Summary

Adrien & Marinette have lived a miraculous life together. Marinette is reminded of that when, post-Adrien’s death, she finds his journal - a series of memoirs about his life. For Adrien AUG-reste Month.
Welcome to this new month-long story I've written for Adrien AUG-reste. I'm sorry, in advance, if this makes you cry. It's been an emotional rollercoaster to write - that's for sure. I hope you enjoy.

Marinette's hands shook slightly while she pulled things out of his desk one at a time. Her heart ached as she caressed each object softly. His favourite pen. His phone full of pictures of their life together. His notes from work written in neatly coiled cursive. She wanted to keep it all. Every piece. Tears pricked at her eyes as she surveyed the growing pile. Parting with anything that kept him here with her was impossible.

In this room, it felt like he was everywhere and nowhere all at once.

She was exhausted. Attempting to clean out his office was more taxing than she had hoped. The pain was still raw - he’d only been gone for a week, but it felt like forever. She was trying to keep herself busy so she wouldn’t atrophy and fade away. People needed her. They always needed her.

Reaching into the deepest drawer, her hand connected with a thick book bound in soft leather wrapped tightly with a strap. Pulling it out, she frowned. It was well-worn. Something that seemed to have been important to him. Her fingers trailed slowly over the worn cover, emblazoned with his monogram, AA, in an elegant script.

Slowly, she undid the strap that sealed it closed and let the pages flop open on the desk in front of her. The smell of him hit her first - a wild, windblown smell interlaced with the soft fragrance of his favourite cologne. Closing her eyes, she bit back a sob as she breathed it in.

Watery vision greeted her as she opened them again, the image of his careful cursive swimming in front of her. Gently she turned to the first page and read the title he’d written there:

“The Memoirs of Adrien Agreste: Memories of a Miraculous Life.”

She was shaking as she turned the page, blinking away the tears to see the words better.

_When I decided to write these memoirs, I wasn’t sure where I should start. I guess the first thought is the most common: Start at the beginning of my life and ramble through all the years. But it just doesn’t seem right to start there. So, I’m going to start with one of the most important days of my life. The day the most wonderful woman in the world, Marinette Dupain-Cheng, married me._

Slamming the book closed, Marinette struggled to breathe. She couldn’t do this. Not today. One last skim against the soft cover, she pushed herself away from the desk and stumbled out to the hallway. Somehow she found her way to her bedroom, falling loosely onto the mattress while sobs tore from her throat, fingers tangled in the sheets. Not today.

It was nearly a week before she dared to open the cover again, heart in her throat as she tried to read...
When I decided to write these memoirs, I wasn’t sure where I should start. I guess the first thought is the most common: Start at the beginning of my life and ramble through all the years. But it just doesn’t seem right to start there. So, I’m going to start with one of the most important days of my life. The day the most wonderful woman in the world, Marinette Dupain-Cheng, married me.

I have no idea why she said yes to me, but who am I to question destiny? She did.

The morning of our wedding, I was a nervous wreck. Not at the thought of having her forever. Not at the thought of marriage. Not at the thought of commitment, because honestly, I’d given her everything long before then.

I was terrified that I’d pass out when she appeared. Or that I’d forget the words I was supposed to say. Or that I’d throw up all over the dress I knew she’d made herself. Nino just laughed at me. I remember that in the middle of the chaos of my insides. Nino laughing. He told me that I’d be fine. That all I had to do was remember to breathe.

I tried. I really did. And it was going great until I was standing at the front of the church and the music started. I remember chanting the mantra “Just Breathe” to myself over and over in my head while the bridesmaids all slowly made their way to the front, looking unbelievably wonderful in their soft grey flowing gowns.

When the room stood up because the bride had arrived, I’d forgotten the mantra. I couldn’t see down the aisle to where I knew she was. It took every single bit of composure I had not to move from my assigned position to be able to see her. Heads were turning towards the door.

I really thought right then that I was going to do exactly what I feared. I could feel myself going light headed. It was Nino who clapped me on the back to bring me back to earth. Maybe he saw how pale I was - I’m not really sure, but at the moment, I was thankful.

At least until Marinette appeared. I think I died because, clutching the arm of her father, was the woman I loved with all my heart. I remember it in complete clarity as I sucked in each detail.

She was wearing a red dress, and although I’d known that would be the case, I wasn’t prepared for how beautiful she looked. It was her own take on a traditional Chinese qipao, starting at her neck with scarlet lace that travelled all the way to the floor over a white dress beneath, hugging every curve of her petite and wonderful body with her arms left bare. The hollow of her throat peeked out in a drop shape beneath the clasp. She carried a bouquet of bright white roses. Her hair was elaborate and beautiful, whisks cascading from their hold in silky smooth strands, her simple everyday earrings holding their place of honour in her ears. I wouldn’t have wanted it any other way.

Her bluebell eyes were what I remember in that moment - staring at me as if I was the only thing in the world. I have no idea how she could love me so much. I’ve always been a broken mess of a man, but she did (and does). She’s like my heart beating out of my chest.

The rest of the wedding ceremony is a blur. I have vague memories of her shy blushes and slipping a ring on her finger. I remember her doing the same to me, giving me a
second important ring in my life. I must have made it through the steps in the right order. I must have said the words I wanted to always say. But I don’t remember.

It was her brilliant smile and radiant eyes reflecting the sunshine as it poured in the church windows, lighting her face right as I went to kiss my brand new wife, that I remember the most. She was an angel. She took my breath away.

Forty years later, she does the same. Every single day. I keep reminding myself of my wedding day mantra: “Just Breathe” -because if I stare at my beautiful wife for too long, I will forget.

We ate, we danced, we laughed, we kissed. I remember hugs from a million people and Marinette struggling to hide her giggles from me when I would make stupid puns in her ears.

While everyone else partied, we snuck away for a short time - her as Ladybug and me as Chat Noir, to run to the Eiffel Tower and stand under the moonlight as husband and wife. There was something magical about my lady in that glow. Something nearly as wondrous as her angel face in the sunshine. Those kisses were powerful.

She told me a secret too. That underneath her beautiful wedding dress she had a hidden surprise for me. Then she raced back to the reception and changed back into her gown. I remember thinking then that I needed to get her out of that dress as soon as I could. Her eyes twinkled at me for the rest of the evening.

I remember it taking forever to pry her away from the party, dragging her away from Alya who sobbed with joy. I’m sure Marinette’s parents were laughing knowingly as I growled at their daughter who was enjoying her secret too much.

That secret? I probably shouldn’t tell, but even now, it means almost as much as it did the day I found it. Carefully stitched into the lining of her bra was a green paw print. My symbol. Pressed right against her heart. Because she needed me that close, she said.

How does a woman like her love a man like me? I will never know.

All she could do was cry.
Marinette didn’t know if she could bear to open it again. But something kept drawing her back to the pages - like his voice was calling her name and begging her to listen to him. So she opened the book to the second entry, trying to keep the tremble out of her hands.

In our times together fighting villains, I’d have to say that the one that was the most frustrating was Mr. Pigeon. Seriously, why did that man love those idiotic birds so much? Over and over he’d get akumatized because of his feelings of injustice to those things.

The first time was the worst though. My goodness, I thought my brain was going to explode from all that sneezing. Stupid feather allergies.

Back then, we were young teens, struggling to figure out how to be a superhero team. Ladybug was insistent that we couldn’t tell each other our identities, but I honestly have no idea looking back how she didn’t figure it out when I started sneezing as Adrien, too.

We were so blind.

You’d think after like 30 times that man would give up. Sigh. At least M. Rainier would buy us ice cream for our troubles. Andre had the best ice cream. I was a huge fan of that stuff. Although, thinking now, I realize that his ice cream combinations sure were unusual. Even if they were intentionally designed to try to get me to subtly recognize Marinette was Ladybug.

Ah, My Lady. I wish we’d found each other sooner.

Anyway, the reason I’d sneezed as Adrien was because Marinette had made this amazing hat. It was this bowler hat that she’d designed and sewn by herself for a competition my father had put together. I remember it was awesome - but it had a pigeon feather in it and I promptly sneezed all over her.

I think that hat is around here somewhere still, probably packed into a memories box. Thankfully with an artificial feather replacement so I didn’t end up sneezing my way down the runway when I wore it in Father’s show. That would have been something to see. Father probably would have disowned me for something so foolish as daring to sneeze in the middle of a catwalk. Although, in retrospect, that could have been hilarious. And memorable!

When Marinette and I first got our house, I loved that she would go into crazy designer mode with the decorating. I let her do whatever she wanted with the place because, frankly, my ideas of furnishing a house kind of involved “TV here. Couch there. Bed there. Poster of Ladybug on the wall there. AND... done.” But Marinette - oh she was like a whirlwind. She would buzz back and forth - the picture in her head long before I could even understand the words that she would say at a million words per minute, her eyes lighting up like a Christmas tree with excitement.

It was all wonderful. Until the special pillows that she’d ordered online arrived.

They were perfect to her design for the room - a weird set of patterns that somehow
managed to pull together all the colours from the walls, the artwork, and the furniture. I fell asleep on the couch one night shortly after she’d bought them and woke up with half my face swollen up, sneezing so hard I thought my brain was going to come out of my nose. (Thankfully, it didn’t.)

Marinette was the cutest - she did one of her super huge freak outs about how she should have taken better care while researching pillows while she threw the offensive ones literally out the door into the street.

One time, Emma brought home a craft from school. She was about 7 or 8 at the time, I think. I can’t even remember what it was she made anymore, but I do remember thinking I was going to die as I tried to hold my breath while she kept shoving it in my hands eagerly. I tried so hard not to sneeze that my eyes were tearing up. The proud look on her face as she preened over her handmade gift for me was so adorable that I didn’t want to hurt her feelings. Marinette found me almost shaking I was trying to hold those sneezes in. The minute she swooped in and grabbed that feathered item, it all came out.

I sneezed for like an hour.

Poor Emma. I don’t know if she ever figured out that her gift was the reason I turned into an overdramatic sneezer.

You know, all this talk about feathers makes me wonder something. Why didn’t I ever sneeze at Mayura’s attacks? She used to use feathers to create these monsters. I don’t remember sneezing at any of them. Strange. Maybe people/Miraculous feathers aren’t the same as bird feathers?

Memories came flooding back of moments semi-forgotten. Marinette allowed herself to chuckle softly at the reminder of the morning that she’d found him on the couch curled up with one of the new pillows. His poor sweet face, all swollen like that, and the horrified look in his eyes when he realized they were filled with feathers before he started on his sneeze-a-thon. Oh, her sweet Adrien.
Just A Friend

It was still hard, but the pages got a little easier to turn, his voice filling her head with the stories of their life together.

*I didn’t have a lot of friends growing up. There was one girl I knew from my childhood named Chloe. Her mom was a fashion guru and had kind of helped my Father to launch his design company so she was around sometimes when we were little. She was a force to be reckoned with, that Chloe - a miniature version of her mother - opinionated and callous, but she loved me in her own way.*

When Father finally let me go to school, I discovered more about friendship. It was so strange to see how people interacted with each other. I always thought it was because I was homeschooled, but I’ve come to realize it wasn’t how I was taught - it was how my Father controlled every aspect of my life up until then: who and how I interacted with others, when and where I could go. He kept me locked in my room to protect me, but in the process, isolated me from the world.

Sorry, that digressed. I was talking about friendship.

*Nino was my first real friend. Somehow he managed to give me a chance even though I was that rich, famous kid who was friends with the class bully, Chloe. And because of him, I became friends with Alya - Nino’s girlfriend, too. Eventually, I had a whole classroom of friends.*

*Nino has always been my closest friend. He basically taught me how to friendship works. In fact, one time, somehow - Nino convinced a group of the guys from my class put together an elaborate plan and managed to get into my Father’s house to throw me a party while he was away. It went a little out of control. I seem to remember Kim doing goofy poses on top of the piano in my room… in his bathing suit?*

*The two of us even roomed together, much to Father’s utter dismay, during university. I swear we somehow lived on pizza, even though it was completely against my eating rules. Thankfully, running around part time as a superhero saved me from the dreaded weight gain that a life of pizza could cause. One does have appearances to keep.*

*He told me first when he planned to propose to Alya and I was his best man. Of course he was mine too.*

*We’ve had the kind of friendship that doesn’t need to be next door, but he’s always been around when I’ve needed him. Like lately. Getting old sucks. Getting sick is worse. If he and Alya hadn’t come to help Mari after my surgery, she probably wouldn’t have eaten. I’m counting on Nino to help her again when I’m gone. She’s going to need it. I know.*

*Anyways, enough of the depressing talk - back to the topic friends!*  

*Speaking of Marinette, I met her back in middle school, too. Same day that I met Nino and Alya. She thought I was sticking gum on her chair like a bully and decided she didn’t like me. When I finally got the chance to apologize and tell her that friendship was new to me, she decided to be my friend. It took us a long time to get to the point where we were incredibly close though.*
She went into this weird phase after that gum incident and couldn’t even talk to me without going all jittery. I finally asked her about it one day, many years later, and she turned this awesome shade of pink as she explained that she’d fallen in love with me and didn’t know how to talk to me. I might have laughed.

Ladybug and I were a different kind of best friends. We were so busy trying to keep Paris safe that we spend so much time together. She knew everything about me that I couldn’t tell anyone else while I was just my normal self because I had a face to maintain.

Man, I chased that girl hard. I’m not sure how she didn’t fall for my anime and cartoon style flirting - that stuff was on point! (It’s actually a miracle in itself that she fell for me at all, the fool that I was!)

The day that I learned Marinette was Ladybug was one of the best days of my life. Both of my best girl friends were actually one! I think Marinette though was in shock when she learned I was Chat Noir. Maybe me consistently saying that Marinette was “just a friend” had gotten to her. She was wrong. I was so in love with Marinette as herself that I had to try and convince myself that I actually didn’t see her as more than a friend because I loved Ladybug.

Man, that was complicated.

Needless to say, friendship has been a huge grounding for me as I escaped my house as a young teen. The friends I made back then became my life. And I’m grateful for every minute that they’ve been a part of my life.

I wish it didn’t have to end.

The funny thing about marriage? Your partner is your best friend. Marinette mused on that for a long time.
Lucky Charm

I don’t know if Marinette knows, but I still have the lucky charm she gave me that first year in school. It’s almost always in my pocket. When the kids were little, I was afraid that they would break it, so I started hiding it there. Even today, now that they are grown, I keep it hidden out of habit.

It’s just a little string of beads. Pink ones on each end and a large green one with a little flower shape embossed in it. I rub it with my thumb whenever I need a little bit of luck.

It was my constant companion while I’ve been in the hospital. Sadly, I think I’ve rubbed the embossing off after this many years. It’s actually a miracle that it didn’t fall apart from all the use it had as I’ve tried to counter my own bad luck.

The irony that she gave me a lucky charm before we even knew the truth about each other has never been lost on me. The amount of times that I’ve heard that woman yell “Lucky Charm….” - you’d think I’d be able to mimic it perfectly. (Note: I can’t. I tried. It was miserable.)

Sometimes I wonder if Tikki’s sense of humour came into play for those things. Or if it was just that Marinette needed to use her creative outlet to plan these elaborate traps for akumas while she was Ladybug. I think we saw it all over the years and almost every single time she used her Lucky Charm, the two of us would blink at each other in confusion until all the pieces just clicked for her and she would order me around to do whatever she needed.

Ladybug’s my personal Lucky Charm. I mean, how lucky could a guy be to have been able to spend all of his life with a woman like her? <3

Anyway, I hope that she finds this charm when I’m gone. I know she’s got the one that I gave her for her 14th birthday tucked away in that memory box on the top shelf of her side of the closet. The box she always pretends is shoes, but I know is full of all sorts of things from her life: that charm, the tickets from our first Jagged Stone concert together, one of our wedding invitations, the kids’ hospital bracelets from when they were born, heck - I bet there are even little kid teeth in that thing.

(I’ve never looked in it, Marinette, but I know it’s there.)

Closing the book, she shuffled through the silent house to the closet and looked up at the box. It was unassuming and blank. How had that man known what was inside?

Pulling out a step ladder, Marinette pulled the box off the shelf and carried it back to the bed where she carefully dusted the lid. Slowly, she opened the top and looked inside, memories flooding back while her eyes surveyed the contents.

He was right. The lucky charm of beads that he’d given her that day was right there. Right on the top. Her fingers touched it gently before reaching into her pocket and pulling out a pink thread with a few small beads - the middle one well worn from a lifetime of caresses.

The morning he had passed away, she had been with him. It had been peaceful and quiet - like falling asleep at the end of a busy day. She’d been holding his hand. His other hand, though, had
been tightly wrapped around his charm bracelet. He had held it every minute until the end.

A soft smile curled her lips as she nestled it into the box beside hers. Together. That’s where they belonged.

Her eyes drifted to the empty side of the bed. Just like they should be. Together. Her heart ached.
Partners

It had been a hard day. Most of the time, she was able to make it through the day without an emotional breakdown - pushing herself to keep doing the tasks that needed to be done. Clean the house. Get groceries. Everyday tasks that had never seemed so heavy in the past. But today had been hard.

Especially when she’d been on auto-pilot through meal making and had made two plates of supper by accident, opening her mouth to call him to join her. Food had been forgotten, left on the table for another day, replaced by a round of tears.

She needed him closer.

Fully clothed, she slipped under the covers of their bed, laying her head on his pillow and breathing deeply. The journal seemed to yell for her from the table beside her. Could she handle it today? She wasn’t sure, but the need to hear his voice outweighed the sadness that she felt. The pages flopped open on the bed, the word “Partners” at the top of the page making her smile slightly.

The day I met Plagg was one of the best days of my life. Freedom was all I dreamed about back then. That little cat kwami gave me hope. I admit, I probably should have listened to him better on that first day because I kind of jumped into action without knowing exactly what I was supposed to do.

I mean, I heard the important parts, but not everything before I became Chat Noir. I remember him telling me I’d have a partner to work with. Little did I know that partner would come barrelling out of the sky and crash into me or that I’d be hanging upside down tangled up in a yo-yo string with a pretty girl.

A superhero partnership, I discovered, is like marriage. We had to absolutely trust each other with everything - our plans, our actions, our bodies, our lives. Any time that we weren’t in sync or fought about something, things would go wrong. It was inevitable.

It took us a while to get into a rhythm together. Ladybug needed to grow in confidence in herself, and I needed to learn to stop being so reckless.

Our superhero selves had roles to play in battle too: She was the plan master, I was the distracting fall guy. I had this habit of throwing myself in the way of danger for her. I had to protect her, because without her we couldn’t defeat the akumas.

I know that Paris thought I was just her sidekick. That was ok for me, but it used to infuriate Marinette because she always wanted people to see me as her equal partner. She would get so worked up whenever someone would make a negative comment about Chat Noir’s importance. I would just chuckle beside her while she would go into full rant mode.

Marrying her was just an extension of our partnership. We had to learn to trust each other in different ways: our dreams, our hearts, our responsibilities, the rest of our lives together.

Was being with my partner always perfect? Absolutely not.

As Ladybug, Marinette tended to be so single mindedly focused on the duties of the job that she would get stressed out and angry, and as Chat Noir, I tended to take things a
little too casually. Man, she would get mad at me for making it into a game or just goofing around with jokes and silliness instead of taking it seriously. As a teen hero, I would just respond by being even stupider or pushing her buttons. It wasn’t until much later that we learned to balance that out better.

When I wasn’t in the suit, I tended to be a people-pleaser and a pushover. I’d been well-trained as a kid to do what I was told without question and it stuck with me in most areas of my non-hero life. Marinette, on the other hand, was always so free-spirited and spontaneous. It was like we were complete opposites in so many things. But after years together, we figured that out too - her craziness rubbed off on me and my calmness brought her down to level.

Over the years, our partnership changed. Less running on rooftops and kicking things in the head, and more family-centric. Raising kids is no joke and required a whole other set of skills that we needed to learn. Respecting each other’s decisions, backing each other up in a completely different way than we used to, figuring out how to support each other... Let me tell you, there’s something incredibly humbling about needing to ask for help in the middle of the night with a screaming baby when you can’t figure out what’s wrong.

Ah, our sweet little Louis. That munchkin was such a handful.

Partnership is so much more than showing up together in supersuits. It’s about committing yourself 1000% to everything you do.

I think my Lady and I have been a really great team. From day one. Hard to believe we’ve been partners for nearly 50 years. Time has this weird fishbowl warp sometimes. How has it been that long?

“Forty-Six years, Kitty,” Marinette murmured with a soft smile. No wonder part of her was missing.
She didn’t really trust herself to read too much too quickly, instead flipping to a new chapter every day - stretching out the connection between herself and Adrien as long as she could. The hollowness was there still, but reading his words soothed the emptiness a little. The title scrawled across the top of the page made her chuckle.

Maybe when I die, I should request that they bury me in a cardboard box. That would be funny. (Don’t roll your eyes, Bugaboo. I can see you.)

Damn cat. He always knew.

When the kids were young, one of our favourite things to do together was to build these amazing box forts. Whenever Marinette would head off to a location for work, the kids and I would come up with an elaborate plan and spend the whole time creating it. One time the whole living room was a huge maze. The kids would crawl in from the door and have to find their way to the other end.

We spent a whole day sourcing giant boxes. We stalked all the appliance stores and the basement of the workshop to find exactly what we needed. Brought them all home and clipped them all together before cutting out doorways and pulling out the paint.

Somehow I think the kids were more covered in paint than the boxes. Emma must have been about 8 then, making the boys like 5 and 6. It was wild. But the smiles on their faces. Every minute having to scrub all that red paint out of their hair was worth it.

Especially when Marinette got home and the kids made her crawl through the maze. They squealed so loudly as she chased them around the room, getting lost in there. In the end, I had to save her.

An unbidden memory surfaced from the past: Adrien standing near the exit of the maze, the smile on his face luminous as he recorded the whole thing, trying not to laugh so much that the camera would shake and failing miserably.

After pretending to be so lost that she couldn’t find the kids (which she could see over the tops of the boxes just fine) - she’d dramatically called for Chat Noir to save her and he’d gently passed the camera over to Emma before bounding onto the couches and over boxes to scoop her up and rescue her from the labyrinth in a blatant display of exaggeration.

The children had all cheered loudly as Chat Noir put his princess down on her feet at the exit of the maze and had kissed her soundly as his reward.

He had always rescued her.

Tears burned behind her eyelids.

Not anymore.
'Dork,' she thought, grinning at the silly title.

I should probably talk about Plagg.

Plagg was my kwami.

Wait, I should probably back up a little to explain.

The first day I got my miraculous, I opened this mysterious box that I found on my coffee table and out burst this super-bright green ball of light that turned into a tiny floating black cat creature. His name was Plagg.

I admit - at first, I wondered if he was like a genie, but he was kind of annoyed that I thought that.

That little thing, all he could think about was cheese. In particular - camembert. He LOVED cheese. I didn’t know it was possible for a creature the size of a chunk of cheese to eat said cheese chunks in a single bite and STILL have room for more.

Good Lord, that guy could eat so much.

My favourite method of pretending I had any control over him was to bribe him with incredibly expensive, high-end, ultra-stinky cheese. Ha. I’m honestly surprised that Nathalie didn’t think I had some kind of weird fetish or that Father didn’t cut off my cheese supply because it would ruin my modelling career.

I’d never really had a close friend before, but Plagg became my closest friend. Which is weird because he wasn’t even a human. He was a floating furball who ate stinky cheese!

But he never let me down. Never.

Everywhere I went, he went. Everytime something bad happened, he would be there to look after me. Everytime I went on and on about Ladybug, he would try to give me clues without giving me clues - or he would just talk about cheese.

We would goof around together, joking and talking, playing piano, or watching TV. He liked when I would rub his head and he slept on my pillow. He purred like a real cat when he was happy.

He liked to hide in my laundry pile, smelling my socks, which - frankly, probably was a health risk given that I was a teenage boy.

He was like a floating ball of sarcasm, too. I think he didn’t have a single filter - saying whatever was on his mind at any given moment. All “free-spirited” and not really about following rules.

His power was destruction. A couple of times, he used his power outside of our
transformation because of desperate situations, but it was really dangerous for him to do so without the control. Apparently, he is the reason dinosaurs went extinct? The first time he did it for Ladybug, he nearly took out all of Paris. (Thankfully Ladybug was able to fix everything at the end of it all.)

Tikki was his partner - Ladybug’s kwami. She was adorable. Tiny and red with a giant dot on her head between two antennae. She had these huge blue eyes and was sweet as the cookies that she was addicted to. But unlike Plagg she ate them daintily, not like a freaking monster devouring a planet.

When we finally got married, those two were almost inseparable - snuggled up together all the time. It was incredibly cute.

Tikki would snuggle up with Emma when she was a little one. I swear Emma’s first word was Plagg. And even though he always acted aloof and like he didn’t care, he was probably the most protective little creature known to mankind.

It nearly broke my heart when I had to give him back.

There’s only so much that an old body can do, even in a miraculous super suit. It was time.

But it doesn’t mean it didn’t hurt to see my best friend in the whole world have to leave.

Plagg was special. He was an irritating, sarcastic little brat. And I loved him and his cute kitty little face.

Her fingers ghosted across the empty lobes of her ears. The day she’d given her earrings back was the last day she’d ever worn any. It felt like she’d be betraying Tikki if she wore anything else.

Tikki had been her lifeline in a time of her youth when she’d lost hope in herself. Her voice of reason when she let panic take over. Her anchor when she wanted to give up.

And now all of them were gone: Plagg, Tikki, and Adrien. Shadows of a past life.

Chapter End Notes

Author: I’ve had a few questions asked me about this story so thought I’d try to answer:

1. Was Adrien a stay-at-home-dad?
You’ll find out more about Dadrien in upcoming posts, but basically, yes.

2. How did he die?
I don’t really go through this part in detail as it’s not really relevant to the memoirs, but I was basically imagining him to have had some kind of cancer that involved surgery, treatment, and eventually time in the hospital for hospice care. They are ~60 years in this story.

3. Why isn’t her family around, if he just died?
Well, even when someone very important passes away in a family, life has a way of needing us to return to some state of new normal. Jobs, children, and other responsibilities require our attention and eventually, your support circle isn’t as constant
or as intense as it was. In my head, the story starts at about a week after he had passed
(when she finds the book) and slowly moves forward in time to get to a month or two
afterwards. Family might be around during the day as we just see glimpses into her life.
Trust me, her children are important - and you will see them later, briefly.

Thanks to everyone for reading. <3 I’m sorry for all the onion ninjas….
Seeing the title he’d written on the page made Marinette laugh sharply. Oh, how Adrien had fallen prey to the habits of his cat side. Memories of his cat-like antics flashed in front of her eyes, making her giggle.

Being Chat Noir was awesome. What kid doesn’t dream of being a superhero? I had super strength, super speed, super agility. I could punch and kick things. I could run on walls and jump super high. I got to make cheesy puns and hit things with a stick. (And all of this with a beautiful girl by my side!)

But, there was a price.

First, there was the tail. Oh, that tail. I swear it had a mind of its own, flicking back and forth and getting into trouble. And the ears kind of did their own thing, too. I mean, they WERE handy at times to hear things that I couldn’t with my own ears.

But later, being Chat Noir infected my regular self.

I could purr.

THAT was an embarrassing discovery. Especially when it happened outside the suit and Marinette was there. It only happened when I was happy… which honestly was mostly whenever she was around.

I don't really have any control over it. It isn't like I could turn it on or off. It just happened.

I swear Marinette has spent our lives together testing how much cat I am.

One time, she secretly pulled out a laser pointer and quietly started moving it around. I tried. I really did. But how can you honestly resist the urge to catch that little red dot???!

Her laughter though. I still can’t decide if it was pure evil or the most wonderful thing in the world.

So, I had my revenge. Muahaha. I gave into my cat urges.

How many times did I lay on her sketches? How many things did I knock off the table? And how often did I rub myself against her when she was trying to concentrate?

She would get so annoyed. At least until I gave her my super adorable kitten eyes. Then she would forgive me, ruffle my hair, and call me her silly kitty.

That was my favourite.

How many times had she found him sitting inside one of the big cardboard boxes that he claimed were for making forts with the kids, peeking over the top with a ridiculously cute face? Too many to count.

When he was having fun playing with the kids, his whole body would wiggle - something she thought he’d never really noticed about himself. It had been adorable.
The purring had been one of the best things about Adrien Agreste, a secret special thing that he only did at home with the people he loved the most. The soothing sound had been the solution to their struggles with Louis as a baby, curled up into Daddy’s chest and finally sleeping. It had been one of those daddy-baby bonding moments that melt a mother’s heart.

Oh, and she well-remembered his kitty eyes - all big and round and blinking.

Her sweet, silly Kitty.
Did you like that one, Bugaboo? =^.^=

Marinette served cake tonight and it gave me a flashback to something that I think I should share. I don’t think I ever told her.

When I was going to propose, I had this big awesome idea. I was going to dazzle Marinette with a cake that I made myself. I mean, Tom had shown me a few tricks to the whole “be a baker” thing by that point, and I thought I had it in the bag! I saw this awesome example of an adorable cupcake with a ring on top that I thought would be ideal.

So, I got to work. I decided to use the kitchen at the mansion since it was huge and had all the extras. I’d searched for the perfect recipe online (chocolate and waited until the cooking staff left for the night. Pulled out all the ingredients and the mixer.

It was going ok until I actually turned the machine on. For some reason, I thought it had to be running before you added ingredients. I have no idea why, honestly. It seemed logical.

I learned my lesson quickly when I dumped in the flour and it EXPLODED everywhere. It looked like the kitchen had snowed. Plagg was both completely disgusted that he looked like a snowball and laughing like a wild hyena.

It was the biggest mess I’d ever cleaned up, since that crap gets into every nook and cranny. I could totally envision the cook opening a drawer that I’d missed, see the pile of flour, and be very confused about the whole thing.

After I’d cleaned that up, I tried again. I actually managed to follow the instructions carefully and thought I’d done a damned good job. Put the batter gently into the tins. Totally going to nail it.

Totally didn’t nail it.

They didn’t rise. They weren’t cooked in the middle. The ones that looked semi-ok were completely stuck to the pan and fell apart. And, realizing that there really wasn’t much I could do about it, when I tasted it - they were the worst thing I’d ever eaten in my life.

Tom would probably have disowned me right then and there, if he’d been in the kitchen. Exiled from the family before I was even officially part of it!

A total cat-astrophe.

I gave up.

Instead of those cute little cupcakes, I went for something completely non-food related. We went for a walk instead. I stopped at the street corner where we first met (tangled up in a yo-yo cord when she fell from the sky into me the first day as superheroes), we stopped by the old school and reminisced about that first year of me as a student, we ate at the bakery - although, I was SURE Tom was going to ruin everything he was so
excited, and we went to the Eiffel Tower. We even went to the first platform together and that’s where I proposed. Like a lovesick fool, down on one knee at the Eiffel Tower.

I learned an important lesson, though.

I should never bake anything. (Sorry about that, Tom.)

She’d never heard that story before, but she did know that her husband was not meant to be a baker. She knew that well. Visions of Plagg covered in flour combined with memories of their romantic date that ended in a wedding promise danced in her head with an overwhelming sense of nostalgia.
The entry for the day was short. Marinette looked at the title and knew why. Adrien had never really liked talking about life as a child much.

*Maman* was beautiful. Long blond hair, green eyes like mine, and a smile that could knock people’s socks off. She was the kind of mother who always hugged you in the morning, tucked you into bed at night, and squeezed your shoulder as she walked past.

*I still remember her laugh - it sounded like that of an angel.*

*When I was 13, Maman vanished. Gone. Without a trace.*

*I thought for the longest time that it was something I had done. That she had abandoned me and Father because we were horrible people or because we were unlovable.*

*The day my mother disappeared was also the day my father gave up on me. It made things a million times worse to have a Father living with you who is never there and who is completely disconnected from you.*

**Believing that you have been abandoned really impacts a person, you know?**

*I saw it rear up regularly through my life. I had a hard time trusting that people cared for me for real. I always had a hard time reading how people actually felt because I was afraid to be totally invested in anyone.*

*At least, until I found out the truth of it all. That my Father, for years, had allowed me and the world to think she vanished, when in truth she was in a glass case that kept her alive right under our house.*

*He had lied to me all those years. Lied and manipulated and - sorry. I wasn’t going to go there.*

*Maman hadn’t abandoned me. She had gotten sick to the point that Father had to go to extreme measures to keep her alive.*

*I don’t know what is worse: feeling abandoned or feeling helpless.*

Marinette knew what was the worst for her: watching someone you love die and being completely unable to do anything to help stop it. All those years as a hero saving people and she couldn’t even save the one that mattered the most to her.
Childhood

Childhood is this weird, magical place. You never fully realize what is going on in the world around you, but all of the things that are happening affect you completely.

My childhood wasn't horrible. I had both my parents, who both loved me in their own ways. I had everything I could dream of. I was content.

I have memories of being with Maman and laughing, exploring museums and galleries, playing hide and seek in the house, making blanket forts, and sneaking snacks from the kitchen at night.

Pere worked a lot, but he was around. I could see how much he loved Maman. His eyes always gave him away when I would catch him staring at her.

I think when she vanished / got sick, that he lost his heart with her.

I even had a friend - Chloe Bourgeois. We have been friends since we were tiny. Her mother was a fashion icon - editor of one of the biggest fashion magazines in the world, and the one who helped my father launch his fashion house.

That meant we spent lots of time together as youngsters. We played dress up - because that is what kids of fashion designers do. She would style my hair and I would try to do hers. We would talk about the things she got to experience at school that I wasn't. I would tell her about the places that I travelled with my parents.

When we were about 8 or so, her mom left to New York for work and decided to stay there. Chloe was so hurt. I didn't blame her.

She decided that when she grew up, she was going to marry someone famous and never have kids. Well, she kind of did that - marrying Luka, who became a rockstar. Not quite what I think she envisioned as a little girl, but it worked for her!

She was the one who helped me get into school-using her father's influence to get me enrolled behind my father's back. She was always getting whatever she wanted.

My favourite childhood memory was when I was 10. Mother and I went to Milan with Father for a show, but while he was busy we snuck out into the city and went sightseeing. We got gelato. I remember how secretive it was - like we were spies or such. Then we had to hurry back in time to dress and be seated at the show. Mother went behind the scenes to wish Father well while I sat in the front row of the spectators - stomach full of frozen treats. I hadn't started modelling on the catwalk yet, only in photographs, so I was free.

I didn't get another taste of freedom like that until I got my Miraculous ring.

And even then. His Father had still controlled so much of his life for years after that.

Marinette sighed, remembering the struggles they had as Adrien had learned to take control of his life after his father had died. Marinette sighed, remembering the struggles they had as Adrien had learned to take control of his life after his father had died. It had been a long process for him to finally find himself and not need verification that everything he did was approved. She had loved watching him grow into himself, even on the hard days.
Tattoo

On our first anniversary, Marinette and I did something wild. We got tattoos! Ok, so maybe it wasn't that wild - I didn't get a giant tattoo across my back or a whole sleeve of artwork, but I will admit, I never thought I'd get a tattoo in my life!

Given my life as a model, it was important that I didn't have any marks like that, so to celebrate my freedom from modelling (and our life together) - it seemed like a good idea at the time.

I got (shocker!) a ladybug on the inside of my wrist. It's so cute and little - just like my tiny BugABoo. She got a small black and green paw print on her wrist - like the logo on my ring.

We were so proud of our secret that we didn't really think of the consequences. Oh my goodness - Alya and her detective skills! The week after we got those designs she was onto us with a thousand questions.

At first, we just tried to make it sound like we were big fans, but Alya didn't believe it for one minute.

Marinette finally gave in and just told her the truth, which also meant that Nino found out and - oh my goodness... it was a bit of a wild ride for a while. Alya went a little crazy - fluctuating between ecstatic, overwhelmed, and angry.

At one point, as the four of us sat in the living room, Marinette confessed something that I'd never really known.

She'd quit.

That first day as Ladybug, after we defeated our first Akuma together, she quit. She took off the earrings, shoved them in a drawer and quit! She told Alya that she'd tried to give HER the miraculous - slipped it in her school bag or something, but that when the chaos happened and Alya had raced off to get footage of the Akuma, the bag was left behind.

Marinette had been afraid to use it again, so she tried to chase Alya down - only to find me being dragged away by a rock monster and Alya pinned by a car. It was because we needed help that she decided to put the earrings back on and become Ladybug.

I can't even begin to imagine what my life would have been like if Marinette had given up that day. ….

Glancing down at the small faded paw print there, Marinette relived the moment of watching her new best friend screaming for help while her partner was flailing about in the fist of a stone monster. If she hadn't made that decision to put those earrings back on.....

Her heart felt hollow at the thought.

A finger slid over his print on her wrist, small and unassuming, but a silent reminder of how her heart belonged to him pressed right into her skin. Forever.
Marinette was starting to look forward to crawling into bed at night, snuggling up with Adrien’s pillow and reading a journal entry. It was almost as if he was allowing himself to linger closeby, just out of reach, but there with her in some way.

I have always wanted to try and explain how it felt when I transformed from Adrien to Chat Noir. In many ways, it was kind of like I could shapeshift from human to cat.

To begin, I had to get Plagg to transform me. There were a set of words I had to say (which I won’t share just in case this ever fell into the wrong hands…) and then Plagg would get sucked into the miraculous ring.

The best way to describe it, I guess would be as if Plagg and I merged together.

In the span of a few seconds, I wasn’t Adrien anymore. I was covered in this black material that could flex and move with my body (and looked very knightly, if I do say so myself), a mask that covered my face, cat ears and a tail, and my hair got longer and shaggier.

Plagg gave me powers, the suit, the sassy attitude and confidence but I was the one driving. I might have been human, but I was also a cat. I could hear better, react faster, see in the dark. It was kind of intoxicating to be truthful.

Together we were powerful. Plagg was destruction. He had the ability to destroy things with a single touch. In fact, he did (apparently, he had something to do with the extinction of the dinosaurs…..). Without a human, his power was kind of uncontrolled and dangerous. But when we were merged into Chat Noir, I was able to channel the power into whatever I needed destroyed by thinking about it specifically.

We actually got cataclysmed once. One of the villains took our powers for themselves and hit me with it. Holy hell, that hurt. It hurt worse than the time I had broken ribs from falling off my rock wall. I swear my insides were melting, I could barely function. Plagg and I managed to find somewhere to hide for a while when Ladybug went for help and we just lay there dying.

Thankfully, Ladybug saved the day as always and I was right as rain soon enough. But I’ll never forget how much that hurt….

That particular day had been hard. She’d felt so torn between worrying about Chat while still feeling the extreme pressure of being the one to save the day. It had nearly broken her.

He was right though - suiting up kind of did feel like shapeshifting. Merging with their kwamis had basically taken the elements of the little ones and interwoven it with their human selves, changing them into something new. Marinette closed her eyes and could still feel the bright tingle ripple over her skin that happened when she transformed into Ladybug.
She knew what this entry was going to be about.

_Emma loved her nighttime stories. We would read the same book over and over and over. Her favourite story was Rapunzel._

_Night after night, I would read this story of a beautiful princess with golden hair locked away in a tower with no hope of escape, trapped and hopeless, waiting for someone to rescue her._

_“Rapunzel! Throw down your hair!” the Prince called to her from the base of the tower. So, she wove her hair into a long, strong braid and threw it out of the window, creating a rope for the prince to climb up.”_ ‘

_For a long time, Emma insisted on wearing a single braid. Maybe she hoped that her hair would get as long as Rapunzel’s._

_I have no idea why she loved that book so much but I admit… I have loved that story too. Maybe the parallels to my own life were too similar to ignore._

_She loved it so much that we built a tower in her room and Marinette made her a beautiful princess gown. Then I had to save her from the tower. Because cats are better than Princes. Then we taught her how to rescue herself because no daughter of Ladybug could be helpless!_ 

No, her daughter couldn't be helpless, but she sure was taught that a partner wasn't a bad thing, nor was having to rely on others for help.

_How many times had Chat Noir saved Ladybug? And how many times had she saved him back?_

_Marinette laughed at the memory of Adrien scaling the wall to reach the crazily tall tower they had built in Emma's room so he could "save" her. The dress she has sewn had been too big (because princesses grow quickly and she needed to be able to wear it for longer than a month.) They had found her a wig with ridiculously long hair so she could pretend to brush it and throw it out the tower window._

_Louis had cried because he wasn't allowed to rock wall climb up the tower like Daddy. That led to creating a cool thing in his own room - a smaller rock wall and crash mats._

_Which set Marinette to wondering if the extravagance of Adrien's room as a youth had been more of an impact on him than she had thought._
When Marinette was at University, I would meet her on campus whenever she had a break. Sometimes we would just go sit somewhere together and she would tell me about her day, other times we would go to the library and I’d help her study, but my favourite times were when I could go to the coffee shop on campus and bring her a large hot chocolate before she had to rush off to her next class.

Sure, it meant I didn’t get to see much of her on those days as she ran around from lesson to lesson, but there were two reasons that I loved them.

- I go to see her instead of just wait for her to come home. Even that few special minutes that I could get with her was worth it.
- EVERY TIME I held out her cup of liquid sugar, she would squeal and her eyes would light up before she would grab the cup from me and take a giant gulp, even if that thing was a zillion degrees hot. She would then groan in delight and there was nothing in the world that could stop me from kissing her right then. Every time. She would taste like milk chocolate. Sigh. It was wonderful.

Then I would spend the rest of the day floating on cloud nine while she studied the history of fashion or whatever her class of the day was.

I remember during her second year, I must have gotten too predictable because every Wednesday, the girl behind the counter at the coffee shop would have a cup of chocolate ready for me right as I would walk in the door. She would put Marinette’s name on the side of the cup with the cutest little heart.

I actually took Marinette to the shop once and who staff surprised us with a very romantic table and treats. It was ridiculous, but totally fun. I swear those girls at the shop lived vicariously through us.

To this day, Marinette loves her hot chocolate. Every morning for 40 years, I’ve made a great big mug full of that sweetness for my beautiful wife before I made my own cup of coffee. And, just like she did back in school, she gives me a smile that makes me want to kiss her senseless to start my day.

Apparently hot chocolate IS the perfect way to start a day.

Marinette looked over at the kitchen counter from where she sat at the empty table. His mug still sat beside hers, both of them untouched for months. She hadn’t taken a sip of hot chocolate since before that last horrible week in the hospital. Gently she put her bookmark in the journal and pulled on her coat. Stepping out the door, she started to walk through the city.

Every corner, every building… it all seemed to echo memories around her head of him, of them. Tucking her hands into her coat pockets, she tried to keep her head down and feet moving.
Somehow she found her way to the university campus where she had spent a good four years of her life. The coffee shop was still there. The door made a chiming sound as she opened it and slipped inside, legs weak underneath her. The young girl behind the counter smiled welcomingly at Marinette’s arrival.

“One large hot chocolate, please.” Coin exchanged for a hot paper cup, Marinette stared unseeingly for a moment at the empty booth where the staff had once created an impromptu date for her and Adrien.

She couldn’t do that yet. Her lips quivered slightly as she raised the cup to them, allowing the sweet, warm liquid burn against her tongue.

“Thank you, Kitty.”
Swap

Mug of homemade hot chocolate in hand, Marinette slid herself under the covers of her bed and snuggled in close to his pillow.

*I was Chat Noir. Marinette was Ladybug. That is just how it was. Except… one time, it wasn't.*

One time, we switched our Miraculous in order to get through a really hard Akuma battle.

I didn't know if it would work, seeing as I don't have pierced ears, but Marinette told me to trust her so I did. Of course Magic Earrings would be magical. I still don't really know how it all worked but one minute I was Adrien and the next I was all dressed in red with spots.

*Marinette was the sexiest Chat Noire - I just couldn't focus on the fight very well because she looked so amazing. Her hair grew into this long braid like a tail and her kitty ears were the cutest thing ever. (Sadly, Plagg wouldn't agree to change her again. I think he was onto me….)*  

*Being "MisterBug" was such a different experience than being Chat Noir. Man, Marinette had so much responsibility than I did in our superhero days. Without her, akumas would have run wild. We never would have survived. Having the brief chance to see our experience through her eyes helped me stop being quite so reckless - although honestly… recklessness was kind of my MO as Chat Noir - to be the distraction.*

*Also - yo-yos are incredibly hard to use.*

*That is all I'm going to say about that.*

A sharp, unexpected laugh burst out of Marinette’s mouth - startling her slightly. Oh, he’d been horrible with the yo-yo. Worse than she’d been the day she’d became Ladybug and crash-landed into that boy tightrope walking on his baton.

Twice she’d had to save him from himself as he was tangled up head to toe with the string. He’d completely missed the Akuma when it started flying away and on the downswing, the toy had cracked him hard in the head. If she hadn’t grabbed the yo-yo from him and launched her cat-self into the air to grab the butterfly high in the air, it would have escaped.

The funniest part was when he had tried to be all silly as he’d called for the Lucky Charm in a silly high-toned voice, standing in ridiculous poses with the yo-yo tossed in the air. She had just about fallen over laughing when all that landed in his hand (other than the yo-yo) was a tiny push pin. The look on his face as he stared at it in surprise had made the whole kwami swap worth it.

She smiled as she took a sip of her drink.
A stab of worry went through Marinette as she glanced at his topic of the day.

So, the main villain that Ladybug and I battled against was Hawkmoth. Hawkmoth did really fight for himself, instead using other people do his dirty work for him by exploiting emotions.

So many of our friends and family and people across Paris got akumatized - turning into villainous versions of themselves with powers and a plan to try and steal our Miraculous for Hawkmoth. Most of the people we freed felt frustrated and upset when it was over because they had no control over themselves while it was happening and no memories of what had happened.

I never really understood it, until I was akumatized.

As Chat Noir.

I honestly can remember nothing. I do remember sitting on a rooftop feeling very upset about something and suddenly there was this …. Voice… and a promise telling me that I could get what I wanted. The next thing I remember is standing under the Eiffel Tower with Ladybug standing over me looking worried.

Apparently, I’d been this really horrible akuma - destructive, cold, aggressive - everything opposite myself as Chat Noir, creating terror and havoc through the city of Paris.

Oh, he had. The memory still left chills down her spine. There had been so much damage throughout the city - buildings on fire, holes in the ground from his repeated cataclysm, a trail of rubble through the streets. But it had been his eyes - cold, piercing, and haunting that left her terrified that day.

He had been completely and utterly controlled by his father- Hawkmoth - with the single-minded purpose of getting her earrings. He had been vicious and cruel.

I had a new appreciation for the victims of Hawkmoths evil. It inspired me even more to care for them. I had always taken time to talk to them after we had freed them, but after that, I personally used my own money to create a facility for mental health care.

The fact that it was my Father behind all of the attacks made it even more important to care for people after we discovered that and defeated him. It pushed me harder to be better than ever - kinder, gentler, happier.

Adrien had spent a lot of time after his Father died trying to make up for the man's sins - funding support services as Adrien, making appearances as chat Noir, anonymously sending care packages to victims who had been especially traumatized by their experiences. He had genuinely cared.

It warmed her heart to remember the faces of the many, many people he had generously and selflessly helped over the years. His legacy was not the one left to him by his father, but the one he had created for himself.
"Oh dear," thought Marinette as she read the title of the next page.

One of the awesomest perks of being with Marinette was her amazing sewing skills. She made the coolest stuff.

After we got married, I begged her and begged her to go to the Paris Comic Con. As soon as I got her on board, we went full out. That first year, we went as Kirito and Asuna from SAO. I even temporarily dyed my hair black! (Thankfully, my hair magically stayed blond when I transformed to chat Noir.)

The costumes that Marinette made us were so awesome. I seriously wore my black swordsman coat every day after that convention and any time I wanted to feel powerful. We had so many compliments on those costumes. In fact, I think we won prizes for our outfits in the cosplay competitions. Marinette could have started a cosplay business from the number of requests that she had - but haute fashion was more her thing.

The next year, we dressed up as Cloud and Tifa. The sword was impossible to carry around, even as a foam prop. I swear I kept banging into tables and got caught on the stairs when I carried it on my back.

One year, we went in full Ultra Mecha Strike robot costumes. That was awesome. She, of course, was the Ladybug machine and I was the Chat-inspired machine. We even had a mock battle in the foyer when we met up with another pair in different robot costumes. It had started as a joke, but in the end, all of us were seriously trying to win and there were video cameras going, and we triumphed. So many laughs.

The year that Emma was a baby, we were Team Rocket. Marinette’s wig was this HUGE purple thing that stuck out from her head. We put Emma in a Meowth costume, complete with the cutest hat in the world. I think we gained the most attention that year - because everyone loved the baby.

We went almost every year when the kids were young, letting them dress up as their favourite superheroes and characters, toning down our own costumes to allow the kids to shine more in our place.

Giving our family something special like that to do together was really important to me. Instilling my inner geek on my children was necessary, Marinette, I swear!

I have fond memories of practising with swords with the kids, of watching Marinette teaching the kids how to sew their own costumes, of us laughing as we came up with plans for the next year’s events and how to make the outfits.

She had loved it, too. Even though she had been unsure that first year, she’d dived right into costume design for their Sword Art Online characters and they had turned out amazing. Putting down the book next to her on the bed, she slid herself off the side and padded over to their closet. There was a depressing sense of emptiness there now that she’d purged through her clothing - keeping only the things that evoked the most memories.

Fingers reaching out, she touched the black coat from that first year. He had looked so shocking with black hair. His father had been livid, which had made Adrien slightly giddy with happiness - in his
passive-aggressive sort of rebellion.

Somehow, though, he had always managed to be able to channel that inner swag that he carried as Chat Noir to become the characters they dressed up as.

The sword fights with the kids had been some of their favourite things to do as a family - although the kids had complained loudly that Daddy’s Cloud sword was cheating because it was just too big.

With a smile, she gently closed the closet door.
Fencing

Of all the things that my father forced me to do for extracurricular activities as a child, the one that I enjoyed the most was fencing.

There was something elegant about being able to hold a sword and duel against someone, plus it allowed me to be aggressive without being really aggressive - something I needed as a child since I felt so trapped and controlled.

Fencing is a challenging sport because it has so many rules of etiquette but also requires extreme skill. If you happen to fence without all the electronic extras to keep track of touches and points, the game becomes significantly more difficult.

I loved the challenge of it all. I worked hard to become the best at the game. I won many championships and even competed all around the country in competitions. I am proud to admit that I was invited to the French Olympic Fencing team - although Father absolutely refused to let me participate.

My most challenging opponent was a woman named Kagami Tsurugi. She was an amazing fencer who trained her whole life to be terrific at what she did. She pushed me hard to be better, to be stronger, to be the best I could be. I needed that because, at some point - everyone else no longer seemed like a real challenge and I got complacent easily. But against Kagami - I could actually push myself.

I think at one point, Marinette was jealous of Kagami, but they became great friends over the years.

Marinette tried fencing once. She could have been good if she had tried to stick with it, I think. But she quit after tryouts - I think because of the misunderstanding of how points work and the call that she’d made that ended up with Kagami akumatized.

Fencing actually helped me be a better Chat Noir, too. Although, it is really hard to use a staff like a rapier. It can be done though. I had to improvise several times but my fencing experiences gave me other skills too- like how to defend, how to lunge and dodge, how to anticipate my opponents' attacks, and how to control my own body while fighting. They all came in handy for a superhero.

Of course, my sword skills were of utter importance against my children, too.....

Marinette chuckled. He had never realized that the only reason she had tried out for the fencing club was because she was trying to spend more time with him.
Marinette realized with a bit of a shock that he had been gone for just over a month. She smiled slightly as she put her hand on the cover of the book that he had left behind. It was this book that had her grounded. Without it, she didn’t know if she would have made it this long. Death by a broken heart was a real possibility. But thanks to this journal, his memories, this little piece of him to grasp onto…. she was making it. One day after another.

*Piano lessons were part of my life for many, many years. I can’t say that I ever thought it was my passion to play the piano, but I could do it. I think I did it pretty well.*

My Father wanted me to practice at least an hour every day - it was scheduled into my daily routine. I admit, I never practiced as much as he expected me to. I cheated. I recorded myself practicing once in a while or found the song I was supposed to doing online and then would set up my phone at the piano to sound like I was doing what I was told - then I would go play games or the computer or something like that.

*Father expected perfection, so every now and then he would come to listen to my progress. If I made mistakes, I would be required to practice with supervision for the day until I met his standards.*

At some fashion related parties, he would dangle me in front of his colleagues and require me to play as entertainment.

As a teen, I was able to play keyboard a few times with some friends from school in their rock band. Let me tell you - it is quite different to play something by Beethoven than it is to follow along with a band. Playing by ear is significantly harder than it looks.

When Marinette and I started dating, she would sit and listen to me practice with a gentle look on her face - as if the music was calming her down. I loved that music did that for her.

*I played at our wedding too - a serenade that I wrote myself and she cried. I brought the piano with us when we moved into our new home and played it sometimes. Only because I wanted to - not because I had to.*

It was a wonderful tool to help with the kids, too. As babies, I would sit them in their bouncing chair beside me and play when they were screaming. Almost always, it would settle them down - especially Louis, who cried so much.

*Hugo is the only one who ever decided to learn how to play for real. I probably wasn’t strict enough about his practicing, because he never really put much effort in, but he learned enough to play some basic music. I just was determined never to force my children to do anything they didn’t want to do. I didn’t want to become my Father.*

Music was a big part of my life, even if I didn’t appreciate it nearly enough.

*I tried to play the other day. It was really frustrating because my body is weak and my hands shake too much, but I did it. I played my favourite song from Mendelssohn’s Songs without Words: Opus 38: Duetto. It was just as beautiful as always and I was so pleased that my fingers remembered what to do on their own as I listened.*
When I was done, I looked up to see Marinette in the doorway, a soft smile on her face. Maybe the reason I love that song is because it’s a duet between two parts - just like her and myself. We are two parts of a whole.

That had been the last time he had played - one last beautiful song to fill her heart. She could almost hear the notes vibrating through the house as he played. She hadn’t been in the music room since. She couldn’t bear it. It was all his. And it would stay that way.
Modelling

She’d almost missed the chance to read since the day had been filled with meetings and lawyers and family get-togethers. She was exhausted. Pulling on some comfortable pajamas, Marinette slipped between the covers and grabbed the journal from where she’d left it on his pillow.

Yawning, she flipped open the now-familiar pages of his handwriting to where she had last left off. Today, it was about his experience modelling.

*Modelling is totally misunderstood. The idea that modelling is just “Stand there and look pretty” is actually not fair. It’s hard to model. You have to be so aware of your body and how it’s positioned to best be able to showcase the clothing you are wearing. You have to be conscious of your facial expressions - because it reflects how people perceive the clothes. You have to make people believe that if they buy this outfit, they will have fun, they will be sexy, they will get a promotion. Or you have to be completely devoid of expression because the clothes are supposed to be the centre of attention, not you.

Models are expected to be some kind of perfect - even if that’s a ridiculous notion - an example for others to look up to for standards of beauty and style. In reality, so many models are starving, dehydrated, and severely overworked in order to achieve the look that is required of them.

I started modelling at the age of 5. I started out doing work for only Gabriel and quickly became the face of the brand. The fashion world watched me grow up on camera. I learned exactly how to smile, how to pose, how to stand under studio lights for hours without complaining, how to be the perfect image for my Father.

When I was 11, I walked my first show. I remember watching youtube videos over and over to see how more experienced models walked so I could master it. I practiced for hours in my room, trying to make sure that I did exactly what I had to in order to represent my Father well. I learned to walk smooth and elegant - catlike even. That first show my Father gave me a nod of approval and my mother gushed as I came backstage. I only did one outfit in that show, but it got more crazy from there.

By the time I was 15, I was doing full shows with multiple outfit changes, all around the world as my Father promoted his brand. Being the face of the company meant I had to be there with him all the time - something that I found frustrating since I was also supposed to be back in Paris helping Ladybug with our jobs there.

Modelling led to other things - like commercials and guest appearances on shows and for events. I was busy and I had to smile through everything.

By the time I was 19, I was on the top of the model world. I was in demand everywhere. Father wouldn’t let me walk or show for anyone else other than Gabriel - protecting his brand I guess, but I was offered crazy amounts of money to make appearances all over the world. I never had free time - I was always prepping for a show, getting fitted, doing photoshoots. It was crazy.

But it wasn’t what I wanted.
I hated it. I hated being the centre of attention. But I played the game.

After Father’s death, I dropped modelling for good - other than the occasional shoot for Marinette. I refused to do any shows anymore.

Sometimes, I look back at the advertisements from my youth and wonder how I looked so happy and carefree when on the inside I felt completely the opposite. Especially the few years after my mother disappeared.

But I was a professional. And…. frankly, I looked good. I was model material and my Father sure used it to his advantage.

The book flopped awkwardly against the pillows as it slipped from Marinette’s fingers when she fell asleep, visions of those advertisements that she had spent hours admiring as a teen floating through her dreams.
Ah, Gaming. One of their favourite past times. Marinette grinned to herself, thinking of how hard he’d always tried to beat her without success.

One of the things that I did while locked in my room as a kid was spend hours and hours playing video games. I loved it. I thought I was pretty damned good at it too, until I went to school and met people like Max. Max was the official gamer of the whole school and he was freakishly amazing at all games - designing them in his spare time even!

Anyway, there was this competition where Max was trying to find a partner to compete as gamers in the school district championship and I ended up beating him so we were paired up. Then Marinette showed up and asked if she could try out too.

Everyone kind of thought she didn’t know anything about games - giving her instructions on what buttons to use, etc. She shocked them all. She annihilated me. Like…. wiped the floor with my character.

I remember how stunned all of the people in the room were that day when Marinette cheered her win. She was amazing.

Poor Max got kicked out of the team and Marinette and I had to practice together. That’s when she gave me my lucky charm bracelet. :)

Anyway, long story short - Marinette was an amazing gamer.

We spent many of our dates playing games together - and she always beat me. When I took the time off to be a stay-at-home dad, I would practice in hopes that I’d hone my skill enough to finally win.

Never did.

We played so many different games together - fighting games, RPG games, building games. Got into that Fortnite game for a bit. The Final Fantasy remakes were awesome, and so were all the Ultimate Mecha Strike series. I think our favourite game for a long time was the one that Max designed. He made this really cool game that battled different akuma villains against each other. It was amazing. We would laugh as we beat each other up with crazy akumas. Kind of like a freplay time for our superhero craziness.

When the kids got bigger, we made sure we had family game night every week. So many memories of laughing and challenges happened on those nights - especially when the kids decided to be on my side to encourage me to beat their mother.

One time, Marinette let me win - I totally know she let me win, no matter what she tells you - and the kids went wild. We ran around the room, threw a party, and went out for ice cream - making sure, of course, that I got the biggest one (along with the kids) and Marinette got the smallest.

They were so proud.

He was right. She’d thrown the battle - even though the kids had tried to distract her by running in
front of her and poking her in the ribs in the middle of the game. He’d smiled that wicked smirk at her when the victory sign had flashed on his side of the screen and the kids had acted like they had just won the greatest sporting event in the world.

Gaming had always been one of her personal favourite things to do with her father, it had been something so important to do with her own - and to give them something special with their father.

Where had that console gone, anyway?
Opening the book to the page for the day left Marinette tempted to slam it shut again. The word Puns scrawled across the top of the paper made her groan loudly. It was with some trepidation that she kept reading, hoping that her brain could handle a whole entry on Adrien’s favourite method of humour.

Words are amazing things. The fact that we can change words in jest to say one thing but mean another is one of my favourite things to do. Ask Marinette. She thinks my punning skills are Meow-velous.

I used to use puns ALL THE TIME as Chat Noir - my internal filter seemed to vanish the instant I put the suit on (probably due to Plagg and his lack of filter) so I’d just let them run wild. Cat themed ones were the cat’s meow and I had an a-pun-dance of them.

I had this gift of just waiting for the purrfect opportunity in a conversation then jumping in with the wittiest joke. ESPECIALLY against villains because they always seemed to just be waiting for someone to play the word game with them.

Candy themed villain? Sweet.

Weather themed villain? Time to knock the wind out of her sails.

Miming villain? Keep your hands to yourself.

Mummy villains? Let’s wrap this up.

You know - all the fun stuff. Pro level punning skills right here.

It took a long time, but I finally managed to crack Marinette. The times she’d pun back were like purrfection, heavenly, and a great way for her to keep my heart. (As if I was going to take it back anyway!?)

I’m half tempted to fill this page with 1000 really amazing puns to create a legacy of awesomeness for my children, but…. I know that Marinette’s eyes are probably close to coming unscrewed from their sockets given how much she’s likely rolled them while reading this, so I think I’ll just leaf it for meow.

Dammit Kitty. You and your stupidly (adorable) jokes.
Seriously, this man was going to make her die by groaning or eye rolling with the series of topics he’d put together in a row in this book. First puns, now flirting advice? God save her.

7 Ways to Flirt with a Girl - By Chat Noir

Since I’ve obviously mastered the art of snagging a beautiful woman, I thought I would share my top success tips for flirting, so that other men can do the same.

- As the last entry clearly shows, the excessive use of puns is a necessity for winning the heart of any young woman. They basically just fall all over you at your amazing and dazzling ability with words.

- Call her by unique and personalized nicknames (a play on her name or something to make her feel extra special work great!).

- Flowers, especially roses, at every possible romantic opportunity. Ply her with them.

- Be a gentleman, but make sure that she sees it - bow deeply to her, open the door for her, protect her, etc. Kissing her knuckles is totally bonus points.

- Tell her every chance you get that you love her, in as many different ways as possible so she has 0 doubt of your feelings. Even if it’s seemingly at the worst time possible - like you are fighting off a villain or falling off a building. Just do it!

- Wink. A lot. Girls just melt at a well-timed wink. Trust me.

- If you can purr, it’s a definite advantage. There’s just something that a rumble can convey that words can’t.

Not sure what else I can offer here. These totally work. Trust me.

Marinette hadn’t had such a full out laugh in months, memories of her sweet kitty acting like a complete an utter fool through their whole teen years and all the way beyond.
Career

Marinette shifted in her chair as she picked up the journal for the day. She’d glanced at his title for the day before she’d last closed the book and admittedly was curious what he had to say.

Most kids spend their lives free and unfettered, able to do what they want, discover themselves, and as they grow up - figure out what kind of job they want to have as an adult.

But for me, it was different. Backwards, even.

I had a career before I even knew that I did - my face plastered all over the world as a model for Gabriel, my Father’s design line. It felt like everywhere I went, I was looking at myself. He’d started me young, long before I could actually remember. I was always on photoshoots. There were always cameras. There were so many clothes and hands and chaos.

I have vague recollections of being on the catwalk (hehe) when I was little. I remember being upset at the lights being so bright that I couldn’t see my mama in the front row. I also remember my Father being angry with me that I had stopped walking to look for her.

It only got worse as I got older. Suddenly I kind of went from “Gabriel’s adorable little son” to “teen heart throb” and girls were all over me. It was worse when I was like 19 and I somehow got roped into doing a swimsuit session. Then I was a sex object.

I hated every minute of life as a model, but it was all I had, so I did it. I did everything I was told exactly as I was told, with the brilliant smile. It seemed to make Father happy. He would tell people over and over how perfect I was. I thought that was good. The more perfect I could be, the more he would love me.

I was wrong. Oh God, I was wrong.

Sorry….. I digress. Careers. Right.

Being famous did have its perks, I admit. I got to do some pretty cool things. I got to do the voice acting for the Ladybug and Chat Noir movie (ironically voicing myself - hahaha!) I got to go to some amazing places around the world.

I think my Father’s ultimate goal was that I would succeed him at some point - take over the family business or something like that.

When the house of Gabriel crashed (maybe I’ll talk about that some other time), I dropped modelling. Suddenly, I was free to do whatever I wanted. There were so many options. So many things I could do. But I’d never really thought about what I wanted to be when I grew up before. It was always just expected that I’d do what I was told.

I had money saved up from my years in front of the camera, so I didn’t really need to work. But I ended up doing photography. It was really weird to be on the other side of the camera but so incredibly rewarding.

My unique experience as a model helped me take better pictures, because I knew what they were feeling and how their bodies could work best. I was pretty good at my job
After the kids came, I stayed home with them, but I still did photography. Most of the fashion photography I did was for Marinette’s small fashion business. The kids would come along and learn from the experiences.

I took pictures of everything else too. The kids. Our house. Paris. Our travels. I even managed to get some of them published - and not just because I was “Adrien Agreste” but because I was good at what I did.

My favourite picture I ever took was when Hugo was about a week old and Marinette sat in the living room with him cuddled into her shoulder with Emma and Louis draped over her lap as she read them a story book. It was like a beautiful pause in the middle of the chaos of our lives. I couldn’t stop just staring at my wife in that moment. She was tired, sure, but she was radiant. And she was mine.

At the end of the entry was taped a copy of the picture in question. She couldn’t remember him having taken it. She was sure she had seen it at some point in their lives, but she had never known that it was his favourite picture.

How did that man always manage to turn even the littlest thing into a heartfelt confession of love? She smiled wistfully, raising her eyes to the picture of him that she kept on the mantle. He smiled back - one of his brilliant and sincere smiles that lit up his eyes into a twinkle.
Hamster

*Three Kids and a Hamster.* How many times has she quoted that to Alya in her teens? In fact, if memory serves her correctly, Alya had even mentioned it in her maid of honour speech. Marinette groaned at the memory of that speech and the embarrassing things her best friend had decided to spill for Adrien and all their friends.

It was a big day for us. The day we picked out Hubert, our first family pet. Emma was sure we were getting a kitten because of Plagg (but I could do that to my little buddy - territorial cars make trouble after all.)

We had debated a fish but it seemed like too much temptation for my kwami. I couldn't imagine coming home one day and finding the fish tank empty and having to explain to Emma that Plagg had eaten her pet.

Plagg was straight up offended when I made him promise to leave a hamster alone after all, he told me, a hamster isn't cheese.

Hubert was white with black and brown spots - one that covered one of his eyes. Emma loves him right away and I could tell Marinette felt something for the little fluff ball. She would get this strange nostalgic look in her eyes whenever she would look at him.

It wasn't long before Hubert was a running machine, whizzing around the house in his little hamster ball like he owned the place.

The kids and I used Hubert for so many scientific experiments- mazes, puzzles, the study of nocturnal animal behaviour... we even made him an extremely complex tunnel system to run through. He was like our homeschooling mascot. I think Emma sewed him a cape once - that was pretty hilarious.

One time, the hatch to the cage wasn't closed all the way and Hubert escaped. Emma sobbed. Louis went into full panic mode. Hugo decided to crawl under everything to search and nearly got himself stuck under the couch.

At the very least, it became a great excuse to clean everything and to play a game of hide and seek. When we finally calmed Louis down, I sent him off to design some kind of Hubert Trap. That kid could invent the craziest things - and he did again! He made this box thing that held some of our little pet’s favourite treats (carrot pieces!) and would close behind the hamster when it went inside. He made 2 or 3 of them and we placed them all around the house. Left them out overnight.

The look on Louis’ face when he realized that he’d managed to catch little Hubert was the best. He was so incredibly proud. And he became the family hero.

She’d forgotten about the time that Hubert had gotten out and Louis’ miraculous hamster trap. Hamsters had definitely turned into something more challenging than she’d expected as a teen, that’s for sure.
Marinette chuckled at his silly use of words in his title for the entry she was reading. In truth, she had wondered when he was going to write about the kids because everyone who knew Adrien Agreste as a father knew that his children were his life.

The face of their newborn child is one of the most beautiful things a parent can experience - I know that now. I was blessed with that experience three times!

Emma was born a day past her due date. Marinette had been lamenting over the fact that she was still pregnant - her feet swollen and her whole self exhausted. I remember her deciding to take a shower so I decided to play some video games for a bit. We spent the afternoon just snuggling on the couch as she watched me run my character around doing quests.

I think her first contraction started around 4pm, but we waited patiently, sure it would take hours. Emma, on the other hand, wasn’t really interested in hours. Poor Marinette. The next 2 hours were hard on her. Everyone kept telling her that she’d be fine and to just wait. She just lay on the bathroom floor saying she wasn’t sure if she was dying or in labour.

The midwives came around 8pm. And at 8:20 - Emma was here.

My heart exploded. She was so small and so perfect. I had no idea something so little could be so loud. But she was so sweet.

I remember holding her and shaking so badly that Marinette told me to sit down so I wouldn’t drop her. There, in my arms, was my baby. MY baby.

I don’t know if Marinette ever realized how terrified I was. How I had nightmares about being my father - cold and distant and closed off from my children, controlling their lives instead of being part of them. Looking down at Emma, I made a decision that every single day of their lives I would be involved.

I had no idea how to do that. I had no idea how to do anything with kids. I’d never really been around kids. Marinette had to teach me everything, but I tried. I learned how to do diapers, how to make baby food, how to play with them, everything.

By the time that Louis arrived 2 years later, I felt like a master.

Except that Louis was a whole other experience than Emma. Emma was a happy-go-lucky little thing who was curious about everything and gentle as a mouse. Louis… was a fireball.

He arrived in a hurry! And 3 weeks early.

We’d just managed to get Emma to bed and sat down to play a video game together. Suddenly Marinette squawked because her water broke. It was only 9pm. We totally weren’t ready yet. I remember both of us running around making phone calls and throwing baby clothes into the laundry and installing the baby car seat in the car and panicking. But she didn’t go into labour.

Tom and Sabine arrived at 1:30am. Marinette had just started feeling like she might be
in labour. At 2, the contractions were bad. The midwives didn’t make it. Louis was born in the
front entrance at 2:20am. Somehow I managed to catch him. He was so teeny. Like 2 and half
kilograms! I thought for sure I was going to break him.

Louis was a challenge - he cried so much. Screamed about everything, I spent too many
nights marching that little boy up and down the hallway hoping he’d sleep soon.

By Hugo, I was definitely a pro. And I caught that kid too, because apparently, my
children are impatient - not that I have any idea where they got that from….

Hugo was the biggest of our babies. Thankfully, he was the easiest baby of them all.

We homeschooled. I don’t regret it at all. It was a decision that Marinette and I made
together because I couldn’t bear the thought of the kids being gone so much of the day!
They were too important to me. But we had to make sure it didn’t turn into my
childhood all over again.

We did it so differently. Museums, field trips, so many projects and fun activities, laying
out under the stars, and belonging to a community of other homeschooled kids so they
could have friends. So many friends. There were friends here almost every weekend for
sleepovers, I swear.

And I loved it more than anything. Watching the excitement in their faces every time
they learned something new.

And now, they are all grown. How did that happen?!

I have grandchildren! 6 of them. 4 boys (Charles, Gabriel, Thomas, and little Sebastien)
and 2 girls (Emilie and Celeste). It has been a wonder watching my children be parents,
watching these new lives grow.

I’ve been incredibly blessed. I’m thankful every day that I am not my father, that I’m an
important part (and maybe sometimes an overly involved part?) of my children’s lives.

They are the most miraculous things I’ve ever had the honour to hold. And that’s saying
a lot. Considering I was once a superhero with superpowers…..

She had to close the book because her mind was playing back memory after memory.
Nightmares

The title of his entry made her want to skip this chapter. She wasn’t sure she wanted to read about his nightmares. They felt too close to home. She pulled his pillow close, hugging it tightly to her as she forced her eyes to follow the curved script of his writing.

I still have nightmares, although they were pretty quiet for a long time. I think this cancer has brought them bubbling back to the surface. I think they happen almost every night now. I try not to wake Marinette but I know she knows.

But, the night we defeated Hawkmoth was the fodder for many of the terrifying dreams that plague me. The man was a monster.

Every night the dream starts the same. We’re standing there, surrounded by his butterflies - their wings tearing at every inch of our exposed skin, facing off against Hawkmoth and his partner, Mayura.

He attacks first, and always - always! there is this horrible sound of his laughter echoing all over the walls of the dome-shaped room with the huge round window. It is a crazy fight, I remember but it’s his eyes that haunt me. Boring into me as he throws attack after attack with his cane sword. I remember blood. I remember pain. But it’s his eyes. Crazy and wild and determined.

In the dream, I can hear Ladybug struggling against Mayura’s crazy fast attacks. My Lady was always better at long-range attacks - after all, a yo-yo is a tricky weapon at best, but close up doesn’t offer much protection. To my side, all I can see is a flurry of blue and red as the two of them fight it out and I keep Hawkmoth at bay.

It’s when I’m knocked to the ground and my baton clatters away that I hear her scream for her lucky charm. A lucky charm that does nothing. She gets nothing. It’s like slow motion as we stare at each other before Hawkmoth has me around the throat and is beating my head senseless into the floor over and over.

Then, I hear the screaming. Ladybug screaming over and over - whether for me or for herself or for both of us, I’m not sure. Mayura has my lady pinned down with a fan blade against the pulse on Ladybug’s neck.

The screaming cuts off abruptly and Marinette lies there, covered in blood. Blood everywhere. I can’t get free. I am trapped. Hawkmoth’s eyes are crazy. And I can’t get to Marinette. I can’t save her. I’m helpless and the world is hurting and I can’t move.

Usually, I wake up here, sweat pooling all over me. Usually, I have to touch her to make sure she’s ok. Usually, I have to stop the crying that wants to burst out.

But there are other nightmares too. Like when he dragged me mostly unconscious down this narrow bridge of metal to a garden and dumped my body there, before pulling my ring off. The look on his face then. The shock. The horror. Like he’d seen a ghost. Yanking me to my feet and pressing my body against this glass case. Seeing the face of my mother inside. I remember throwing up. In the dream, she’s screaming and clawing
the glass from the inside, begging to be free. And then it’s me in the box, doing the same thing.

But that’s not what happened.

Ladybug’s earrings and my ring. Together. Hawkmoth turned into my father, his eyes burning me alive, and a series of words that I still can’t figure out in my head as I try to push past the agony of it all.

And then suddenly, there’s this huge shockwave and I’m falling. Falling into the abyss of the unknown.

In this dream, I’m screaming. No one can save me now.

But sometimes, I’m not falling. Sometimes I’m there. And the pulse is me. Tearing my soul into a million pieces. And my mother looks at me with angry eyes inside her glass tomb while my father laughs.

Other times, I watch them both die. The pulse wave claiming them both in an instant and I am alone with no one. Marinette is dead. My parents are dead. I am alone.

For most of my life, my greatest nightmare was that. Being trapped. And alone. The trapped nightmares make me feel horribly sick. Screaming for my father to save me. And then realizing that it was my father who trapped me in the first place.

Then there are the dreams about dying. About leaving people behind and the horrible guilt I feel about that. Marinette. My children. My grandchildren. My friends. They all deserve so much better than me just dying. I have these nightmares where I’m floating there, helpless to help them, unable to hold them close and they are the most painful dreams a man can have.

I don’t want to die.

His last week had been one of the hardest she remembered. He’d been more and more tired as the disease took over his body and sleep led to more nightmares. He never told her any of the things he could see, but would stare at her with hollow eyes when he would wake up, the heart machines pulsing faster.

“Oh, Adrien.” His name whispered from her lips in a heart-wrenching sob. She’d never known what he saw behind those lids at night. And maybe she hadn’t really ever wanted to. Because now, the images would probably haunt her too.

Chapter End Notes

... sorry. :'( 
Ladybug and I had the best team. Although some of our teammates were only able to help once or twice, it was awesome to be able to see others become heroes, especially since so many of them were our friends.

Alya was Rena Rouge - the fox miraculous. She loved being a hero, and mostly she loved working with Ladybug since my Lady was Alya’s idol. She was fun to work with.

Nino was Carapace - the turtle. I swear it took every ounce of my willpower not to crack TMNT jokes. He was amazing with his shield - determined to keep us all safe. I often wondered if he and Alya practiced together out of the suits as we were teens. They always seemed to know who each other was.

Chloe was Queen Bee -at least for a while. Having the chance to be a hero really started helping Chloe become a better person. She made some great progress from being completely self-absorbed to paying attention to other people. She was incredibly proud to be a superhero. I was proud of her too.

We also had Luka, Max, Kim, Kagami, Alix, and others of our friends join us from time to time when we needed them.

Although I loved just being Ladybug & Chat Noir, and knowing it really boiled down to the two of us to deal with problems, it was great to have help. The team was great at having our backs - especially when Ladybug got caught and I, in a stupid love-sick response, would leap before thinking and get myself into trouble too. Not that I did that often….. (Stop rolling your eyes, Marinette!)

We had to count on them to defeat evil and they pulled through every time.

Having a team was really helpful. The rest of the gang had helped them pull through some of the hardest akumas and Hawkmoth confrontations they had ever had. She shuddered to think what would have happened to Paris if there hadn’t been a team backing them up. Too many times Chat, whether his intentions were noble or not, had gotten into trouble on her behalf. They had almost failed many times on their own. The team was their saving grace.

But the truth was, the two of them were the core of that team.

Marinette sighed, closing the book for the day. It had been the two of them as a team for so long. As he always said, wedding vows included, “It’s you and me against the world, Milady.”

The house felt empty without him, but slowly she was learning to accept the help of others - a new team, perhaps - so she didn't have to face the world alone.
The book was getting scarily close to the last entry. Marinette didn’t want this to end. His voice, his memories, his life were too important to her. For a few days, she tried not to read the next entry, instead, flipping back and starting from the beginning again. She took in the words over and over, hiding them in her heart, pulling him as close to her as she possibly could.

But inevitably, she found herself face to face with the reality that it was nearly over. That he had been forced to stop writing. With a resigned sigh, she let herself read.

My work as a model as a teen allowed me the privilege to travel. I’ve been all kinds of places: Italy, the US, England, Spain, Germany. I’d even gone to Australia a few times, did a show or two in Dubai and Hong Kong, and did some photoshoots in Iceland.

But I’d never visited the Caribbean before.

For our 25th wedding anniversary, I surprised Marinette with a trip to one of the islands there, leaving the children in the care of her parents so we could enjoy a getaway together.

It really was paradise - warm weather, white sand and blue-green ocean as far as the eye can see, friendly people, delicious food. Have you ever eaten a mango or coconut right off the tree? Ah, heavenly.

We spent our days relaxing in the sun, walking down the beach hand-in-hand, or swimming in the ocean. I discovered that the Caribbean sun was much more potent than I’d experienced before and got a wicked sunburn - I’m not sure I’ve ever really had a sunburn before. Those things hurt!

I tried to romance the heck out of that woman - taking her to restaurants, giving her a diamond necklace, daily love notes on her pillows, drawing her bubble baths, showering her in roses, foot rubs, walking together in the surprise rain storm that appeared one afternoon, watching her favourite romantic movie during a thunderstorm all snuggled together on the couch in our suite.

And you know what she did? She upped me.

On our actual anniversary, I had made reservations at the best restaurant on the whole island, got myself dressed and waited patiently for Marinette to get ready in the bathroom. The minute that door opened I just about died.

She had designed and made the most stunning dress. It started at her shoulders with thick straps, a plunging neckline that dropped all the way to her belly button, back bare, with the length of the dress ended just above her knees. Three thin neon green bands wrapped around her waist. The dress itself looked black, but it shimmered and when the light caught the material, it shifted to tones of green. Her incredibly high heeled shoes were the same colour of neon green to match both the bands on her dress and her small clutch. Her hair was simple - just draping over her shoulder softly and around her neck was the diamond necklace I’d given her.
She stood there with a Chat Noir approved smirk as I died slowly, knowing exactly the effect she was having on me by wearing such an outfit in my colours. I was actually afraid to take her to dinner because I figured that everyone would try to steal my wife away.

I love that woman - more than I think she even realizes it. She’s beautiful, strong, caring, talented, determined, sweet, and most amazingly - loves me back. I still have no idea why. But I’m grateful. Every day. She’s the most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.

Our getaway was something I will never forget - the chance to spend time together in appreciation of our commitment to love each other forever.

With a soft sigh, Marinette felt herself flash back to that evening. The dress itself had been somewhat of a nightmare to make since she’d been so determined to make it perfect for him but the look on his face when she’d opened the bathroom door all dressed up in that dress had been pure appreciation. It made her feel that, even in her 40s, she was still beautiful - despite having had 3 children and not being the same shape she was before. He’d loved her so much that he never cared about any of that.

That whole evening, he’d fluctuated between pride and protectiveness - and at one point, she wondered if he was going to go completely feral and tear a man’s eyes out for daring to comment on the dress.

That whole trip had been magical - a bubble in the middle of a busy and chaotic life.

Chapter End Notes

Brace yourself. Tomorrow is the final chapter and one that had me in an uncontrolled sob-fest. (Maybe it won't affect you the same way, but just wanted to give you a heads up!)
Kitty

Chapter Notes

Fair warning. This chapter made me sob so much while writing it that I had to lock myself in the bathroom for 15 minutes to recover. And then I still sobbed myself secretly to sleep that night. I've avoided editing this chapter until right this moment because I was afraid to read it again. You might need a box of Kleenex before you start.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

One last entry. Marinette’s hands shook as she turned to the last page of words, the writing less refined than it had been in the rest of the book, an indication of the lack of strength Adrien had suffered in his last few days before needing to be hospitalized for good.

She found her way to his office, mostly empty now other than the desk and his oversized chair. Gently she ran her fingers over the worn leather arms as she settled into the seat. She put his journal on the desk and flipped it open to the entry.

There was no title today. Seeing that it was addressed directly to her made her uncomfortable, worried.

My Lady,

I’m not sure how much time I have left, in truth. I’ve been feeling so tired lately. I can barely keep my eyes open and I know, I know it’s almost time. But first, I need to tell you a story.

Once upon a time, there was a boy. A boy who had a life of a prince. He lived in a castle, had his every whim met in a blink of an eye, and everyone in the kingdom seemed to adore him. Except, maybe, his Father. His father was afraid to let the boy out of his sight. You see, the boy’s mother had disappeared without a trace. So, the Father kept him locked in his room when at home, and guarded fiercely whenever he was out. The boy had no real friends, only loneliness.

And then, one day, a magic ring appeared. That ring gave the boy a way to escape from the castle in secret. A way to be freed from his cage, from his life alone.

On his first day out in the world, that boy met a girl. A beautiful girl dressed all in red, with her dark hair in the cutest pigtails and with eyes that looked like the sky. A girl who doubted herself. Not knowing how to handle all the feelings that he had right then, the boy acted foolish and brashly overconfident. But when she became fire and steel, her self-doubt melting away, he knew, from that moment, he loved that girl. Together, they had a responsibility to save the kingdom from a darkness that threatened to overtake it. They were a team.
The boy began to stand up for himself at home, just a little, begging for some semblance of normalcy - and his Father reluctantly agreed to send him to school. The safety measures remained, but he was able to be with others for the first time in his whole life. He stumbled a lot, not knowing how to be a good friend, how to behave in a group, or generally what to do around others.

There, he met another girl. Soft and pink with pigtails like his partner, this girl started with fire and anger. Thinking he’d done something bad and deciding he was a fool, she ignored him - at least until he managed to get her to listen to him and he explained that this was all new to him.

Then, she became one of his closest friends when he didn’t use the ring. A friendship he valued more than anything.

The girl in red was his best friend when he escaped the walls of his room. They would battle evil, laughing along the way. Somehow they became a team who worked together to defeat the encroaching darkness that was taking over the kingdom. His heart felt like it would explode with how much he cared for her.

A cocky cat who didn’t know how to talk to girls (or really how to talk to anyone). She’d roll her eyes at his antics and remind him to focus on their mission. He tried, he really did, but all he wanted was for her to love him as much as he loved her.

Together they won. They defeated their enemy - who turned out to be the boy’s Father.

Now alone, the boy begged the girl to tell him her name. When she did, he was stunned. She was his close friend from school - the one who was fire and softness and pink. His lady in red.

It took too long, perhaps, for the masks to drop and for the boy and the girl to discover each other - friends and partners both, all that time. But, most amazingly of all..... she loved him back.

Then they kissed, got married, and lived happily ever after.

The End.

You see Mari - you are that girl. My friend. My partner. My Lady.

All our lives, I’ve spent trying to protect you, when in truth, it was you who saved me.

Without you, I was nothing. I was alone. Unloved.

You gave me everything.

I don’t want to go, Marinette. I don’t. I wish I could stay here with you and hold you forever. Tell you how much I love you every single morning. Never let you go. But I can’t. It’s time for me to go.

Promise me, my Lady, that you will be strong without me. That you will be Ladybug again - fierce, on fire, able to stand strong. Be steel. Because, if you can’t do that, I don’t know how to say goodbye.

I wish I could write more, but it’s too hard to hold a pen for long. Instead, I’m going to spend whatever time I have left with you: watching your face, holding your hand,
hugging you, loving you in every single way that I can.

My life has been Miraculous. All because of you, Marinette.

From now to my last breath, and a million years beyond, I love you.

Eternally,

Your Kitty.

He was gone. Truly gone.

Pressing the journal to her chest, Marinette collapsed her head onto his desk and let the heartbroken sobs tear her apart. She stayed that way for a long time, unable to move or feel much more than the horrible pain of losing your other half.

How does one go on without their best friend, their partner, their soulmate? She had no idea, even if he had begged her to do so.

Dimly, she heard a voice calling for her in the hallway, and quickly moving footsteps in her direction, but she still couldn’t move, the tears long dried up.

A set of arms encircled her. Then another. Then another. And more.

“Maman,” the first one whispered, squeezing her tightly. “We love you.” More voices echoed the same.

Her children. Her grandchildren.

That’s how she could go on without him. The only way she could keep her heart beating still without him.

I love you too, Kitty. Wait for me.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for joining me in another month-long adventure. This one was quite the emotional rollercoaster, I admit it. I felt like I was intruding on something extremely personal and intimate between our two favourite heroes with this one but it was too beautiful to turn away.

Thanks for all your comments, kudos, feedback, questions, and silent reading (I see you. I appreciate you!). Honestly, hearing that things I write mean something to others is a wonderful feeling. <3

Stay tuned - more stories are coming your way! I’ve got a few in progress, some more monthly teamed-up stories coming before the end of the year, and who knows, I might do NaNoWriMo in November! :D

Feel free to pop over and join me or send me a message on Tumblr. My name there is
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!