History Repeats Itself

by JazzGirl123

Summary

Felix Beauchamp and Bridgette Cheng did not have the sweet love story of their successors. Instead, they had one filled with heartache and misfortune.

Years after retiring as Ladybug and Chat Noir, they are reunited in the city of London with the arrival of his nephew and her cousin’s class, still oblivious to who was behind the mask.

As they watch Adrien and Marinette dance around each other, old feelings arise and Felix and Bridgette wonder if the answers to their questions are closer than they thought.

Notes

Mm, so I deleted this because I was emotional and feeling bad about my writing, and I never reuploaded it. So here we are. If you’ve read this before and commented or anything, I apologize if I never got to reply.

For new readers...hey~ I hope you enjoy.
See the end of the work for more notes.
Prologue

They say evil never sleeps.

One evil is defeated and another rises; it is the way of life, for there cannot be peace without chaos.

This tale of a bug and a cat is not the tale you may know.

For this story revolves not around Marinette Dupain-Cheng and Adrien Agreste, but their predecessors.

Bridgette Cheng.

A bright, bubbly teenager who was the embodiment of sunshine and rainbows; friends with everyone, never afraid to show the world her smile. She was Miss Sunshine, perky and bright. She was courageous and kind, utterly adorable.

Her only visible flaw seemed to be her luck - or rather, lack of it. Always getting splashed by puddles; running late for everything; tripping over air; getting things mixed up. One might call her ditzy; another might call her cursed.

But other than that, she was lovely and quirky and wonderful. She lived with her mom in a cozy apartment above their quaint little cafe in London.

She was also in love with Felix Beauchamp.

Felix; oh, Felix.

A gray, quiet teen who was the embodiment of rain showers and cloudy days; always kept to himself, never without a book to hide his nose in. He was cold and frankly, intimidating; not in a “I’m going to pick you up with one hand and shove you in your locker” way but in a “You dare to speak me?” way. He lived in a cramped apartment complex, alone since his parents’ deaths and his sister’s disappearance.

Like the girl who was very oddly infatuated with him, he too seemed cursed. Unfortunately no one seemed to care - they probably thought he was the curse. And, unlike Bridgette, he really was cursed with bad luck - quite literally.

It all started the day he suddenly found a ring on his finger - a tacky one too - on his sister Emilie’s birthday. Her first since her disappearance.

Felix didn’t even get a chance to ponder how in hell a ring magically appeared before an inky black blob was shoved in his face, whining for cheese. Oh, and telling him he was stuck as a superhero until his curse could be broken. That was a nice birthday present.

That night, the city of London witnessed the first appearance of Chat Noir and Ladybug. It was also the first - but not the last - time Chat Noir failed to get a kiss from Ladybug; a kiss that would break his curse.

Normally, Ladybug might have considered it. But she wasn’t about to give her first kiss to some stray cat she just met - especially when she was quite in love with someone else.
Was that not mentioned?

Ladybug was really Bridgette, who was in love with Felix, who was really Chat Noir, who needed that kiss from Ladybug to break his curse -

Yes. A love square. With two people.

Marinette and Adrien weren’t the first. But perhaps they would get a happier ending than those before them.

If not, history is doomed to repeat itself.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

In which some people end up with an unwanted roommate.

Chapter Notes

Who knew I could finally get inspired to write by sitting in a bookstore? I don't know what's so special about being in a bookstore or library, but it makes me want to write!

And so, I finally finished chapter one. I hope you all like it!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It had been a perfect trip planned in the spur of the moment.

Or perhaps on the whims of a teenager’s obsessive fanatics.

Either way, upon hearing there was a museum dedicated solely to Ladybug (and Chat Noir), Chloé had instantly demanded her father fund a trip for her to go.

The mayor, however, saw it as an opportunity to gain favor with the voters and the heroes as their third anniversary approached. The way he saw it, if the heroes saw how much he appreciated them, they would help his campaign, and once the people saw the heroes favoring him, they would too.

Simple.

So he compromised with his daughter; an exclusive, all-expenses-paid field trip for her class to see the museum in London, where they would roam the city and be able to learn the history of the two heroes before returning to Paris in time for the anniversary banquet he would hold on Ladybug and Chat Noir’s actual anniversary (since becoming heroes, that is).

It was perfect, and it certainly got the rest of the class up in a frenzy.

Alya, in particular, was bouncing with joy. She was almost excited enough to copy Marinette’s infamous butt wiggle.

Almost.

“Girl, can you believe this?” Alya gripped her phone, grinning ear-to-ear. “We’re going to learn all about Ladybug and Chat Noir! Where they came from, what they did...agh, I can hardly wait!”

Nino turned in his seat, unable to not hear his girlfriend’s excited squeals, and leaned close to remark, “Yeah, I’m pumped too. And, not that I’d ever tell her, but I’m glad Chloé’s dad is funding this trip. No way my family would have been able to afford it.”

Alya sighed at that. “Yeah, same here. I hate the idea of having to thank her though.”
“Don’t worry. She’s gloating enough to let us know she knows we’re thankful,” remarked Marinette, rolling her eyes. “It’s a miracle she hasn’t shoved in directly in our faces yet.”

“Well, I think the real miracle is that Adrien’s old man let him go,” said Nino, playfully nudging the blond next to him. “How did you do it?”

Adrien rubbed the back of his neck, smiling sheepishly. It was amazing how at seventeen, he still had the same innocent smile he did three years ago.

“Well, Chloe can be pretty persuasive when she wants to be,” he said as an explanation. “And...I had a good argument myself to go.”

Alya leaned in. “Really? And you won?” She grimaced. “Not to sound...impressed or anything, but your dad’s one hard nut to crack.”

Adrien sighed. “Believe me, I know. But yeah...I had a pretty solid argument for why I should be able to go. Aside from it being paid for and all that. Nathalie already rearranged my schedule and everything, so he can’t change his mind at the last minute.”

He sunk down in his seat a bit.

“And I happen to know he’s pretty good at backing out at the last minute.”

Marinette clicked her tongue, reaching across to rub his shoulder in what she hoped was a comforting manner. While it was true she still had feelings for him, she was proud of herself for reeling in her emotions. If she hadn’t done that, she wouldn’t have been able to grow closer to him the last three years.

(Though not all of the posters had come down off her wall yet...most! But not all.)

“Hey, if your argument is as solid as you say, no way he’d have a reason to suddenly back out,” she reasoned.

Adrien smiled a bit and put his hand over hers, squeezing her fingers lightly.

“Thanks, Marinette,” he said. “So everyone in the class is going?”

“Yeah, pretty much,” said Nino. “Who’d turn down a free trip? My parents are thrilled about it. But maybe that's cuz my mom is probably planning to deep clean my room while I'm gone.”

Alya rolled her eyes. “I've been in your room; I don't blame her.”

The aspiring DJ grinned as he shrugged his shoulders.

“Hey, not all of us can magically keep our room clean - despite having two tiny tornadoes you call sisters,” he said. “How do you even do it?”

“Easy. I tell them there's a giant octopus monster in my closet that tickles little girls all day long, so unless they want to be tickled, they have to stay out of my room,” explained Alya. “It's...pretty effective.”

“Would work on me,” said Adrien, grinning at the two. “You think they won’t go in your room while you’re gone though?”

“Who’s gonna save them from the giant octopus monster if I’m not there?” Alya remarked, snorting. “They won’t be going in there, trust me.”
“But they may try to convince your dad to let loose one of the animals at the zoo and eat the octopus monster,” pointed out Marinette. “Wait, why are we even discussing an imaginary octopus monster?”

Nino shrugged. “Why not?”

Adrien chuckled and looked at the aspiring fashion designer.

“He’s got you there,” he said.

Marinette rolled her eyes, slumping her shoulders. “He does, doesn’t he? So is your mom really going to deep clean your room while you’re gone, Nino?”

He laughed. “Probably, but it’s all good. Nothing really worrying for her to find that she doesn’t already know about.”

“That poor woman,” said Alya, her voice oozing with sympathy. “What horrors has she seen?”

“Er, an empty turtle tank I use to store random stuff?” Nino remarked. “That’s about the oddest thing in my room.”

“And why do you have an empty turtle tank in the first place?” Adrien had to ask. “You don’t have a turtle.”

“That’s why it’s empty, duh,” teased Nino. “Eh, I wanted one when I was a kid. My neighbor had a tank he didn’t need anymore so he gave it to me, and I just never got a turtle.” He laughed. “I don’t know. Maybe I’ll get one later. It’s a good tank, huge and full of space, so it’d be a shame that a little turtle dude didn’t get to use it.”

“It’d be like having a bunch of catnip and no cat to play with it,” remarked Marinette, thinking of the plants on her balcony.

“A shame,” said Adrien, shaking his head gravely. “No catnip should be neglected.”

“Well, it’s gonna be, unless you have a cat you’d love to lend for a few hours,” replied Marinette, resting her chin on her hands. “Maybe I’ll just ask a stray cat I know…” She chuckled suddenly, as if remembering an old joke. “Mm, maybe I’ll do that.”

“Okay…” Alya shrugged off her best friend’s kookiness; she was used to it at this point. Though she was never any closer to figuring out what Marinette was so amused by. “Well, back to the trip, at least we know we’ll be comfortable. Chloe would never forgive her father for putting her in a cheap hotel, and since he can’t show favoritism - more than he already does, clearly - he’d put us in pretty decent rooms.”

“That’s true…hey,” said Nino. “You think we’ll get to choose who we room with?”

“Mm, I don’t know.” Adrien furrowed his eyebrows. “We should, right? As long as we’re not inappropriate,” he said as if scandalized by the word alone.

“Can’t be any worse than what some people do in the hallways,” said Alya. “Then again…”

Marinette snorted. “Not everyone has, as Adrien said, inappropriate intentions.”

“Not everyone,” agreed Alya. “But a bunch of teenagers? Wouldn’t be surprised. But I hope they don’t randomly assign us rooms. Ugh, imagine getting roomed with Chloe.”

“She’s not that bad, really,” said Adrien, quick to defend his childhood friend despite their faults.
“Yeah, you saying you want to room with her for two weeks?” Marinette cocked an eyebrow at him. “I’ll go tell her now.”

“Don’t, please,” said Adrien, making a face. “I...alright, fine. But I mean, aside from Chloe - and Lila - everyone gets along with each other fine; what’s the worst that could happen?”

“Can...Can you repeat that, Madame Bustier?” Rose squeaked as she and her classmates stared at their English teacher in shock. “I don’t think we heard you right…”

The red-haired woman hummed, mindful of the bright screens above their heads, each one depicting the flight times.

“Ladybug and Chat Noir were presumingly thrown into a new situation and forced to adjust, despite - we assume - being strangers,” she said. “You all will face a similar situation, by your room partners. This was decided by a random generator, and this means anyone can be your partner. Now, there’s an uneven number of you so one of you will have a room to yourself. And no trading is allowed.”

“Is this even...allowed? The school allowed this?” Mylene asked quietly, blinking up to see if anyone would answer her.

Madame Bustier didn’t hear her as she pulled out a sheet of paper.

“Since there are chaperones waiting for you in London, I will not be attending this trip with you. Therefore, I’ll be reading you your partners’ names now,” she said, a hint of tiredness - and, was that amusement? - in her voice. “I do not want to hear any of you complaining - or trading. Your chaperones have already been told of this, so they will know if you switched.”

She cleared her throat.

“First, Rose.” The blonde-haired girl squeaked a little. “You’ll be sharing a room with Juleka.”

“Wicked,” said Juleka, smiling at her best friend. She nudged Rose a little, allowing the smaller girl to sigh in relief.

Everyone else shifted anxiously. Even Chloe was eyeing their teacher, silently hoping to be paired with at least Sabrina if not Adrien. She wouldn’t be able to stand anyone else.

“Ivan, you’ll be rooming with Max,” continued Madame Bustier.

Ivan and Max glanced at each other, both clearly skeptical but also fairly relieved. This was good; the random pairing wasn’t that bad. And no one had been paired with a member of the other-

“Kim and Alix.”

Spoke too soon.

Alix stared openly at her teacher before she gaped at her rival, who did the same. 

“Oh, no,” she muttered.

“Please don’t kill each other,” said Madame Bustier simply before she looked back down at her list. “Next, Mylene and Sabrina.”

The two girls eyed each other suspiciously; they weren’t exactly friends, after all. Not enemies either,
but not friends. Nowhere near friends. That was fine; there were plenty of roommates who weren’t friends but managed anyways, right?

Madame Bustier eyed Nino and Alya for a moment before she said, “Nino, Alya. I know you two are dating, but no funny business, please.”

The two of them had the decency to look abashed, though didn’t hide their excitement at being paired together.

Chloe had moved closer to Adrien at this point; since Sabrina was taken, she was confident she’d be paired off with him. It’d be better than being forced to share with Marinette Dupain-Cheng, of all people! Hell, she’d even take that lying fox or the lovesick artist-

“Nathanael, you’ll be with Chloe.”

“What? No,” shrieked Chloe. She looked between Adrien, Marinette, and Lila, the latter of which looked all too smug. Just like she had before she was assigned with the boy who couldn’t even accessorize properly!

“No trading,” said Madame Bustier firmly. “Now, to the three of you left.” She stopped as an announcement came on, telling them it was time to board the flight. “Alright, alright. Hurry, hurry. We don’t want you to miss your flight, do you?”

She ushered the kids towards the boarding area, ignoring their surprised cries as they picked up their suitcases.

“Wait, Madame Bustier,” protested Marinette before her teacher could push her into the plane, mindful of the poor flight attendant nearby. “Who are we-”

“You’re with Adrien,” said Madame Bustier quickly. “Lila, you have your own room. Now go and find your seats.”

She smiled at the teenagers, waving them goodbye.

“And have fun!”

Marinette gaped at her teacher even as Alya dragged her along.

“What?!”

Chapter End Notes

Okay, so some of the pairs were predictable. But who doesn't love Person A and Person B inexplicably sharing a room with one bed?

Maybe.

I've asked people on my tumblr (jazztastic-panda) to help me decide which pairs get one bed or two beds...and, well, we'll see the fruits of our labor soon! Thanks for reading!
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Airports are busy, busy, busy. So many people!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Marinette honestly wouldn’t have been able to say if the flight had been good or bad, because she spent the entire time staring out the window wondering if she could use her yoyo to break the glass and leap out.

Two weeks.

For two weeks, she would be sharing a room with Adrien Agreste.

The thought made her want to scream again.

Alya had spent far too long cackling at her expense, only to pause to congratulate herself for bringing cute pajamas. She had a boyfriend to impress, after all. (Though Nino would probably be quite happy with whatever she wore...or didn’t.)

It was true that she was working on moving on, but staying in the same room as him certainly wouldn’t help. Or maybe it would.

Wasn’t that some sort of test? Live with a person for a while and see if they're really the person you think they are?

Well then. She’d just have to take this test, decide whether or not Adrien was as perfect as she always made him out to be.

“Hello, Marinette?” Alya waved her hand in front of the girl’s face. “You’re spacing out again. I'm pretty sure your luggage already passed by.”

“What?” Marinette groaned as she indeed caught sight of her pink suitcase disappearing back into whatever hell airport luggages went into. “Nooooo.”

The curly-haired girl laughed, nudging her with her shoulder.

“Still thinking about Adrien?” She remarked. “It won’t be that bad. Don’t overthink it, okay? Adrien is a sweet guy, and you two already get along well enough. I mean, the worst thing that can happen between you two is that one of you hogs the shower or something.”

Alya put her luggage down and took her best friend by the shoulders, looking her in the eye.

“Seriously, girl. Do not overthink it,” she said, smiling a bit. “Your biggest worry right now is getting your suitcase.”

Marinette smiled, putting her hands over Alya’s.
“Yeah...okay,” she agreed. “Thanks, Alya.”

Suddenly, she spotted her suitcase coming around again and she yelped, nearly tripping over herself to race to get it.

Chloe scoffed, watching her for a moment before she turned her attention back to Sabrina, who was struggling to get the two bright yellow suitcases off the conveyer belt, her own dark purple carry-on sitting by her feet.

“How Hurry up, Sabrina,” she snapped. “I want to see the hotel Daddy picked out; it should be the best, of course, but I have to make sure I have enough room with the extra…” She crinkled her nose, “guest.”

“Coming, Chloe!” Sabrina assured, pushing her right foot back to try and lift the suitcase again. She squeaked in surprise when someone lifted up the other side and helped her set the luggage on the floor. “Oh, thank you, Nathanael.”

Chloe lifted her gaze from her nails, hearing her new roommate’s name. The redheaded artist picked up the suitcases and placed them in front of her, straightening and meeting her eyes.

“Did you really need suitcases this big for a two-week trip?” He remarked, brushing some of his hair away. Over the last few years, it had grown quite long and she had an inexplicable urge to chop it off for him. What was the point of having such bright eyes if he was just going to cover them up?

Shaking her head, Chloe scoffed and said, “I wouldn’t expect you to understand.” She looked meaningfully at the ratty brown duffel bag slung over his shoulder. “Some of us have standards.”

Nathanael hummed, an amused smile tugging at his lips. It agitated her for some reason.

“If you say so,” he said before he left to go talk with Adrien and Nino.

Chloe huffed, crossing her arms. Some people were just so annoying!

Alix grinned at the scene and nudged Kim. “How long you think they’ll last?”

“Not very,” snorted Kim. “I betcha Nath will end up sleeping on the floor somewhere; Chloe’s like that.”

“I can’t believe you ever had a crush on her,” muttered the skater, shaking her head in disapproval. “I mean, I have to ask why.”

“I like a girl who bosses me around,” explained Kim, smirking at the shorter girl when she gave him a disdainful look. “What?”

“Nothing.” Alix waved her hand. “Hurry up and help me find my stuff already.”

“In that mess?” Kim eyed the countless suitcases on the conveyer belt, where more than just their classmates struggled to find their things. “You’re lucky I like-”

“-triple espresso for Briar!”

The barista put the cup of coffee on the counter before she went to make the next customer’s order. The espresso was quickly picked up, given a curious look, before quickly approved.

“How in the world do you mix up Bridgette with Briar?” The dark-haired girl remarked, chuckling a
bit as she exited the airport’s coffee shop. As she did, she glanced at her phone and she groaned. “I’m late!”

Stuffing her phone in her coat pocket, the young woman’s dark blue eyes darted around the area before they caught sight of the group of teenagers looking around expectantly. Thank goodness; she was at least in the right area for once.

Working in her mom’s tea shop was fun, sure, but they needed something a bit more to make rent; a part-time job at the museum was perfect, especially since it gave her a chance to be with-

“Madame Bustier’s class?” She called out. The familiar name made some heads turn, but the English baffled the other kids. Grimacing at her blunder, she switched to French, “Hello, hello? Is this Madame Bustier’s class?”

She smiled kindly at the fifteen teenagers, one of whom was giving her a surprised look.

“Welcome to London! My name is Bridgette Cheng; I’m going to be your chaperone.”

Chapter End Notes

I’m trying a new thing; finish a chapter at a good point, not by word count. I’ve seen it work well for other stories, so I hope it will work for me too.
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Bridgette is sweet, roommates don’t always get along, and not all memories are pleasant.

Chapter Notes

I implied this in earlier chapters, but I feel I should state it now: everyone is aged up here to be 17/18. Not the kiddie ages they are on the show, okay?

Bridgette was pretty, he had noticed.

Their chaperone, after introducing herself, had launched into a general overview of how the day would go; get to the hotel, settle in, all that. Adrien couldn’t help but tune her out for a bit.

She looked young, probably only a few years older than them, and had long dark hair with bright blue eyes that seemed familiar to him. She was an animated speaker, often waving her hands and smiling vibrantly at the teenagers.

“All right, now~” Bridgette clapped her hands, just to get the attention of anyone who might have zoned out. “Before I take attendance - have to make sure I didn’t lose any munchkins, right? - I have to ask...where is Miss Bourgeois?”

Chloe stepped forward, giving her chaperone a skeptical look. This is what her father sent? (Not that Andre Bourgeois had anything to do with the trip besides the expenses, not that Chloe knew.)

“That would be me,” she remarked.

Bridgette lit up. “Your father was so generous to pay for the expenses of this trip, so thank you. Living in a luxury hotel for the next two weeks is certainly better than staying in the apartment above my mom’s tea shop,” she said, giggling.

Chloe preened at the praise, adjusting the sunglasses on top of her head while her classmates rolled their eyes.

“All right, now I do attendance,” continued Bridgette, pulling out her phone. “I’m sure many of you are eager to settle into your rooms and explore, so we’ll make this quick.”

She stopped and leaned in closer to the screen.

“Am I reading this right?” She murmured before she laughed airily. “Who thought this would be a good idea?”

“Um...Miss Bridgette?” Mylene spoke up. “Is everything okay?”
Bridgette looked up, blinking. “Oh. Oh, yes, everything is fine. My bad! Well, I already know about your roommate situation—several of them shifted awkwardly, “—so that’s not the issue here, nope. But I just received an email from the hotel telling me that some rooms had to be changed.”

“So what does that mean? Our roommates change?” Max asked curiously.

“Please?” Alix muttered.

“No, that stays the same; nice try,” said Bridgette, smiling in amusement. “No, well, apparently the hotel had a computer bug that mixed up the type of rooms for your class. And because the hotel is booked for the museum’s anniversary ball, well…” She bit her lip, still giving them an amused look, before she continued, “Some of you may have to share a bed.”

While her words made nearly all the teenagers freeze, it shook a certain someone out of her shock.

“B-Bridgette?” Marinette choked out, mouth still agape as she kept her eyes trained on their chaperone.

The chaperone in question blinked, her smile growing even more amused.

“Yes, Marinette?” She said calmly. “Is something wrong?”

“Wha-You?” The young designer sputtered helplessly.

“Wait, girl, you know her, Bridgette?” Alya asked, one of the few unaffected by the room situation. “How?” The question made her classmates blink in surprise, relieved to have something else to focus on for the moment.

Bridgette giggled. “You don’t see the resemblance?”

Marinette relaxed her shoulder, sighing despite the small smile on her lips. The shock seemed to pass, finally, at least.

“Bridgette is my cousin,” she explained, and the others looked between the two girls. “Our moms are sisters.”

Adrien snapped his fingers. “That’s why she seemed so familiar! You two have the same color eyes. Wow, Marinette, you really look alike.”

“I’m right here,” reminded Bridgette, raising an eyebrow. Her features softened as she looked at her baby cousin. “You’ve gotten so big,” she cooed.

Marinette flushed, instinctively reeling back when her cousin reached out to squeeze her cheeks.

Bridgette laughed and pulled her phone back out.

“Okay, okay. Now I’ll really do attendance and we can go. You guys will seriously love seeing the city when we take the shuttle; it’ll be fun!”

She pressed the tickets to her lips, staring up at him with bright eyes.

“Are you sure you don’t want to go?” She asked, her voice laced with hope despite the disappointment she felt. But really, what had she expected? She knew better by now.
“I’m certain I don’t want to go,” he said, his voice filled with exasperation. Perhaps the only emotion she could get out of him. “Will you move now? I’d really like to get going.”

She held out one of the tickets.

“At least take one, please?”

He stared down at the flimsy paper for a moment before his eyes flickered upwards to meet hers. A tired sigh left his lips as he took the ticket between his fingers, as if it would poison him on contact.

“You do realize I’ll just be throwing this way, right?”

She shrugged, clearly pleased now that he had taken the ticket. Seeing her reaction, he rolled his eyes and turned to walk away from her.

“It’ll be fun!” She called, waving at his retreating back. “I hope you go!”

He didn’t.

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Bridgette grinned at the group, holding her arms out as they stood in front of Chatelle, perhaps one of the nicer hotels in the area.

“Welcome, welcome,” she exclaimed. “This is where we’ll be staying.”

“You too?” Marinette asked. “Don’t you live closeby?”

Her cousin nodded. “Yeah, just over the river.” She pointed beyond their heads, “Over by Kennington Road; my mom has her tea shop there, and we live above it. But it’s more convenient to stay here with you, plus it’s paid for. I have to go back and get my stuff though.”

Bridgette clicked her tongue. “Maybe should have brought that with me; oh, well. Come on, let’s go get you checked in.”

She led them inside, the lavish interior immediately making some of the teenagers gape.

“So the hotel has free Wi-Fi - and breakfast too - and there’s also a super cute cafe here, and I’ve heard such wonderful things about the lounge up on the roof,” she remarked. “There’s lots has things for you to explore during your free time, like a fitness center, a lounge, and private dining. The Tower is a five minute walk from here, and the Bridge. Mm, and if we ever want to travel further in the city, the tube is really close too.”

“Tube?” Sabrina asked curiously.

“Mm, dìtiě…no…the subway,” explained Bridgette. “Sorry; Chinese girl translating London speak to Parisians when English is her second language and French barely her third. You’ll have to be patient with me.”

“I think it’s impressive,” said Adrien, giving her a kind smile. “I take Mandarin lessons, but I’m nowhere near fluent. Three languages would be hard to fit, I think.”

Bridgette hummed. “Well, I doubt that; my uncle told my mom and me all about how you helped him when he visited Paris. Thank you, by the way. Marinette is so lucky to have a friend like you.”

Adrien grinned at that, pleased at being referred to as Marinette’s friend, while the girl in question
flushed.

Chloe huffed.

“Can we check in already?” She said snarkily. She turned to Sabrina to mutter, “Our chaperone is a little scatterbrained, don’t you think? Must run in the family.”

Marinette’s nostrils flared and she turned to give the blonde a piece of her mind, but a hand on her shoulder stopped her.

Bridgette smiled kindly at Chloe as she stepped away from her cousin.

“There’s no rush,” she said. “You seem stressed, Miss Bourgeois; maybe this trip will help you relax. There’s a spa here too, so I’m sure that will help; they’re known for working miracles.”

She leaned over and tapped Marinette’s nose, an amused smile on her face.

“You and I will have to catch up soon, and work on that spitfire of yours,” she said. “Let me go check everyone in, alright? Make sure you’re with your roommate - and, uh, be prepared in case there are not two beds?”

Bridgette gave them an awkward ‘what are you going to do’ smile before she went over to the reception desk.

The receptionist, a thin older man with pointed glasses, looked her over, seemingly unimpressed by her flower-printed dress and plastic leather purse adorned with colorful buttons. In fact, he looked ready to press the button under the desk for security.

“May I...help you?” He said, his voice clipped.

Bridgette smiled sweetly. “I’m here to check in; should be reserved under the name Bourgeois? My name is Bridgette - ah, Bridgette Cheng.”

Instantly, the man perked up and adjusted his glasses.

“Ah, yes! The Bourgeois reservation, of course; yes, yes…” He typed something into the computer. “Yes, says nine rooms reserved - and I apologize, on behalf of the hotel, for the mixup with the rooms.”

Bridgette waved her hand dismissively.

“A trivial issue,” she assured.

“Yes, let me just get the keys for you,” said the receptionist, going to the shelves behind him to look for the right ones. “Ah, I only have one card for your room, Miss Cheng; the other occupant insisted only one was needed.”

“Other-?”

Bridgette jumped when she heard a loud commotion behind her, and both she and the receptionist looked over to see Alix sitting in the fountain, bright blue eyes cutting harshly into Lila, who was arguing with her.

The receptionist clicked his tongue disapprovingly before he remembered who those kids were, and more specifically what name they were under.
Bridgette smiled apologetically at him.

“Teenagers, right?” She remarked, collecting the room keys. “Thank you!”

With that, she hurried back over to the group.

“Now, what happened?” Bridgette asked, sighing as she and Max helped the skater out of the fountain.

Alix scowled.

“Lila tripped me!” She said, glaring daggers at the girl in question.

“You tripped over my suitcase,” corrected Lila, rolling her eyes. “And you wouldn’t have if you hadn’t been skating all over the place - in such an elegant establishment too. It’s not my fault.”

“Why you-”

“Okay, well, it’s nothing to start fussing about,” interrupted Bridgette, wanting to avoid a fight in the lobby. “I have your room keys, so let’s go and get you settled in, okay?”

She pulled up the list on her phone again, making sure to give the right keys to everyone. And then kept an eye on them to make sure no one swapped keys.

Two hormone-ridden teenagers in one room...what could wrong?

“**I AM THE BOX MAN AND I WILL BOX THIS CITY!**”

He clicked his tongue. “He’s been saying that for hours.”

“Well, he’s gloating,” she corrected, grimacing after a moment. “Um...do you mind if I move my leg a little? I’m getting cramped…”

“I’d rather you didn’t,” he said, staring up at the top of the wooden crate. That’s right. The Box Man trapped them. In a crate. Wonderful. “I’m cramped as well, but I can stand still. I suggest you do the same.”

She puffed out her cheeks, glaring at him with the little light that leaked through the crate’s cracks.

“Normally, I find your pessimistic attitude-”

“Being realistic isn’t the same as being pessimist.”

She sighed.

“Normally, I find your realistic attitude adorable, but now it’s just annoying. And I’m cramped. So I’m moving my leg, since it’s obvious Chat Noir isn’t coming to save us soon.”

“Ladybug, you mean.”

She shook her head. “No, Chat Noir. He’s a hero too.”

Sighing, she shifted her body if only to get circulation going again, and she froze.

“Oh.” Now she understood why he didn’t want her to move. “Um...”
“You’re loud; scream for help and someone will come get us out.”

“Right…right, of course. Good idea.”

They agreed not to speak about that day.

“Wicked,” said Juleka as she and Rose entered the hotel room.

“Wow, look at that view!” Rose gushed, dropping her suitcase and rushing to the windows. She pressed her face to the glass. “Wow, look at that, Juleka! We can see the London Bridge from here! It’s so pretty.”

“Not as pretty as you,” crooned Juleka, coming up behind her and kissing her cheek. “And I guess our room was one of those affected; look, only one bed.”

Rose giggled, turning around in her arms.

“How unfortunate,” she remarked, pressing her forehead against hers. “I get cold easily, you know. I’ll have to stay close to you for warmth.”

“Unfortunate,” echoed Juleka, grinning before she kissed her girlfriend.

“There are two beds,” stated Ivan, his voice full of relief. “No…offense, Max.”

Max shook his head, pushing up his glasses.

“None taken; the probability of us being affected by the room mix-up was extremely low…but so was Marinette beating me in a video game when we were fifteen,” he remarked. “At least statistics worked in our favor this time around.”

“Right…” Ivan set down his bag. “You want the bed by the window?”

“No, sun always glints off my glasses,” said Max. “You can take it. Care to unpack?”

“Sure.” The heavy metal enthusiast opened up his things and held up his music player. “You, uh, mind…if I…?”

“Please wear your headphones.”

“Thanks.”

“I am not sharing a bed with you,” snapped Alix. “The bed is mine.”

“Well, it’s not like I want to share a bed with you either,” remarked Kim, crossing his arms. “And no way you’re getting the bed; I mean, come on. You’re small enough to sleep on the couch.”

Alix scoffed, rolling her eyes in disbelief.

“Wow, how gentlemanly of you.” She threw her suitcase on the bed. “It’s officially mine now.”

“What? You’re joking, shortstack,” said Kim. “You probably take up less than a quarter of the bed; it
makes sense that I get it.”

“Well, I’m not moving,” she told him as she threw herself onto the bed. “And I’d like to see you-okay, holy shit. Kim, this thing is ridiculously gentle. Not like prissy soft but like...I feel all my muscles just relaxing.”

“What, really? Move over.” Kim dropped his stuff by the door as he rolled onto the bed, careful not to squish his roommate. “Damn. I would have killed for a bed like this when I broke my leg two years ago. I feel totally relaxed.”

“Right?” Alix wriggled around on the bed, digging her back into the mattress. “My dad’s taken the family to some nice hotels, but this...wow. Not bad. Not bad at all.”

Kim closed his eyes, grunting in agreement.

“We take turns on the couch?”

“Sounds good. Wanna arm wrestle for the first night?”

“You’re on, Pinky.”

Sabrina fidgeted with the pin on her sweater, a bit unsure of what to do without Chloe around. Mylene, likewise, seemed uncertain on how to talk to the other girl.

“Um...do you want the bed by the window?” She asked, looking to the redhead. “I don’t mind really.”

“Are you sure?” Sabrina asked before she shook her head. “No, no; you take that one. I’m a restless sleeper and I like taking baths in the middle of the night - it’s calming, you know, and my dad thinks it’s because my mom used to take a lot of midnight baths when she was pregnant with me so I probably get it from her, and it’s weird - so it’s better if I’m closer to the one by the bathroom.”

“Oh...alright.” Mylene looked around the room, fiddling with one of her braids. “Um...should we...unpack?”

“Sounds good.” Sabrina pulled out her phone. “First, I need to check with Chloe. Make sure she’s okay.”

She sat down on her bed, typing away, and Mylene sighed as she nodded her head.

“Right…”

“A bit smaller than I’m used to, but it wouldn’t be fair to the others, I suppose, if only I got the luxury room,” said Chloe as she sauntered into the room, surveying it. “The closet is just big enough for my shoes, and the dresser should be able to fit the rest of my things.”

She smiled, flinging open the curtains to let the sun in. Yes, she could work with this.

“Um...what about my stuff?” Nathanael asked, standing in the doorway with his duffel bag at his feet.

Right. She also had to work with that part of her situation too.
“You can use the space under the bed,” said Chloe, shrugging. “There’s a pullup couch, I’m sure, so you can sleep there.”

“Chloe.” He spoke her name slowly, dragging the vowels out. “There are two beds. And there are two of us. Obviously I’m sleeping in one. Why do you need two beds?”

Chloe blinked.

“I need to set the week’s outfits out somewhere,” she said. “You wouldn’t understand.”

Nathanael nodded, seemingly amused, before he picked up his bag and tossed it on the bed by the window. She gaped at him, appalled he would just throw his lame, ratty bag onto a luxurious bed like that.

“I want to sketch the city,” he said. “And it’s better I have the bed by the window so I can see that more easily. Unless you want to be in one of my pathetic’ sketches, which you would be if I had to sit on the other bed over there.”

He cocked an eyebrow at her, and she scrambled to form a coherent sentence. Where was the shy, fumbling artist from years ago?

“It would be an honor for you if I ever did that!” Chloe hissed. She glared at him for a moment before she huffed and went to go lay out her cosmetics in the bathroom.

After a minute she called out, “You need a haircut!” before she slammed the bathroom door shut.

“Miss Rossi, I understand who your parents are,” began the manager, “I unfortunately cannot upgrade your room however. As I am sure your chaperone has told you, our hotel is booked due to the museum's anniversary and we simply cannot move you at the expense of another customer.”

“That’s a shame. My parents would be disappointed to know their only daughter is being mistreated in such a wonderful city,” said Lila. “I’m sure I can call them and have me stay in another hotel, one more, well, hospitable. They won’t stand for this; I personally know Ladybug and Chat Noir, you know, and they would be outraged at this injustice.”

“Then I will make sure to tell Mayor Bourgeois and your chaperones to exclude you from the trip’s itinerary,” replied the manager coolly. “Your parents called in beforehand to warn us that you would attempt something like this.”

He smiled at her, as fake and transparent as her lies.

“Is there anything else I can help you with, Miss Ross?”

Lila shifted her weight.

“It’s Rossi. And no.”

“Aw, cool. We get two beds,” said Nino, grinning as they entered their room. “Sweet view too, look, babe.”

“I see.” Alya tossed their stuff onto the closest bed. “Do you think we’ll actually meet Ladybug and Chat Noir? I mean, the ones from then? Here? London’s heroes.”
Nino shrugged. “Maybe. Maybe not. But at least we’ll get to see their history. That’ll be an exclusive scoop for your blog,” he said, taking her hand and flopping on the empty bed, bringing her down with him.

She squealed, laughing.

“What are you doing?” She asked, rolling onto her side.

Nino kissed her nose.

“Appreciating being able to be on vacation with my amazing girlfriend,” he said, a dopey smile on his face.

Alya giggled. “Sap.” She kissed him quickly. “I’m excited to be here with you too, babe. But remember Madame Bustier said to be responsible.”

“She told that to the girl who runs head first into akuma battles?” Nino laughed, rolling over so he was on top of her, his hat falling off to the side. “She should have known.”

Alya grinned up at him, pulling him down for another kiss.

“I’m sorry about dropping my stuff on your foot…” Marinette grimaced as he bent down and rubbed his foot through his shoe.

“It’s fine,” assured Adrien, flashing her a smile. “Accidents happen. Do you have the room key? I think this is ours.”

He gestured at the door and Marinette nodded, reaching into her pocket to get the key out. Sliding it through the lock, she pushed open the door.

“Oh…”

“What?” Adrien followed her inside and blinked when he saw the immediate problem. “Oh.”

Alya was going to get a kick out of this.

“One bed.” Marinette bit her lip. “Bridgette did say there was a mixup with the hotel’s computer; busy holiday, things happen.”

“Yeah, of course.” Adrien looked around the room awkwardly. “You can take the bed; I’ll take the couch.”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” she said immediately. “Two weeks on the couch? You’ll get a stiff back, and your father will kill me.”

“His favorite summer intern? I think not,” remarked Adrien, giving her a small smile. “Well, we have an hour to settle in so we have time to argue about why I’m sleeping on the couch. Honey.”

Marinette looked at him sharply. “What?”

He flushed, rubbing the back of his neck. “Honey…like, um, a married couple on a sitcom? Like, you’re sleeping on the couch tonight, honey? Darling? Sweetheart?”

The blond awkwardly gestured to the bathroom when she continued to gape at him.
“I’m going to take a shower,” he managed to say before he ducked into the safety of the bathroom, shutting the door behind him.

Marinette was still gaping at him when he came out a moment later, having forgotten his bag, and disappeared again. Several seconds later, she heard the water run and she shook her head, awkwardly making her way to the windows.

Tikki flew out of her coat pocket, having deemed it safe to come out.

“Oh, Marinette, it won’t be that bad,” she said, her sweet tone doing very little to reassure her charge. “You and Adrien are friends; it may be a little awkward at first, but you’ll get through.”

The designer sighed, nuzzling the kwami lovingly.

“Yeah, you’re right. I just hope Hawkmoth avoids any trouble.” She clicked her tongue. “It just stinks that both Chat and I had to leave the city at the same time.”

“Well...maybe Hawkmoth will wait until the anniversary? You remember that first day. He’s big on presentation,” said Tikki. “I’m glad you’re worried, but this is also a nice chance to spend time with your friends - and your family.”

“Right...right.” Marinette nodded. “It’s been years since I’ve seen Bridgette; this will be a good time. Speaking of which, I hope she’s settled in okay...”

Bridgette eyed her key card as she stood outside her room, not sure if she wanted to go in or not.

“Ah, I only have one card for your room, Miss Cheng; the other occupant insisted only one was needed.”

On the way back from her mom’s, Bridgette remembered the receptionist’s words. She looked over every email she had received from the school and museum, and none of them mentioned her having a roommate.

But, well, it was a minor problem. Odd, but no problem.

With that in mind, Bridgette slid her key into the scanner and pushed the door open. The first thing she saw was a green plaid suitcase sitting open on a bed, clothes still folded neatly inside. Okay, her roommate was neat. That was good. And there was no sign of said roommate, so she must be in the bathroom, if the running water was any indication.

She put her luggage by the floor of the other bed, taking the time to admire the room. It was beautiful, just like the pictures on the website. She opened the curtains and smiled at the view; sure, she had lived in this city for more than half her life, but she never quite got used to its beauty.

Bridgette sat at the desk chair, texting her mother she got to the hotel alright, when the water stopped and the door creaked open.

She shot out of the chair immediately, fumbling to put her phone in pocket, and smiled as she said, “Hey, sorry to just come in, but you know, I needed to unpack and stuff, and since we’re both chaperones for this trip - at least, I assume so since the hotel wouldn’t book me with a stranger for no reason - I thought it’d be-”

Bridgette looked up, freezing when she saw the other room’s occupant, who was staring at her with
those gray-blue eyes she could never forget. Her phone, halfway into her jean pocket, fell to the carpet with a soft thud.

“Bridgette?” He muttered, blinking in disbelief.

She swallowed.

“Felix.”
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

The past is quite unpleasant.

Chapter Notes

Wow~ These chapters are getting longer and longer. Which is good! I hope it stays that way.

For anyone who read my past oneshots for this series (which are no longer canon, by the way), yes, I did copy and paste some text so it may seem familiar. But I tweaked it a bit, so pay attention!

Also shoutout to recklesssketches for her character Cirque I may or may not have hijacked...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Her phone vibrated from its place on the carpet, but she didn’t notice. All she could see and hear was Felix.

Then again, how was that new?

Bridgette licked her lips, forcing herself to breathe normally. As if her mind wasn’t blown.

“Um...Felix, hello,” she finally managed to say. “What - What are you doing here?” She grimaced; that was a stupid question. Of course. Why was she always saying such meaningless things? “I mean, you’re a chaperone too, right? For this trip?”

Her question seemed to shake him out of his stupor and he coughed as he adjusted his clothes, straightened his back, and nodded.

“Yes, I am a chaperone,” he confirmed. “I was under the impression I would be the only chaperone, however. I am just as surprised as you seem to be, Bri - Miss Cheng.”

She flinched. Miss Cheng? Now that just stung.

“Yes, I am a chaperone,” he confirmed. “I was under the impression I would be the only chaperone, however. I am just as surprised as you seem to be, Bri - Miss Cheng.”

She flinched. Miss Cheng? Now that just stung.

“Yup...yup, well, I guess it makes sense.” Bridgette nodded her head fast enough to be mistaken for a bobblehead. “I mean, wouldn’t want to be overwhelmed; we were only just their age a few years ago. The days of being a teenager, not so far behind us.”

Immediately, she grimaced. Yes, the days of being a teenager. Not too long ago, but still fresh and just as painful in her mind.

Although to him, they were probably just meaningless days.
Bridgette sighed, that thought alone chasing away her awkwardness. She bent down to pick up her phone and clicked her tongue.

“It also makes sense for us to be roomed together,” she said. “More convenient that way. It would have been nice to include all of this in an email or something though.”

“Yes...it would have been,” agreed Felix, stepping towards his things. “I already picked a bed, but if you’d like this one…”

“It’s fine,” she assured, brushing some of her hair back as she went over to open up her own suitcase.

It was so not fine.

But she was an adult. Not really; she was only twenty-two and still lived with her mom, taking up small jobs like being a part-time museum tour guide to help pay off her student loans.

She was not an adult, and she resisted the urge to call up her mom, insist she come pick her up immediately, and eat a whole tub of mint chocolate chip ice cream as she complained about life.

Maybe she could just ignore the problem. Yeah, that could work.

“So...I assume you got the same email, about the schedule and everything then,” she said, avoiding looking at him by unpacking her things. “We give the kids time to unpack, and then we take the tube to the museum.”

“Yes, I saw.” Felix’s tone was calm, unbothered, now as the shock wore off. It was no different than she remembered.

Of course he’d be surprised, but seeing her wouldn’t bother him really. Why would it?

*Why would he care?*

“Great. That’s great.”

Bridgette never did like silence, but she appreciated it just this once. It was awkward and threatened to choke her, but it was far better than speaking.

“DON’T TOUCH HER!”

*She gasped, the wind rushing into her face as he raced past her and tackled the foe. As he did, the foe in question released his grip on her in surprise, making her fall to the concrete.*

*She coughed, sputtering for breath as she regained the ability to breathe.*

*After a moment, enough oxygen back in her system, she looked over her shoulder and her eyes grew wide as he was lifted into the air, meaty claws wrapped around his neck. His legs kicked and fought before dangling helplessly in the air, and she sobbed.*

“No, don’t!” *She screamed - begged, really - forcing herself off the ground and charging at them, no plan in mind.*

“Oh no you don’t!”
Ribbons tied around her waist and heaved her into the air, the end held by the second-in-command. The black stars painted on her cheeks seemed to grow as she grinned at her new conquest.

“My Monarch is going to be so pleased! Kill the spare, and get the real clown here!” She cackled. “You’re done for, Ladybug!”

“Well, welcome to the Museum of the Miraculous,” remarked Bridgette as they stood in front of the massive building. “Now…”

She peered up at the glass doors expectantly before looking down at her phone.

“Where is he?” She muttered, sighing. Seeing no text, Bridgette looked back at the teens. “Well, our other chaperone was supposed to go ahead and finish some stuff before meeting us here, but I don’t see him so let’s head inside.”

She walked up the concrete steps, the others straggling behind.

Bridgette moved to open the door when it suddenly slammed into her, knocking her down to the ground. She groaned, dazed, and she looked up to see Felix standing in the doorway, blinking down at her.

“Bridgette!” Marinette gasped as she rushed to her cousin. “Are you okay?” She glared at the unknown man. “Watch where you’re going!”

“It’s okay, Marinette,” assured Bridgette, grimacing as she touched her nose. Once back on her feet, she turned to address the class. “Everyone, this is the other chaperone I mentioned.”

Felix nodded, cool gaze turning to the teenagers.

“My name is Felix Beauchamp. As Bri-Miss Cheng said, I will be chaperoning you as well as her. You are free to come to either of us for help, if you need it,” he said.

“Felix!” Adrien gasped, his face lighting up as he moved to the front to see the two adults more clearly.

To everyone’s surprise, the blond boy launched himself at Felix, who grunted as (surprisingly) muscular arms wrapped around him. After a moment, his features softened and he returned the younger boy’s hug.

Bridgette eyed the scene, still gingerly touching her nose.

“Well…I certainly wouldn’t have expected that from you,” she muttered, missing the way Marinette gave her a curious look.

“Um, Adrikins…?” Chloe called out, her voice laced with concern for her childhood friend who was embracing this stranger.

Adrien was grinning as he pulled away.

“Marinette’s not the only one with family here! This is my uncle,” he said, nearly bouncing on his heels with excitement.

This was it: his secret trump card, the one he had pulled to convince Gabriel to agree to the trip in the first place. It was a double whammy too, and not even his father could say no to Adrien visiting his
estranged uncle. His mother’s brother.

“*Mom would want me to visit him!*”

Maybe it had been cruel, bringing up his mother, but it had worked.

“I still find it hard to believe Gabriel allowed you to come, not that I’m one to argue with his decision,” said Felix, affectionately petting his nephew’s hair. “Not in this case, at least.” He flickered his eyes to Bridgette. “I suppose it’s coincidence after coincidence then.”

“I don’t believe in coincidences,” said Bridgette coolly. “They can be quite unpleasant sometimes.”

The two of them stared at each other, the others shifting in slight discomfort at the sudden tension, until Nathanael coughed.

“So...the Museum of the Miraculous?” He said awkwardly.

Felix and Bridgette tore their gazes apart to look at him.

“Right...yes, of course,” she said, clearing her throat. “Technically, the exhibits aren’t open to the public yet but we all get an early preview. Starting tomorrow, you can expect hundreds of people on these steps, all trying to squeeze into one building and relive the days of Ladybug and Chat Noir saving the city from harm.”

Bridgette smiled as she opened up the door.

“Welcome to the Museum of the Miraculous. Please don’t touch anything,” she said. “Seriously, they’ll yell at you. Everything is brand new, and they’re kinda on edge with the opening tomorrow.”

With that, she ducked inside, gesturing for them to follow her. Once inside, the teenagers gasped at the lavish interior, the ceiling high above their heads.

Felix cleared his throat.

“Today we will be going in the Hall of Akumas,” he said. “Quite obviously, you will see every akuma Ladybug and Chat Noir fought, at least while they were in London. I’m sure they will eventually update to include the foes in Paris, or perhaps open another museum.”

“There was, mm, some hesitation to include this exhibit,” added Bridgette. “I mean, we have to include akumas when talking about the heroes, of course, but there were people who thought it’d be insensitive to the akuma victims to have this hall. There were protesters, I remember, but ultimately, the people agreed that as long as the victims remained anonymous, it would be alright. There’s still a few people here and there who don’t agree with it, but that goes without saying.”

“Unfortunately, because of that, there is no info on why each victim became akumatized, but I suppose it can be easy enough to guess from their actions,” continued Felix, easily picking up from her speech. “Any questions?”

Mylene raised her hand.

“What-What about Hawkmoth?” She asked. “I mean...what were they like?”

Felix and Bridgette both sighed.

“Well, he was hellbent on getting the miraculous,” she answered. “He didn’t care who got hurt, and the akumas were pretty violent as a result. Not all of them, of course, but they reflected him pretty
She rubbed her arm, clicking her tongue.

“Sure, Ladybug’s powers fixed everything in the end, but it was still…” Bridgette let out a long sigh. “I got off topic. And this is a pretty depressing topic, so let’s focus on the Hall of Akumas, which is right down here.”

“This is all in chronological order, so you’ll be able to see the shift in akumas as time went on for our heroes,” said Felix. “This is not one of the interactive exhibits, and there are no videos.” He snapped his fingers. “And that reminds me. You may take photos or videos, but no flash; and do not post any of them until the opening tomorrow. The museum would like to keep this all a surprise to the public.”

“Guess that means I have to wait to update the Ladyblog…” Alya remarked, sighing in disappointment. “I was hoping to do a livestream.”

Bridgette smiled apologetically.

“Rules are rules,” she said. “But at least you’ll be giving Paris an exclusive scoop, starting tomorrow.”

“Please stay in this area, but otherwise, feel free to look around.” Felix tapped his watch. “It is now 10:26 am so make sure to meet back here at 10:46 am. After that, we’ll be going to another exhibit.”

“Now scram, kiddos, and learn a little about history,” said Bridgette, gesturing for them to scatter. “It may be a bit more intense than your textbooks may want to tell you.”

“…”

“Chat...Chat,” she murmured, tears staining her skin as she nudged her partner’s body with her foot. “Chat, please wake up.”

She took pride in remembering the akumas’ real names, stories. Right now though, she didn’t care about the most recent one at all. Best not to get attached to the person she’d attack if he had really-

Her partner groaned, consciousness slowly returning to him.

Ladybug choked out a sob.

“Chat,” she breathed.

“Mm...I’m okay, Bug,” Chat managed to say as he began to sit up. For once, his bad luck affected someone else; no one had even checked for a pulse. “Why...ugh, didn’t they just take them?” He ran his thumb over his ring.

“It’s not like he can…” Ladybug reminded him. “Help undo these ribbons?”

Chat leaned over, absently stretching out his sore limbs as his claws easily tore up the ribbons holding his partner captive.

“I guess this is it, Ladybug,” he said quietly as they helped each other to their feet. “We have to take advantage of this situation. We’re so close.”

The red-clad hero rubbed her waist, knowing the ribbons would leave bruises later. Again.

“You’re right,” she said, surveying the dark room. “But even if we can find Hawkmoth, we’d still
“Have to deal with—”

“Well, well, well. Look who’s up!”

“Cirque.”

“Why is this portrait bigger than the others?” Kim asked, pointing at the painting at the very end of the hall.

While the other portraits lined up parallel to each other on the two side walls, this particular one had been set on the back wall, clearly to be presented more grandly than the others.

Bridgette, who was closer, puffed out her cheeks when she saw who the athlete was gesturing towards.

“That’s Cirque,” she said. Absently, she rested her hand on her hip, thumb running circles over the area. “She was more than just an akuma; she was Hawkmoth’s second-in-command, and much more powerful than any of his other victims.”

“What?” Lila’s voiced carried, causing others to look over and draw close. “How was she more powerful? I mean, she looks just like any other circus freak.”

Bridgette smiled faintly at the words.

“Well she was just a regular akuma at first,” she began. “But I guess Hawkmoth saw her potential and…” She hesitated for a moment. “Well, it’s just a rumor...but it looked like he had given her full control.”

“What do you mean?” Max asked. “Full control? Of what?”

“Normally, a victim doesn’t remember being an akuma, right?” She received nods, and she didn’t like how she noticed they all looked like they had personal experience with it. “And they’re not aware of it, like a different person takes over?”

More nods.

“Cirque was different - supposedly,” she added quickly. “She - The rumor was that she was aware of who she was before being akumatized and chose to stay as Cirque. Because of that, I guess her powers were a lot stronger. She could make a whole circus appear and force people to be a part of her show. She was active for…” Bridgette sighed long and hard. “She was active for almost two and a half years, and always got away before Ladybug and Chat Noir could get her.”

Marinette’s eyes were wide. “Is that even possible? I mean, they fought the same akuma for two years?”

Her cousin shook her head.

“No. Well, yes, but it wasn’t just her. Hawkmoth kept her active all while making new akumas on a regular basis,” she explained. “Like I said...he was ruthless. And Cirque was too. She was willing to leave Ladybug and Chat Noir for dead if it meant she could get the miraculous.”

“She referred to Hawkmoth as her Monarch,” said Felix, startling Bridgette who hadn’t sensed him behind her. “She was loyal to him and him alone. Not once did she seem to indicate that she missed...
her civilian life...or that anyone missed her.”

“It’s probably why she was such a good candidate to be Hawk’s second-in-command,” said Bridgette, taking a small step away from him. “And she was hell-bent on revenge, it seemed too. A perfect villain, really.”

She gazed up at the portrait.

“All the way until the end.”

“Was she killed?” Chloe asked bluntly after a pause.

Bridgette looked appalled by the question.

“God, no,” she exclaimed. “We - We would definitely see the heroes in a new light if they brought up murder to stop an enemy.” She looked back up at Cirque. “No, no. She was definitely not killed. She, of course, would have put up a good fight during the final battle but…”

Bridgette sighed.

“She vanished, I guess is the best way to describe it. No one saw her, akuma or civilian, ever again.”

“So it’s possible she was killed,” said Alix, raising an eyebrow. “Right?”

“I...I suppose you’re right,” said Bridgette. “I guess only Ladybug and Chat Noir would know what really happened. The battle wasn’t public, after all. Although, to be honest, I don’t remember a lot of what happened during that time. My mind was...elsewhere then.”

She bit her lip, seemingly lost in thought for a moment. She was oblivious to the way Felix shifted awkwardly at her words.

“But we’re getting ahead of ourselves,” she said finally. She put on a small smile. “You’ll learn more about the details of the final battle in another exhibit. Are there any questions so far on these akumas?”

Sabrina raised her hand.

“What was it like? The first akuma, um, LunaLuna?” She asked. “The caption said she was like a ghost sticking to the shadows?”

Bridgette crinkled her nose.

“That’s right. The first akuma...it wasn’t a loud or sudden appearance. LunaLuna stuck to the shadows, possessing people and causing all sorts of trouble for people because she couldn’t go out in the sunlight.” She shuddered. “It was terrifying for the city. We could all sense that something strange was going on, but we would have never guessed something like an akuma.”

Throat suddenly dry from talking so much, she looked towards Felix for a moment. He caught her gaze and nodded even she was already turning away.

“LunaLuna spent the entire first day wreaking havoc and probably ruining dozens of people’s lives,” he said. “Then when the sun went down, she showed herself. Like you can see from the portrait, she wasn’t very distinctive with that long robe. She looked like something out of a horror film.”

Some of them, particularly Rose and Mylene, looked petrified at the thought.
Felix walked towards the portrait, the others trailing behind him.

“The people who were out at the time were obviously terrified, and then…” An odd expression crossed his face, something near nostalgia. “Ladybug showed up.”

“And Chat Noir,” added Bridgette after a moment. “He kinda blended in with the night though, and some people thought he worked with LunaLuna because of it.”

“I suppose with a power like destruction and chaos, it’s easy to assume,” said Felix, shrugging dismissively. “He was always a bit useless in battle.”

Bridgette bristled as if personally offended.

“Chat Noir was not useless,” she said sharply. “He was every bit a hero as Ladybug.”

“He was her shield, and a distraction..” Felix turned back to the portrait, effectively crushing any chance Bridgette had to argue. “In any case, LunaLuna was the first akuma ever seen in London. She was not the strongest, but she was quick and clever. It was only because of Ladybug’s Lucky Charm that they could defeat her.”

“A giant flashlight,” added Bridgette, still giving him an unimpressed look. “Pretty straightforward since she couldn’t be in the light without possessing someone. Of course, not all of Ladybug’s charms made as much sense. It was a miracle sometimes that she figured it out…”

Marinette snorted, though she quickly covered it up with a cough.

A small alarm went off, and Bridgette looked at her phone in surprise.

“Oh, time’s up! Time to go to the next exhibit, which is filled with all kinds of art dedicated to the heroes,” she said. “These are the only two exhibits we’ll go through today, unfortunately. The museum can’t give us too much special treatment, can they?”

She winked.

“Don’t worry. You all can go rest soon; the day is almost over.”

Ladybug leaned against a wall, dirt and sweat clinging to her skin as she tried to catch her breath.

The sky was full of fire, smoke and ash filling the air.

“But it’s finally done,” she murmured, opening her fist and smiling at the brooch. “Chat, we did it.”

Next to her, Chat coughed.

“For three years, he put up a good fight,” he said. “But it wasn’t good enough.” He looked at the wreckage. “I just wish…it had ended a bit better…”

“Yeah…me too.”

Her earrings beeped loudly.

“I...we need to rest,” she said. “We can’t face the city - or each other - like this. Let’s meet tomorrow, okay?”
She shakily held up her hand and pressed her fingers lightly to his lips.

“We have some unfinished business anyways.”

Chat grinned, taking her hand and nuzzling his cheek against her palm.

“I agree, Ladybug. Until tomorrow.”

“Tomorrow.”

“This is the art exhibit,” said Felix, leading the class into a different area. “Artists from all over the city contributed pieces for this exhibit. Of course, it helped that the museum offered to pay anyone who contributed even if their work didn’t appear in the exhibit.”

“Starving artists aren’t just a joke,” remarked Nathanael, nodding in understanding. He held his own sketchpad under his arm, twirling a pen between his fingers.

Marinette chuckled, remembering when she spent an entire summer trying to work on commissions.

“No, and we were fortunate to be provided so many pieces of art,” said Felix. “Again, no flash; no posting photos or videos until tomorrow. Other than that, feel free to look around.”

He glanced at Bridgette, who smiled brightly at her cousin.

“Now we have a chance to talk!” She exclaimed, hugging Marinette who grunted in surprise. “I haven’t seen you in forever!”

“It’s been awhile,” agreed the young designer, eyes wandering as she watched Alya immediately run over to the portraits of Ladybug. “So you work here?”

Bridgette hummed. “For now; it’s a part-time job where I rotate the position with five other people. I was lucky enough to get the first shift.” She gestured for Marinette to follow her. “I want to show you one of my favorite paintings here. After, mm, that dispute, I want to show you it even more now.”

The two of them went over to a nearby corner, where Bridgette proudly pointed towards a large painting on the wall.

After a pregnant pause, Marinette whispered, “Wow”.

It was a beautiful painting; every single akuma that ever terrorized the city surrounded the two heroes, who both looked bloody and fatigued. However, despite their appearances, they seemed oblivious to the crowd as Chat Noir kneeled in front of Ladybug, a single rose in the hand that wasn’t holding hers. From his angle, he was unable to see the arrow that someone was pointing directly at his back.

Bridgette smiled bitterly. “Chat Noir was a cursed cat and there was a lot of talk about whether or not his love for Ladybug was real - did he only want her to break his curse, or did he actually fall in love with her? But there was no doubt that he would do anything for his partner; he took a lot of the hits meant for her. Many people said that he was going to get himself killed one day.”

Marinette stayed silent, listening to her cousin intently.

“I wonder whatever happened to him,” murmured Bridgette, a sigh leaving her lips as she absentely
turned her head to the side, only to meet Felix’s eyes. Quickly, she looked away and focused on the painting once more.

She was all too aware of her cousin’s intense eyes staring her down.

“Bridgette…”

The older girl prepared herself.

“Do you still know how to make those chocolate chip cookies of yours?”

Surprised, Bridgette looked back at her cousin, who was wearing an innocent smile.

“Huh?” She asked dumbly.

“Those cookies you used to make all the time when I was younger; do you think you could teach me to make them? I have a friend who would love to try them.”

The former superhero blinked, taken aback by the sudden change in conversation.

“Um, sure. Sure!” Bridgette smiled brightly, as if the last two minutes hadn’t happened. “I’d be happy to! I don’t know if we’ll have time during your field trip, but...well, I’ve wanted to visit Paris for a while now. I heard there’s been a lot of crazy stuff going on lately.”

Marinette’s smile grew.

He wanted nothing more than to just scream.

He would never get to tell Ladybug the truth. That she was his best friend. That she made him love being Chat Noir. That she made him smile and laugh like no one else could. That he wanted to kiss her, not because of his curse but because he was in love with her.

“Felix!”

And speaking of which, here came the girl who claimed to have feelings as raw and powerful as love for him.

Honestly, it was - well, pathetic was a harsh word, yet he had no other way to describe it. He wasn’t so sure why she was so infatuated with him when she barely knew him, barely knew how harsh and cold he could be. He rarely talked to her in the first place.

Sighing, Felix schooled his features and turned to the face overzealous girl.

“Bridgette.”

If she noticed his stiff reply, she didn’t say anything. What he noticed was that she seemed more solemn than usual. Her hands were fidgeting anxiously with the hem of her shirt.

While he didn’t want to spend another second by the school, he didn’t look forward to entering his now cheese-free apartment and enduring a second night of silence either. And so he waited for her to speak.

“Um...well, you see...”
Felix sighed, waiting for her to collect herself; he did find it a bit odd that she was uncharacteristically fumbling for words, since she was well known for speaking her mind rather confidently, but he wasn’t all that curious as to why she had a sudden shift in behavior.

Actually, all it did was irritate him. He didn’t want to go home to an empty apartment, but he didn’t want to waste his time listening to some girl’s babbling either.

“What is it, Bridgette?” He asked, his words sharper than he had intended.

His raven-haired classmate took a deep breath and her bluebell eyes met his gray ones.

“Felix Beauchamp, I love you,” said Bridgette, her voice lacking any hesitancy or doubt whatsoever.

Felix froze. Not waiting for a response, she continued.

“I love you, and -”

“No, you don’t,” he interrupted.

She faltered. “W-What?”

“You don’t love me,” said Felix firmly.

“I do-“

“No, you don’t. You love the twisted idea of me that you’ve created, and I highly suggest you cut yourself from these delusions immediately before you get hurt.”

“But Felix -“

“That is enough, Miss Cheng,” said Felix, eyes narrowing. She flinched, not at his look but at the name. “For years, you have been flagging me down and insisting I accompany you to various events despite my refusals, and it quite clear you do not know the meaning of the word ‘no’.”

“Felix, I-“

“Miss Cheng, I ask that you do not address me so familiarly.” Felix scrunched up his nose as if he was disgusted. Perhaps he was. What did she know about love? She didn’t have a bond with him that was strong enough for anything other than acquaintanceship. She didn’t trust him with her life, and he her.

“You are not my friend; you are a now former classmate, and there is no need to pretend we are anything more. I do not know what sort of relationship you imagined us to have, but I assure you they are false and I suggest you educate yourself more on the meaning of the word ‘love’ before you carelessly throw it around to some high school boy you fantasized about in your free time. You cannot love someone you do not know, and you know nothing about me, Bridgette Cheng.”

Felix turned to her, ready to continue, only to stop upon seeing her face.

Her eyes were blown wide, tears streaming down her face as her lips parted in surprise.

“In an instant, Felix forgot whatever frustrations he had; perhaps it was partly because he had just taken them all out on his sweet, kind-hearted classmate.

“Bri-“
“I see.” It was Bridgette’s turn to cut him off and Felix winced, seeing how she trembled, as if it physically pained her to hold back the sobs he knew she was hiding from him. “I’m sorry for troubling you, Mister Beauchamp. Don’t worry; you won’t hear from me again.”

Before Felix could say anything, she spun on her heel and bolted away. As she did, she stopped to stuff something in a trash can before she continued with her escape.

He stared after her, his breathing unexpectedly uneven and harsh as the sky became gray, droplets of rain gently falling to the ground.

Slowly, Felix stepped towards the direction she had left in, stopping by the trash can. On top there lay a box, her signature pink ribbon indicating they were some of her homemade treats.

He ignored the rain cascading over him as he pulled out the box, inspecting the contents.

Toffee, his favorite.

His hair, usually groomed to perfection, was ruined by the rain as it fell apart and clung to his face.

He really was cursed in the worst of ways.

“Say, Felix,” began Adrien, looking away from the statue of Ladybug and towards his uncle, who gave him a curious glance. “What was your Ladybug like? Did you ever meet her? Was she awesome?”

Felix gave his nephew a small smile, amused by his barely contained eagerness.

“Yes, I met her once when my school was attacked and she carried me away from falling debris; she was very...noble,” he answered. “She was always more worried about others’ safety before her own.” A pause. “I once witnessed her willingly leap into a sea monster’s mouth to save someone; I don’t remember much, only that Chat Noir nearly had a heart attack.”

The teenage model nodded, laughing quietly as if there was some joke only he knew about. Felix didn’t ask.

“You look happy.”

Adrien started, looking at him in confusion. Felix elaborated.

“The last time I saw you...you didn’t seem as happy. Emilie...” He hesitated at the mention of his sister and Adrien tensed as well. “You have her smile. Did you know?”

Adrien sighed, but it wasn’t out of despair.

“I’ve been told,” he murmured, glancing back up at a statue before he looked at his uncle once more. “Can I ask you something?”

Felix nodded and when Adrien glanced over at Marinette and Bridgette, he knew he was going to get asked something awkward regardless of which girl was involved.

“What happened between you and Bridgette?”

Well, he never had much experience with good luck.
Felix sighed. “We were classmates in high school.”

Adrien cocked an eyebrow, clearly not satisfied with that general answer.

The older of the two adjusted the buttons of his shirt, and Adrien noted that his uncle almost looked ashamed of what he was about to say.

“I said some things I shouldn't have, and I ended up ruining our...whatever relationship we had,” he said.

Adrien watched as his uncle glanced in the direction of the woman in question, a rueful expression written across his features.

“Did you ever apologize?”

There was a long pause.

“It’s too late now, isn’t it?”

Chapter End Notes

For anyone familiar with London's layout, the museum replaces the spot where Tate Britain currently is.

Speaking of London, I hope anyone there is safe and wasn't caught in the attack. Stay safe, everyone.
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Relationships are a mess.

Chapter Notes

It's been months since the last update...sorry about that! I've been busy with summer classes, so writing has been partially cut out of my schedule lately. I also apologize for this chapter being a bit shorter than the last few. I was originally going to scrap it and start over, but I liked what I had written so...I posted it. ^_^

I hope you enjoy!

(Also, again, Cirque belongs to recklessssketches)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Okay, Cirque doesn’t even count since she was the pretty much the princess of evil,” said Alix, crossing her arms. “So you can’t say she’s the strongest when Hawkmoth made her his second-in-command for a reason.”

Kim mirrored her actions. “Fine then; not counting Cirque, who’s the strongest akuma here?”

“If we’re talking about physical strength, then definitely Jumbo Shrimp,” said Alix. “I mean, he turned into a 50 foot monster right in front of everyone! But if we mean power, then….Aphrodite.”

Her roommate raised an eyebrow at her. “Come on. How does making people fall in love make her the most powerful akuma?”

“Are you kidding?” Alix rolled her eyes. “You’re such a lughead. Normal people already do stupid shit for love. Imagine what they would do if they loved some hellbent akuma like Aphrodite. And think of all the chaos she must have caused. Love is a powerful emotion, dude. Ten outta ten would not fuck with someone in love.”

“What kinda logic…?” Kim shook his head. “Whatever, love is dumb. I mean, it can only lead to heartbreak, right?”

Alix stared at him and opened her mouth to say something, but seemed to reconsider.

“Yeah, heartbreak can be pretty nasty…”

Nathanael hummed as he sat on the window seat, sketching the street outside. He didn’t want to forget a single thing about the city; drawing even the smallest things beat having artist’s block. At least he felt productive that way.
He pressed the side of the pencil lightly against the paper to get the right shading, when there was a loud sigh.

Concentration broken, he looked up. A sigh of his own left his lips when he saw his roommate, her faithful ‘bestie’ by her side.

At some point, her classmates had become immune to her harsh personality so he didn't fear her. It was just easier to steer clear of her nowadays. Although that would prove to be difficult since they were sharing a room for the next two weeks.

“Can I help you?” Nathanael finally asked, seeing that the two girls weren’t going away anytime soon. It was sorta creepy how they were standing there.

“You need to move,” declared Sabrina. “It’s mega important that Chloe takes her pictures in the best lighting, and this spot has it.”

Nathanael didn’t get it. Sabrina was such a smart person, always competing with Max for top marks in the class. She was pleasant to be around without Chloe's presence. It made no sense why someone like her would be around the blonde.

“Well, that’s too bad,” he said. “I’m in the middle of something, so she can wait. And talk to me directly if she has a problem. Just a suggestion.”

Chloe, who had been standing to the side and checking herself in a compact mirror, sighed as she glanced at him.

“I don’t expect you to understand the natural beauties of the world,” she remarked. “Me, for example. I’m so underappreciated.”

“If you’re such a natural beauty, then why do you need good lighting to take a selfie?” Nathanael returned to his sketchbook, looking away from the girls. “Besides, you want the background of a busy street in your selfie? The view from our room would be better and make your eyes pop out more, especially since they’re as blue as the sky.”

When she didn’t reply, his eyes flickered up at her. She seemed stunned by his words. Sabrina hesitantly poked her shoulder.

“Chloe…?”

The blonde jolted, swiftly turning on her heel without another word. Startled, Sabrina chased after her.

Nathanael furrowed his eyebrows, taken aback by her actions. After a moment, he shrugged and went back to sketching.

Her pigtails were longer and her suit was a bit different.

Marinette peered up at the statue of her predecessor. She took in every difference there was. Not just in design - which was her excuse for standing here so long - but also in stance.

She wasn’t as shy and awkward anymore - not like when she was younger, before she donned a mask - but it didn’t go away. It bled through while Ladybug sometimes, but hey. She wasn’t perfect, even if she was a hero.
Something about the other Ladybug though seemed...graceful. Determined. There was a look in her eyes, from the pictures she’d seen, that Marinette felt she lacked some days.

On those days, the bad ones, she reflected on her first day as Ladybug. She messed up now and then, and she wasn’t perfect. While things usually ended up okay in the end, she occasionally thought about Stoneheart and what almost happened.

What if Alya had taken her bag and found the earrings? What if she became Ladybug? What if it was her running around with Chat Noir on the rooftops?

Marinette slumped her shoulders.

She didn’t think Alya would make a bad hero, but she definitely didn’t want her as Ladybug these days. She was chosen for a reason. Chat Noir too.

And so had their predecessors.

Marinette peered up at the statue once more, taking in the hero’s appearance. She saw a lot of herself in those determined eyes, in the tense shoulders, in the small smirk.

Actually, in the nose too. Were their eyes the same color? No, right?

“What am I thinking?” She muttered, shaking her head. “There’s no way we’d look alike...Ladybug could have been anyone.”

“Wow, I’m impressed by your eagerness, Alya!”

Bridgette beamed at the journalist, who had practically bombarded her with questions.

“Well, I’ve been doing more research since this Egyptian incident a few years ago,” said Alya as she fixed her glasses. “But things about the miraculous has been hard to find.”

“Oh, that’s partly because of the museum,” said Bridgette. “I mean, this has been a huge project for a while so they started blocking stuff about the miraculous online. It wasn’t hard since the appearance of the miraculous is every few centuries and in different areas. A lot of the tales get scraped away as urban legends. You’d only see connections to the miraculous if you were looking for them.”

“Hmm, that makes sense but also….doesn’t,” said Alya. “I mean, you can find anything online, even if it’s in a museum.”

Bridgette shrugged. “You have me there. But there are people in the world who believe that everyone is better off if fewer know about the miraculous. Speaking of which, did you have any specific questions about the heroes? Marinette has told me a lot about your blog.”

“Really?” Alya grinned. “Well, I do put a crazy amount of work into it. Was there anyone who did the same thing? You know, keep a daily blog?”

“Well, no one as extensive as you,” remarked the older girl. “But there were a couple of people, yes. It was a lot more...criticism than news. I know they go hand-in-hand, but it was difficult to go online and find an unbiased blog about the heroes. None of them in particular stuck out.”

“Why was there a lot of criticism?” Alya asked next, phone in hand and ready to capture every
second.

Bridgette sighed, sweeping her hair back. It was getting so long; she ought to tie it somehow, but pigtails were...a reminder of the past.

“Well, it was mostly on Chat Noir…” She said. “His power was chaos and destruction. A lot of people wondered how someone with a power like that could be on the side of ‘good’. They nitpicked and tore him apart every time he did something wrong.”

“So Chat Noir was hated?” Alya frowned. “In Paris, the people favor Ladybug for the most part but I’ve never heard or seen anyone put down Chat Noir.”

Well, aside from Chloe. But individuals didn’t count. No mass hate, like Bridgette was describing.

“With all due respect to Paris, they haven’t faced the akumas we have,” said Bridgette. “Hawkmoth -no, Papillion - was ruthless, violent. He chose to attack in the middle of the night to strike more fear into the people. Imagine waking up to screaming and chaos. It was a dark time for London. Not…”

She reached up to massage her earlobe, as if absently toying with something that wasn’t there.

“Not everyone could be saved by Ladybug’s powers.”

Alya was taken aback by that.

“But if someone is affected by the miraculous-”

“Exactly. You can’t...some disasters were caused by the battles,” said Bridgette, slowly and painfully. Alya realized then how difficult this line of questioning was. “Her powers could save the people who had been hypnotized and controlled and thrown in a black abyss. She could fix the buildings that had been shrunk and destroyed and turned into giant pumpkins. But if the building collapsed during battle and there were people inside…”

She looked away, towards the statue where her cousin was standing.

“Having a miraculous doesn’t make you a god.”

“Shut up!”

Ladybug pouted, crossing her arms while her partner laughed.

“No, but you really tackled him to the ground?” Chat Noir grinned at her. “That sounds cliche, my Lady. And adorable, imagining a tiny you crashing into some poor guy in the middle of the street.”

“Yeah, tiny me…” Ladybug murmured, deciding not to clarify. It would only make it more embarrassing for her. “But I mean, he was so sweet about it. So I was surprised later when he acted so cold.”

“Mister Perfect doesn’t sound so great now, huh?” Her partner remarked. “Come on, Bug. You and I both know you’re amazing. If he’s gonna act like a jerk to you just because people are around, he’s not worth your time.”

“I know that makes sense, but I also know he’s not actually mean!” Ladybug insisted. “Just...awkward sometimes. And I really like him. He’s so handsome and smart…”
She sighed dreamily, and Chat merely watched her expression change. She always became softer, somehow, when talking about her Mister Perfect, as he had dubbed him.

“If he’s so smart, why hasn’t he agreed to go on a date with you then?” He asked, unable to keep the bitterness out of his voice.

That seemed to pop her bubble, and he was almost sorry he had asked when he saw her frown so deeply.

“I don’t know,” she admitted. “Maybe he thinks I’m trying to use him. He’s...not very popular. Even my best friend hates him. And when your best friend tells you she has a bad feeling about a guy, you listen to her! But I can't this time…”

Ladybug groaned, looking up at the night sky.

“I’m drawn to him. I know we seem like total opposites at first, but I feel...complete around him. He makes me feel giddy and warm, and I want him to feel the same about me. Have you ever met someone like that, Chat Noir?”

Her attention on the stars, she failed to notice the way her partner was looking at her.

“Yes, actually,” he finally said. “I have, Ladybug.”

“Alright, it’s noon now,” announced Bridgette. “So feel free to take a peek at the gift shop while we eat here in the cafeteria. You all have about thirty minutes before we have to go back to the hotel. Then tomorrow, we come back and you can see the rest of the exhibits.”

As the group dispersed, the chaperones stood alongside each other by the entrance.

Several moments passed, each one more awkward and tense than the last.

“So...how have you been?” Felix finally asked, daring to glance at the girl. “It’s been...four years, right?”

“Yup...yeah, four years,” she confirmed. “Since we graduated and went off to different universities. You went to King’s College, right? Their campus isn’t too far.”


“Wow, double major...impressive,” she said. She wished it didn’t come out as sarcastic because it actually was impressive. “I, uh, went to Hackney for early education learning.” She paused, licking her lips. “Wanna be a teacher.”

“Oh, that’s...nice,” said Felix, touching the back of his neck.

“Yeah...”

A silence fell over them with Felix staring out the window and Bridgette swaying on the balls of her feet.

“So, um, how are you a chaperone?” She asked finally. “I mean, I have a part-time job so I got the first shift but…”

“Internship,” he answered.
“Oh...okay,” she said when he didn’t elaborate. Maybe he didn’t need to. He shouldn’t, right? Right. They weren’t friends or anything.

“Bridgette, look at this!”

Both chaperones looked up as Marinette came racing over to them, an excited look on her face as she held up a bag from the souvenir shop.

“Marinette, you bought something already?” Bridgette chuckled at her cousin’s eagerness. “What caught your attention so much?”

The teenager dug through the bag and pulled out a Chat Noir doll.

“I couldn’t resist buying one,” she said, smiling. “I mean, the design for Ladybug and Chat Noir’s suits are different than the ones I’m used to. And this doll was cute.” Marinette pointed at the doll. “Look at his fangs! They’re so adorable!”

Bridgette giggled, missing the way Felix shifted beside her.

“They are, aren’t they?” She reached out and affectionately pinched the doll’s velvet cat ears, giggling some more. “You didn’t get the Ladybug doll?”

Marinette handed her the doll so she could dig through her bag again.

“No, I did. You can’t separate them, after all,” she remarked. “And I figured Ladybug’s doll would sell out tomorrow so I wanted to get one now.”

“Smart,” said Bridgette as she examined the doll in her hands. A fond smile formed on her lips as she ran her thumbs over the soft material. “I’ll have to buy a Chat Noir doll too.”

“You were a fan?” Felix asked. “You did seem defensive of him earlier.”

Bridgette hugged the doll to her chest, humming.

“Well, yeah. He did so much for this city, and no one seemed to appreciate it,” she said, meeting his gaze. “His powers were destructive, but that doesn’t mean he was.”

Felix hummed, eyes flickering down to the doll in her arms.

“I don’t think many people would have agreed with you,” he said. The softness of his voice caught her off guard.

“Well, no,” agreed Bridgette after a moment. “But as much as the city celebrates them, they overlook how dark the times were back then.”

“Isn’t it more like they choose to forget?” Felix pointed out. “As you said, it was a dark time. I would rather not remember everything about that time either.”

She squeezed the doll, and her eyes flickered over to her cousin who had been watching them talk with a curious expression.

“I guess that makes sense,” she said after a pause. “Here, Marinette. Try not to spend all your money, okay?” She ruffled the younger girl’s hair. “There’s plenty to see in London.”

“Alright,” said Marinette, putting the dolls back in her bag. “What kind of exhibits are in the
“Well, the ones you saw today,” said Felix. “There are also more interactive exhibits that make this seem more like an amusement park than a museum. If I’m not mistaken, there’s a virtual reality exhibit where you can pretend to be one of the heroes and fight akumas.”

“There’s also a simulator where you can experience flying through the sky like the heroes,” added Bridgette. “The budget for this place was...incredible.”

“So is it a museum or an amusement park then?” Marinette asked, eyebrows furrowing. “Both?” The chaperones answered together.

Felix and Bridgette looked at each other in surprise.

“Well, I suppose you can just say it’s a highly advanced museum,” said Felix with a shrug of his shoulders. “Like...the Air and Space Museum the Americans have. Modern technology can make any old museum an amusement park, especially if the intention is to draw in younger patrons like children.”

“That makes sense,” remarked Bridgette, humming. “It definitely worked. It’s supposed to be crowded tomorrow. A lot of children looked up to Ladybug and Chat Noir.”

“Well, Ladybug,” Felix corrected, fiddling with the sleeve of his shirt.

Bridgette crossed her arms. “Chat Noir wasn’t a villain.”

“I didn’t say he was.” He gave her a pointed look, raising an eyebrow.

“You didn’t have to,” she said coolly. “Excuse me, Mister Beauchamp.”

She turned on her heel, going to check on another cluster of kids. Marinette grimaced, glancing at the other chaperone awkwardly, before she quietly excused herself.

Felix pinched his nose.

“Not again,” he murmured.

She knew she must look like an idiot to the others, but she couldn’t help it.

Bridgette refused to let people talk bad about her partner, even if he wasn’t with her anymore. It was because he was no longer around, actually, why she had to defend him.

Things got destroyed and ruined all the time; it was just a part of life. Why did it matter that it was his power? It didn’t mean he was a villain. He had saved the city just as much as she had; hell, he had saved her more times than she could remember.

She reached up, gingerly touching her earlobes. They were bare, no earrings present anymore.

The battles had been intense, lives had been lost. They had spent countless nights patching each other up, muttering how the suits could have at least been indestructible so they could be too.

(“But then we’d be gods, not heroes, Bug.”)

They had things thrown at them, sometimes flowers if the people were happy and sometimes rocks if
they were in mourning.

The city had been in ruins for two years, something the citizens simply got used to. It wasn’t a fun time, far from it.

But Bridgette would do it all again, from the start to the end, if only to see him again.

She would love to be fifteen again, battling akumas and risking her life for the next three years until graduation. She’d even deal with getting rejected each day again, hours of work being tossed away by the boy she was in love with.

Wounds and rejection from the past seemed to pale in comparison to the heartbreak and loneliness she felt now.

Ladybug and Chat Noir weren’t meant to be separated, and each day without her partner felt like the day Felix had rejected her but ten times worse. What was worse that there was no supportive little red bug to cheer her up, help her transform and escape from her thoughts.

Bridgette bit her lip, wiping at her eyes. She really couldn’t cry, not now in public.

There was no more Chat Noir, no more Tikki, no more being Ladybug. There was no need for them when Papillion was gone.

She knew that. She did.

But it didn’t make the hurt go away.

Without meaning to, she ended up back in the art exhibit. She walked past the statue, which should not have been alone in the first place, and to the painting she had shown Marinette earlier.

Bridgette reached out, the pads of her fingers just barely touching her partner’s face. The canvas felt rough and cool, so much unlike the kitty she knew.

“I miss you,” she whispered. “Please, please, come back to me.”

She didn’t want to spend their anniversary alone.

Not again.

Chapter End Notes

If there are any errors (whether it be grammar/spelling or continuity things I may have missed), please let me know! Otherwise, I hope you all liked it!

Next chapter, definitely expect some kwami talks...
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

“You think it would have been easier if we had said goodbye properly?” He asked her, rolling onto his stomach. “Or harder?”

“Who’s to say?” She returned to folding her stars, but she was much slower than before. “If we had given them that extra day...if Fu had let us say goodbye, let them say goodbye...”

Tikki took a deep breath.

“Fate brought them together a long time ago, Plagg. This is no coincidence and you can feel it same as me. They were given a second chance, and we have to let things run their course.”

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long break! This chapter is about 6000 words long, so hopefully that makes up for it.

Truthfully, I’ve been busy with school and trying to reorganize this story. Like...so it actually makes sense. That being said, please don’t hesitate to tell me if I have any mistakes, grammar or plot wise.

Also: Hawkmoth is Adrien and Marinette's villain. Papillion was Bridgette and Felix's. Just to help clear that up.

Other than that, I hope you enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

If Bridgette could pretend she didn’t have her heart broken every day throughout her further education, she could pretend that she didn’t just have an emotional breakdown ten minutes ago.

“Well, I hope you all enjoyed the sneak peek at the museum,” she said cheerfully as she and Felix led the teenagers back to the hotel. “We’ll be having lunch, generously paid for by Monsieur Bourgeois, and then you all will be free to explore the hotel until dinner.”

They came to a crosswalk, and she stopped to look at the group. She clasped her hands together, smiling.

“I understand some of you may want to go sightseeing, and I can’t blame you with all of London’s sights,” she remarked, “I mean, Shakespeare’s Globe isn’t too far from here! How exciting is that?”

Bridgette hummed.
“Unfortunately, we can’t let you go explore the city by yourselves so I’ll have to ask you to stay in the hotel for today,” she continued. “I assure you that there will be a time where we can go sightseeing, and you will have a chance to explore on your own, but that time is not today or tomorrow.”

“For future reference though,” said Felix, “when you go exploring or have to leave the hotel for any reason, you must tell at least one of us.”

“Once we get back to the hotel, Felix and I will be giving you each of our phone numbers so that you can reach us at any time,” said Bridgette, looking up when the light turned. “Okay? It’s really important you always have a buddy with you too. No exploring on your own, even if you know this city like the back of your hand. You can either stay with your roommate or go with someone else.”

“And when you leave unsupervised, always state who is going with you, where you are going, and when you will be back,” added Felix. “This trip is meant to be educational and fun, but do not disregard safety protocols.”

“There are lots of fun stuff to do in the hotel, so I don’t think you’ll be bored,” assured Bridgette as they approached the building. “First, let’s go to the dining hall. Remember, your meal is already paid for so pick whatever you like but be reasonable about how much you order, please.”

Chloe flipped her hair.

“And at least pretend to have manners, alright?” She looked specifically at Kim and Alix. “You’re reflecting the mayor of Paris, after all, and more importantly my father. Don’t act like animals.”

Kim and Alix both reeled back, clearly offended, and Bridgette got ready to intervene when Max placed his hands on their shoulders. He whispered something in their ears and they seemed to calm down, leaving Bridgette relieved.

“Yes, well, I’m sure everyone here knows how to act appropriately,” she said, smiling reassuringly at Chloe.

The dark-haired woman clasped her hands, a bright smile on her face.

“Let’s all have some fun!”

Lunch was quick and simple following that conversation, and as promised, the teenagers were set free to roam the hotel.

Nino immediately suggested going up to the pool, inspired by seeing Kim and Alix banter on the way to the gym.

“It’ll be an awesome way to cool down and relax after the flight,” he reasoned, grinning like a little kid about to enter a bouncy house. “What do you think, Adrien?”

The blond couldn’t help but share his enthusiasm, mirroring his best friend’s smile.

“I think it’s a good thing I packed a swimsuit,” he said. “Let’s go up and change, and we can hit the pool.”

Nino clicked his tongue.
“Solid plan. Hey, mind if I invite Alya?” He asked.

“Why would I mind? She’s your girlfriend and my friend,” replied Adrien. He fiddled with his ring for a moment before he added, “And you know, Marinette can come too...if - if she wants. I mean, I assume Alya will probably want to invite her so I may as well-”

“Dude, chill,” interrupted Nino, clapping his shoulder. “I’m sure Marinette will come to the pool too. You can ask her yourself if you want. Better yet, ask her out already.”

Adrien flushed.

“I mean...I don’t…” He stammered.

The truth was simple: he was in love with Ladybug. Has been since the day they met and she literally came crashing into his life. How could he not love someone as passionate and kind as her?

That being said, how could he also not have feelings for Marinette? She was sweet and energetic, not to mention incredibly talented and fun. Sure, they had gotten off on the wrong foot but look at how close they had become in the last few years.

Originally, all he wanted was to make things right with his classmate and make her not hate him. But as she seemed to warm up to him, he found himself wishing for a bit more.

Too often he would get caught up staring at her when they were supposed to be studying, or telling his driver the wrong time so he could spend a few more minutes talking with her.

He wasn’t afraid to admit he liked Marinette Dupain-Cheng. One day he could love her even. He certainly wouldn’t be the first nor would he be the last.

What he was afraid of was losing the friendship that had taken years to build. Marinette only just started liking him, and he didn’t want to ruin that. He was content just being in her presence in their little group.

“I’m not going to ask her out,” said Adrien firmly. Whether he was telling Nino or himself would remain unclear to even him. “She’s our friend and she’s more than welcome to join us at the pool.”

Nino looked him over, opening his mouth to say something, but then seemed to change his mind as his hand slid off of Adrien’s shoulder.

“Okay, dude, no problem. I’ll ask the girls then,” he said. “I think they’re both in my room anyways, but if they’re in yours, you ask Marinette yourself. Deal?”

Adrien nodded, smiling.

“Yeah, sounds good.”

Like Nino guessed, the girls were in his room. They had been in the middle of looking at photos from the museum when he walked in, and he waved.

“Hey, babe,” he said, kissing his girlfriend’s cheek. “Hey, Marinette. You guys wanna come to the pool with me and Adrien?”

Alya hummed, leaning back on her hands. She tilted her head to her best friend.

“What do you say? It’d be a good way to relax before dinner too,” she said.
Marinette thought of how her cousin vanished after they got back to the hotel, and how her cheeks had been blotchy as if she had been crying. Then she thought of the way Rose kissed Juleka’s cheek, asking her to come to the lounge with her.

Her cousin was strong and stubborn, like her. If Bridgette needed to talk with someone, she would decide when she was ready. They were similar like that.

“Sure,” she finally said. She smiled at Nino. “I’ll leave you guys to change then. No funny business!”

Marinette poked Alya’s nose affectionately before she grabbed her bag and got to her feet.

“Seriously. No funny business.” She made a ‘I’m watching you’ gesture before leaving their room.

When she heard Alya squeal through the door, she sighed but couldn’t stop the smile on her face. She teased her friends, but she was truly happy for them.

Marinette passed by a window and down below she could see Mylene and Ivan walking hand-in-hand along the hotel’s botanical garden. Her smile grew. Their relationship had always been solid, never did they waver from each other or have their love diminish in any way.

Romance in her own life was difficult, to say the least. She just wasn’t looking for anything serious. Even if she was, she had to consider the possibility of telling her partner she was Ladybug. And if she did that, she also had to consider telling Chat first.

Because Chat Noir was her partner, the person she trusted the most, and if anyone deserved to know her identity first it would be him. She knew it was what he wanted, but he would never force her to tell him or pressure her into doing it.

It was why she was in love with him.

He understood her worries, listened to her all night, and distracted her from her sadness with his silly jokes. He would be there for her, no matter what, and she wouldn’t want it any other way.

Marinette fingered the dormant miraculous on her ears, sighing softly. She felt Tikki wriggle around in her purse, asking a silent question. The seventeen-year-old placed a hand over the kwami, reassuring her.

But being with Chat Noir meant giving up Adrien, and as much as she treasured their friendship, she wasn’t quite ready to let go of her first love. Her heart wasn’t ready, and it sucked being in love with two people.

“Love sucks,” she murmured as she slid her key through the door, pushing it open only to get an eyeful of Adrien Agreste’s nether regions.

Immediately she squealed, dropping her key and bag (sorry, Tikki!) as the door shut behind her.

Adrien jumped, oddly enough pulling the rest of his shorts up as he did, and looked at her with wide eyes. Marinette turned around, covering her eyes and hoping her flush stayed on her face and didn’t creep down to her neck.

“I am so sorry,” she exclaimed. “I didn’t know you were changing!”

Adrien shook his head frantically, his own cheeks bright red.
“No, no, it’s okay!” He assured. “I should have changed in the bathroom!”

Marinette stood there, hands still covering her face, for a solid minute before she asked timidly, “Are you changed?”

“Y-Yeah,” he replied, touching the back of his neck when she finally turned around.

She couldn’t meet his eyes, and he didn’t blame her. He pretended to be distracted by the comforter’s design as she shuffled by him to get her bathing suit out of her suitcase.

They both murmured out apologies when her leg bumped into his, and Adrien dared to glance at her before she could disappear into the bathroom.

She apparently had the same idea, and squawked when they made eye contact. Her flush deepened further and before she finally went to change, she made a choking sound that reminded him of their younger days.

Once the door clicked shut, a cackling Plagg wormed his way out of his bearer’s discarded shirt pocket and Adrien could already feel his level of embarrassment rise.

“Shut up,” he murmured, looking away from the kwami.

“In my experience, kid, most humans have waited until after they asked someone out to make a fool out of themselves,” remarked Plagg, ignoring his words.

He flew over to nestle comfortably on one of the pillows, sighing in content.

“Hey, don’t expect me to go with you to that place,” Plagg said after a moment.

“What, the pool?” Adrien cocked an eyebrow. “Why not?”

“I’m a cat, Adrien.” The kwami gave him a flat stare. “A cat.”

“...right, that makes sense.” The blond grabbed the rest of his things. “Fine, just...don’t destroy, ruin, or deface anything in this room or in the hotel. Actually, stay in this room.”

Plagg sighed.

“Honestly, treating me like a kitten...I’m a capable, all-mighty god, kid. But no promises to any of that.”

Adrien rolled his eyes.

“Be good or I won’t give you any camembert until we’re back in Paris.”

“Yes, sir, best behavior!” Plagg chirped, tail beating against the pillow. “You can be reassured of that!”

The teenager gave him a wary look but didn’t have time to dwell on it as the door opened and Plagg vanished in between the pillows. Marinette stepped out, her bathing suit covered by a floral dress.

Her cheeks were still pink as she looked over at him.

“You ready?” She asked, her voice a bit soft and still laced with embarrassment.

“Yeah.” Adrien took a deep breath. He wasn’t going to be awkward about this. He was not going to
ruin this friendship. “Look, I’m sorry about earlier. I know it wasn’t either of our faults but...I mean, I knew you had the key and that you might come back soon to change...”

“You didn’t know how soon,” finished Marinette, meeting his gaze for a moment. “I get it.”

She smiled a bit.

“At least we know we’re at a good point in our friendship? I’ve seen Alya naked plenty of times. I swear, she always forgets the bathroom door doesn’t lock automatically at my house.”

Adrien chuckled.

“Yeah.” He picked up his towel from the dresser. “You have your stuff? We can walk to the pool together.”

“Mmn. Let me put my clothes and other stuff away real quick,” she replied, shoving her regular clothes in an empty drawer before grabbing a towel. “Kay, let’s go.”

Marinette threw her towel over her shoulder, her blush still present but barely noticeable as opposed to before. Adrien had a feeling he was the same way.

“Hopefully, Alya and Nino are being good friends and not ditching us for some alone time again,” he remarked, a teasing smile on his lips as they left their room.

“Ugh, which thing are you talking about? The movie date? The festival date? The one where we went to the amusement park and lost them somehow in the Tunnel of Love?”

Adrien laughed. “All of them. I mean, I don’t mind but if they wanna go out on a date, they should just go out. At least the two of us can spend time together though.”

“It’s probably a plot of Alya’s somehow,” said Marinette, shrugging. “To get their two best friends to get along? Or maybe it’s because back in collège, I…”

She glanced at him and seemed to reconsider what she was about to say.

“Well...anyways, I don’t mind spending time with you, Adrien.” She smiled sweetly at him, and his heart skipped a beat. That wasn’t fair. Stupid emotions betraying him.

“Neither do I,” he said, returning the smile.

“There they are!” Alya put her hands on her hips, grinning at the two of them. “We were wondering if you ditched us or something.”

Adrien and Marinette glanced at each other, sharing an amused look, before turning back to their friends.

“We just needed to change, is all,” said Marinette. “Have you guys seen the pool yet?”

“Nah, wanted to wait for you two,” replied Nino, starting to lead them to the door. “Hey, we should have a chicken fight!”

“A what?” Adrien asked, baffled. Was this another normal school kid thing he had missed out on or was Nino messing with him again?

“A chicken fight,” repeated Nino, looking amused. “It’s where someone sits on your shoulders and they have to try to knock down the other person. Say, Alya is sitting on my shoulders and Marinette
is on yours. Alya and Marinette would have to fight with pool noodles or something to try and knock each other down.”

“But you and Nino would be our legs,” continued Marinette. “Make sure we don’t fall, which is probably the hardest part since we’re in the water the entire time.”


Alya grinned. “Great. I call Adrien first.” When the others looked at her, surprised, she shrugged. “Babe, I love you, but Adrien’s shoulders are broader.”

She poked the blond’s shoulder playfully.

“Besides, then I can say I’ve had this boy’s head between my legs.”

Marinette made a small choking noise while Adrien did a double take. Nino, on the other hand, snickered.

“Okay, fair point.” He grinned at his best friend. “Good luck, dude. Guess that means you’re with me, Marinette.”

The teenage designer smiled a bit, shrugging off her best friend’s words. She did remember Alya’s words from a few years ago, how attraction didn’t always mean feelings.

“I have feelings for Nino, but if I had the option to spend the night with Leonardo Dicaprio - young Leo, not current Leo - I’m pretty sure I would say yes. Doesn’t mean I have feelings for him though.”

Marinette understood after that. She loathed Chloe and would probably always dislike the girl, but if given the chance….

“Hopefully there isn’t a lot of people in the pool so we have enough room to play,” she said, dismissing those thoughts. Definitely not the time to get into it.

“Yeah, you want some room when I knock you down,” remarked Alya, flashing a playful look to her best friend. “If there aren’t any pool noodles, I’m going all out, girl. So Adrien, that means you better be holding on tight to me because I am not a gentle girl.”

She glanced slyly at the blond, who tried to sputter out a reply but eventually looked away with pink cheeks. Aw. He was so innocent sometimes that she just couldn’t not tease him now and then.

“Come on, leave him alone,” said Marinette lightly. She leaned over to whisper in Alya’s ear, recounting what had happened in the hotel room.

Alya raised an eyebrow in amusement, but decided to drop the teasing as they tossed their things at a nearby table.

“Babe, you better treat my girl right in the pool,” she said, looking at her boyfriend. “If either of you go easy on us….”

“Considering you’re not going easy on us, I don’t think you have to worry about that,” replied Nino. “Adrien…” He gave the model a playful look. “She’s merciless. Be careful.”

Adrien looked between the three of them warily.

“I thought this was going to be fun,” he said. “Not make me wonder if Alya is going to kill me in
“I wouldn’t,” replied Alya, patting his shoulder. “You’re too pretty to die. Now, come on!”

She grabbed the boys, pulling them to the edge of the pool. Since they were near the deep end, she had no hesitation in pushing both her boyfriend and his best friend into the water.

Marinette giggled, watching from under the shade of the table. When Alya slipped into the water as well, she pulled off her cover and went to go dip her toes in the water.

“It’s cold!” She squealed, pulling her foot back.

Alya swam to the edge, resting her arms and chin on the ledge.

“Aw, don’t be a baby. You won’t be in the water long anyways once we start playing,” she said. “Come in so we can fight!”

Marinette looked at her for a moment before she giggled.

“You’re so weird,” she said before she went to go use the pool ladder.

“Boo! Boring!” Nino called, flicking his glasses to get some water off. He’d put them on the table but, like Alya, he was blind as a fucking bat without his glasses.

Once she was in the water, Marinette splashed both Nino and Alya before ducking under to wet her hair.

Adrien looked to his friends as she resurfaced.

“Alright, so how do we play again?”

Plagg yawned, stretching out his limbs as he did so.

Well, he was bored. And Adrien had hidden the camembert from him. Must have left it in another kid’s room. Damn him and his promises.

Tikki looked up from her origami stars as he made a long whining sound.

“I was wondering how long you could stay quiet,” she commented, glancing at the digital clock on the nightstand. “Fifteen minutes. Impressive.”

Plagg rolled over on his side, looking at her.

“Come play with me,” he said. He stretched out his arms toward her, and she scoffed. “Are you still mad about the Spanish Inquisition? Because that wasn’t my fault.”

“One, you’re the one who gave Ferdinand the idea to force Jews and Muslims to convert or risk being kicked out of the land,” reminded Tikki, returning to her stars. She placed a pink one in the jar that Marinette had bought for her. “But no, I am not mad about that. Right now.”

“It’s because your Isabelle was Muslim, yes, I know,” said Plagg, his tail swishing. “I want to remind you that my Miguel was Jewish so it affected me too. And you know I had no choice!”

He frowned at her.
“What I wanted to talk about is sorta related to that though…past bearers.”

Tikki paused in her folding, looking at the paper in her grasp. It was a lovely shade of blue; not as bright as Marinette’s, but paler and softer much like…

“We both knew there was a chance this would happen when Fu granted us new charges,” she said softly. “Or rather, when we discovered who our charges were. I knew from the moment I saw Marinette she was related to my Bridgette.”

Plagg kept his eyes on her. His partner was rational, to the point where she could be cruel and cold to some. But that didn’t mean she was heartless.

“You think it would have been easier if we had said goodbye properly?” He asked her, rolling onto his stomach. “Or harder?”

“Who’s to say?” She returned to folding her stars, but she was much slower than before. “If we had given them that extra day...if Fu had let us say goodbye, let them say goodbye...”

Tikki took a deep breath.

“Fate brought them together a long time ago, Plagg. This is no coincidence and you can feel it same as me. They were given a second chance, and we have to let things run their course.”

The whiskers on his face quivered.

“Last time we did that, our charges were nearly beaten to death and had their hearts broken the next day,” he reminded her. His voice was quiet, but she could recognize his angry tone. “Even with our connection severed, I could feel Felix’s anguish over losing his true love. Just like you could feel Bridgette’s.”

Plagg moved closer to her, but she did not flinch. She was not scared of him, and he her. They could not destroy each other, and even if they could, they wouldn’t.

They loved each other too much to do that.

“They still feel it, Tikki,” he said, eyes trained on her even as she avoided his. “I know it, and so do you. It hasn’t even been a full day and they’re forced to go through all of this - as the humans say - bullshit again. Aren’t you angry? Don’t you care?”

“Of course I do!” She snapped at him, throwing down her unfinished star. “How could you say that? I have always cared for my charges!”

“Well if you really care, do something other than sit around and let Fu or the Fates dictate their lives!” Plagg hissed.

Lightning flashed in the distance, followed by a roll of thunder. Neither paid it any mind.

“Are you going to let Adrien and Marinette go through the same thing? Let history repeat itself, huh?” He asked. “Ladybug and Chat Noir are destined to have tragic endings. From Cleopatra and Marc Antony to Miguel and Isabelle. To Bridgette and Felix to Adrien and Marinette.”

Plagg got right in her face, and this time she met his gaze.

Her partner was dangerous, passionate. He acted like he didn’t care but that was merely to save himself the pain of losing another charge. He cared too much.
“Think of Alvaro and Truda. They were able to have their happy ending and avoid tragedy because we stepped in, Tikki. It was us that knocked down the Wall and let them reunite. Did you forget that?”

“Of course not…” Tikki straightened. “Not even gods can avoid Fate though, Plagg. Don’t you forget that. I don’t enjoy seeing my charges harmed any more than you do. But history repeats for a reason. Lessons need to be learned.”

“Really? So we fight Nooroo again and again so he can abused by someone else?” Plagg sighed. “History repeats, but maybe it’s because no one has bothered to try to break the cycle, Tikki.”

He moved away from her, going to settle back on the pillows.

“I love you, Tikki,” he said softly. “But war has made you forget your humanity.”

“...we are not humans though, Plagg.”

He glanced outside, where the skies began to clear. As if the storm was never there.

“…”

“We were once.”

Conversation fell silent after that, which was for the best as their charges later returned to shower and change before skipping to dinner. Then they were left alone once more.

“I’m sorry.”

Plagg glanced at his partner, and wondered when it became normal for him to see the goddess of luck see so depressed.

Tikki shifted before she slowly went to join him on the pillows.

“I know you care. I do too,” she said, her voice just above a whisper. “But it’s easy to pretend not to because we can’t do anything to help them right now. Bridgette and Felix…like you said, our ties have been severed.”

She leaned into him, seeking his embrace, and he met her halfway.

“I don’t like fighting with you, lovebug,” he said, matching her tone. “No, we can’t exactly reveal ourselves to Bridgette and Felix, at least not without raising any more questions we can’t answer. But we can still help them somehow.”

Plagg nuzzled into his partner, purring when she stroked the top of his head.

“You’re the smart one, Tikki. If anyone can think of a plan to do it, it’s you.

“It’s been a long time since we sat like this,” she said softly, closing her eyes. “Can we just enjoy that
for a little bit? Please?"

One might wonder how the god of chaos could be so soft, but truth was that he wasn’t. His partner thought otherwise, but really, she was just the exception to his prickly personality.

The world may have known Ladybug and Chat Noir, and all their different names, but even those were just pseudonyms. Transformation was a tiring process that yanked at his bones, his soul, and mind - especially when forced - but...

It was pretty much the only time he could regularly see his true love, so he would take it.

Ladybug clutched her face, fingers pressed against her mask.

It wouldn’t make her vision come back, she knew that, but what else could she do?

Listening for the akuma’s movements, she turned her head in various directions only to hear a laugh behind her each time.

“Hard, isn’t it? Being without one of your senses?” They must have moved around her, because she was shoved from the front and knocked back on her bottom. “Kids can be so cruel, leaving you in the dark. Plug up your face, won’t let you hear or see anything. Soon you can’t even breathe because they stuffed your nose and mouth too.”

They cupped Ladybug’s face, laughing slightly.

“I wonder how long you’ll last, little bug.”

The akuma barely got their words out before they shrieked, moving away from the heroine.

“Sorry, that name is patent and pending!”

Ladybug held out her hand as she pushed herself up to her feet.

“Chat, is that you?” She recognized her partner’s humorous tone, and then his grip on her. “It is you! Don’t let them touch you or you’ll lose one of your senses.”

Chat hummed in her ear, helping her stand.

“Don’t worry, Bug. I won’t let them take another person’s sense,” he said. “Just listen to my voice and let me guide you, okay? Trust me.”

“Mm.” The heroine rolled back her shoulders. “Let’s do this, Chat Noir. It’s just like when we fought LunaLuna in the dark.”

The thing about having a partner is that you get used to their movements, can recognize details few others can, like the weight of their steps, their breathing, their laugh...their weird battle maneuvers they insisted on creating in case a situation like this happened.

Chat was silly, but prepared.

Unless you witnessed it, there was no way to tell Ladybug had her vision taken away. She and Chat moved seamlessly around each other, working to take down Sensory Overload like any other battle.

Eventually, there on the ground rested a distraught teenager, tired of their classmates bullying them
for not looking and acting a certain way.

*Ladybug blinked as her powers warped around the city, damaging broken buildings, and light returned to her vision.*

*It was a wonderful sensation, but nothing beat the bright smile of her partner.*

*It was something she wanted to see every single day.*

Marinette played with one of her pigtails, standing beside her roommate as they both eyed the bed.

“*We never did discuss who would get the bed, right?”* She said softly.

With everything that had happened, from lunch to the pool to playing cards with the others to dinner, their room situation hadn’t exactly been at the front of their minds.

“I really think you should get it, Marinette,” insisted Adrien. “I couldn’t let you sleep on the floor or even the couch. Really, I’ll be fine.”

“No, that’s not fair to you,” she replied. “And we’ll be here for two weeks! What kind of friend would I be?”

Adrien smiled a bit, nodding in understanding.

That really left them with one option, and they both knew that.

“I...move a lot in my sleep,” she said. “Alya said I kicked her once. It’s why she refuses to sleep with me anymore.”

“I...hug in my sleep,” admitted Adrien. “Apparently I scared Nino half to death when I did it class.”

She giggled.

“That must have been a sight.” The designer bit her lip. “Well, in that case, maybe it’s a good thing...that way if you... hold me, I won’t move around as much. Or maybe I’ll kick you more. I don’t know.”

Adrien chuckled.

“Well, I guess we’ll find out.”

He made his way to the bed, pulling the covers and settling on the mattress. He glanced at her when he felt the mattress shift as she got on too.

Both under the covers, their legs brushed against each other. The bed wasn’t meant to hold two people really, but they would make it work.

They glanced at each other, smiling shyly.

This was fine. Friends slept together all the time, purely platonic.

Marinette reached over and turned off the lamp, darkness filling the room with streams of moonlight reaching in from the balcony.
“Good night, Marinette,” he said softly as they laid down, his voice soft and right next to her ear.

She shivered slightly, though it wasn’t from the coldness of the room. Even if it was, he was close enough to keep her warm.

“Sweet dreams, Adrien,” she murmured, rolling onto her side.

Blue met green, two pearls of color standing as vibrant as ever in the black room.

“Sweet dreams,” he echoed a moment later, a bit breathlessly.

She closed her eyes and hoped sleep would come soon to save her from her pounding heart.

Ten minutes, a pair of arms wrapped around her, pulled her close, her cheek pressed against his chest. Never did she feel as warm.

Sleep came much easier after that.

Bridgette sat atop her bed, brushing her hair.

She and Felix hadn’t said a word to each other, so the only sound in the room was the running water from the sink or the zipping of one of their suitcases.

She knew they couldn’t continue like this forever. Marinette was pretty suspicious, and she was sure Adrien, being Felix’s nephew, was too. Their classmates would catch on soon eventually as well.

They had to work together, be civil and professional for the sake of their jobs.

But it was difficult, pretending like the man in front of her hadn’t broken her heart just a few years ago.

It had been a stupid schoolgirl crush, a simple infatuation she mistook for love. At the time, she really didn’t know what love was. She just knew she felt something for Felix, and took it too far.

Felix knew better though, and it wasn’t fair of her to resent him for making her come back to reality.

Sure, she knew he liked his coffee with insane amounts of sugar. She knew he was bitter about *The Count of Monte Cristo* simply because Edmund didn’t reunite with Mercedes at the end. She knew dark chocolate was his favorite, and that he ate it during tests to help him focus.

She knew he loved spicy food, and fish made him sick. She knew he avoided the park by their old school because it reminded him of his sister. She knew he took ten thousand years to type something because he hit one key at a time. She knew he liked to watch cooking videos but couldn’t even work a microwave.

All the little things she knew about Felix...she thought they were proof of her love for him.

Turns out she was just wishing for something that wasn’t there.
Sure, Felix could have laid her down more gently and she knew she didn’t deserve to be torn apart like that. But he had already made his feelings clear to her, several times, and she just didn’t listen very well.

So much for love.

Bridgette gazed down at her lap, the sight of her fuzzy pink socks cheering her up a bit. They had little cats on them, all wearing different fruit costumes. Her favorite was the cat in the banana suit.

It didn’t do her any good to dwell on the past. She thought she loved Felix once, and maybe some of her old feelings would always be there with her, but this would pass. Two weeks would go by and they would be strangers again.

It would be fine.

Bridgette placed her brush on the dresser.

“Tomorrow, we should try to go to the Battle Simulator exhibit,” she said suddenly, startling Felix.

It was a small victory, seeing him look at her with something other than annoyance. (Truthfully, she had been the only one at school who could pull any facial expression whatsoever from him.)

It took Felix a few seconds to process her statement.

“I...yes, we should.” He picked up his comb from the floor, frowning slightly at it. “I assume it will be crowded though.”

Bridgette stretched out her arms before she tucked herself under the comforters.

“Well, yeah, probably. Doesn’t mean we shouldn’t try.”

Here was her chance: use dry humor, do something to sweep away the past, make their situation a little more bearable. Say something like, “And we both know I try and try no matter what” to hint at their past.

“In any case, we should get some sleep,” said Felix, moving to his own bed.

Fuck him. She had that perfectly planned out!

She grumbled, wrapping her blankets around her so she was perfectly tucked blanket burrito. She met Felix’s eyes, and then tried to roll over so she wouldn’t have to look at him.

And then strangely, he chuckled.

Bridgette nearly did a double take, struggling to roll back around because Felix Beauchamp did not laugh. He just didn’t. No one ever even saw him smile, not even for picture day.

But he had laughed, and it was soft and brief because by the time she looked at him, he was already settled in bed with one of his books, his face as passive as ever.

She heard it though. Bridgette didn’t imagine that laugh, and she knew it.

She had made Felix Beauchamp laugh. Fifteen-year-old Bridgette Cheng might have cried.

But twenty-two year old Bridgette merely rolled back over, her face warm and not because of her blanket cocoon.
His laugh sounded as melodious as she always thought it would be.

A smile made its way onto her face for the briefest moment, even more than his chuckle.

No.

She wasn’t going to go through this again, she told herself.

He was still handsome, still so sharp and intelligent. Still so invested in his stories, still so in love with history.

But Bridgette Cheng wouldn’t be fooled again. She wasn’t going to let herself be warped up into this mess again.

Because if she let herself fall again, be swept up with his cool words and mesmerizing gray eyes, she wasn’t going to be able to move on next time. She wouldn’t survive a second heartbreak.

So it was decided: Bridgette Cheng was done with Felix Beauchamp. Period.

Chapter End Notes

....

This is 6000 words but still feels too short...

Again, don't hesitate to tell me if I've missed something! I love hearing what you guys have to say!

You can also talk to me on my tumblr: jazztastic-panda
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Everything has a counterpart: creation and destruction, bad and good...

Peace and chaos.

Chapter Notes

You guys are spoiled....6000 words last chapter, and three weeks later, 7000 more? Just kidding! I mean, true, I wrote a lot, but I've been really motivated lately, so I hope you guys like it :)

Very important notes at the end of the chapter!

There wasn’t much in the world that Nathanael really valued. He had always been a “go with the flow” sort of guy, especially in recent years when he mostly stopped letting his anxiety and shyness get the best of him. If something bothered him, he just tried to accept it and move on.

Chloe Bourgeois, of course, had always been an exception.

The redheaded artist groaned into his pillow, using his hand to shield his eyes as the white light from the bathroom poured out into the main room. He managed to grab his phone to check the time and groaned again when he saw it was barely five.

Tossing the pillow aside, Nathanael kicked off his covers and stumbled towards the bathroom to lean against the doorway.

“Chloe, what the hell?” He murmured, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

The blonde barely even looked at him, gently touching her face and rubbing in her cleanser. She had her hair pulled back in a bun, and a pink headband stopped any stray hairs from falling to the front of her face. Had it been a normal time for living beings, he might have found her pink bunny shorts funny.

“It’s, like, 4:45 am,” continued Nathanael, squinting at her. “Breakfast is at eight.”

“As much as it pains me to admit it, I don’t look this perfect naturally,” replied Chloe, peering closely at her reflection. She must have taken a shower because the mirror was a little foggy. How he slept through that, he wasn’t sure. “Of course I need a little time and effort to look the way I do.”

“Don’t you sleep?” Nathanael asked, taking a look to the balcony doors. It was still dark out. “The sun hasn’t even risen yet.”

“Why do you think I go to bed early?” She retorted. “I don’t expect you to understand. You clearly
don’t care about what you look like. So go back to bed and dream about whatever you starving artists dream about. What is it anyways? Money, pretty people out of your league to sleep with…?”

“You think so highly of me.” Nathanael rolled his eyes. “As much I’d want to go back to sleep, I can’t. The light and your hairdryer woke me up.”

He stepped into the bathroom, ignoring the way she raised her eyebrow at him, and plucked one of her lipstick tubes off the counter.

“Hey, put that down! That costs more than your entire wardrobe!”

“Why do you always wear the same shade of lipstick?” He asked, ignoring her words. “For someone so focused on her appearance, you don’t really have a lot of progression.”

“Excuse me?!”

Nathanael opened the tube and smeared some of it on his finger. He met her gaze before he looked into the mirror and coated it over his lips.

“Hey, now I have to throw that away,” said Chloe, snatching the tube from him. “What the hell is wrong with you?”

“If you’re going to wake me up this early to do your makeup, I might as well play around too,” he said, still looking into the mirror to fix his lipstick. “You could have at least closed the door, but you left it open the entire time.”

Nathanael glanced at her, and she glared at him.

“Look, fine, I’ll close the door. Just stop wasting my makeup,” she said, eyes trailing down to his lips. “It’s not even your shade.”

“It isn’t yours either,” he replied, reaching for one of her makeup wipes. “It’s just too much with your blue eyeshadow. They don’t go well together.”

Chloe crossed her arms, looking more than annoyed now. He was probably pushing his limits, but he didn’t care. If they were going to live together for two weeks, he wasn’t going to lose sleep because of her.

“Well, it’s not like you know any better,” she snarked.

“Is that a challenge?” Nathanael looked pointedly out to the balcony doors again. “We have time…”

Chloe peered at him as he waved the makeup wipe around.

“Are….Are you offering to do my makeup?” She asked, unable to keep the surprise out of her voice. “Do you even know anything about makeup?”

“It’s no different than painting,” said Nathanael. “Come on. I’m already up, and I’m sure you’d love a reason to tell me you were right.”

The blonde eyed him up and down before she checked the time on her phone. She did get up a little earlier than usual…

“Ugh, fine. I guess I can just wash off whatever you mess up.” Chloe made to grab the wipe, but he held it out of her reach. When did he get so tall? “Give me that, you cretin.”
“Okay, first of all, it’s cree-tin,” said Nathanael. “If you’re going to insult me, do it properly.” He reached out and took her by the chin, catching her off guard. “Second, hold still. I’m in control right now, remember?”

He reached over, gently wiping the lipstick off her face before doing the same to her eyeshadow. Really, who wore the same look as they did when they were fourteen?

“I could have done that myself,” said Chloe, huffing as he tossed the wipe. She watched as he took out of the rest of her makeup. “And be careful with that! Those are expensive.”

“As if you can’t afford more,” he retorted.

He pulled out a dark red shade of lipstick and, after searching through her bag, a few tubes of mascara.

“Isn’t that a bit much for this dumb field trip?” Chloe asked, scoffing. “I knew this was a bad idea.”

“Hey, Chloe? Shut up,” he said softly as he glanced at her. “It’s better than that pale pink you’ve been using for years.”

Nathanael cupped her chin again, and she noted how oddly gentle he was with her.

“Now let’s see what this street artist can do with this blank canvas.”

Sabrina rolled over in bed, fumbling to turn off her phone’s alarm before it woke up Mylene. It was far too early for this, but she didn’t want to sleep in either.

She unplugged her phone, rubbing the sleepiness from her eyes as she unlocked the screen and threw the covers off her body. Not wanting to disturb her roommate, she stepped out onto the balcony. It was still dark out, but the city lights were enough.

She began calling her father’s phone, smiling when he picked up.

“Morning, Papa,” said Sabrina softly. “Have you left yet?”

“Just waiting for my coffee. How’s your trip, honeybee? Did you settle in okay?”

Sabrina hummed.

“Yes, yes...the hotel we’re staying at is really nice. I’m in a different room than Chloe, but it’s okay. The girl I’m with is nice too. What about you? Did you remember to take your medicine last night?”

“Don’t worry, I took them. Thank you for leaving notes. But...isn’t it early over there? Shouldn’t you be sleeping?”

“It’s only an hour difference,” said Sabrina dismissively. “I wanted to call and say good morning, since I can’t be there to do it in person.”

“Aw, you’re too good for me, honeybee. I appreciate it, but try to go back to bed after this, okay? I don’t want you to miss out on your trip because you were so tired. We can talk more tonight, if you want. Oh, there’s my coffee. I gotta run, Sabrina.”

She leaned on the railing, staring out at the city.
“Sure, don’t be late, Papa,” she said, smiling. “Have a good day at work, and keep Paris safe!”

“Of course! And have lots of fun, but be careful, okay? Love you, honeybee.”

Her father hung up then, and Sabrina hummed softly.

This was her first time away from home, really, and she worried about him. Of course, they both knew she was going to leave home eventually, but they didn’t really talk about it. This trip was a big test for them both.

For many years, it had just been Sabrina and Roger. She didn’t remember her mom very well, and he didn’t like talking about her very often. He would, if she asked, but she knew he didn’t like remembering the heartache he felt when she left them.

Honestly, it was something that had made Chloe so attractive to Sabrina at first. They had gone through something similar, yet Chloe hardly let it define her, and Sabrina had been envious, hoped that confidence rubbed off on her.

It hadn’t really, but she figured it was the little steps that mattered.

Her phone vibrated, letting her know she had an email, and she opened up the app.

“Oh…”

Another acceptance letter, and another thing to discuss, not just with her father but also Chloe. After all, they had never been apart aside from that nasty akuma situation a few years ago. Even that was a short period of time.

She wondered how her best friend and father would react if she left to study in America, away from them.

Would they be okay?

Sabrina looked at the email again, thumb hovering over the delete button, before she closed her inbox and stared out at the city.

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A floor above, Lila too was looking out at the view from her balcony.

Sleep had been pointless; she had been too frustrated with the lack of involvement from her parents. Honestly, Chloe wasn’t the only one with influence; her parents should have come through for her.

But they hadn’t.

The Italian girl played with the charm around her neck, the surface cool to her touch. It had just been a dumb charm she had hired someone to make, naively hoping it would be enough to impress Adrien Agreste. It had worked too, and she reveled in knowing she could get the famous model to look at her in awe.

And then Ladybug had to show up to correct her, destroy her plans.

Lila knew it was petty to be so hateful towards someone when that incident had been years ago, but she didn’t care. She had been completely humiliated by the great heroine of Paris.

And now, she was forced to spend time in another city far away from home, fawning over yet
another spotted heroine and her loyal kitty.

“What’s so great about Ladybug anyways?” She murmured. “There are other heroes too!”

That book had been proof. Hawkmoth was proof.

As long as you had a miraculous, you could have powers like no other. Lila wanted that, to remind others she was just as deserving as power and influence as the others, maybe more.

What did Ladybug even do? Fix everything she destroyed in trying to catch the bad guy? It was Chat Noir who did all the hard work, but of course, all anyone cared about was Ladybug. Ladybug this, Ladybug that….!

She knew she could do it. Do what every other akuma failed to do.

Lila was capable, smart, and cunning. She didn’t really care if Hawkmoth took over Paris; she didn’t live there, it wasn’t her home. Her parents had just dumped her there to get a “cultural experience” as they called it.

Cirque….Cirque had been inspiring, and Lila was more drawn to her than she thought she would be. To be in control, to have the powers most didn’t even remember….to be able to toy with Ladybug as much as she wanted, day after day….

If she could have that, that would be simply….

“Miraculous,” she whispered, clutching the charm around her neck.

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Morning came quick, and it was with luck that coffee came with breakfast.

Adrien was grateful he and Marinette were close enough friends that she didn’t mind waking up to him nuzzling against her shoulder. Plus, he did tell her he reached out to people in his sleep so it was no surprise that he was cuddling her.

And he merely smiled when she saw the bruise on his leg and apologized profusely. She had told him she kicked in her sleep, so he considered them even. She took a break when they got to breakfast, not wanting to be teased by Alya and Nino.

Even when they were walking to the museum with the group, Marinette kept glancing down at his leg and biting her lip.

“Marinette, seriously,” he said for what felt like the fiftieth time, “I’m fine. It’s just a bruise. It’ll be gone by the time we go back home, maybe even before then.”

Marinette continued to pout, but eventually dropped it. He was glad; it really wasn’t a big deal, and she hadn’t done it on purpose.

Besides, they had other things to think about, like the overwhelming crowd outside the museum.

Bridgette and Felix came to a stop, causing the class to do the same.

“Wow, what a turnout,” said Bridgette, looking around. “Okay, everyone, follow us. Stay close, try not to get swept up in the crowd.”

“If necessary, link hands,” advised Felix, trailing to the back of the group so that he could keep an
eye on the teenagers, make sure no one got swept off in the crowd. “Move along now.”

Bridgette led them to the doors, where people were trying to cram themselves into. One door was blocked off by a security guard, who nodded towards the group when he saw them.

“Miss Cheng, Mister Beauchamp,” he greeted, moving to unlock the door. “You were smart to request a private door to enter through.”

Bridgette smiled, gesturing for the teenagers to go through. Only a few of them passed before someone suddenly grabbed her arm, catching her by surprise.

“Hey, what do you think you’re doing?” A man demanded, glaring at her and the teenagers. “The line is back there .”

Marinette frowned, eyes on the hand that dared to grab her cousin. Said cousin merely continued to smile, turning her attention to the man and waving off the security guard.

“I understand, but my colleague here and I are just trying to get these kids inside,” she said, her voice calm. “We both work here, and the museum is aware of our arrival. It may not seem fair, sir, but we are simply trying to do our jobs.”

The man, dressed in ridiculous tourist attire, only seemed to scowl more and Bridgette grimaced as the grip on her arm tightened. Still, she waved the guard off when he tried to intervene.

“You said it yourself, it’s not fair,” he remarked. “Do you even know how expensive the trip was for me and my wife, what we’ve been through to get here? I don’t work day after day, exhausting myself as I contribute to society, so that these kids can goof off and not appreciate the vacation I kill to have.”

“Of course not,” said Bridgette, keeping her voice steady even now. “But, sir, you are already close to the front of the line. It is unfortunate that you have to wait in line, especially on such a busy day, but no one is denying you access to the museum. Everyone here will get to see the exhibits regardless.”

This seemed to infuriate the man more.

“If that’s the case, why don’t these kids wait in line too, huh?” He snarled. “This is bullshit!”

He yanked on Bridgette’s arm, clearly intending to shove her and the group away from the door, and began pulling her down the steps. Several people from the group, including the guard and Marinette, moved to intervene but Bridgette pulled her arm away the man’s grasp at the last second.

In one fluid motion, she grabbed the man’s still outstretched arm and pinned it behind his back, holding onto his other arm tightly. A frown was now on her face, and when she spoke, it was still calm and steady but contained an underlying tone that was more or less intimidating.

“Sir, I apologize for the inconvenience, truly, but just as you try to do your job, I am trying to do mine. So I kindly ask that you return to your spot in line before you lose it. It would be quite unfortunate to have to go to the back when you are so close to the entrance.”

Bridgette looked over at the security guard.

“Walter, I can handle the doors; do you think you could show this man to his spot? I’m sure his wife is wondering where he is.”
The guard, Walter, nodded his head and clapped a hand on the tourist’s shoulder as Bridgette released her grasp and stepped back. The man opened his mouth to say something most likely stupid but Walter gripped his shoulder and began to lead him away from the group.

Bridgette sighed, rubbing her arm as she turned back to the teenagers.

“Sorry about that, you guys,” she said, smiling sweetly. “Some people can be so impatient. Come on, come on. Let’s go inside and see the rest of the exhibits.”

Marinette walked alongside her cousin, frowning.

“Are you okay?” She asked, eyes on the red marks left behind.

The older girl merely hummed.

“I’m fine,” she assured. “It’s not the first time someone tried to use force to get their way. Don’t think about it too much, okay? Just try to avoid people like that, or get me or Felix if you can’t.”

Bridgette addressed the others as she said that last line.

“Today, we’re going to try to get you guys in one of the simulators,” she said. “Emphasis on try; they’ll probably be really busy. If not, there’s plenty to see, don’t worry.”

Rose raised her hand.

“What kind of simulators are there?” She asked curiously.

“The most popular one will probably be the Battle Simulator,” answered Felix as he stepped towards the front beside Bridgette. “It’s essentially a virtual reality game where you can pretend to fight as Ladybug or Chat Noir. Although it’s exclusive to the museum at this moment, there are plans to launch it as a regular video game if it’s successful.”

“The other one is a flight simulator,” continued Bridgette. “Basically, you get to feel what it’s like to jump over rooftops like Ladybug and Chat Noir used to. There’s also an obstacle course near the back of the museum, a training simulation of sorts. It’s different than the Ladybug and Chat Noir inspired playground, meant for the little kids.”

“Why is there a playground and an obstacle course in a museum?” Kim asked. “I could get the playground thing, but I mean, doesn’t that make this place more like some sort of theme park instead of an museum?”

Felix shrugged, saying, “You could say it was both. The intention was to garner as much interest as possible for this place, and so the owners had to consider all age groups. There were several young children who looked up to the heroes and are possibly teenagers by now; hence, the simulators that resemble the new technology and video games. There were adults who probably idolized the heroes or are just curious creatures, hence the museum itself. And, of course, the young children who most likely grew up with whispers about the heroes once they were gone.”

“Considering there’s a giant statue of Ladybug in the city, I assume most people would end up telling their kids about the heroes and Papillon anyways,” said Bridgette. “Obviously, they got the outcome they were hoping for.”

She led them past the crowd, making her way to the simulator area, only to frown at the long lines waiting for them.
“Hmm, I expected this,” said Felix, catching up to her. “We should make reservations with the museum later so they can still try it out before the trip is over.”

Bridgette nodded.

“Good thinking,” she agreed before she looked back to the teenagers. “Okay, so we won’t be able to go on any simulators today. Ooh, the Tribute Room is right down the hall. Let’s go check it out.”

Felix led them into the next exhibit, explaining, “The Tribute Room is dedicated to all the video and news articles relating to the heroes and their battles.”

He snapped his fingers, as if recalling something.

“Speaking of which…..” He looked to Alya. “You asked about taking videos yesterday. We did not allow you yesterday because the museum had not opened yet, but you are more than welcome to today. Just no flash.”

Alya beamed, clutching her phone.

“Perfect! The Tribute Room will be a great first post,” she said.

“Good, it’s not that crowded,” said Bridgette as they got to the exhibit. “Looks like everyone is more interested in the simulators and artwork. I mean, we’ve all lived these events; the tributes aren’t as new to us.”

She held out her hands.

“This is the part where we set you free,” she remarked. “We’ll probably stay in this exhibit for a while, but try not to wander. We want you to experience every part of this museum as a group. After this, we can go back to the Hall of Akumas if you’d like and then the gift shop before lunch. Then we’re going to take a walk around the city. So remember the buddy system we talked about, and have fun.”

Alya didn’t need to be told twice, immediately holding her phone up and going to the nearest exhibit. Amused, her friends followed her, reading each inscription over her shoulders.

After making sure everyone stayed in the room and was actually looking at something, Bridgette decided to walk around and look at the memorabilia herself.

A small, nostalgic smile formed on her face as she came across a clip of Ladybug and Chat Noir moving in sync during a battle. The next one showed them talking to a crowd afterwards.

During that, she had been out of breath and focused on wrapping up conversations so she could transform back. Now, her eyes lingered on her partner, the way his eyes flickered over to her and how his smile would grow ever so slightly as she continued talking.

How did she miss it? The way he would look at her, how his eyes would glow and his smile grow….? The way his hand would always slide inch by inch off her shoulder, as if he didn’t want to stop touching her, part from her…

“What an idiot,” she murmured, watching a clip of Chat Noir being flung across the city by his partner.

Chat Noir must have been in love with her a long time, and she….never noticed. Not once.
Too caught up in a hopelessly eternally unrequited love with someone who tossed away any gifts she gave him, rejected each invitation she had for him.…

Everyone had told her to give up, to stop chasing after the man with no heart. She hadn’t listened, convinced she could make that boy feel something other than disdain.

Bridgette shook her head.

No. The past was in the past.

She looked at a newspaper clipping of Ladybug and Chat Noir standing side-by-side, smiling at each other despite their haggard appearances.

“The past is in the past,” she said aloud. “Nothing will change that.”

“Hey, Bridgette,” called Marinette. “Is this you?”

The older girl glanced over at her cousin, who was standing by one of the screens with a few of her classmates.

Bridgette cocked an eyebrow out of curiosity, walking over to them.

“What are you talking about?” She asked, amused, before she caught sight of herself on the screen.

Ahh, Animal Control. An akuma who was furious at all the stray animals on the street and wanted to get rid of them all. She had been a great fan of Chat Noir, tossing him around like a rag doll and screeching how his existence was completely unnecessary.

(That had led to a long talk later about how he was needed.)

Despite that, Bridgette couldn’t stop the fond smile from forming on her face.

“Yeah, that’s me,” she said at last, watching the clip.

What a day.

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Bridgette squealed as a cage of stray animals crashed in front of her. The animals inside yowled in protest, but otherwise seemed okay.

In her scramble not to get, well, scrambled, she had lost her grip on the silver gift box. It sat in a rather deep puddle, the water already soaking into the box. If only it hadn’t rained earlier that morning!

As if to add to her misery, a cat carrier landed right on top it before she could even reach out to get it.

The teenager squealed, stomping her foot. She had worked so hard on those chocolates! She had even individually wrapped each one of them, leaving a little message inside. It had taken her weeks of practice and she had lost way too many hours of sleep over them.

She glared up at Animal Control, who had Chat Noir in her grasp.

Gripping the blue umbrella in her hand, Bridgette marched into the middle of the street, completely ignoring the way her kwami wriggled around furiously in her pocket.
“Hey, you!” She exclaimed, bringing the umbrella up like a baseball bat. “Knock it off, you pest!”

“I’m the pest?!” Animal Control remarked, astonished, right before she was whacked in the face and sent flying away from the hero. “Ow!”

“What are you doing?” Chat Noir said, massaging his throat as he stared wide-eyed at the girl. “Get out of here, it’s dangerous!”

“I just saved your life, and you’re telling me to get lost?” Bridgette retorted as the akuma got back to her feet.

“You’ll pay for that, you little freak!” Animal Control snarled, lunging at her.

Bridgette swung her umbrella once more, this time hitting the akuma in the gut.

“You! Ruined! My! Work!” She emphasized each word with a smack of her umbrella, not hesitating at all. “What’s your deal with stray animals anyways? Are they hurting you? Are they taking your job, ruining your life? What the hell did they ever do to you? Who do you think you are, thinking you can ruin someone’s whole day - an animal’s whole life - because you’re a pretentious little brat?!”

“Why, you!” Animal Control, amidst the attacks, reached out for her with a malicious glint in her eyes.

It was that point Chat Noir snapped back to attention, sweeping Bridgette off her feet and leaping onto the rooftops where Animal Control couldn’t reach them. He ran with her, huffing in disbelief.

“Are you insane?” He demanded. “Why would you provoke an akuma like that? You’re just a civilian; you shouldn’t be off fighting someone so powerful.”

Bridgette scowled at him, clutching her umbrella close to her. Seeing the way he was looking at her, she slumped her shoulders in defeat and dropped her angry stance.

“I just worked so hard on this project, and Animal Control came and ruined it,” she said. “I was just so angry…”

“I understand, but be careful,” he warned. “Akumas are no joke, and if you let your emotions get the best of you, it can put you in more danger.”

Bridgette looked away, mindful of the pieces of jewelry on her ears.

“That would never happen,” she murmured. “Just…please put me down, Chat Noir. I can take it from here.”

Giving her a reluctant look, Chat Noir dropped down to the streets, now a good few blocks away from Animal Control, and set her down.

She waited until he was gone before she sighed and transformed. The battle was quick after that but despite her powers fixing the damage, she didn’t go retrieve the box from where she had left it.

“There’s really no point in grabbing it, huh…”

“You hit an akuma with an umbrella?” Adrien asked, eyebrows raising into his hairline.

Bridgette crossed her arms, pouting.
“She ruined my work, and I was angry. Besides, getting angry because there were a couple stray animals on the street? I mean, really….do something about it if it makes you so upset,” she murmured. “Plus, Ladybug hadn’t shown up yet and Animal Control was practically choking Chat Noir to death. Someone had to do something.”

“So you hit an akuma with an umbrella,” remarked Nino. “That’s awesome.”

“Dangerous,” commented Marinette. “You could have been hurt, Bridgette!”

Her cousin shrugged.

“I wasn’t thinking straight back then. But…if I could go back to that time, I would probably do it again. I don’t even want to think about what might have happened if I had just let Animal Control have her way with Chat Noir,” she said.

Alya peered at her.

“You talk about Chat Noir a lot, and you were really defensive about him yesterday too,” she commented. “Why?”

Bridgette glanced at the phone in the teenager’s hand before she sighed. It wasn’t really something she was hiding anyways.

“Well, as you know, there was a lot of criticism if not hatred towards Chat Noir,” she began. “Really, there were a lot of angry protesters at first. To this day, I don’t understand why it was so bad. He didn’t deserve it. He was every bit of a hero as Ladybug, and it’s just infuriating that not many people saw it like that.”

A small, fond smile formed on her face.

“He was cursed, you know. I mean…the rumor was that Chat Noir couldn’t take the ring off and needed Ladybug’s help to do it. But instead of forcing her, he worked with her and they became a team - they became friends.”

Bridgette let out a long sigh.

“Of course, it’s just a rumor. Only Ladybug and Chat Noir would know the truth,” she said, looking back at the teenagers. “To answer your question, Alya, I’m defensive of Chat Noir because he deserved so much better. Anyone who’s been rescued by him would say the same. Unfortunately, Ladybug got all the credit more often than not.”

“You talk down about Ladybug a lot….?” Marinette said after a moment, a frown on her face. “Was she…was she a bad hero?”

“No, not at all,” assured Bridgette. “She did her job just fine, and worked hard to get along with the people and police, especially when there was a lot of skepticism going around. But it was always obvious that she couldn’t do her job very well without Chat Noir.”

She glanced at a couple of newspaper clippings pinned nearby, and reached out to tap her fingernail against the glass.

“Take the Hunter, for example,” she said. “He set out all these traps over the city, snaring people and seriously hurting them. Ladybug was alone for most of the battle, and she was struggling. Badly. She had been caught in a couple of the traps, and she couldn’t even get close to the guy. Chat Noir came in later and not only carried her away when she was about to be killed, but grabbed the akuma-
infested item and saved the day.”

“Sounds like a tough akuma though, in Ladybug’s defense,” said Nino, frowning a bit.

“Oh, no it was,” agreed Bridgette. “A vicious akuma, one of Papillon's more malicious ones. Even Cirque kept her distance from this battle. The Hunter was almost as deranged as her. Almost.”

Adrien, who had been silent up until now, frowned.

“Wait...you said before ‘she was about to be killed’. The akumas....they tried to actually kill people?” He asked, his voice quiet. Despite that, he was unable to keep the shock out of his voice. “Or was it just the Hunter?”

Bridgette sighed, shaking her head.

“At first, they were harmless, like LunaLuna, who only wanted to shroud the city in darkness. We would get silly akumas, like this one guy obsessed with pigeons....but then something changed. Papillion started sending out more dangerous, lethal akumas, who didn’t care if Ladybug and Chat Noir’s lives were spared. It was almost like an experiment; to see if he could make akumas as dangerous and crazy as Cirque.”

She ran a hand through her hair.

“It was probably why the Final Battle was as violent and explosive as it was,” she remarked. “The prime minister even ordered an evacuation, a total shut down on media and everything. If we were going to have to fight - I mean, if we were going to have a fight in the city, it was going to stay in the city.”

“Did anyone ever find out why Papillion wanted the miraculous?” Alya asked. “I mean...it sounds like he was desperate to get them, if he got so violent.”

Bridgette shrugged.

“It remains a mystery. We still don’t have a face to the name either, but that’s no surprise. Everything during and after the Final Battle is just...a mystery. Most of the things in the Final Battle exhibit are just details of what happened later, like the rebuilding of the city and documentaries explaining theories about what happened. There are lots of photos of the wreckage too.”

She tucked a few strands of hair behind her ear, where her fingers lingered.

“Since that battle, no one’s seen the heroes or Papillion again. It was....quite a shock when the people found out that Ladybug and Chat Noir had been spotted in Paris. But....it was obvious they weren’t the same heroes we had. Same with Papillion.”

Bridgette hummed.

“For example, Hawkmoth attacks mostly during the day and while his creations may be odd, they do not aim to kill, even after four years. Plus, he calls himself Hawkmoth; why bother going by a different name, especially if you are in a new location? And the heroes were obviously different people too, since they are clumsier during battle. Not bad, but, mm, less graceful and coordinated.”

“Oh...” Marinette frowned. “But they’ve gotten better.”

Her cousin nodded.
“Yes, they did! And our Ladybug and Chat Noir were certainly just inexperienced when they first arrived. I merely meant….if the heroes in Paris were the same as ours, then they would not have looked so much like fish out of water. For them, it would have been like coming out of retirement; they may be a bit rusty, but they would be able to adjust much easier than your Ladybug and Chat Noir.”

Alya hummed.

“That makes sense. I remember Chat Noir used his powers on a goal net, as if he didn’t know he would time out….and Ladybug didn’t purify the akuma the first time,” she recalled, missing how her best friend shifted beside her.

“Well, I wouldn’t hold it against them. Everyone learns from their mistakes,” said Bridgette. “If things had gone smoothly the first time, they wouldn’t understand consequences of their actions. It’s better they mess up in the beginning than later on, especially since there is no way of knowing if Hawkmoth will send out more dangerous akumas.”

She glanced at the time and clapped her hands.

“But we should save the rest of that discussion for the whole class! You kids have fun. I’m going to go check on the others, okay?”

Adrien nodded.

“Of course,” he said. “Thanks for the talk, Miss Cheng.”

Bridgette put a hand on her chest, pretending to look appalled.

“I’m only a few years older than you! How would you like it if I called you Mister Agreste, hm?” She teased, laughing when the blonde shuddered. “That’s what I thought. Miss Cheng is my mom anyways. Make sure you give her a call, Marinette. She’s so excited you’re in the city.”

Marinette nodded.

“Sure, I’ll call her when we get back to the hotel,” she agreed. “Does she know about the umbrella thing?”

“Probably. You know moms; they know everything,” remarked Bridgette, laughing as she walked away to another group. “Chloe, Sabrina, how are you doing?”

Sabrina, who had been scribbling down notes, looked up at her chaperone.

“Good! There are so many fascinating facts about the heroes, even things you can tell from their gestures and movements,” she said, smiling. “I’m curious about the origins of the heroes though, or rather their miraculous.”

“There’s an exhibit for that,” assured Bridgette. “We’ll be visiting it tomorrow. I’m glad you’re interested though! What about you, Chloe? Oh, well, why don’t you look pretty today!”

Chloe lightly touched her lips, a dark red shade instead of the pink she had been wearing yesterday, and shrugged.

“Well, I always look pretty,” she said. “But thanks for stating the obvious.”

Bridgette smiled.
“Have you seen anything you like yet?” She asked. “I know it’s not as exciting as the simulators, but hopefully you find it interesting?”

Chloe glanced around the exhibit. She caught sight of something that made her eyes widen a bit and cheeks flush the slightest shade of pink.

Bridgette glanced in that direction, her smile growing when she caught sight of Nathanael, retying his hair as he talked to Rose about something. Amused, the chaperone turned back to the girls.

“I guess….there are some things I didn’t expect to like,” said Chloe, huffing. “It’s definitely different than what we’re used to, that’s for sure. Chat Noir doesn’t seem totally incapable, which is an amazing feat by itself.”

Bridgette raised an eyebrow, but chose not argue this time. The blonde in front of her reminded her of an old classmate: stubborn until the end.

“Well, if you have any questions, feel free to ask me,” she said before she glanced at the time. “Oh, look at that. Let’s go see if the Hall of Akumas is less crowded; it’ll give people a chance to look at any portraits they didn’t have time to see yesterday.”

Bridgette and Felix gathered up the teens, leading them to the other exhibit. As she had guessed, it had mostly cleared out at this point. There were a few people still looking around, but most seemed to have moved onto the more exciting exhibits.

“I’m surprised there aren’t any photos of Papillion anywhere,” said Mylene, glancing around. “I don’t think I saw anything about him in the other exhibit either.”

“He rarely showed his face,” explained Felix. “After all, there was no need to when he was sending out his akumas. He would instead ride around the city in a large blimp, a butterfly symbol on it. Before you ask, yes, there were efforts to take it down once it was discovered it belonged to Papillion. It was his lair, so to speak.”

“There are a few images in the Final Battle exhibit,” said Bridgette, “but they’re not that clear. As Mister Beauchamp said, Papillion rarely showed his face. When he did, he wasn’t elaborately dressed like Hawkmoth is. In fact, all we know for certain is that Papillion wore a mask and suit. No animal-themed design like the heroes.”

“So….he wasn’t transformed when he sent out akumas?” Adrien asked, looking a bit horrified. “Doesn’t that mean he could send out any akumas he wanted at any time?”

Felix placed a hand on his nephew’s head, sighing as he tried to comfort the younger male.

“Just a rumor, but….yes,” he said. “It’s the most likely theory, and it terrified a lot of people, especially since Ladybug and Chat Noir had to be in uniform to use their powers. It’s unfortunate that most of our knowledge on Papillion is based on speculation and rumors.”

“But the important thing to remember is that he’s gone,” said Bridgette, taking note of the few horrified looks. “The miraculous might have resurfaced, but as villainous as Hawkmoth is, he’s nothing compared to Papillion. He’s gone.”

Lila crossed her arms.

“But….like what happened with Cirque, no one ever found a body, right? Otherwise, you would have a face to the name,” she pointed out. “It’s a rumor, like everything else. Why else would the miraculous resurface? Isn’t more likely that everything got….scattered in that battle? Who’s to say
Papillion isn’t lurking around somewhere?"

Bridgette reached for earrings that weren’t there, and Felix ran his thumb over his ring finger. It was luck that no one noticed, too busy contemplating Lila’s words.

“You….bring up a good point,” said Bridgette finally. “Yes, it’s likely everything scattered, but considering there has been no action relevant to Papillion in the last four years, the people remain confident that he is gone. As for the miraculous themselves….well, I guess only the heroes know what happened between then and when they arrived in Paris.”

“London chooses to remain positive, especially considering the damage they had to suffer during Papillion’s reign,” said Felix. “It happened, they accepted it, and now they’ve moved on. Yes, there were tragedies and we shouldn’t forget that, but….time goes on. The people move on.”

He barely finished speaking when there was a sudden shout from across the room. All heads turned to the source, the same American tourist from earlier.

The tourist was pointing at a mousy-looking woman, his face screwed up in disgust.

“It’s you! I remember you from last time I was in London! You’re Animal Control, aren’t you?!” He exclaimed, and anyone who wasn’t paying attention certainly was now. “You animal hater!”

The woman stepped back, clearly horrified if not terrified.

“I...I don’t know what you mean,” she sputtered. “T-That was in the past, sir...I a-actually work to find strays homes now-”

“You ruined my last vacation!” The man interrupted, snarling at her. “You’re not gonna do it again!”

He lunged at her, and she screamed as her partner pulled her out of the way. The man ended up crashing into the nearby bench, groaning in pain.

“Irene, are you okay?” The woman asked.

The akuma victim, Irene, nodded despite it being clear she was shaking.

“Yes, I’m fine, Rita,” she assured, kissing her cheek. “S-Sorry...I thought I would be fine coming here....”

“Don’t apologize,” said Rita firmly, helping her girlfriend up. She gave the man a nasty glare. “It’s not your fault; it never was. Come on, let’s go somewhere else.”

Irene nodded, letting her lead her out of the exhibit. The man’s wife, meanwhile, reached out to help him up but he shook her off.

“Damn akumas! Still causing trouble, with or without their powers!” He grumbled, getting to his feet. He glared at the people staring at him. “Great help all of you were!”

He stormed out of the exhibit, and his wife murmured out apologies before chasing after him.

Bridgette sighed as people slowly returned to their previous actions.

“The people of London have moved on….but as we all know,” she began, “the peace never lasts long.”
Nearby, one person remained unaffected by the chaos. Instead, they chose to continue staring up at one single portrait, much larger than the others in the room.

The person bowed their head, a hand over their chest.

“Where are you, my Monarch?”

Chapter End Notes

So remember when I said Cirque was my friend recklessketches' OC? Okay, well, there are lots of things you should know about Cirque. I already mentioned/implied it earlier but, yeah, Cirque was fully conscious as an akuma. She knows what she was doing, and she didn't care. She was a loyal subject to Papillion.

Another thing you should know is that Cirque takes place in the Ladybug PV verse, but Maddy (recklesssketches) incorporated a few CG characters into her version of the verse. One of them was Lila, who was Volpina in this verse; the real Volpina, miraculous and all. But she defected and went to work with Papillion instead, betraying the Quantic kids and Ladybug and Chat Noir.

But why am I bringing this up?

Because I recently saw a post on tumblr that depicts Lila with an almost exact idea about this: she works for Papillion as a loyal subject, knows what she's doing, etc.

Now, Maddy rarely made these ideas public but I know for a fact she's had them for well over a year, at least. I am NOT saying to hound the artist about these ideas, because they probably didn't know about Cirque, but it really upset me personally because it kinda...just sucks when you have an idea but a more popular person gets the credit?

That's worded wrong: this person probably didn't steal the idea, but it's a "we had it first" sort of thing, if you can understand.

That's what it boils down to, especially since I'll be talking about it in this fic: WE HAD IT FIRST.

Immature? Maybe. But I refuse for such an original idea to be swept under the rug of popularity.

...

That's the real reason I wanted to get this chapter out so soon. To tell you guys what's up before that idea/artwork got really popular. Thanks for listening; please leave any comments, recommendations, questions, etc. you have! I appreciate them!
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

It's not easy to forget when the ghosts of the past surround you.

Chapter Notes

Hi, wow, yeah. I'm alive! And so is this story. Sorry for the long wait; I wish I could say I had an extra long chapter as an added apology, but alas. Thank you so much to everyone who has been reading and commenting the last few months despite my lack of activity; it really means a lot to me, and motivates me more to finish each chapter.

I hope you guys like the update! We're starting to get into the real heart of things.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

“I am so sorry you all had to see that,” said Bridgette as she guided the teenagers into the gift shop. “We, of course, know that we cannot blame victims for what they have done, but some people don’t see it that way.”

“Quite honestly, they’re more often than not the people who haven’t been akumatized,” commented Felix, sighing. “Not always, but usually.”

He began to say something else, but stopped to stare into the crowd, and Bridgette followed his line of vision, curiously, only to fail to see anything out of the ordinary.

“But we shouldn’t let that little hiccup ruin our nice day,” she continued, shaking it off. “Go on and buy whatever you’d like from the gift shop, and then Felix and I will take you around the city for a little hero sightseeing.”

The teens scattered, and Bridgette immediately weaved through the throng of shoppers to get to the doll display where she finally managed to snag a Chat Noir doll. Quite a couple of them had been knocked to the ground due to people trying to grab a Ladybug doll, and she sighed heavily as she bent down and picked them up.

Her cousin came over and helped her, dusting off the dolls and carefully putting them back on display.

“People will literally walk all over Chat Noir, huh?” Marinette remarked, gazing down at the doll in her hands. If she didn’t already have one, she’d buy another if only to show her partner (or rather his predecessor) was in fact appreciated. “How cruel.”

“That’s just how some people are, unfortunately,” replied Bridgette, finger grazing over the soft face of the doll. “They don’t appreciate what they have until they’re gone.”

She sighed, lifting her face to look at her cousin.
“And sometimes not even then.” Bridgette hugged the doll to her chest, giving her cousin a small smile, and reached over to pat her head. “When you get back to Paris, you make sure you let Chat Noir know you appreciate him. Even if it’s just offering him a snack or something when he races across the city.”

Marinette raised an eyebrow at that, clearly suspicious of her words, but nodded.

“I will,” she promised. “He’s just as much of a hero as Ladybug, and he deserves to know it.”

“Yes, he does,” agrees Bridgette. She sighed and glanced back at all the knicknacks inspired by the heroes. “It’s something I should have worked harder to do back then.”

“Well...there’s only so much you could, right?” Marinette reasoned. “Not like you had easy access to one of the city’s heroes.”

The older girl hummed softly as they wandered around the gift shop, still hugging the doll to her chest.

“Right,” she echoed, “but I guess that’s what makes it harder.”

Bridgette smiled a bit as she saw Adrien pick up a few Ladybug-inspired jewelry pieces. His uncle was nearby, watching with a skeptical expression.

“You can’t just throw polka dots on a cheap mirror and call it a Ladybug accessory,” remarked Felix as he picked up the plastic accessory. “You could get something like this for less than a pound anywhere else.”

“They did mass produce a lot of ‘Ladybug’ merchandise,” pointed out Bridgette as she and her cousin approached the two of them. “At least the bigger items, like the dolls, are better quality.”

Felix glanced at the doll in her arms and he cocked an eyebrow.

“And yet, you chose not to get a Ladybug doll?” He asked her.

Bridgette hummed, pulling the doll from her embrace and fondly dusting off its face.

“I always preferred Chat Noir, that’s all,” she replied. “I’m in no rush to get a Ladybug doll.”

It would just be a painful reminder that she couldn’t ever look like that again, adorned in spots and ribbons as she flew across the city. Somehow, she knew having the doll would make her old life seem even less real.

A flash of purple suddenly caught her eye and she turned sharply, heart caught in her throat, only to see it was Juleka showing something to Rose. A frown marred her features; she needed to calm herself.

The war was over.

“We should probably get ready to leave,” she suggested to Felix. “There’s a lot to show the kids. Maybe grab a quick lunch and-”

She heard someone laugh, shrill and mocking, and suddenly she was standing under a pair of swinging trapezes, the flyer reaching down to grab her, and she jolted in shock as Marinette touched her arm.

“Bridgette, are you okay?” The younger girl asked, worried. “You kinda just zoned out there.”
Bridgette blinked, and she realized her hands were shaking as she continued to hold onto the Chat Noir doll. Seeing the plush toy filled her with some comfort, brought her back down to reality, away from the sky high dangers that no longer existed in the city.

“Yes, fine,” she managed to say, mentally scolding herself.

Again, she repeated to herself: the war was over. It was done, that part of her life was over, there were no more heroes and no more villains, certainly not in London.

Right?

“...where the original statue of the duo was,” explained Felix, gesturing to an empty plot of grass. “It was destroyed during a demolition incident a year ago, but the prime minister has already declared that a new one would be built soon.”

“Why was the statue built in this place?” Mylene asked curiously as she glanced around the seemingly ordinary space. There were a few tourists and a couple of nice buildings that looked like houses, but nothing really grand. “It’s not really a park or anything. A big open space, sure, but nothing, well, attractive about it.”

“It’s like a courtyard almost,” agreed Rose.

“Actually, this is where Ladybug and Chat Noir stood after the final battle,” answered Bridgette, a faraway look in her eyes as she gazed around the area with an indeterminable expression. “Crowds of people surrounded them, listened as they were told Papillon’s reign of terror had finally come to an end.”

Felix glanced at her, an eyebrow raising in curiosity. She had been a bit off since the incident in the gift shop, though he still didn’t understand what had caused her to react in such a way. He almost dared to ask, but he didn’t want to intrude in her personal affairs. Not after what had happened in the past.

“That tower over there,” he finally spoke, gesturing to a large building behind the teenagers, “is where the Final Battle took place. Ladybug and Chat Noir knocked Papillion from his airship and fought him and Cirque in this very building. It was perhaps ironic that this tower used to hold prisoners throughout history. Papillion deserved to be in prison, and that was where he landed in in the end.”

“Would have been better if Ladybug had actually found him though, right?” Lila remarked, crossing her arms. “You guys say he and Cirque were here, according to Chat Noir and Ladybug, but there’s never any proof.”

“I see you remember our conversation from before.” Bridgette smiled faintly. “Papillion was, well, a manipulative genius who evaded the heroes for years. Heroes who, we assume, were no older than all of you. Teenagers aren’t perfect; no one is. Mistakes were made, yes, but the threat is gone from London, isn’t it?”

“In any case, this tower holds a great significance to London, even more so after the final battle with Papillion,” said Felix, interrupting before another debate could get started. “There are usually a handful of people here and there who come to honor Ladybug and Chat Noir. The Beauchamp Tower has become almost a memorial sight, if you will.”

“Beauchamp?” Adrien spoke up, blinking in surprise. “Does that-”
“No, Adrien, our family does not own the tower,” interrupted Felix, adjusting one of the buttons on his shirt. “It’s just a bit of irony by Fate, I suppose.”

“Why would it be ironic?” Rose asked curiously. “Wouldn’t this be more of a strange coincidence?”

“Yes...I suppose....I suppose it would,” said Felix, clearing his throat. “If you get close, you can see some of the tributes people have left for the heroes.”

“At first, as you might expect, the police were against it, said that they shouldn’t encourage vigilantes in the city,” said Bridgette, leading them closer to the tower. “Over time though, even they came to feel the absence of the heroes and turned a blind eye to the tributes. Mostly.”

She smiled faintly at seeing all the candles and flowers, and all the letters left behind.

“Hundreds of people came to leave these letters for Chat Noir and Ladybug,” she continued. “Many of them are thank you letters, though some people have come here to plead for the heroes to come back.”

Felix glanced at the teenagers, humming.

“Clearly though our Ladybug and Chat Noir cannot come back,” he said. “Paris needs heroes now at this time, not London. Still, the people hope they will one day be able to say a proper goodbye.”

Juleka raised her hand, asking, “What was the significance of the tower before the heroes then? It looks way older than a few years.”

“That would be your department,” said Bridgette, glancing at Felix. He raised an eyebrow at her, confused for a moment. “You majored in history, right? Or did I get that wrong?”

“No.” Felix picked at an imaginary stray hair on his cheek. “No, you did not.”

He adjusted one of the buttons on his shirt as he spoke to the group.

“The Tower is most famous for its graffiti, which you can see here is quite old, and is a result of a lot of political and religious unrest in the sixteenth and seventeenth,” he explained. “I certainly won’t tell you all the gory details, but do know that its main purpose is to hold prisoners of all sorts here. There was always at least a few people in here being imprisoned and tortured before execution, though that was a long time ago.”

“I would never give up My Lady so easily!”

“Rot in hell!”

“It wasn’t really,” said Bridgette softly, and he blinked, not even realizing he had trailed off in his lecture. “I mean, it seems like a long time ago but it isn’t really if you think about it.”

She reached out to the touch the wall of the tower and, without realizing it, he did the same. As soon as he touched the cool stone, he flinched, remembering the feeling of crashing down through the roof, having been pushed over the railing of the blimp, and the pink and purple ribbons that had wrapped around his legs as he was dragged under the ice water.

“Someone, let us out! The water, it’s-”

“Chat, she’s going to drown, I don’t care if she’s his second-oh no!”

“No, it wasn’t too long ago,” he finally said, pulling his hand away. “I suppose that is another reason
the Final Battle meant so much to the people; we have yet to forget our history.”

“This is where the Final Battle took place, that’s what you said?” Sabrina asked after a moment. When she received nods from both chaperones, she continued. “Does that mean - I mean, is this where Papillion and Cirque supposedly...died?”

Felix and Bridgette exchanged looks the same way parents did when their child asked a question they themselves weren’t ready to answer yet. After a few moments, Bridgette nodded albeit slowly.

“Yes, it is,” she answered. “It’s one of the reasons why the police didn’t want the public so close to the Tower after the smoke cleared and all that. They were afraid of someone stumbling across something they shouldn’t have. But, you know, the police searched for weeks and they never found anything. Ladybug’s powers had even fixed the Tower to how it was before so there was no proof anything even happened here.”

“Of course, that upset some people since no one but the heroes and villains would know what exactly happened in that Tower,” commented Felix. “There were certainly protests from some who demanded the truth, and most of them were from the police force who, I assume, felt a lack of power from not being able to really do anything.”

“The police, normally, keep the city safe but sometimes, they can’t do what needs to be done, and they didn’t want to admit that,” continued Bridgette. “The Final Battle was something entirely out of their control, and they didn’t appreciate that.”

“I mean, what trained professional wants to admit a teenager in a ridiculous costume with thigh high boots knows how to do their job better than they do?” Felix remarked.

Bridgette snorted beside him and he glanced at her.

“Sorry. Just remembering some of the early comments about the heroes,” she said. “A lot of people said Chat Noir looked more like a stripper than a hero.”

Felix fought the urge to roll his eyes, silently cursing his old kwami just as his gaze fell on his nephew, who was clutching the front of his shirt.

“Adrien, are you alright?” He asked, concerned.

Adrien gave his uncle a small smile, and Felix noticed he tightened the grip on his shirt, as if he was holding something inside. Or trying to stop something from falling out of his shirt, maybe.

“Y-Yeah, just fine,” he said unconvincingly. “Hey, is that a souvenir cart? Do they have anything the museum doesn’t?”

“Mm, most likely not, if you’re asking about Chat Noir and Ladybug merch,” replied Bridgette, glancing over at the cart in question. “It’s probably regular souvenir stuff from London. Do you guys have any questions about the Tower or the Final Battle before we head over?”

When no one raised their hand, Bridgette smiled and led them over to the cart of souvenirs, several of the teenagers poking around for good old stereotypical tourist junk.

Felix, meanwhile, glanced back at the Tower. It loomed over him, unmoving, untouched, as if no battle had ever happened inside.

He shivered, a feeling of unease washing over him, and he turned away from the building.
Bridgette pushed her food around with her fork, oblivious to the dinner table chatter around her as her mind continued to wander.

After doing a bit of shopping and walking around, she and Felix had led the kids back to the hotel for their last meal of the night, and she honestly couldn’t wait to bundle under the blankets and forget the day.

She hadn’t expected to be so shaken up in the gift shop earlier, especially not so easily. Was it because the anniversary was coming up? Was it because she was surrounded by a million memories from another life?

It was true she always got a bit wary around anything purple and pink, but that had been mostly right after the Final Battle. Nothing had ever terrified her that much though, and visiting the Tower afterwards certainly hadn’t helped.

She could still remember the burning sensation in her lungs, the sheer panic she felt as she reached blindly around in the water for her partner. She could still hear Cirque’s cackling, only for it to be cut off by the realization her precious Monarch was going to abandon her to the icy water.

Bridgette looked down at her untouched food and then sighed as she put her fork down. She definitely wasn’t eating anything tonight, it seemed like.

“Hey, Bridgette,” spoke her cousin, and she looked at the younger girl in surprise, trying to hide how she had been a million miles away. “Is it true?”

Bridgette blinked, looking around the table with confusion. Marinette and a couple of her friends, primarily Alya, Nino, and Adrien, were looking at her in curiosity.

“Is...what true?” She asked, suddenly feeling guilty for not paying attention. When was the last time she had seen her cousin? She shouldn’t have her head in the clouds, especially not now. “Sorry.”

Marinette shook her head.

“You’re fine!” The younger girl reassured. “I was just telling them about how you and Aunt Mei used to visit all the time when we were little. You always made us the best cookies ever. I think Papa wanted to hire you for the bakery then and there.”

Bridgette smiled faintly, and she forced herself to breathe, to push other memories away so she could focus on the now.

“You’re exaggerating, Marinette,” she told her. “My cookies weren’t that good.”

“Yes, they were.”

Bridgette looked sharply at Felix, who was seated next to his nephew and who had been silent throughout dinner. Until now.

“How do you know?” She asked him, and she flinched when it came out more accusatory than she meant for it to be.

Memories of Ladybug had been pushed away, only to be replaced by memories of Bridgette; spending hours perfecting each recipe, making customized goody bags, bribing her kwami to leave cookies in his locker despite knowing he would always throw out her hard work without a second
thought…

Felix continued to pick at his salad and she then noticed he, too, had left his food mainly untouched, as if something heavy weighed on his mind.

“One, there were always crowds of people who lined up for a chance to grab one of your cookies back in school,” he started, and those who didn’t know they had been classmates certainly knew now, “and two, I had them myself, naturally.”

“You ate them, really?” Bridgette blurted out, leaning forward in her seat as she stared at him with disbelief. “I thought you tossed them.”

Felix was silent for a moment before he looked back down at his bowl, poking at his food.

“No...I ate every treat you gave me,” he murmured, and she strained to hear him. “All of them. I couldn’t them go to waste, after all.”

He excused himself and immediately left the table, ignoring the way his nephew called after him.

Stunned, Bridgette sunk into her seat. Her younger cousin was giving her a strange look, she knew, but she paid her no attention as the implications of that conversation settled in.

He had eaten everything she had made for him.

The image of Felix Beauchamp enjoying the chocolate chip cookies or cinnamon snickerdoodles or homemade toffee, or whatever else she had made, in the privacy of his own home made her flush unexpectedly, and she placed a hand to her chest when she felt her heart pound.

It made her unbelievably happy, and she smiled to herself only to frown a moment later.

No! No, bad Bridgette!

She covered her face with her hands, murmuring something about fatigue as she slipped away from the table.

She needed to get a grip on her feelings. It didn’t matter what had happened years ago, no matter how shocking this was. She moved on, she was past whatever silly infatuation she had with him.

The past was in the past, and nothing would change that. There was no reason to think about what had happened before.

The war, the Final Battle, that last day before she woke up to an all too quiet room.

Everything was over, everything was done.

Right?

Chapter End Notes

One of my struggles with this story is trying not to make everything happen too quickly, especially since they’ve only been in London for two days, so I hope I’m setting a good pace here.
Obviously, it's going to be a bit before we get into the actual drama and plot I have planned, but I hope I'm keeping it interesting enough for you guys. I would appreciate any feedback you have!

Come talk to me on tumblr too at jazztastic-panda.tumblr.com!
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

They don't realize how easy they have it, do they?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was raining outside, so it seemed a bit fitting to spend the day with a virtual reality simulator. Felix was relieved Bridgette had called to get reservations, especially since the line was even longer than it had been before.

The Battle Simulator had been expected to be popular, but he doubted the museum coordinators imagined this turnout.

“So, today, you’ll get to experience a little bit of what Chat Noir and Ladybug did,” said Bridgette, addressing the group. “In this simulation, you get to be one of the heroes and face off an akuma with your partner. There are different settings, and the akumas are ranked from ‘easy’ to ‘hard’. These settings were decided by an online poll last year, and most people seemed to agree that the deadlier akumas are definitely harder.”

She smiled at the teenagers.

“That said, it is just a simulation so you’ll be perfectly fine if you pick the harder akumas. Now as for your partners…”

Bridgette held up her phone, showing an open email to the class.

“Your teachers said your roommate assignments were designed to test your ability to compromise and adapt to change. So they suggested our simulation do the same thing. Therefore, you’ll be paired up with your roommate if the both of you want to do it. Obviously, you have the option to not participate, and we can find a partner for whoever needs one. Sound good, guys? Any questions?”

Kim raised his hand, and she nodded at him.

“Do we have to pair up with our roommate? Or can we switch?”

“For the first round, as Miss Cheng said, yes, you have to pair up with your roommate if you both want to participate,” answered Felix. “However, any time after that, once everyone has gone, you are welcome to pair with anyone you choose.”

After a brief safety instruction, the teenagers began to pair off.

Ivan and Max were the first to go in. Although friends, it was clear they weren’t used to working together and they stumbled a lot, even while facing a moderately easy akuma.

After nearly losing their heads from a stray dodgeball - a gym teacher akuma - the two boys figured out a plan that relied on both boys’ best qualities. With just the right calculations, thanks to Max, Ivan was able to hurl one of the dodgeballs in a way that went right back to Coach.
“Now that’s what I believe is called a slam dunk!” Max exclaimed as he lifted the helmet off his head, glancing over at Kim. “Was that correct?”

Kim grinned, a few low chuckles coming from him as he nodded.

“Definitely,” he assured, looking up at the screen showing the recent simulation. “I didn’t think you would be Ladybug though.”

Max adjusted his glasses.

“It’s clear Ladybug relies on logic and quick thinking in battle, so it’s only common sense I be her,” he replied. “Although I do have to admit her lucky charm was too straightforward; rarely any thinking was put in before using it.”

“Well, I think you both did great,” assured Mylene, squeezing Ivan’s hand as he went back to her side. “It looked fun!”

“I’m glad you think so, because it’s your turn,” said Bridgette, smiling at the younger girl. “Why don’t you and Sabrina step up?”

“Oh, I, uh, dunno,” replied Mylene, suddenly more hesitant as she bit the tip of her thumb. “I was still trying to decide if I wanted to go or not.”

“Me too,” confessed Sabrina, raising her hand slightly. “Maybe someone else can go before us?”

“No problem!” Bridgette looked at the remaining teenagers. “Does anyone else want to try it out?”

Alya nearly hit her boyfriend in the face as she shot her hand up, bouncing on the balls of her feet as she practically vibrated with excitement. Nino took a step back to avoid the hit, laughing a bit.

“We’ll go,” he remarked before he grabbed Alya’s hand, bringing it down, and kissed her cheek with amusement. “You know we’re not in a rush, right, babe?”

“Still!” Alya exclaimed, grinning at him. “You know I’ve always wanted to be a hero like Ladybug!”

“Now is the perfect time to act,” said Bridgette, watching the younger couple with a smile. “Why don’t you guys go in and try it out now? The rest of us will be out here watching. Maybe you can inspire some other heroes to join in.”

Felix watched as the two teenagers slipped on their virtual helmets before stepping onto the platform. The giant screen above their heads let the rest of them see what was going on inside the simulator, and Felix pressed a few buttons on the operating machine nearby to start it.

“It appears they chose Glinda the Wicked Witch,” he announced, reading the screen in slight interest. “That had been a difficult akuma - I assume,” he added after a moment. “She had appeared in the final year before Papillion’s fall. I do wonder how the developers would recreate her abilities in this simulation…”

“What were her powers?” Juleka asked as she raised an eyebrow.

“Most akuma’s attacks are physical, much like Coach and Animal Hunter,” explained Bridgette, twisting a strand of her hair. “But there were also akumas that messed with you emotionally, mentally; akumas that had a special perfume that could make you mindless zombies, like Aphrodite, or akumas that could mess with your personality, make you do things you would never do before.
Glinda the Wicked Witch was a bit of both. Does anyone remember her from the Hall of Akumas?” Sabrina hummed.

“If I remember right, she had something to do with dreams and nightmares?” She guessed.

Felix nodded, occasionally glancing back at the screen to monitor the two teenagers inside the simulator.

“She had two sorts of perfumes, one that would make you see and live your greatest fantasy, all your desires come to life, whatever it may be,” he said, “and one that would make your greatest fears come to life, hounding on you and be worse than you imagined. London had been in chaos as people walked around in clouds of pink and black smoke.”

On the screen above, there was a sudden scream and the others whipped around to watch the action.

“Alya-bug, don’t scare me like that!” Nino Noir shouted on screen. Although the screen could only display what Nino and Alya were seeing, the others could guess what was happening from the way Alya-bug had been knocked back on her feet. “We have to save the people who haven’t been hit yet!”

“Yeah, but we have to save the people hit from the nightmare perfume, or they’re going to walk right into the Thames!” Alya-bug exclaimed, right before a large shadow passed over them and the akuma herself appeared.

Glinda the Wicked Witch was quite the looker; she was split right down the middle, one side of her green and black and horrific like the actual wicked witch, and the other side was pink and gold and covered in glitter, no doubt the fantasy side. She smiled cruelly at the two heroes.

“Sweet dreams, little ladybug,” she crooned before she blasted Alya-bug with the black perfume, making the heroine’s health on screen go down. “Better hope your kitty’s still around to save you when I’m done!”

Felix jolted at her words, nails digging into his palm as a certain memory unwillingly came to surface.

“Better hope your kitty’s still around to save you when I’m done!”

Glinda cackled as Ladybug collapsed on the street, choking on the black perfume that surrounded her like a swarm of bees.

Chat Noir gasped, putting down the civilian he had been carrying, and immediately raced to his partner, only for her to wave him off.

“No, don’t get close!” She warned, moving backwards. He could already see that the perfume was settling in as her eyes, normally a beautiful and bright blue, began to glaze over. “Go...stop...her!”

Ladybug covered her eyes with her hand, falling back again, and a moment later, she let out a blood-curdling scream that shattered his heart.

“I’ll come back for you, my Lady,” he promised, reaching out to her, to take her in his arms, to reassure her, only to pull back at the last second as she choked on a sob. No. If he got swept up in comforting her now, he’d never be able to let her go. “I’ll be back, alright?”
Chat glanced up at the skies where Glinda had fled to, and a shadow crossed his face as he leapt onto the rooftops, racing in the direction Papillon’s latest chrony had run off in. Nightmares and misery were things he had become accustomed to; there was no doubt he would have somehow managed to block out the horrific perfume.

His partner on the other hand…

He didn’t know her outside of their masks, but he had a feeling she wasn’t used to holding back and repressing her emotions like he was.

Chat heard them before he saw them, and his blood filled with fire as he found Glinda and Cirque laughing together, as if they were gossiping over tea and cake, not the misery and imprisonment of others.

“Well, well, well,” began Cirque, crossing her legs as she sat on her ribbons, as always hanging from nothing in the sky, “I was just wondering about you, little kitty. What, no lady to help you out?”

“I can do just fine on my own for now,” snarled Chat. He allowed them to see his rage, his worry, but he hid the cool calculations he did as he observed them both, decided who would be the greater threat. “You won’t get away with this!”

Cirque threw back her head and laughed, swinging on the ribbons. She pretended to wipe away a tear as she glanced at Glinda, who had been smirking at the hero the whole time.

“You won’t get away this,” mocked Cirque. “Do you even hear yourself? How can you be a hero when you steal lines from those who pretend to be heroes? Speaking of fakes though, perhaps I should drop by and see the little bug myself. Should be easy to take her miraculous now, shouldn’t it?”

Leaning forward, she flipped over her ribbons and moved in the direction Chat had come from. Before he could even act, she tossed a hand in his direction, causing several ribbons to shoot from her sleeve, blinding him for a moment.

When he pulled the ribbons from his face, Cirque was gone, and Glinda hummed in disapproval, blinding the pathway with her perfume when he tried to go after her.

“Nu-uh-uh, eyes on me, little kitty,” she called, pointing her wand at him. “You and Ladybug are opposites, aren’t you? Poor little cat, you certainly got the short end of things with your bad luck. Don’t worry though, you’ll finally get your chance at happiness. And you’ll never escape it.”

She waved her wand at him and Chat immediately rolled out of the way, only to fall back right into the perfume she had released before.

Glinda cackled with glee as Chat coughed and sputtered on the pink smoke, feeling his arms and legs grow heavy as the drug crept into his system, slowing down his movements and digging into his memories, bringing out his fantasies.

“How does it feel, Chat Noir?” Glinda crooned, coming in close. “Don’t worry, it’ll get so much better soon, and you can live out your days curled up on your Lady’s lap with all the milk in the world for you to lap up, kitty. Today will be the start of something new-”

She gasped as Chat suddenly grabbed at her throat, making her drop her wand in surprise. She looked up and saw his eyes, narrow and cold, focus on her despite the drug in his system.

“Yes, it will,” he managed to get out before he used his draining strength to stomp on the wand,
releasing the akuma. He pulled back the hand that was wrapped around Glinda’s throat and
snatched the wretched butterfly.

Plagg had told him not to use this power often - if at all - but he had no idea what condition
Ladybug was in, if Cirque had succeeded, so he couldn’t hesitate.

“Fatal Encounter,” he murmured, crushing the butterfly in his grasp. Black energy surrounded his
fist, much like when he summoned Cataclysm, but after a moment, the energy turned white and he
opened his hand to release the now purified butterfly.

Glinda transformed back into her regular self, and a large shadow passed over the city, cleaning up
her handiwork as if never happened.

The last thing Chat Noir heard was a woman’s laugh and the faintest meow before the pink smoke
vanished, taking the fantasies away.

He would get yelled at by Plagg later, knowing there was some sort of consequence for this power,
but for now, he had to find his partner.

.

Her scream still echoed clearly in his head. Glinda never had to hit him with her nightmare perfume;
nothing would ever terrify him more than seeing his partner in that state. Those kids had no idea
what it was like.

What it was still like.

“Felix, Felix!”

Felix whipped around at his nephew, who looked horrified as he stared at the machine. Glancing
down, the older man blinked in surprise when he saw the controller was black and smoking, pieces
falling off.

“Get back, you idiot,” exclaimed Bridgette, yanking him by his arm as the other kids helped Alya
and Nino out of their helmets. “What happened?”

Felix stared dumbly at the machine, watching it continue to melt and fizzle. Almost like it was
rotting, destroyed by….

He stared at the hand that had been on it, the hand that, once upon a time, had a dark ring on it.

“I don’t know,” he finally confessed, tearing his eyes away from the melted mess up at Bridgette,
who pulled him away. “I don’t know.”

Bridgette furrowed her eyebrows, obviously concerned as she looked him over, taking the time to pat
his arms, as if making sure he was reacting, making sure he was still with them. Honestly, he wasn’t
sure if he knew the answer himself.

“I’m going to go get one of the other employees,” said Marinette before she rushed off to where a
few security guards were posted.

“Felix,” called Bridgette, gently taking his chin and making him look back at her. “Are you alright?”

He stared at the shorter girl, and placed his fingers lightly on her wrist, tugging her hand away from
his face. Not out of disdain, but rather….something he couldn’t explain.
“I’ve been better,” confessed Felix, sighing as he tried to collect himself. The situation began to settle in for him, leaving a lot more questions than answers, but that was something he had gotten used to as a teenager. It was not a feeling he missed. “We should help clear the area.”

“Do you need to get checked out?” Bridgette asked, her bright blue eyes still focused on him. It reminded him far too much of their school days. “You were standing really close to the controls when it overheated, Felix.”

“Beauchamp,” he said absently.

Frowning, Bridgette peered at him closely.

“Yeah, Uncle Felix,” piped up Adrien, stepping forward. His eyebrows were furrowed in obvious concern as he looked over the older man. “Are you sure you’re okay? I...I don’t want anything to happen you.”

_I don’t want to lose you too_.

Felix heard his nephew’s unspoken words and his heart clenched as he stepped forward and stroked Adrien’s hair.

“I’m alright, Adrien,” he assured, smiling softly at the boy. “Believe me, it will take more than faulty wiring to get rid of me.”

Even as he said it though, Felix couldn’t help but glance at the puddle that had been the machine in question; it just didn’t seem impossible for it to be as simple as faulty wiring or overheating.

_“You have to control your emotions, kid! Believe me, the curse will use them as a map, especially now that you’ve gone and done it....”_  

_No_. That was even closer to impossible; it was just flawed technology, nothing more.

Then again, looking back, Felix had never really gotten his curse _broken_ , did he? He had just woken up with no ring, no pest with a cheese addiction, no bad luck to trail after him like a vengeful spirit.

He glanced back at his nephew, stroking his cheek with his thumb.

“They don’t we move to the next exhibit while they clean this up?” Felix suggested.

“Actually, sir,” interrupted a security guard as she approached the crowd, “if it’s alright, we’d like to ask you about what happened, and to have someone check on you. We’ve already cleared those two—” she jabbed at Nino and Alya in the background, “so would you mind staying back for a few minutes?”

“I’ll take the kids,” said Bridgette, running a hand through her hair. “Adrien, sweetie, why don’t you come with me and the others? Your uncle will be fine.”

Adrien looked between her and him, no doubt conflicted. Felix sighed and squeezed his nephew’s shoulder in what he hoped was a reassuring manner.

“Miss Cheng is right, I’ll be fine,” he said. “Go on, you should enjoy the other exhibits. I’ll come find you when I’m done.”

“Alright…” Adrien still looked unsure but, after embracing his uncle briefly, went to go join Bridgette and his other classmates.
Felix let out another sigh as he turned back to the security guard. Without meaning to, he clutched his right hand as he heard the first question.

“Do you know what happened, sir?”

This entire museum was ridiculous.

She found it sort of fitting though, to have something so grand and amazing dedicated to a super zero, and for it to all fall apart.

The portrait of Cirque was as grand and colorful as she remembered, the artist having captured the lunatic’s too-wide smile so perfectly that Lila could have sworn she heard someone laugh as she continued to stare.

A finger traced the curved pendant she wore over her clothes, a reminder of what she had been once. She absently wondered if Cirque ever did the same with her akumatized item.

Because unlike some people, Lila believed the fool was still alive. It would make no sense if not. And if she was alive, then that would mean-

“Come on, everyone, we’re moving to the origins exhibit,” called Bridgette from the entrance. “Are you ready to hear everything from the beginning?”

Lila glanced over her shoulder at the older girl, the pendant piercing her skin as she gripped it in her hand.

“Finally, something interesting,” she murmured.

She turned to follow the group, only to walk straight into someone she hadn’t seen before, someone who was unfazed as they stared up at the portrait.

“Sorry,” said Lila, mostly out of obligation, frowning when the stranger didn’t even glance in her direction. Instead, they reached out as if to touch the painting. “Okay.”

Rolling her eyes, she made her way over to her classmates. Honestly, some people were so weird; the museum really needed better security if they were letting in people like that. Some people would try to sneak in and stay overnight, especially suspicious people like that.

Lila scrunched her nose as she recalled the way the stranger had smelled.

“Hairspray and stale peanuts? Their last home may as well have been a circus tent.”

Chapter End Notes

As always, shoutout to recklesssketches for allowing me to use her OC Cirque! Make sure you check out her tumblr, guys!

Fun fact, my laptop finally died on me! It’s whatever, I’m saving up for a new one, and I’m very lucky that I saved all my HRI planning and whatnot elsewhere. So remember to back up your stuff, especially if you have a computer from last century like I did!
I have pretty much the next few chapters planned out so hopefully updates will be more frequent than this one, but you guys know me by now, unfortunately. We'll see how it goes! Planning is so much easier than actually writing, OTL.

All in all, thanks for reading!! I hope you guys like it and please don't hesitate to tell me if you see any errors! If you have any questions about this and that, feel free to ask me on my tumblr: lapzoli

Until next time! :)

End Notes

This is the room I based the hotel rooms off of:


Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!