Hawk Moth had won.

He’d gotten his wish, and still somehow wound up losing everything anyway. And the worst part was that his only confidant in this mess was a very sullen and vindictive black cat who fully blamed him for everything wrong in the world and was more inclined to waste time heckling him than actually do anything to rectify the matter.

“Come on, I don’t blame you for everything wrong with the world. I just blame you for everything you happen to be responsible for—which in this case, happens to be everything wrong with the world.”

God, he hated that cat.

Notes

Hawk Moth won. Gabriel got his wish. That means nothing but smooth sailing from here, right?

....Right?
Be careful what you wish for. Wasn’t that the old saying? He hadn’t considered it before—never bothered to in the face of his wish. Because how could saving someone so wonderful and pure be a poor choice? How could acting out of love be wrong?

He had gotten his wish and seemed all the better for it. His wife was alive and by his side. His son was safe and had no secret life as a superhero nearly getting himself killed on a regular basis. And with his family whole and as it should be, Gabriel had no need to become a villain. He had no need for any Miraculous. As such, he had no concern that the Butterfly Miraculous was no longer in his possession—and may not have fallen into his possession in the first place. He had no need for it, after all. His wish was granted, his life was complete, and he finally felt satisfaction.

He was able to maintain that satisfaction for two months before it all started to fall apart.

A super villain appeared. One with the ability to turn people into monsters. One bearing the symbol of a butterfly. One calling himself Hawk Moth.

Only it wasn’t Gabriel.

He should have acted sooner. He should have thought things through. He had been too caught up in his own happiness that he hadn’t considered the full effects of the changes.

He got what he wanted. But it didn’t stay that way.

His wife was alive, but he was constantly at risk of losing her again with each time she tried to resolve the latest upset. Since she didn’t suffer her previous fate, she remained a hero and was regularly putting herself in danger to fight akumas that were no longer at his command.

His son wasn’t Chat Noir, which he had initially found relief in. But without the protection of the Miraculous, Adrien was more susceptible than Gabriel had realized, and he was now terrorizing Paris as an akuma under the mask of Chat Blanc while his wife desperately attempted to free him.

There was no Ladybug to hinder his plans, but now that they were complete, there was no Ladybug
to save anyone and restore order either.

He no longer had the Butterfly Miraculous—or any Miraculous for that matter. He was forced to watch from the sidelines as his wife and son fought each other—completely incapable of doing anything and leaving him with a sense of powerlessness that he hadn’t felt since losing Emilie the first time.

He thought he had won. He HAD won. He had finally gained both Miraculous and used their combined power to complete his one goal. After all of that effort, after all that heartache, he thought that was the end of it. But it’s never that easy, is it? He’d gotten his wish, but not how he wanted. This new life was a mess. His family was in tatters. He was helpless to act.

And the only thing worse was being stuck here with the cat.

“I can hear you, you know.”

God, he hated that cat.

“You’re not on my list of top favorite people either, buddy.”

The kwami was much different than Nooroo had been. It was snarky and all too eager to delight in his misfortune. Where Nooroo was gentle and submissive, this new kwami was more direct in its vocalization of disagreement with Gabriel’s choices and much more inclined to act if it didn’t like them. When it wasn’t causing chaos in its disruptions and so called ‘accidental bad luck’, it was being infuriatingly lazy—particularly when it came to finding a solution to this nightmare they were both trapped in. One would think the creature would care about its former holder.

“Funny.” The creature had snapped back at him. “I would have thought the same of you about your son.”

Gabriel held himself back from reacting. Less because the creature had a point and more because he knew full well that’s exactly what the little devil wanted and the last thing he needed was for someone to burst in out of concern only to find him seemingly yelling to himself.

Again.
When it had first appeared, he had hoped that the little kwami’s arrival was indicative that he would be granted a Miraculous he could use to try to rescue his son and save his family.


Needless to say, that hope died rather quickly with the resulting boisterous laughter that was both needlessly exaggerated and gratuitous, leaving Gabriel glaring at the thing in increasing annoyance which did nothing to stifle its cries. If anything, it only got worse as it became loud enough to get his wife’s attention and nearly led to them both being caught had Gabriel not somehow convinced her it was just a phone call with an overly enthusiastic client.

The fact that the cat’s laughter didn’t stop until well after she left certainly didn’t help his first impression of the thing. Or his desire to shove it into a shoebox.

The fact that it wouldn’t leave him alone afterwards only compounded that.

He had come to learn a couple things after this less than pleasant initial meeting. That the little creature before him was, in fact, the Black Cat kwami. That its name was Plagg. And that it hated him.

A lot.

“You can stop laughing at any time.”

“Can’t. Heehee—not until it stops being funny.” It replied, wiping away a tear.

“This is hardly humorous!” Gabriel seethed.

It only continued to grin at him. “An egotistical screwball thinking I’d actually partner with him?
That has to be the world’s best joke!” It gave another chuckle. “Thanks, I needed that laugh.”

Gabriel glowered.

“And if we’re being honest,” the little kwami added, rising from the fancy mahogany desk and lazily floating around Gabriel and ending at his impeccably quaffed hair. “You wouldn’t look good in the suit anyway.”

Oh now that was just uncalled for.

As far as first meetings went, it was easily among the most aggravating—which seemed to be the intent. And it was only the beginning. What came to follow was by no means a partnership or indeed anything resembling an amiable relationship. For all that they should have been allies, their relationship was less than mutually beneficial and more than once did Gabriel question why he continued to host the damned thing.

Then he would have the unpleasant reminder shoved in his face (either by Plagg’s words or his own traitorous thoughts) that this was his fault in the first place and that he really had little choice in the matter.

It quickly became evident over the course of their interactions that the kwami remembered everything from prior to Gabriel’s wish. While that was fortunate in that it meant he wasn’t alone in his knowledge of the world being altered, that also meant that it knew full well that he was the one responsible. And the damn thing wasted every bit of time and effort it could to verbally lambast him for it as much as possible.

If the knowledge of what he had caused wouldn’t drive him to insanity, he was sure this creature would.

“I would be able to do more to fix this if you would just work with me.” Gabriel grumbled at one point, increasingly frustrated after multiple failures. And why wouldn’t he be? He had finally gained a glimpse of hope only to have it torn away by a vindictive little brat of a kwami.

The thing continued to chortle a bit although its laughter had finally gotten under control. “Even if I were inclined to help you—which I’m not, you would still need my Miraculous to do any good—which you don’t have.”
This gave him pause. “Where is the Black Cat Miraculous?” He had wondered but hadn’t chosen to ask before given the kwami’s blatant ire.

“With the new big bad. Why do you think I’m hiding out here?”

He stared in surprise. “You can leave your Miraculous?”

It shrugged, uncaring. “We’re not supposed to, but yeah. Got any cheese?”

Stunned and somewhat overwhelmed by the strange turn this entire situation had taken, Gabriel numbly paged his assistant for some cheese—vaguely realizing that the little black thing taking up residence on his desk had apparently been the cause of his son’s sudden and rather bizarre requests for Camembert. Things were starting to make more sense now, except that it was only after all of it ceased to matter.

That was how he had come to be the reluctant caretaker of a similarly reluctant but much more antagonistic kwami. Keeping it hidden was difficult enough. Keeping it appeased so it wouldn’t do anything foolish to undermine his attempts to hide it was even more so.

He had hoped to have an ally in resolving this mess—even if it did not come with a Miraculous he could use. Instead, he found himself carrying more of a millstone quite intent on being dropped on his foot even to its own detriment. It would not speak to him if it could help it, and even on the occasions where it did (usually only after multiple offerings of its favored and horribly expensive cheeses), it offered nothing useful—simply more scathing remarks and less than helpful commentary on his failings.

And there were many more of those than he would like.

The kwami, on its end, seemed to care very little about Gabriel’s disappointment or even the situation in general as it continued to gorge itself on the disgusting cheese he had been forced to order for it just to get it to even talk to him. When it wasn’t eating, it would either ignore him or meddle in his attempts to keep some semblance of normalcy in his life.

And such was how the time passed.
“Can’t you tell me anything?”

“No.”

“Would you just tell me?”

“Still no.”

“How about a trade?”

“Camembert for information?”

“Yes!”

“No.”

“What will it take?”

“Not for all the cheese in Wisconsin.”

“Fine! Then I will handle this situation myself!”
“Yeah, because you’ve done a great job of that so far.” It replied with a roll of its eyes before it went back to its nap.

The kwami raised an eyebrow as Gabriel entered the room with a black eye.

“How’s progress on the whole ‘handling the situation yourself’ plan going?”

“Shut up.”

“Aren’t you supposed to be out there?”

“Emilie didn’t want me to be involved.”

“So?”

“She locked me in the house.”

It fell to the desk and started rolling around in laughter.

It takes a lot to force Gabriel to drink.

“Well, it could be worse. Your wife could divorce you and take your kid with her, though from the looks of it, that possibility isn’t off the table just yet.”

“Surprisingly enough,” Gabriel growled, “this isn’t helping.”
“I wasn’t trying to be helpful.”

This is enough to call for another bottle.

“…”

“…So…?”

“Not. One. Word.”

Another day, another failure. His wife had survived another skirmish, but had come no closer to
saving their son. Her being unaware of his knowledge of her identity only hindered his own attempts
to aid her or his work to rescue their son. She was so concerned for getting him out of the conflict
that neither of them had been able to effectively act to the best of their ability. The two of them ended
up unintentionally impeding one another as he attempted to reach his son while Emilie was trying to
purify him.

He had been so close, though. Close enough to try to talk to Adrien for all of a few minutes at least.
But if anything, that only made the situation worse and Gabriel was regretting acting so rashly as to
attempt to confront him directly.

On his own, Chat Blanc was confident and mischievous, acting out of a juvenile and destructive
sense of “fun”. But as soon as Gabriel made his appearance to try to appeal to him, his attitude had
completely changed. And the longer he remained, the more unsettled the boy appeared to become.
He had thought at the time he was making progress, but things quickly escalated despite Gabriel’s
attempts to calm him as Chat Blanc became more incensed and his ferociousness increased. It was as
though the boy lost all rational thought—hissing and spitting much like the creature for which he was
named.

He had expected some anger or aggression—an akuma was the emotional state made physical, after
all. But he had never expected Adrien would ever raise a hand to him, yet here he was, covered in
bruises and nursing the headache that came with colliding with the ground when the boy finally had
enough and literally threw him into a billboard featuring his own fashion line.

Gabriel groaned, covering his face in his hands and trying to mind the growing bruises. “This is a disaster.”

“You’d know all about that, wouldn’t you?” Came the caustic reply he really should have known to expect by now. No sympathy, of course. The damned thing wasn’t capable of it.

“So there was a miscalculation—”

“MISCALCULATION, he says!” It barked out with a laugh. “Did somehow the whole ‘godlike powers’ not work out as you expected?”

He tensed, anger coursing through him. “I had no way of knowing this would happen! The Miraculous didn’t come with instructions!”

It crossed its arms, clearly not buying his claim. “They came with kwami! Who told you not to do it! You even had an entire freaking instruction manual detailing what would happen! The only thing you DIDN’T have was the common sense to figure out why messing with the laws of nature would be a bad idea!”

It wasn't wrong, though that didn't stop Gabriel from wanting to throttle it. However, he needed information, not an argument. So it seemed Gabriel would have to attempt to be the rational one here. “I know you’re unhappy with me.”

“Unhappy is putting it mildly.” It said with a huff.

“And I understand why.”

If looks could kill, Gabriel was certain he would have been dead a hundred times over from the creature’s expression.
“No, I really don’t think you do. Because altering reality isn’t even beginning to touch the list of reasons why I despise you.”

He raised an eyebrow at that. “And I suppose you’re going to be the one to tell me?”

“Would you listen if I tried?” It asked with a shrug before turning away from him to go back to nibbling on the cheese he was regretting to have ordered for it. If he’d believed the thing was capable of feelings beyond spite, he’d almost have said it sounded melancholy at that. Nothing further was said as it simply shrugged at any further inquiries and remained silent.

Attempts at conversation or any sort of legitimate answers or planning ended similarly. Usually with the kwami huffing and turning away like it had any right to be the one vexed by the situation.

Having gone through more than enough for one day, Gabriel chose to return to his own room for rest and left the creature to its petulant silence in his office.

More days. More attacks. Nothing changed and Gabriel would have been inclined to pull at his hair if he wasn’t already finding himself becoming depressingly used to the current state of things.

So this was what his life had come to. Stuck watching matters get progressively worse from the confines of his office where the only one he could talk about any of this to clearly hated him and would be all too happy to spend the days mocking him. It made him miss Nooroo, and not for the first time he wondered how the little kwami was doing under the new Hawk Moth.

Which begged a question.

“Where did Hawk Moth come from?”

“Well,” came the smarmy reply from the still very angry and in no way sympathetic black cat kwami, “When some asshole finds a Butterfly Miraculous and decides to be reeeaaaaaaally stupid—”

Which begged the insight that he should perhaps stop trying to ask questions.
But he hadn’t gotten this far being ‘smart’, apparently.

“Where did this Hawk Moth come from?”

“What, you changed reality without thinking anything through and actually expected everything to be better? What kind of cotton candy dreamworld do you live in and where can I get a ticket there?”

Although even that would still involve insults.

“How is there a Hawk Moth at all in this new reality?” He rephrased. He had come to learn over time that while the kwami would needle him relentlessly given the opportunity, it would at least answer questions honestly—but only depending on how he asked. So he had to watch his wording and phrase things specifically to get a real answer, though even that would still take multiple attempts before it would relent and actually answer in any way appropriately.

“Isn’t it obvious? You never lost your wife, so you never went searching. Someone else was bound to get ahold of Nooroo eventually. You were just too lazy to follow up on that this time.”

“Do you at least know who it is?” If he can know the new Hawk Moth’s identity, he can target the other using non-magical means and hopefully help to end this situation all the sooner.

But the creature shook its head. “No clue. We kwami don’t automatically know who the other holders are. And now that my Miraculous is compromised, I can’t risk getting close enough to find out or else I’ll end up like Nooroo, and things are already bad enough as it is.”

“Then…why come here?”

Its eyes snapped up to glare at him. “I was trying to get back to my kid. But it looks like I was too late.”

He bristled at that. “He isn’t yours.” And Adrien never would be if Gabriel had any say in things.
“Isn’t he? I cared for him, consoled him, supported him, actually spent some fucking time with him—which is more than anyone can say for you!” The creature hissed back at him. “He’s more mine than he ever was yours!”

It floated up and jabbed a paw at his nose. “I stayed by his side through everything! When he was sad, when he was lonely, when he was scared or uncertain, I was there! When he was being attacked—by YOUR minions, I was the one who offered protection! I was the one who actually worked to keep him safe! And where were you?”

“I was trying to bring her back!” Gabriel shouted, taking a swipe at the damned thing because how dare it suggest he wasn’t there for his son!

“Don’t you even start trying to say you were doing it for him! You were trying to drag back the past instead of looking at the present!” It countered, spinning away from his reach and gesturing widely. “You went further than any rational person would—more than anyone SHOULD, looking into magic and fairy tales you didn’t know were actually true for an answer to get back someone who was gone while completely ignoring the people you still had!” It turned back on him, making Gabriel jump. “Your wife was gone, but your son was still there! He was always right there behind you, just waiting for any scrap of affection from you! So he waited and he worked, only to be disappointed time and again. But he still kept holding on to that hope and trying to earn your acknowledgement—more than anyone should have had to and certainly more than you deserved!”

It shook its head, glaring at Gabriel in sheer disappointment. “It’s no wonder he was akumatized this time around! If one good thing came out of this new timeline, it’s that he’s finally had enough of your treatment.”

How dare he? To question Gabriel’s parenting and his devotion to his family? “I did what I had to! And he wasn’t an akuma last time!” He huffed, angrily.

“Sure wasn’t.” It agreed, flippantly. “But things were actually better over there, so…”

This gave Gabriel pause, drawing his focus back to the main issue at hand. “So how could the events vary so drastically but still be the same?”

“Wibbly-wobbly timey-whimey.”

He drew back in confusion. “What does that even mean?”
“Wait—you mean that’s not a thing here?” It asked in surprise, only growing more vexed and pointed at him threateningly. “Oh, heaven help you if your screw up did anything to ruin that series!”

Now he was completely lost. “What series?”

“You know. That series? The one your son used to like before he was TURNED INTO AN AKUMA!”

“Enough! A television series is not relevant here!”

“Your son being an akuma is!”

“And I am trying to fix that and make things right!”

“No, you’re only trying to clear away a portion of the mess you’ve made so you don’t have to deal with it! If it weren’t for the fact that this is affecting you directly because of your wife and kid, you wouldn’t even be discussing this right now!” It shouted, throwing up its arms in frustration.

Gabriel slammed a fist on his desk, sending a tablet clattering to the floor though he ignored it in favor of the irritant before him. “They’re the only reason I even did this in the first place!”

“And look how that turned out! You prevented yourself from losing them one way only to risk losing them another!”

“And what would you do then?!” Gabriel demanded, growing frustrated and desperate to end this conversation if nothing else.

It only gave him a look like it thought he was an idiot—which he had no doubt it likely did. “Your wife is a Miraculous user. You know she’s a Miraculous user. Tell her what’s going on!”

This actually took Gabriel aback. A simple answer, and yet one he had not previously explored. One he had not wanted to. Emilie loved him, and like him would do anything for family. But if she
“And say what?” The fashion mogul uttered in a defeated tone.

“The truth.” It responded. He could almost hear the ‘duh’, like it should have been obvious.

In retrospect, maybe it should have been.

Gabriel froze, actually uncertain for the first time. His analytical mind plotting out the possible course of events that could follow.

It was the most straightforward solution, clearly. If Emilie knew he knew about the Miraculous and her involvement, they could work together instead of clashing when they each try to act. Emilie was distracted in the conflict because he kept getting in the way. He was similarly distracted when trying to act on his own because he was so fearful of her finding out.

But that brought back the matter of why he did not want her to know.

A mother would die for her son. But to find out that he did this—caused their son to become this just to save her?

He wasn’t sure she would forgive him. He knew he wouldn’t be able to in her shoes.

“I can’t.”

Plagg frowned at that, but didn’t seem surprised. “These things have a tendency of getting out, and you’re far from subtle—about as subtle as a brick to the face.”

Gabriel sighed and leaned back, resting his head on the back of his chair, but didn’t comment.
Time passed and animosity remained. At the very least, the stodgy silence was diminished. Gabriel continued with his paltry efforts to little effect. But at the very least, his unwilling companion had ceased to endlessly mock him for them. With each day that went by with no change, it grow more weary. If Gabriel had believed it capable of feelings, he would have thought it to be concerned.

A thought occurred to Gabriel at one point as he was overlooking the latest news report about the heroes facing yet another akuma. They were different heroes from the Ladybug and Chat Noir of before, but there were still two of them and the akuma they fought appeared familiar to him.

This gave him pause and made him stop to consider something he hadn’t before.

“Why did things turn out this way?”

“You mean besides the obvious?” It shot back before taking another nibble of the Camembert.

“No, this is serious.” Gabriel frowned at it, pointing to the screen. “This is a new reality. New Hawk Moth. New heroes. But for all that things should be different, they’re still somehow the same.” He had heard the saying the more things change the more they stay the same, but that couldn’t the case, could it?

To his surprise, it actually put the cheese down and turned to face him from its seat on his desk.

“You knew there would have to be a balance.”

“Yes, I was aware—”

“No, clearly you weren’t. Did you really think people could be traded so easily? That it’d be as simple as your wife being restored to life in exchange for some random stranger you’ve never met and won’t have to deal with the fallout from? No! No, no no! It’s hardly that self-contained!” It scoffed with a shake of its head. “See, the universe likes balance and hates it when people try to mess with that balance because they think they know better. But balance isn’t just about the number of lives or the perceived importance of individuals to a single person—that’s much too small minded.”

At his look of surprise, the kwami floated up until it was eye level with him before continuing, gesturing widely with its paws for emphasis.
“It’s the series of events, the roles people play, the overall impact! It wouldn’t be enough for you to switch someone else’s life for hers and have that be the end of it where you’re happy, they’re sad, and everyone simply has to deal with that. Because it wasn’t just one life that was traded, it was how everyone else was affected by that life as well! The missing wife, the grieving husband who turns to villainy, the heroes who step forth to stop him, and all the shenanigans and drama that arise from the ensuing conflict between them! You know, the good ole status quo!”

It did make a strange, twisted sort of sense. Though he hardly wanted to admit the cat was right, he had indeed believed it would be a simple matter of reviving his wife with no other effects. He hadn’t even been aware another life would be taken, and honestly, would hardly have cared even if he had known.

Seeing that it had his attention, it continued. “Why do you think we try so hard to prevent anyone from doing it? It’s because it becomes a cycle of continuous world-changing that alters reality as we know it while never actually resolving anything! No solution is made! Nothing moves forward! And it’s a major pain to be stuck living the same year over and over regardless of any changes made to it that are actually pretty damn minor in the wake of an eternal time loop!”

“So there is still a Hawk Moth.” Gabriel asked, turning away from the annoyance to his desk to glance through the book he fortunately managed to retain possession of through the change.

“Yeeeee.” Came the annoyed drawl of one who was dealing with someone abnormally slow.

He dutifully chose to ignore it. “But because I wasn’t the one to lose anyone and go searching for the Miraculous, it’s not me.”

The cat rolled its eyes and settled down on the edge of the desk where the cheese was still waiting. “Given that your hideout is missing and some other lunatic is making akumas without your input, I’m gonna guess you’re not.”

Gabriel ignored the sarcasm and smell of cheese as he flipped through the pages of the book until it settled on one in particular—the Fox, if he was accurate. He needed to focus and work this out if he was going to be able to come up with a suitable plan. And right now, he needed to clarify the full extent of the changes. “And there are still heroes.”

“Obviously.”
“But they aren’t Chat Noir and Ladybug.”

“Clearly they aren’t.”

“Nor are they Adrien or his former partner.”

“Them either.”

“But why?”

Plagg shrugged. “Different circumstances lead to different choices. I can’t speak for the girl who was Ladybug, but your kid was chosen after he escaped your suffocating and overall horribly misplaced sense of overprotection. If dead mom wasn’t dead, he may not have had reason to do that.”

So he had affected more than he thought in regards to his son’s destiny and prevented him from becoming a Miraculous user. He wanted to be pleased to have spared his child that stress and pain, but the fact that this led to him becoming akumatized instead gave him very little to be happy about among everything else going wrong with this situation.

“Then why are there different Miraculous active as heroes instead of the Black Cat and Ladybug?”

Here, the cat kwami sent him a dry look. “Part of it may have to do with the fact that since a certain someone used our combined powers to alter all of reality, we’re pretty drained and far from in the best condition to try to fight or use any of our powers to prevent someone else from doing the same. Guess who we have to thank for that.”

Gabriel was hardly impressed. “And yet you’re here.”

“Not by choice, mind you.” It sniped before taking a bite of the cheese. Clearly it was a petulant little demon.

“You’re active.” Gabriel reiterated. “You’re not dormant and sleeping in your ring.”
“Wish I was, but with the ring being part of an akuma right now, that wouldn’t be wise.”

“But you’re able to help that.” As much of an irritation as the creature was choosing to be, it said something that it was able to be active and had been able to abandon its Miraculous. Though why it chose to come to him of all people if it hated him so much was a question all its own.

“You should be grateful. If I wasn’t, Chat Blanc would be an unstable self-destructive mess instead of simply Hawk Moth’s favorite lackey at this point.”

For the sake of his own sanity, the father had to try very very hard not to think further on that.

“So how are you active if you are so drained?”

For once, the small cat creature actually appeared pensive instead of looking like it wanted to tear Gabriel’s head off. “Tikki took the brunt of it.”

“Tikki?” How curious. That was not a name he’s heard yet. “Is that the Ladybug Kwami?”

The smaller being didn’t answer, merely turning away and giving every indication that he didn’t want to speak further. Unfortunately, this discussion was not over and Gabriel needed more information if he was going to be able to take any steps from here.

“Why is Adrien an akuma?”

“You mean besides the fact that his father is a horrible excuse for a person?”

“You know what I mean.”

“And you know I’m angry with you and not feeling sensitive to your needs.”

“This is important.”

“So is my mealtime.”
Gabriel sighed and set down yet another container of that blasted product the thing so enjoyed.

“Now then, let’s try this again. Why is Adrien an akuma?”

“Akumas still function the same.” It stated as it popped a piece of the cheese into its gaping mouth. “He got upset and one was attracted to him. That is kind of what akumas do.”

“How is Adrien an akuma when he’s Chat Noir?”

“Should be plain to see. He wasn’t a Miraculous wielder this time around—for obvious reasons.” Here he shot a knowing glare that Gabriel chose not to respond to. “So no, he’s not technically Chat Noir, and no Chat Noir means there was nothing to protect him from the new Hawk Moth.”

“That doesn’t explain how he is still an akuma. It has been over a month and he is still Chat Blanc. None of my akumas ever lasted more than a day.”

“Does that say more about the heroes or you?”

“Just answer the question!”

Plagg rolled its eyes. “The shorter answer is that the balance of the universe means the plot has to stay the same and the roles still have to exist despite the switch in players. Only problem is—other than morals and time/space shenanigans—just because new people have been stuck with these roles doesn’t mean they’ll be nearly as good at them. Or as bad in the case of the new Hawk Moth given that he’s already one Miraculous away from rewriting the world a second time when it took you over a year to even get that far.”

“I am well aware of that issue, thank you.” Gabriel bit out through gritted teeth.

“Really? You sure? Because I’m sure I could put together a slide show if you need me to.”

“That won’t be necessary.”
“Or a puppet show, since that seems more up your alley.”

“Enough!”

“Hey, I don’t judge.”

He absolutely does, the little devil.

Nooroo had been passive. Quiet, skittish, and eager to placate Gabriel in the midst of his many failures. He had been downright pleasant in comparison to this.

It, in true cat fashion, ignored his growing ire and continued. “This time, we’re in a reality where someone competent is Hawk Moth.”

“I was—”

“I said someone competent!”

Gabriel frowned at the insult but still mulled over the rest of the kwami’s words. For all that it may have had a point, there was something off.

It couldn’t be enough that there was simply a different Hawk Moth. His various akumas had managed to bring all of Paris to its knees. He’d come close to success multiple times. The public was easily cowed. The police weren’t even a speed bump to his goals. There was not even so much as an obstacle to his takeover. Even without the Miraculous, there had been plenty of akumas that had successfully gotten him control of the city. Nothing ever seemed to truly stand in his way.

Nothing except—

That’s when it hit him.
“Ladybug…”

His eyes widened. Of course! Why hadn’t he considered it before?

His multitude of attempts in his time as Hawk Moth were always subverted—not because of himself or Chat Noir or circumstances, but because of the girl who was Ladybug. She had been the central cause of the failure of his plans back then. With nothing more than a random object summoned by her creation powers, she was able to defeat his warriors time and again. She was the one who constantly restored the city to normal and undid any of the damage caused. If she was active now, it could change everything!

“Ladybug!”

The cat blinked up at him. “Eh?”

“That’s it! That’s the solution!” Gabriel exclaimed. “It’s Ladybug!”

“Right away, no.” Immediately it realized what his ‘solution’ entailed and tried to nix that line of thinking.

“Every time! Every plan, every akuma, every attempt—it was HER!”

“Stop this. Stop this right now.”

“If I can just find her—”

“She’s not Ladybug anymore!” The cat tried to insist nearly in a panic. “You won! She lost! She doesn’t have her Miraculous anymore and none of her memories or experience carried over with her!”

The creature flew up right to his face, jabbing angrily at his nose. “If you go after her, she’s just going to be a normal girl.”
“She was a normal girl before as well. She became something greater. She can again.”

“Let me reiterate: a normal girl who is going to be freaked out that some stranger is coming after her wanting her to run around the city in a spandex suit with magical powers which—in case I have to remind you since I’m sure I do—SHE DOESN’T HAVE ANYMORE!”

“If Adrien still had his Miraculous, then it’s fully plausible that Ladybug may have retained hers as well!” Gabriel continued, ignoring Plagg’s outburst.

“Would you just listen for ONCE in your life!” It shouted at him in a desperation that actually gave him pause.

Seeing that it had his attention, it grabbed his cheeks and looked him straight in the eyes. “She’s not Ladybug anymore! She is just a scared girl trying to survive as best she can in a city constantly under siege!”

“She can change that!” Gabriel exclaimed as he pushed away from its hold to return to the book that had offered him so much insight.

Not to be deterred, the kwami flew down to sit right on top of the book and glared up at him, pointlessly continuing the argument when his mind was already set. “You don’t know that!”

How could he make it understand? Much to its annoyance, he lifted the creature from the book with one hand and used the other to turn to the page that featured the spotted heroine. "Ladybug is the bearer of all the powers of creation. If anyone can counter Chat Blanc’s destructive nature, it would be her!"

The kwami forwent a response in favor of swiping at the hand holding it, forcing Gabriel to release it. But he was not to be deterred. Everything was right there, even if he couldn't read it completely, he knew this was the answer he had been seeking.

“Don't you see? The situation isn’t beyond salvaging!” He insisted, gesturing to the picture of the warrior on the page.

Unimpressed with his claim, it started ticking off claws as it counted. “Your son is an akuma. Ladybug is in no position physically or mentally to purify him. The current Hawk Moth has a tighter
grip on the city than you ever managed, and seems particularly fond of using Chat Blanc as one of his top enforcers with very little intent to loosen that control. The ‘Situation’ as you call it is way past salvaging at this point!”

“But she can help!”

“And how exactly do you expect that to work, huh? Go around stalking a teenage girl, trying to convince her she’s a magical girl in another world with the power to make everything sunshine and rainbows?!”

“It would at least be a starting point!” He exclaimed, not willing to let go of perhaps the one decent plan he’s been able to turn to since this entire mess started. “As Ladybug, she is the greatest force to counter the akuma and the only one who can fully restore order! The entire reason I failed as much as I did in the previous timeline was because of her!”

“Yes, because it had absolutely nothing to do with you being an overall crappy villain. Or the fact that the very first thing you decided to do with a Miraculous was become a supervillain.”

He intently ignored the snipe. “There’s every likelihood that things wouldn’t be to the state they are now if she had still been one of the heroes this time around. She was the reason that Paris was able to function as well as it did with the constant attacks since she could undo any of the damage! She is what we need right now! You know that! If you could just tell me who she is—”

It turned away in a huff. “I’m bad with names.”

“I can bring you photos and you can point her out—”

“I’m bad with faces, too.”

Gabriel glared at the cat kwami. “You are going to be insufferable, aren’t you?”

Plagg glared right back. “If you think this is what insufferable is, then clearly I have to up my game.”
“You know I’m right!”

“Whether you’re right or not,” the kwami hissed, not willing to in any way agree with the man, “the problem is that you think you’re entitled to this! You’re trying to play things again! Using people to fulfill your needs and obsessing over things you can’t change! Instead of moving on or going forward, you try to force your will on everything else to get the result you want even if it’s not healthy for anyone!”

Gabriel simply ignored him and left the room. He didn’t want to hear this. He didn’t need to hear this from some know it all magical creature with an axe to grind about his parenting.

So he attempted to locate the girl on his own. But without a current Ladybug being active, he had no leads. And he had little information to go on from what he knew prior to the change. He soon realized—or rather was forced to acknowledge that for all his current resources and efforts, he had absolutely no way of determining the identity of the girl who was once Ladybug in a world she no longer was. Too much had changed, and he was unable to reconcile anything he knew of the hero in the previous timeline to any specific individual in this new reality. If not for Plagg’s vague comments, he wouldn’t even be sure she was still alive.

He didn’t want to admit it, but he was stuck. Not for the first time, he cursed his short sightedness and that he didn’t take steps to verify Ladybug’s identity when he finally obtained her Miraculous. Eventually, he gave in to his desperation and turned back to the insufferably smug creature in a vain hope at obtaining answers.

“Isn’t there something you can tell me? Anything at all?” He did not beg. He was not so low as to beg for answers. But damned if he wasn’t close. For his son…yes, he would beg if he had to, but everything in him railed against showing weakness to this creature and his pride and anger kept him from that final step. He knew full well it wouldn’t make a difference even if he did.

To its credit, it seemed to consider his words.

“She should have been mine, did you know that?”

Gabriel blinked in surprise at this strange response, uncertain what the kwami meant and what it was getting at.
Plagg on the other hand, smiled softly to itself. “That girl made for a pretty good Ladybug, don’t get me wrong. Optimistic, supportive, nurturing, and all around more inclined to the ‘high road’ that Tikki so loves. She took to the fortune and creation powers like a champ and was generally able to come up with the best plans and ways to use what she had to the greatest effects—to the point that she could have accomplished just as much outside of the mask as she could in it.”

It paused, looking up wistfully and thinking of things that could have been. “Yeah, she was a good pick for Ladybug, but she had all the makings of an amazing Black Cat given the chance. Protective, sneaky, graceful, territorial, cautious, observant—everything a good Cat should be. And she had a sort of resiliency in facing bad situations that would have made her perfect for the bad luck of the Black Cat Miraculous. I could have molded her into something extraordinary if she’d been put in my hands.”

It nodded contemplatively. “Similarly, Tikki would have made something good out of your kid as well. She’s all about order and structure and whatnot, and your kid was always by the book in that regard—you made real sure of that.” It added with a brief glare in Gabriel’s direction before softening again. “With their personalities, they would have gotten along splendidly. She would have made an amazing Ladybug out of him.”

It smiled, almost fondly for a brief moment before remembering where it was and growing somber.

“But the thing about the Miraculous is that when it comes to picking and choosing who we go to, we tend to wind up with the people who need us rather than the other way around. And of the two of us, Adrien needed me more.”

Gabriel bristled at that. “My son did not need some miscreant who encouraged him to put himself in danger on a regular basis!”

“He needed someone who helped him to assert himself!” Plagg countered.

“He was perfectly able to be assertive!”

“Only when it didn’t inconvenience you!” It sneered at him. “And lets not mince facts, he was always an inconvenience to you! You barely spoke to him! Hell, you spoke more to him through that secretary of yours than anything! You dictated every aspect of his life without so much as a thought to how he felt about any of it, and you willfully ignored any of his attempts to protest. Anything he tried to say fell on deaf ears. His wishes, his hopes, his desires for what to do with his own life didn’t matter! And through it all, you were completely blind as to just how miserable he was!”
They both glared at one another for a good half minute before the kwami chose to continue its initial point. “It doesn’t matter who would work best with the powers, but how they can grow the most with the kwami. Tikki’s a pillar of stability. Stern and motherly and lecturing—always with the lectures, I kid you not. But other than the spurts of creativity she tends to inspire in her bugs, Tikki wouldn’t be able to offer your kid anything except for more of the same he’d been dealing with up to that point. More responsibilities, more structure, more order, more nagging. Sure, she’d be a bastion of support for him—and certainly more than anyone else in his life at that point had been giving him, but Tikki’s thing is that she tends to try to caretake for her holders and push them to the straight and narrow, and Adrien’s had more than enough people doing that for him.”

It looked up at Gabriel, a stormy look in its eyes.

“I went to Adrien because he needed me. Tikki’s girl needed someone who could reign her in—help her focus and look past her initial impulses. But Adrien needed someone who would push him out—to encourage him to break out of the cage he was trapped in and actually have fun for once in his life. You know, fun? That thing children are supposed to have? I honestly didn’t think you did, since you never let Adrien have any. But then you went and fully encouraged it in all of your minions—and what does that say when you’re encouraging everyone else BUT your own child to have a good time?”

“I will not have one of you creatures speak to me in such a way!” Gabriel thundered.

“You mean like how you talk down to everybody else in general? And not even because they’re doing anything wrong, but just so you can upset them enough that you can use your dark powers on them? It kind of says something when your child’s happiness or well being ranked as less important than making people miserable so you could manipulate them!”

“That’s not true!”

“You refused to let your son have a freaking birthday party just to upset his friend enough to turn him into one of your minions! Do you have any idea how that made Adrien feel?”

“I was not going to let a number of unknown miscreants in my home!”

“So you couldn’t let them arrange something elsewhere? There are events and plenty of places that would have been happy to host them, but you refused to let him even celebrate the day of his own existence! And that’s not even getting started on the birthday gift. You know the one, right? Hah! I’d
be surprised if you did, seeing as how your assistant stole it from one of Adrien’s classmates to claim it was from you because you couldn’t be bothered to get him anything yourself! Hell, it says something when the girl clearly cared more about his feelings than you did since she never told him the truth just to let him be happy!”

That the gift he ordered Nathalie to get was stolen was not something he was aware of, and if this was that same world, he likely would have stern words with her about that. But that did beg the question—

“How do you know who it was from?”

The pest shrugged and looked away from him. “I could smell it.”

He rolled his eyes because of course the little monster could.

“She made that gift for him with her own two hands. Every part—from the materials to the time and energy she put into it were all for your child solely with him and his happiness in mind. It was more thought and love in one single gift than you’d shown him in years, and she never said a word even after she discovered what you’d done! She stayed quiet and let you take the credit just so Adrien could believe that his father gave a damn about him! What the hell does that say about you?”

“Nathalie was supposed to have—”

“Nathalie is not his father!” It shouted at him. “She’s not the one who he desperately wants attention and approval from! And she’s not the one who is supposed to be raising him! THAT’S YOU! But where have you been?”

“I’ve been trying to make my family whole—”

“By neglecting the only one you have left! And what if it hadn’t worked, huh? What if you’d managed to get both miraculous and it still didn’t bring her back? What then? Would it still have been worth it or would you have neglected and outright tortured your own son for nothing?”

Gabriel froze.
Plagg saw this, but didn’t relent. “You were a terrible father! The absolute worst! And that’s not even counting all the times you nearly killed your own son with your antics! Hell, how many of his friends did you turn into monsters without a thought of whether he would be in the crossfire?”

“I never meant for him to be a target!”

“But you never really tried to see if he was even potentially in the line of fire!”

“I didn’t know he was Chat Noir!” He had suspected at times, but for the most part he hadn’t actually known until the end.

But that didn’t matter to the cat.

"I'm not even talking about when he was Chat Noir!" It shouted, actually knocking the cheese reel aside to Gabriel's surprise. "It was when he was Adrien! Just plain Adrien going to school or events where you set your akumas to attack people without considering he would be there!"

He didn't always know his son's schedule or where he would be, but he had been certain that he could reign in his akuma if Adrien was in danger. And even if anything had happened, he would have been able to fix it once he had both Miraculous in hand. "I would have protected him. I could easily have freed him from anything the akumas did. I would not have allowed it if I was not certain he would be fine."

It gritted its teeth in frustration. “How could you have been so certain? You didn’t hold back! You didn’t even try to change tactics! And when you did know, you put him in danger!”

“It was just to prove if he was Chat Noir” And it turned out that he was, so it wasn’t like he was wrong.

“YOU HAD HIM FALL TO HIS DEATH TO PROVE A POINT!” It bordered on shrieking, possibly the first time he had ever seen it truly angry and not simply spiteful.

He looked away, hiding his hands and their growing tremors. “He wasn’t in any true danger.”
“You could have KILLED him!” Plagg shouted, pointing at Gabriel accusingly. "And what if he HAD transformed? What then? He would have revealed his identity in front of the entire world! How well do you think THAT would have turned out? He’d have an even bigger target on his back since people would know to go after him as a civilian! Did you even think of that?!”

“I would have protected him!” Gabriel insisted, ire growing.

“Because you’ve done such a wonderful job of that so far!” It hissed, unimpressed.

“I was simply trying to confirm my suspicions!” He argued. And really, Adrien should never have been out there in the first place.

“And that makes it okay? What if he transformed, then what?”

“Then I would know.

“AND SO WOULD THE WORLD!” It screeched back.

Silence.

The two glared at each other, as if attempting to will the other to burst into flames with mere thought.

One of the two might very well have been capable of that.

Fortunately, it instead took a breath in an attempt to force itself to calm. “If I’ve learned anything from my time with you, it’s that you don’t think things through. You create grand, overly elaborate plans but don’t consider the consequences. Say Adrien is revealed to the world—then what? Just keep him locked in his room for the rest of his life?”

Gabriel forced a neutral expression. That hadn’t…not been a possibility he had considered.

As if it could read his mind, it glared up at him. “Even if he isn’t allowed out into the world, the world is still going to be after him. What would you even be able to do against real criminals, huh?
“Can you protect him from poison? A sniper? A BOMB? Plenty of people out there have even less scruples than you do—if this new Hawk Moth should have taught you anything, it’d be that!” It started off speaking lowly but was shouting again by the end, pulling at his—its ears in frustration.

“What lengths do you think people would be willing to go to in order to get ahold of that type of power? Do you really think murdering a model is really beneath them? That they wouldn’t be perfectly willing to take his life if they thought it was the only thing between them and all the powers of a Miraculous at their command?"

“I would have confiscated the Miraculous once it was confirmed.”

“And you think that would have made him safe? People are stupid! They won’t care it’s gone, they’ll care it was there and assume he’d have some means to getting it again.”

Gabriel frowned at that. “I would have sent him outside of Paris. They wouldn’t know where to find him.”

It shook its head. “Even if you did, do you really think he would be grateful? His friends and family would be all the more in danger for it because desperate people will do anything, target anything, lash out at anything to get what they want! And that’s not even getting into the mess it’d have left Ladybug with. Not only would she have been stuck dealing with your akuma alone, but she’d have everyone else homing in on her as well now that the people know for sure that their heroes are just kids.”

“She wasn’t a concern.” Or at least she wouldn’t have been for long. Every advantage was necessary to defeat her, and under those circumstances, even the reveal of his son would have been to his advantage. Once he had her Miraculous and altered reality, none of it would have mattered anyway.

It seemed to catch on to his train of thought as it glowered at him. “Right, right. Because that would have only been to your benefit.”

“It ceases to matter anymore regardless.” Gabriel stated flatly. Because going over what-ifs and could have beens are pointless in this new world and served no use other than for the kwami to try to instill a belated sense of guilt for actions he did not regret.

No matter how badly his hands were shaking.
Another day. Another failure. And he was only growing ever more desperate.

He had managed to get close to his son again—enough that they were able to speak. He had tried yet again to encourage Adrien to return home. But despite his heartfelt words, nothing he said could pierce Chat Blanc’s rage.

And he certainly did rage. The things he had shouted at him hit Gabriel hard. And as much as he wanted to simply chalk it up to the akuma’s influence, he knew full well from his time as Hawk Moth that anything the akuma said or did was still based on everything the victim felt.

That meant that everything Chat Blanc said, Adrien truly believed.

As much as Gabriel tried to force the encounter from his mind, he could still vividly hear the words his son had shouted at him, leaving him with tremors he couldn’t calm.

While he somewhat suspected Adrien might have held a level of resentment towards him, he still found himself shaken by the encounter and the things that were said. He had thought that Adrien perhaps remembered the previous timeline or that some other irritation in his life had resulted in the akuma targeting him. He hadn’t given much thought to how his own attempts to keep Adrien safe would have negatively impacted him. Once he had realized a new Hawk Moth had risen, he had tried to take steps to protect his family—increased security, limited their travel beyond the walls of the mansion, and rejected public school in favor of private lessons for Adrien. And to think that his very attempts might have been the cause of his corruption…

Had he really caused this like he had caused everything else?

No, no, no! He found himself turning to the Book for answers, searching for anything—ANYTHING that would give him guidance and hopefully tell him this claim was wrong.

Seeing his frazzled state and how he immediately rushed for the ancient book he should already have memorized by this point, Plagg rolled its eyes. “Looking for another trick to pull?”

Gabriel didn’t even look up at him from his fevered searching. “There has to be some way to fix this!”

“Haven’t you figured out anything yet?” It hissed at him. "You can’t keep turning to magic to fix
"Given that magic is the source of my troubles so far, it seems an apt solution if not the only one." He snapped his gaze up to the kwami. "If you would just tell me who Ladybug is, this could all be over by now!"

"Could it really? Or is that just wishful thinking on your part?" It jeered, disgruntled.

"Of course it could!" Wasn’t that obvious? "If I know who she is, I can locate and explain the situation—"

Plagg cut him off. "So you’re telling me you would rather talk to a teenage girl than your own wife?"

"YES!" He froze, realizing what he just said. "NO!" He gritted his teeth and grabbed at his hair. "How did you get so awful?"

It grinned cheekily. "Your son’s friends. You know, back when he had friends at any rate."

Gabriel grumbled under his breath. "I knew they’d be trouble."

"Really?" Plagg asked with a smirk. "Because I thought Adrien was quite the good influence on them."

How ironic was it that while it was the other who was supposed to be the cat of the two, it was Gabriel who was feeling rather inclined to try to claw someone’s face off.

"Listen." Gabriel started, trying to be the reasonable one and get back to the original point while holding back his growing anger. "It’s been months. MONTHS. And nothing has improved."

"I am aware." It replied, neutrally.

Seeing they had at least that in agreement, Gabriel continued. "Hawk Moth has Chat Blanc as a constantly active minion now and isn’t inhibited in making another akuma in addition to him! The
heroes currently active are barely able to handle just one akuma, and that’s even with my wife helping out despite her experience and training. None of them are a match for Adrien as he is and they certainly aren’t going to be able to purify him anytime soon. They need help.”

But Plagg only shook its head. “Throwing another kid into the mix isn’t going to help matters.”

“But we could find Ladybug and—”

“And what? Restore the world to how it was? Would you really be satisfied with that?”

He bit his tongue, unable to respond. He didn’t have an answer for that. How could he? After everything he’d done and even after the harm it had caused, would he really be willing to give it all up?

“This is the reality you asked for, so this is the reality you have to face.” It told him, calmly. “You need to think long and hard about what you’re wanting to accomplish here.”

What he wanted to accomplish?

He forced himself to relax and mull over the ancient being’s words.

What he wanted was simple.

He wanted his family whole.

He wanted his wife safe.

He wanted his son restored.

That was what he wanted. That had been all he’d ever wanted. If he could at least rescue his son from the akuma possessing him, he would be satisfied. Even if—
He froze, realizing.

Even if it meant Adrien became Chat Noir again.

Yes. He despised the thought regardless, but he would gladly take Adrien being Chat Noir over Chat Blanc any day.

And there was only one way to accomplish that.

Only one person who COULD save him…

“Could Ladybug resolve this?” He finally asked.

It sighed, weary. “Trying to ‘fix’ things won’t cut it. It’d cause more problems if we did.”

“But could Ladybug resolve this?”

Plagg hesitated.

Gabriel continued, steadfast in his resolution. “What it comes down to is that this is the reality we must now live in, even if there are things we don’t like about it. Adrien is an akuma. Neither you nor I have the power to save him. But in another lifetime, Ladybug did. And in this lifetime, Ladybug can.”

It was unfair. It was cruel and unfair and horribly selfish of him, he knew that. To bring a girl into this battle because of a life she now never lived because of him in the first place was horrible. But if it saved Adrien, wouldn’t it be worth it?

And if she was still Ladybug—or even anything like the Ladybug she had once been, wouldn’t she feel the same?

“You’re not thinking this through.” The cat warned him.
He closed the book with a sense of finality. “No, I think perhaps I’m finally seeing the situation for what it is.”

“No, you’re not. Because you’re still focused on Adrien.” It looked up at him, solemn. “And I get that, I do. I don’t want him to stay like this anymore than you do, but there’s something you need to consider.”

“Right now, I’m more worried about saving my son.” Gabriel retorted, angry that even now the creature would try to impede him. It had been months. He could tell the kwami had been growing more worried as time passed and the situation remained unresolved. The bite of its spitefulness dulled with time and if anything, there were a few points where it almost seemed to want to help him. That may very well have been wishful thinking on his part, however, as even now it refused to help him.

It simply shook its head. “Here’s what should worry you. You’re trying to bring the Ladybug back into the spotlight without considering what it will mean. See, bad enough if this new Hawk Moth rewrites history again and starts everything over in a new cycle and thus setting off yet another game of ‘Miraculous Merry Go Round’.” It started, waving a claw in a circle to emphasize the last point. It looked up at him with a shrug as it continued. “Maybe you’ll remember this time. Maybe you won’t. But what should really concern you if he wins isn’t what will happen the next time around if he does make the same wish you did, it’s what will happen THIS time around if he chooses NOT to.”

He didn’t understand what it was talking about. Something told him he should, given the slowly creeping feeling he was getting of something terrible in the works. How it could be worse than the current state of things, he didn’t know. But he needed to if they were going to be on the same page. “What do you mean?”

“You wished that your wife never left.” Plagg explained. “So she didn’t, and history changed to accommodate that new route with someone else vanishing in her place. But different people respond differently to situations and wish differently for things if given the opportunity. There’s every chance this new Moth could reset things and we’ll be going through this all over again. But there’s also every chance that he DOESN’T make the wish to reset everything again—in which case, we’re going to end up with a super villain with ultimate power and a world to play in.”

He still didn’t see the issue. He had already been in that position and when both Miraculous were in hand, the thought to not use them for his original wish never crossed his mind. Surely this would be the same?

“What are you talking about?”
“You immediately chose to become a super villain and decided to get the Miraculous not only to get your wife but to rule the world in true super villain fashion.” It gave him a dry look. “Seeing as how this is a much more intelligent villain than the one who came before him, he could decide he rather likes having a city under his thumb and two Miraculous users at his beck and call. He’s already got one in Adrien, and the Black Cat and Ladybug were specifically meant to be a team—and an unmatched one at that.”

Gabriel felt something inside him go cold at that realization. He hadn’t wanted to think of what could happen if the madman won before now, and certainly hadn’t even considered what said madman would choose to do. He was dangerous in a way Gabriel had never been—had never wanted to be, and was already one step closer to success in half the time it had taken Gabriel as Hawk Moth to accomplish.

He had thought finding and restoring Ladybug to some capacity could undo the damage—and perhaps she could. But once in the open, the new Hawk Moth and Chat Blanc would have a direct target. Instead of spreading out over a city, they could focus in on the Ladybug holder. The last piece they needed—in more ways than one.

It finally hit him just how badly things could go.

“If he gets the Ladybug Miraculous—”

“He’s going to get Ladybug, too.”

Ladybug, who was the main instrument of his defeat time and again with nothing more than her wits and random luck. Ladybug, who was the only one able to truly purify the akumas and save those possessed and their victims. Ladybug, who had the power to restore the world to its previous state and was the only one who could keep things in some semblance of order even in the middle of the worst of attacks. Before the change, she had been the biggest hurdle to his victory. Now, she was the only hope he had of saving his son and protecting his family. But if the new Hawk Moth got to her as well…

That was not an enemy he wanted to face. Not like this.

He clenched his hands in an attempt to hide how unsteady they were. “But she doesn’t remember being Ladybug! You’ve even said as such!”
“She doesn’t right now, no. But trying to bring her back when she still doesn’t remember anything won’t help matters. It doesn’t protect her now and it won’t make her not just as dangerous if Hawk Moth gets to her. Chat Blanc is already evidence enough of that.

He felt he was grasping at straws at this point, but there was one benefit to this mess, it was that he was the only one with clear knowledge and memory of the timeline before. He almost felt himself starting to calm as he remembered this. “At least she’s an unknown variable at this time. We could find her and start training her in secret. Hawk Moth has no knowledge of her and no one even knows to start looking.”

Plagg didn’t seem heartened by this. He simply looked up at Gabriel solemnly.

“But Adrien does.”

Gabriel froze, eyes widening in horror at the realization. Because of course Adrien would recall his partner—he had a Miraculous still and had been downright obsessed with the girl previously. He was fully aware of how much Adrien spent on her merchandise. Any free moment he had was spent on the Ladyblog or other internet sites discussing her deeds and debating her identity. And how many times had he put himself in danger for her sake? His love for her was clear to everyone except the heroine herself and worried him in how similar it had been to his own love for his wife.

Adrien loved that girl. And if some things truly carried over, his feelings would no doubt be one of them.

Plagg nodded, seeing that Gabriel finally understood. “The Black Cat Miraculous is a half of a whole. Romantics would call it fate or destiny, soulmates and the like. Which sounds all nice and overly cheesy in theory—and not the good kind either.” It shook its head and looked back up at him. “But what it comes down to is that if Adrien retains anything of his time as Chat Noir, he’s going to know at the very least that he’s supposed to have a partner. Even under normal circumstances, he would have every inclination to find her and restore that previous balance. And as an akuma, he will have no inhibitions or restraint keeping him from trying to get that back.”

“So you’re saying…”

“The instant she becomes Ladybug again, Chat Blanc is going to know. And he will stop at nothing to find her.” He rose up to eye level with Gabriel, arms crossed and looking quite possibly more serious than the man had ever known him to be.
"So if you really want Ladybug’s help, you’d better hurry."

End Notes

I've been wanting to see interaction between Gabriel and Plagg for the longest time. Not because I think they'd get along, but because I'm pretty sure they wouldn't.

Because Plagg Dad is Best Dad and no one will convince me otherwise.

And I fully intent to make "Hawk Moth is an Idiot" into an official tag.

Explanation is as follows:

1. Hawk Moth/Gabriel Agreste won. He used both Miraculous to make his wish and created a new reality where his wife never left, his son was never a superhero, and Ladybug doesn't exist. He got what he wanted, but he ignored the whole "balance" issue of the equation.

2. The universe is a jerk and enjoys its soap operas as much as anyone else. So when the main actors of its favorite show are gone, it simply rearranges things to find other people to fill their roles (so to speak). So there's still a missing person, still someone who becomes Hawk Moth because of that, and still heroes who step forth to try to stop him. But these are different actors trying to fill the original roles, and we all know that can make all the difference in a story. In this case, the story goes quite poorly because of it.

3. Gabriel made the wish so he remembers. But he never followed through with his previous knowledge and thus never got Nooroo or the Butterfly Miraculous, so he isn't Hawk Moth this time around.

4. Plagg is a kwami so he remembers. Naturally, he rather hates Gabriel for this. And everything else Gabriel has done.

5. Adrien and Marinette don't really remember the pre-changed reality. They do have some recollection in the form of feelings or knowledge that don't fit with the current setting since they are normal civilians this time around. And they each just happen to have a strange piece of jewelry that they don't quite know where they had gotten from...

6. Adrien never became Chat Noir, and his life has not improved from what it was initially in the show. There was at least some resentment expressed about his sheltered life in the series even if Adrien never actually showed anger over it. How far fetched is it for this very thing to be what makes him an akuma target if he never became Chat?

7. Marinette never became Ladybug and is actually doing quite well for herself in this new reality. Focusing on school and fashion, and simply trying to manage as best she can like any normal civilian in a city being regularly attacked by monsters. Now if only it didn't seem like a certain former villain was going to disrupt that...
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