Chat Noir?” He tapped her on the nose with the wand and she laughed delightedly.

Her expression sobered as she took back her wand, “But Ladybug always wins.”

“Against the akumas yes,” Chat said, leaning in closer and meeting her gaze, “because she is a hero and that’s what she does. She has to win against the akumas so that Hawkmoth doesn’t get the miraculous.”

Manon nodded. “Because that would be bad,” she guessed, biting her lip fretfully.

“Definitely,” he replied solemnly. “But you know, just because Ladybug always wins against the akumas doesn’t mean she always wins at everything.”

“She doesn’t?”

“Nope. Wanna know a secret?”

She nodded eagerly.

“Ladybug is terrible at chat perché.”

“Ladybug is bad at playing tag?” Manon gasped delightedly.

“Absolutely awful,” Chat said.

To be honest he had no idea whether or not Ladybug was good at the game, it wasn’t like the topic had ever come up between them. However, he doubted the small white lie would come back to haunt him. “Even My Lady, as truly magnificent as she is, is not perfect all the time. No one is you know.”

“Wow,” she said with a brilliant smile, looking off into the distance in awe.

Chat hummed in agreement.

“You know I am really good at playing tag,” she added conspiratorially.

“Well then maybe the next time you’re having trouble with your friends, you should suggest playing a game! That way they will see how talented you are too.”

“I can do that,” she said determinedly. Her expression turned serious and he waited patiently for her to gather her thoughts.
After a few moments of silence she turned to him with a look that seemed far too calculating for her childish features.

“Chat Noir?”

“Yes?”

“Are you any good at chat perché?” she asked, as if it was a question of the utmost importance. He bit back his laughter and gave her a teasing grin.

“What do you think?” he asked slyly.

“Well, you are a cat,” she said knowingly.

“And don’t you forget it,” he said, reaching out and giving a playful little tug on one of her pigtails. She giggled happily and he felt himself relax. It looked like she was going to be okay.

“I won’t,” she smiled, before shyly adding, “Thank you, Chat Noir.”

“You are very welcome.”

He stood up, stretching a bit after being crouched over for so long and gave her a jaunty salute.

“Well I should probably be on my way.”

“OK, thanks for visiting,” she said bouncing up onto her own feet as well.

He flashed her another smile and turned to go, but paused when he felt a soft tug on his tail.

“Here,” she said, holding out her toy wand to him, “for you.”

Chat looked down at the simple, little piece of plastic, in wonder. “You’re giving this to me?” he asked.

She nodded, still holding it out with a hopeful expression, as if he would somehow refuse such a precious gift.

He bent down again and carefully took the pink toy, the sunlight glistening against the bright golden star. “Thank you, I will treasure it always.”

Her smile lit up her face and she wriggled happily at her successful offering. “Come back and visit me again sometime! Maybe we can play tag!” she called, giving him an excited wave as he quickly climbed back up the tree and to the rooftops from which he had come.

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