Vide et Vide ~ Blanc and Empty

by EggboyDraco

Summary

[Miraculous Ladybug]
[Death AU]

Another mission. Another expected victory. But this will be their last battle. Hawkmoth himself has joined the party, and the Miraculous Ladybug struggles to fight another day.

The end of the battle spells trouble, and Chat Noir finds his Ladybug dying in his arms. And nothing is the same.
“No!” screamed Chat, his hand scraping the air where Ladybug had been only moments before.

Hawkmoth, with his dying breaths, had seized Ladybug's uncoiled yo-yo and viciously yanked it from where it was attached to her arm on the balcony above his broken form. He cackled wickedly, before his guise melted away, revealing the grinning body of Gabriel Agreste. Chat felt the torment like a fist in his gut.

In vain, he reached for her. But gravity was against her.

Ladybug toppled over the railing. She gasped in surprise, too shocked to scream. She tried slinging her yo-yo, but it was trapped beneath his father's corpse.

The Miraculous Ladybug hit the concrete. An uneasy crack whipped the air upon impact.

A sickening dread loomed over him, and he felt his ears press back against his hair. An un-catlike bark of pain escaped his throat.

Not thinking, Chat Noir hurled himself over the railing. Unlike his Lady, he'd landed on his feet. Crouching beside her, his hands wavered over her. Dread clouded the air. He couldn't bear the idea that he'd hurt her more.

"Ladybug-"

"Chat," she replied, her voice hoarse and feeble. Blood, redder and more evil than any he'd seen before, oozed from her mouth. He knew the damage was done. Chat choked on a sob. Gently, he wrapped her in his arms. He only wished he could've ignored her croak of agony. "H- hawkmoth. A- agreste? I- I didn't mean to... I killed him."

Ladybug was crying, more through pain or guilt he couldn't decipher. He pressed his lips together.

"No... no. You didn't. He's been trying to hurt us. He hurt you."

"I- I can't... Chat-" Her breath was laboured. Chat could hear the wail of sirens approaching, but they were too far away. He knew her time was short. And so did she.
Then, her form began to glow. His breath caught. The familiar red suit and mask melted away. A girl no older than fifteen, in blood-stained pink and black clothes, looked up at him with agonised, fearful eyes. They were the colour of the sky. Chat couldn't believe it was her. After all that time-

"Marinette?" he said, his voice approaching hysterical.

"A- adrien," she said, a small smile tilting her bloody lips. At his obvious surprise and awe, her smile twitched slightly. "I knew. I a- always suspected. I- I just wanted you to... love Marinette. Not Ladybug."

"And I wanted you to love Chat."

Her skin was cold, and his was gradually feeling warmer in comparison. The sirens were close. So close. Not close enough. "We m- made quite the pair," she whispered. Her eyes glistened, but their light was fading.

"Don't leave me! Don't you dare! J'taime Marinette!" Chat wailed. He was angry- so, so angry because he loved her so much. A small, innocent grin curved her mouth in a smile he wished would stay.

"J- je t'aime Adr-ien. Don't w- worry about me. We'll find each other in a- another life. We always ha-" And in one final agonising moment, her beautiful eyes became blank and empty.

And, almost in sync, his heart did too. "Marinette! Please... please no. Je- j-t'aime. Je t'aime!"

Distraught, Adrien cradled her to his chest, knowing that he could do no more damage to her shattered body. A small red kwami hovered silently nearby, its small face desperate and tearful. As the last of Hawkmoth's akumas vanished, a familiar black butterfly skittered across an unfelt breeze.

Adrien didn't feel the feathery wings graze his Miraculous as it landed.

Or the bubbling pain as it covered his body, his Miraculous burning into him as it protested against his new transformation. Plagg would be furious. But Adrien didn't care. For once, he didn't care.

Carefully, he pulled the now-black earrings from his dead love's lobes and clenched them in his clawed fist, ignoring the screaming protests of the red kwami.

His Ladybug was gone. His Marinette was gone. And as he rose to his feet, Chat Noir was gone.
Only Chat Blanc remained, and he wanted anarchy.

Chapter End Notes

Gah. This is so shit but I can't be bothered rewriting it.

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
A week. A week. So much to be done in a week and Chat Blanc couldn't stand it.

He knew he had so little time. Not enough time. Time.

Perhaps he was losing his mind. Hell, he knew he was. Plagg raged inside his head, fighting and hissing and cursing his very name, pleading him to stop and end this and just rest. But Chat Blanc knew better. And the akuma that had Plagg in his choke hold seemed to agree. There was no Hawkmoth controlling it, but his last evil persuasion before his death lingered in its wings and begged for anarchy.

To the ruins of Chat Blanc's mind, anarchy seemed like the best solution.

His princess... his Marinette. Gone. Gone, gone, gone! No, it wasn't fair. But all Chat could do was plot and pace. Revise his plans no matter how fractured or nonsensical they were. His sweet princess... gone. Yet his plan remained. The only source of comfort while he tore himself apart in grief.

How much he hated his own weakness. But never again.

Chat Blanc had an endgame. He wouldn't be weak this time.

A week.

He stood at the back of the crowd that had gathered around the white coffin. Once the police arrived, they'd found Marinette's body in his arms and then everyone knew who she was. The whole of Paris mourned the hero who saved them on a regular basis, hanging Ladybug murals and black spotted shrouds from the street lamps and from houses. The flags were drawn to half mast.

But despite this, none of them really knew her like he had. Chat Blanc had seen her as both Marinette and Ladybug. Two sides to the same coin, just as Adrien and Chat Noir once were. Now there was only Chat Blanc. He'd known the quiet, loveable, competitive Marinette. The girl who cared too much and was so kind and gentle and... he'd been in love with her. Of course, he was too foolish to realise she was Ladybug, or that he did love her. He was so desperate for his Lady to love him for who he was that he didn't recognise maybe he loved someone else just as much. Now... it was too late.

Paris didn't mourn Marinette. They mourned the girl in the mask, who seemed like another person entirely. They didn't mourn the real girl.

Her parents did. They stood by her coffin, each resting one hand on it. They were half clutching each other, so desperate for any kind of comfort. Their faces were grey and worn with grief. Tom Dupain didn't look stoic or jolly any more. He was weary and droopy-eyed, too stunned by the loss of his only child to even cry any longer. Sabine Cheng was crying, so much that her eyes were puffy and sore and her cheeks raw with moisture. She was only a shell of the happy, beautiful woman who gave them cookies when they hung out at the Bakery. They no longer had a daughter. They'd lost everything.

Alya did. She and Nino stood together, but Alya was inconsolable. She cried the worst kind of tears, when you cry so much that tears build quickly and fall fast and don't stop. When you cry so
much and the agony is so unbearable that you hunch over, clutching your stomach because it hurts too much to breathe. That was Alya in that moment. Mourning a best friend who was taken too soon. Who had a secret that she couldn't tell. That died in agony. Who shouldn't have died at all. Alya crumpled to her knees as the service began, in too much pain to even hold herself up.

Chat Blanc did. He still stood at the back of the vast crowd, wearing a coat and hat to hide himself. He’d wanted to come as his civilian self, to mourn her as the Adrien who loved her so much and never got the chance to show it. But the akuma wouldn't let him escape his suit. He was trapped.

Perhaps he wasn't even worthy of that. To be the shoulder to cry on for the others. Chat Blanc deserved to suffer alone. To feel every piece of his soul being torn apart again and again and again. When his mother went missing, Adrien had cried for months. But this seemed so much worse somehow. Even if the people gathered only knew Ladybug, they still missed her. *He* missed her.

But there was nothing he could do. She was gone. Gone, gone, *gone*. And it was all his fault.

How had he not seen his father was Hawkmoth? How had he not predicted that he wouldn't die without putting up a fight? Without a show or parade?

How had he not stopped her falling? She’d been right there, less than a metre away. He remembered her expression; the horror as she realised she'd just killed Hawkmoth. The guilt, the fear... he’d wanted to comfort her. Then she was falling. And she was just a fingertip out of reach.

Chat Blanc decided something right then, in that moment, as he watched the mourners holding their wreaths and candles. As he watched Alya collapse next to Marinette's coffin, her hand grasping for the friend that was no longer there. As he watched her parents... her poor parents... His father had got more than he deserved. A quick death. An honourable cremation. A quiet funeral. A small number of mourners. Even that had been too much. Gabriel Agreste had been a well respected man. Hawkmoth was a well feared one. And Chat Blanc would ruin the both of them.

Chat Blanc realised something when her gleaming coffin was being lowered into the ground, when her parents were too distraught to watch, when Alya had to be consoled by Nino. He realised that he was so very alone in the world.

His mother was missing, presumed dead. His father... a traitor. Nino and Alya had been searching for Adrien Agreste, sending flyers all around Paris, but he didn't want to face them.

He was Chat Blanc now. Adrien Agreste was the weak boy who couldn't save the one girl that mattered. Adrien Agreste was gone.

Chat Blanc waited until the mourners had left. It took hours. Her parents stayed until the coffin was re-covered, then Tom broke down and they couldn't face their daughter's grave any longer. Alya remained for even longer, going only when Nino tore her away from the ground with soft words that only brought more tears. At last, they were alone.

Chat Blanc moved across the graveyard until he stood at her graveside. It was unmarked until a headstone was fitted, so all that was left of Marinette Dupain-Cheng was a gleaming white coffin and a mound of dirt as a grave marker.

A sharp pain in his heart brought Chat Blanc to his knees. All he could do was cry. The hurt made his throat swell and his nose run and his stomach ache so much he curled up into himself in pain.
"Je t'aime," he whispered. And that was the only thing he could force himself to say.

Chat looked down at the earrings he clutched in his gloved hand. Two small Miraculous, black with their lack of use. The only thing of her that was now his. The only tangible object he had in his possession that had belonged to her.

A thought occurred to him. It was a thought procured by a long forgotten memory, something he passed off as meaningless. The book he had found in his father's office, the one he'd presumed his father hadn't known the true meaning of.

Again, he stared at the earrings in his hand and narrowed his eyes.

Yes. Yes... there was a way. Of course, it could just be a fairy story, something fictitious... but he had to hope. Perhaps Chat would see his Lady again after all.

He forced the first earring through his un-pierced lobe. The akuma tittered excitedly in the back of his mind, jeering him on. Blood dripped from his ear down onto the shoulder of his coated disguise. Plagg hissed and protested, trying to break free of the akuma that trapped him in the back of Adrien's consciousness. Chat could hear his kwami's voice so distinctly, but it was too late to stop now.

Biting his lip, the second earring was though and his shivering, clammy form jerked in surprise at the arrival of a new kwami. A small, red creature with large blue eyes. The one who had cried over her body with him, a week before. A week. "My name is Tikki. Chat Noir... for Marinette-" Tikki almost choked on her words, the first time he'd ever seen a kwami speechless. "- please stop this."

Chat Blanc stared at the kwami perplexed. So it wasn't a fairy story, he thought triumphantly.

"I can't stop now. It was my fault. My slowness caused her death," Chat swallowed thickly. An alarming amount of blood coated his ears and neck and now his coat and suit too. It was worth it, if he could ever stand a chance of seeing his Lady again. "I am Chat Blanc, and I must avenge her. Or I shall suffer the consequences."

"Chat Noir."

"Tikki! Spots on!"

Chapter End Notes

I made myself extremely sad while writing this and I don't know when the next update will be but hopefully, soon.

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
Master Fu had been enjoying his work in Paris. After all, being a Miraculous holder for over a hundred years tended to bring responsibilities with it. One of these involved keeping track of the two most powerful forces found in the Miraculous. That meant when one of the holders dies and her kwami and earrings go missing, it's his job to find them again.

He attended the girl's funeral of course. It would only be courteous after all she had accomplished for Paris, even if that had led to her admittedly inevitable demise. Fu felt some regret for not being able to help, or to warn her that she may never live to see adult maturity. On the few occasions he had conversed with Marinette Dupain-Cheng, she had been pleasant and kind, with the passions required for being a Miraculous holder. He himself had been similar in his youth, as all the holders were required to be. You had to be worthy to wield such power. That was why Hawkmoth had caused such an issue.

Although the Butterfly Miraculous had been possessed by someone who may have been deemed worthy based on their values, his own misgivings had perverted its powers. It was a shame that Nuuruu had fallen into such dire straits. Yet even with Ladybug and Chat Noir doing their best to stop him, it was impossible to locate him. Otherwise, perhaps the conflict could've been avoided. Perhaps the most recent Ladybug wouldn't have fallen in battle.

Perhaps the present situation could've been avoided. After Wayzz had sensed the Ladybug's passing, Master Fu had set out to retrieve her Miraculous and placate the remaining Chat Noir. But then Wayzz could no longer sense Plagg, and Tikki had vanished completely.

When he reached where the girl had died, he found only two dried pools of ochre bloodstain.

Chat Noir was nowhere to be seen.

This had happened before. Ladybug and Chat Noir were always fated to fall in love. But one was also fated to lose the other, through death or by other means. And the abandoned counterpart never simply grieved. Many of them quit, returning to normal civilian life. Others took their lives. Some died of grief or mysterious illness shortly after, maybe even losing their humanity. Fate only relayed one message on the fate of the Miraculous holders, and that was that star-crossed lovers could never be apart.

But what had happened to Chat Noir? No Miraculous holder had ever simply vanished. The Miraculous tended to be returned magically to their boxes if something happened to their owners. Yet Ladybug's hadn't. Chat Noir's hadn't. Which meant both Miraculous were still in someone's possession.

Master Fu had looked into the disappearance of the boy, in order to try to piece together what happened. Adrien Agreste had been missing since the day of Marinette's death.

That was most definitely not a coincidence. However, how could it not be? If Chat Noir was missing, it was unlikely his civilian counterpart was just wandering around, wasn't it?

"Master, the Miraculous have been missing for over a week now," said Wayzz. Fu's kwami had been uncharacteristically quiet for many days, so Fu himself was slightly startled to suddenly hear his voice.
"Wayzz, we agreed to wait a week in order to see if the Miraculous turn up of their own accord," Fu dismissed, poring over the Miraculous book. A beat.

"But Master... it's been awfully long. I cannot detect Plagg, and Tikki... something is wrong. The few times I can sense her, her powers seem suppressed."

Master Fu pondered on this for a moment. His fingers caressed his goatee thoughtfully. "That is... worrying."

"Do you think it's time we did something about it, Master?" pressed Wayzz, his small yellow eyes rather pleading and worried. Fu knew that look.

"I'm afraid we have no choice but to step in," he murmured. "After all, the situation is delicate and... rather new, don't you think?"

Wayzz smiled lightly. The worry on his small green face immediately dissipated, but the residual stress remained. After all, Wayzz was one of the first kwami to be found and had been watching over the other kwamis ever since. He'd taken on a leadership or caretaker role since beginning his duty as a Miraculous, similar to how Master Fu was the guardian of the Miraculous and their kwamis. It was their sworn duty to make sure the Miraculous stayed safe. They'd already failed once, when Nuuruu fell into Hawkmoth's hands. They couldn't afford to fail again.

Nevertheless, here they were. Failing again. Two of the most powerful kwamis were missing. One of the Miraculous holders was dead. The other was missing.

Parisian newspapers had already started publishing articles about how the now elusive Chat Noir might have been on Hawkmoth's side all along. How he had murdered Ladybug and Hawkmoth to gain more power.

Other articles simply stated that he was probably dead, or was better off dead if he had done what others accused him of.

Master Fu knew these accusations were false. No Miraculous holders had the capacity for murder, at least not if they were chosen by the Guardian. And the Guardian, being himself, was very rarely wrong.

Still, Chat Noir's absence after such a tragic loss worried him. Fu understood his kwami's urgency. "We shall wait three more days, to await further developments." Before Wayzz could protest, Master Fu held up one finger. "It isn't long. Besides, nothing may come to pass at all. Their absence could be simply... a fault."

A fault indeed.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry I've been posting such short chapters but... this is just a fanfic to fill my time.
Thanks

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
Ah, the Louvre.

Perhaps a year before, Chat Noir had been accused of stealing the Mona Lisa from that very museum, and had been warranted for arrest. It had, in fact, been Copycat. He was an akuma.

Now, things were so different. No Ladybug to save his neck this time. Yet here he was. An akuma himself. No longer the infamous Chat Noir, but his akumatised counterpart. Chat Blanc. That was all that was left.

Chat Blanc was greedy and furious. Power coursed through his veins with sadistically pleasurable sparks. It was like nothing he had experienced before. The akuma that clouded his mind was especially pleased with itself. It gloated and goaded Plagg and Tikki into fitful response. The din in his head created quite the unbearable headache.

He landed on the roof of the Louvre and blasted open one of the air ducts. The energy coursing through his body was writhing and in such surplus that it overdid its job. The entire vent was blown fifty metres sky high. It plummeted back to earth, startling tourists. His hands were shaking. It felt... amazing. No wonder Hawkmoth had been so eager to get their Miraculous.

Maybe thinking that was wrong. But Chat Blanc was using his powers for good. Or so the akuma said.

He jumped down the exposed air duct, the shiny interior offering warped images of his reflection. It was a blur of white and red that strayed across his white suit like blood spatter. Perhaps that’s why they needed to keep the power of Tikki and Plagg separated. It bred a monster, no matter how innocent their intentions.

Too late now, thought Chat Blanc. The akuma was building his pressure in his head as it writhed in discomfort. It didn't like him thinking into his actions.

The air duct itself was cramped and freezing cold. Lingering moisture clung to his suit whenever he touched the enclosed walls. He shimmied along, following an internal map of the Louvre that his staff displayed on its screen. Every few seconds the image flickered with static as Plagg and Tikki struggled to the surface. Each time, he forced them back.

He was Chat Blanc. He was all powerful. Practically a god. Anyone with as much power as he had could do anything he wanted, to hell with the consequences. Chat Blanc would get his Lady back. All he needed was a little time to figure out how.

Once his map indicated he was above the display room that the Mona Lisa was in, he pummelled the vent cover off and let it drop to the floor. There was a surprised shriek from some of the exhibit visitors. Chat Blanc dropped from the vent and landed in a very catlike crouch.

Quickly, he assessed the room. There were lots of tourists, plus four security guards. No problem.

A confused little boy stood a metre away, clutching the hand of his grandfather. "Cha- Noir? What happened to your suit?"
The innocence in the question made his heart ache. The boy looked so keen. He was a mess of ragged blond hair, bright eyes and a gap-toothed grin that reminded Chat Blanc of Adrien when he was that age. The akuma made a crude hiss in his thoughts. "My name is Chat Blanc, little one. Chat Noir is gone."

The little boy looked expressionless for a second. "So... he's gone home? Where is he? He says nice jokes," he asked curiously. Chat Blanc's heart went out to the boy, it really did, but the akuma shifted in his head in irritation. The next thing he knew, the boy was running screaming, his grandfather desperately pulling him along by his arm.

Chat Blanc's ears pressed down against his hair. What happened?

The akuma hissed, satisfied. Plagg, Tikki and what was left of Adrien were warring. Chat Blanc clutched his wrist as his hand began to shake. Did he Cataclysm a child? The boy's coat was missing.

Fear gripped his heart. It clung like a frigid hand to the inside of his chest, gouging at his flesh and congealing his blood. How did he lose control? Why didn't he stop himself? It almost seemed like he'd blacked out. He couldn't remember moving, let alone attacking the boy. For a moment, Chat Blanc stood unresponsive, as if poleaxed.

The akuma seemed to snarl, and filled his mind with images of her. Marinette in her room, when they'd played video games together. Ladybug proclaiming Hawkmoth as her adversary in front of the entirety of Paris. The image of Ladybug falling from that precipice, and Marinette's broken body being left behind.

What's one more injury? No one is hurting as much as you, it seemed to say. Tears pricked Chat Blanc's eyes. For once, the din of war in his mind settled. Everything in his head was quiet, providing the little clarity that he needed. To Chat, it felt like a great weight had been taken from his shoulders, but then a heavier idol replaced it.

With it came the grief, and the suffering, and the uncontrollable fear of being completely and utterly alone. His parents were gone. His friends would never want him near them, after they found out he could've saved Marinette and failed. Plagg would abandon him in anger. Tikki was never his to take. The akuma... his own fault. And Paris... why would Paris need a hero who couldn't even fight the grieving battle in his own head?

So while the visitors to the museum were running in terror, Chat Blanc was crying. The guilt and pain... it was a wave that peaked and crested before washing him away into the depths of his own mind. It constricted around him, tightening and prising him apart until it was so unbearable he broke down and lost his breath.

A sudden spike of searing agony flared across his mind. The battle began again, and the anguish was locked away. For now, Chat Blanc had work to do.

And first, he had to deal with the security guards that were heading his way.

The numbers had doubled. They'd obviously called for back-up while he was incapacitated. Eight bumbling brutes hurtled towards him, their intercom radios going haywire with garbled messages.

Chat Blanc let out a manic laugh. A stray tear dripped from his chin and splashed on his suit. Where it landed, a spot of black appeared.

The guards didn't hesitate. They continued forwards, determined. Chat Blanc lashed out his staff. It extended, right into the jaw of the closest guard. Jab. Another was hunched over, a blow to the
chest forcing the wind from her chest. Chat Blanc used his staff as a pole vault to launch himself onto another guard, his steel-toed boots causing a satisfactory crack in the guard's shoulder. Another down. A shrill cry of pain.

Chat's resolve broke for a mere moment. He'd caused that. The silence in his head was back. But not for long.

A truncheon smashed across the back of his skull. The sickening wet noise it made echoed through the vacated hall. Chat Blanc swayed on his feet, but the akuma kept him on his feet. He had too much power coursing through him to be affected by blunt force trauma, right? The akuma seemed to think so.

The next thing Chat Blanc knew, only one guard remained on his feet. The others were unconscious. One was bleeding from a deep cut on his face. He'd done that.

No. No. No.

The akuma was messing with his head. How could he not remember doing it?

All those guards... it was his fault they were hurt.

*Never mind,* someone in his head hissed, *they were in the way.*

Chat Blanc shook his head slightly, as if trying to dislodge something stuck in his ear. Or his brain. He could feel the burning trail of blood seeping from the wound on his head down his neck. Not bothering to wipe it away, he turned back to his prize.

The Mona Lisa.

It was infamous for being beautiful, mysterious... and devilishly hard to steal.

Chat Blanc licked his lips. It was true that the painting was beautiful for its time but... he couldn't have that. Nothing was allowed to be worshipped, admired or set on a pedestal when his Lady was gone. Nothing deserved their love and adoration like she did.

He was so deliciously close. He didn't have any particular plan, of course. The akuma was vicious and cunning, but it was putting its focus on causing trouble rather than having a foolproof plan.

What little concept of a plan he did have failed almost immediately. Chat Blanc tried simply remove the painting from the wall, but it was in vain. Clearly, they'd improved upon its hanging since his Copycat had stolen it. It was secured to the wall with screws this time, making it much more difficult to simply remove on a whim. And as much as he tugged and hissed and struck the bonds that secured it, the painting refused to give.

It was more... challenging than he presumed it would be.

He tried to twist and shake the frame away from its screws, but the only thing that did was set off the alarms behind the painting. If he was honest, Chat Blanc was surprised it hadn't gone off before then considering how much he'd abused the painting by that point.

The alarm was shrill and irritating and surely meant that the police were on their way, if the screaming visitors hadn't tipped them off beforehand.

Growling, he decided that a 'last resort' measure was in order. "Cataclysm!" he hissed, drawing back his hand and slamming it into the two-inch thick bulletproof glass that protected the painting. It bubbled, then vanished.
Footsteps behind him. He was surrounded by more security guards, this time accompanied with weapons, medics and a SWAT team. "Chat... uh, Blanc? Step away from the painting with your hands up! You're under arrest!"

Chat Blanc looked at the guard through hooded eyes, his lips tilted in a smirk and his eyes dangerously bright. "Arrest? Are you sure?"

"Uh... yes?"

He snarled, all teeth and rage and rabidness. Chat Blanc was a malevolent being now, and he was a force to be reckoned with. A few of the guards stepped back uncertainly. At least it appeared his little show had unnerved them.

Chat Blanc turned back to face the famous painting of The Mona Lisa. When he's visited as Adrien, he'd thought she was very beautiful, but now all he saw was a plain-faced woman in a disappointingly small canvas. Such a dull woman didn't deserve to be worshipped. Even the mere thought of it made his stomach turn. His lip curled in disgust. "No one... and I mean no one... can ever replace Ladybug. They didn't deserve her!"

"Chat Blanc, stand down! You will come with us."

With the ferocity of a wild animal, he howled angrily. "You have no right to speak to me! Her death could've been prevented. And now... I am more powerful than your pathetic mind can even comprehend! I am a god, and I will have my Lady back."

A torrent of swirling black and red devilry swept outward from Chat Blanc's staff. It crested over the guards and knocked them off their feet, sending them crashing into the wall. The piercing scream of the alarm continued.

Chat Blanc still faced the painting. With another snarl of vexation, he lashed out and raked his claws through the fragile painting. The paint split and curled. The poplar panel, already warped and cracked, was lacerated beyond repair, and fell to the bottom of the case in three pieces. "Merde," muttered one of the guards, her face blanched. A wicked smile upon his face, he turned to face the dazed guards once more.

"No one can, or will ever, replace Ladybug," said Chat Blanc. His voice was so level and calm it was almost disturbing. The akuma in his head was silent for once, satisfied to see the destruction of something so priceless. Tikki and Plagg were shocked into silence, too stunned to fight against the Akuma which trapped them. He felt... peaceful. Even if that peace would only last a few moments. Then, his voice cracking and an ache resettling in his heart, he muttered, "I will avenge her... and this time, I won't let my Lady down."

With a strong buffet of wind and another wave of sweeping black magic, Chat Blanc disappeared.

"Master... the news," said Wayzz, his expression turbulent.

Fu looked up from his crossword to read the headline which flashed across the screen. Rapid-fire French blared a message he never wanted to hear. 'Chat Noir: Back and Madder than ever.'
He watched the newsreader explain the situation. Chat Noir, or rather Chat Blanc, had broken into The Louvre. He had destroyed the Mona Lisa and vandalised the museum, to put it lightly. A boy no older than eight was videoed in the back of an ambulance, crying and shaking while wrapped in a shock blanket. His grandfather chattered furiously.

A warrant was out for his arrest.

In the brief, blurred images shown of Chat Blanc, Fu understood why Wayzz couldn't detect Plagg or Tikki. This new villain had both of them in his possession. But the only thing could manipulate and suppress both kwamis for such an extended period was an Akuma. Chat Noir had been akumatised.

Such a thing had never occurred before. Fu narrowed his eyes.

"Wayzz, perhaps it is time we un-retire."

Chapter End Notes

Just a quick word of warning:

I will never post on time. Ever.

Regular updates are a mythical entity I have yet to discover.

So... yeah, I don't know when I'll update but I'll try to do it every few weeks.

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
The Pont des Arts bridge had arched over the Seine river since 1802.

It was the first metallic bridge ever built in Paris, with seven arches, and it was considered a national historical monument. It was truly magnificent.

Since 2008, lovers had travelled from across the globe to share their love with the world. To ensure their love would last forever, they would write or engrave their names across a padlock and secure it to the panels of the bridge. For a final touch of eternity, they would toss the keys to the padlock into the flowing waters of the Seine below. *What wasteful, arrogant pricks*, thought Chat Blanc.

Adrien had once visited, and secured his own locks onto the panels. One was entitled "*Maman*". The other, in elegant curled script, was engraved "*Ladybug*".

Of course, he hadn't had his own name added to the locks. No. His Lady wouldn't have appreciated it. After all, she didn't love him... at the time. It would've seemed too forward, if she ever found out about his little declaration of love. And if she'd never found out, it would've seemed like a token of love from Paris itself, or from an overly fond admirer.

Not that he wasn't.

Looking back on those meaningless locks, Chat Blanc sneered. How weak he had been. But no longer. All that coursed through his veins was anger and uncontrollable, seething power.

Chat Blanc would've been foolish to visit the bridge too soon after destroying the Mona Lisa. After all, it was the Louvre's greatest prized possession. Hell, it was prized amongst all of Paris, if not the entirety of France. And he had destroyed it without a second thought.

Yet, seeing the Parisian people whipped into such a frenzy was oddly satisfying. Watching them from rooftops, he had heard them hissing their anger and remorse at the loss of such a relic. Panic was spreading. Word had got out about how this white Chat Noir had defeated a legion of highly-trained security guards and policemen. They were said to be the best in the business, yet he'd bested them all.

Now all of them were recovering in hospital, their injuries ranging from broken bones and concussions to severe haemorrhaging and brain damage. At least two of those guards were on life support.

One, he had seen inked in a newspaper he had stolen, was the mother of a baby that wasn't even a year old. She had been back at work for only three days, after returning from her designated maternity leave. She was a single mother, with no family able to care for her infant while she lay on life support, balanced between life and death.

Chat Blanc, for a few hours, had been trapped in the silence of his own mind. The akuma was muzzled by the kwamis, who for a time, were silent. But it was far from peaceful. In those hours alone, he was on the fringe of being Adrien again. Every thought blistered and lacerated his mind. He had caused those injuries. He was responsible if an infant was orphaned. Or a mother was left without her son. Or a pet was left locked alone in an apartment, waiting for an owner who might
never come home.

He was alone with all his grief. He could imagine her voice too, and how disappointed she'd be with him. Revenge was not the answer she would've chosen if he'd been the one to die. She would mourn silently. Yet here she was, disgracing her memory, defiling it with the darkness of a partner who picked off security guards for a few minutes of mirthless entertainment, and undoing every good deed they'd accomplished over the years.

Then the akuma had wrenched itself free, and filled his mind with the *positives*. Paris would never forget him, or his Lady.

So he lay low for a week or so, letting the majority of the hubbub die down after the destruction of the Mona Lisa and his sudden disappearance into hiding.

Now, he sat on a bench near the bridge, waiting. Of course, due to the guards and military patrols circulating the Louvre, he'd had to disguise himself. Wrapped in a stolen winter trench coat, and his ears pressed flat under a beanie and hidden beneath a hood, he observed the comings and goings of the tourists.

When the bells of Notre Dame rung out their lusty peals in the distance, marking the time as noon, he stood.

Lazily, he stretched and began a slow walk towards the bridge. While it was common for people to rush about and bustle, it was probably best not to draw any unnecessary attention to himself. Nevertheless, his walk was more of a prowl than a leisurely stroll.

He toyed the end of his claws, which since Plagg and Tikki had merged, had turned red. They almost looked like they'd been digging into flesh, and were consequently stained with blood.

The bridge was relatively empty. It was pretty much the Parisian off season, when schools and offices were in session, there were no bank holidays, and no excuses for going on holiday. The majority of the tourist population was made up of pensioners who were on a sightseeing tour or a short break.

There were two old couples shuffling across the bridge. That was all. He still waited until they were off the bridge, before looking around to see if he could spot any patrols. He then spent a while searching. The akuma hissed impatiently, so intent on destruction that it considered plotting a waste of valuable time.

Eventually he found them.

His locks.

The one which commemorated his Maman had been damaged, and someone else's lock had been attached to it as there was little room left to attach one to the panel itself.

The silver lock immortalising his Lady was perfectly preserved, shining and beautiful among the considerably duller locks that surrounded it.

"*Lucky charm,*" he hissed. Chat Blanc got what he wished for. A small, polka-dotted key lay in his palm. It was perfect for the lock. He slid the freed padlock into the pocket of his coat, and tossed the key into the Seine. Now, he could continue. "*Cataclysm!*"

The lock depicting his mother's name frothed with blackness, before crumbling away. She had abandoned him just as his father had betrayed him. And he only had room in his heart to mourn one person. His *Maman* didn't deserve what little love he had in reserve.
It took him several Lucky Charms, several curses, and a thankful prayer that his power appeared so limitless, to achieve what he wished. At least, he clutched multiple small circular discs in his fists.

Now... this was where it got significantly more challenging.

People were heading his way, and by his calculations another patrol was due to pass him in a matter of minutes. What he needed to do... it needed to be done quickly. The akuma refused to negotiate. Nothing could go wrong.

Hopping onto the railing, he found one of the curved support beams with his feet. He hooked them around it and released his grip on the railing. He swung backwards. At the last second, Chat Blanc unhooked his feet from the beam and fell rather ungracefully to the central supporting pier.

Working quickly, he strapped one of the discs to it. Detaching the staff from his back, he vaulted across to the next pier. Then the next... and the next.

He repeated the same routine several times, until each of the arches had a disc attached to its pier. Seven, in total, if he remembered correctly.

The akuma was pacing, hissing and screeching in his mind. Each of its cries sent a whip of pain through his head, but he couldn't pay it much attention. Until they were done, it wouldn't settle.

Chat Blanc landed at the end of the bridge, exactly where he'd started. The patrol was just coming into view. The people- a group of elderly tourists with incredibly outdated fashion sense- bustled past him, their cameras snapping away and voices muttering in different accents and languages.

Perfect.

He began to walk away, turning his back on the bridge. Vaulting onto the roof of the Institut de France, he finally turned back to look at it. The water glistened in the sun, sending twinkling refractions of light his way, like the winking of some dreadful nymph.

The beauty of the water drew the attention of the tour group, who had paused to attach locks where they could find room. Chat Blanc didn't see the point. They were all old. Their love would die with them soon. It was a waste of a lock, just as his Maman's had been.

"Lucky charm," he whispered. The patrol was by the bridge now, passing it in a slow and organised march. What he had wished for, the kwamis had given him, albeit reluctantly. With the power of the akuma to hold them in place, they were no match to defy him. He was Chat Blanc. He was limitless. And he would avenge his Lady, no matter the cost.

Three.

He held his breath.

Two.

The tourists had lost interest in the water. The tour guide was ushering them towards the Louvre.

One.

One of the patrol soldiers noticed him on the roof, and pointed at him.

Zero.
"My Lady, I am sorry it's come to this." Click. The remote detonator beeped for a moment.

Then the Pont des Arts bridge exploded.

Shrapnel flew sky high. Tiny shards of metal, the remnants of the love locks, tumbled into the river by the thousands. Some of the tourists screamed. They were quickly silenced. The Seine rocked, huge waves from the force of the blast grasping at the banks. Clouds of fire and steam and dust ballooned above the carnage.

Sirens soon followed. An influx of patrols were surrounding the area.

One small squadron clambered onto the roof of the Institut de France, weapons loaded. The order was clear. Shoot to kill. No prisoners.

But the roof was uninhabited. One soldier moved forwards, on guard, his weapon never aiming lower than chest height. Yet the now notorious Chat Blanc was nowhere to be found.

All that remained was a shattered detonator...

... and a love lock with one word engraved upon it.

Ladybug.

Chapter End Notes

I promise I'll update more.

(If I can find the time.)

But... yay. We're officially half way through this story, so please stick with me.

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
Chat Blanc had exploded a gas main that ran under his family mansion. It had been his childhood home, his refuge, but it was also the capital of his father's treacherous empire. It was where Gabriel Agreste had brought material magic to the world, yet had been plotting to take both his and his Lady's magic from it.

He had stood while the fiery ruins burned, fuelled by the gas. The akuma had forced him out from his father's ashen office, and away from the charred golden canvas that had glorified his Maman's image.

The police and the media remained clueless as to who was behind the Agreste house explosion, and behind the deaths of the workers inside. Gone was Natalie. Gone was the Gorilla. Gone were the twenty other staff members who had had the misfortune of being trapped in the house.

It still surprised him that no one had put two and two together. To Chat Blanc, it seemed so obvious. That he was Adrien Agreste. That Adrien Agreste was Chat Noir. That Gabriel Agreste was Hawkmoth, which had been covered up by the best lawyers in the world and a lot of hush money in the pockets of the emergency response team from that fateful day.

So, as Chat Blanc caused the world to burn around him, he was calmly watching the news in front of the Dupain-Cheng television set. Fortunately- he refused to use the word 'luckily'- Sabine and Tom were out of the house. In fact, it had been published in the papers that they had left the country for a while, to visit family in China. To mourn, no doubt. The bakery was Chat Blanc's home for a while.

He almost laughed when the reporter interviewed the police chief, Roger Raincomprix. He proved the height of incompetency in the police force. It was obviously a bombing, Chat Blanc had made sure there was evidence it was, but Raincomprix still insisted it was an "unfortunate incident".

Chat Blanc's vision fuzzed black in anger, and just as he was about to pummel the TV into the wall in frustration, his own face flared onto the screen. The sheer surprise of it made him stop, fist raised and merely inches from the glass.

It wasn't a modelling shot like he would expect, but it was a photo of him grinning like a kid, his arms around a smirking Alya and a blushing Marinette, with Nino leaning over his shoulder and shooting finger guns at the camera. Chat felt... numb.
He remembered that day.

It was a day after Reflekta had been akumatised. They'd all gone out as a group to the park, and had bought ice cream cones. And for the first time in a long while, Adrien had felt truly happy.

Chat Blanc was trapped, watching the news that followed.

Alya and Nino stood side by side, eyes hollow and tired, as they shared their message with the world.

"We're... appealing for any knowledge regarding the disappearance of Adrien Agreste. He has been missing since... since... I-" Nino couldn't finish his sentence. Looking down at her hands, Alya frowned.

Then she looked up and stared down the camera, continuing for him, "He has been missing since Ladybug was murdered by the Papillon. He has not been seen or heard from since that date, nearly four weeks ago. So... please, we're begging you. Help us find our friend," she stopped, her face growing hard and cold. "Adrien, no matter what you've done or how much you're hurting... come home. I know you have no one left, and maybe that's not entirely incidental, but we miss you. Please... we don't want to lose you too. Come home." Then the footage cut away.

His mouth dropped open.

Alya was clever... very clever. Perhaps even cleverer than the rest of Paris, it seemed. Of course she'd know.

While the police were looking for anything that wasn't there, Alya had pieced together the evidence. She wasn't stupid. She knew who he was and what he had done.

And she didn't care.

She wanted him to come home. So did Nino. Hope like a light in a thousand miles of darkness filled his chest, and the akuma's hold on his mind was relinquished for the briefest moment.

Plagg and Tikki rushed to the forefront, glad to be free even for the smallest fraction of a second, and filled his mind with all the happiness he had ever felt. He was Adrien again.

Then the akuma pounced on them, suppressing them, and twisted his thoughts once more. His blood ran cold.

No matter how much he shook his head or blinked or clawed at his eyes, the images wouldn't leave. His Lady's cold body, broken in a pool of Ladybug-red blood. Her funeral procession. The news article that stated the baby of the injured security guard had been orphaned, when life support hadn't been enough to sustain her mother. The obliterated bodies of the tourists being dredged from the Seine. The soot-blackened corpse of Natalie as it was pulled from the wreckage of his family home.

Chat Blanc howled in agony, his claws tearing at his hair and face and pulling away chunks of whatever he could grab.

Stop. Stop. Stop. Stop.

Please.

The akuma settled, satisfied. Chat stumbled to the floor in anguish.
Blood seeped from his face. His hair was matted with blood and pus, where in his torment he had pulled away slabs of scalp. His ear was missing a lobe and his right eye was swallowed in the blackness of the blind.

Crawling on all fours, he made several efforts to climb the stairs before managing to push open the trap door. His crimson ichor was smeared across the walls and floor where he scrabbled for purchase, but most of it had clotted.

Clawing across the floor, he collapsed by her chaise longue. The room smelt of her perfume.

Looking round with his one useful eye, Marinette's room hadn't changed. If not for the fine sheet of dust over everything, it would have looked lived in. There was a pile of abandoned clothes on the floor that she’d neglected to put away. A sketch lay unfinished on her desk. A design project was half sewn and strewn over the back of a chair.

It was simply... Marinette.


And he missed her more than anything in the world.

So what scraps remained of the man behind the monster curled on the floor of a now abandoned bedroom, with nothing to console him but the dusty reminders of his Lady and the dream of a life that could never be.
Du Bois à la Fumée ~ From Wood to Smoke

Chapter Notes

If Chat Blanc hasn't lost his shit already, he has now.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

For once, Paris seemed silent. Maybe it was due to the lateness of the night, or his ruined earlobes no longer letting him hear as well as he was used to, but Chat Blanc was enjoying the peace.

He was sat on the ledge of one of Notre Dame's bell towers. He and Ladybug-no, Marinette-would meet up here for patrol. Hour after hour on whatever nights they could spare, they would sit together.

Chat remembered one particular night the year before, there'd been a meteor shower. Marinette had been gushing about it in school all week, about how romantic it seemed and how she wished she could watch it with someone. Then on patrol, she just happened to mention it, and of course he didn't piece it together, but he cancelled the patrol for his Lady. Together, Chat Noir and Ladybug, the ever inseparable team, watched the shooting stars.

That was a night that she admitted her loneliness, and he cast aside his love for her to stand as her friend above all else.

He regretted that more than anything. The past could not be changed, but he wished nothing more than to do so.

What would've happened if he told her he loved her? He wasn't sure. Perhaps she would've accepted him.

Even so, his past self as the foolish Adrien Agreste wouldn't have looked into the future to see that one of the only people that mattered was no longer alive. He would've seen hope, and the defeat of Hawkmoth, and potentially even love from his Lady.

How wrong he'd been.

So as he stared out at the polluted sky, no longer clear as it had been that night, the reminiscent imaginings were more mournful bitterness than anything of use to him.

Chat Blanc was an all powerful being. He shouldn't have to feel so...

... alone.

But he was.

As he clambered into the bell tower, and down flights of stairs to the ground floor, Chat Blanc curled and uncurled his hands in agitation. After all he'd done, he'd hoped the anarchy would bring him peace. Yet the akuma seemed to be getting harder and harder to keep at bay, and his grief was dawning him.

He submerged himself in it, hoping for some kind of comfort in his memories of her. But they were all tainted, blackness and regret overcoming anything happy that he could remember. Chat
Blanc felt hollow. It was the worst feeling in the world.

Still, he'd rather feel nothing than be trapped in his grief.

He sat on one of the pews, staring at the intricate colours of the stained glass windows. They were beautiful, but nothing could bring him to truly admire them. Perhaps, at one time, he would've gawked at their astonishing luminescence. Now, the akuma only urged him to shatter it.

In his mind, Tikki and Plagg were faint now, their voices merely whispers. The akuma's monologue was becoming infinitely more prominent and harder to ignore.

Perhaps if he did something to placate it...

Chat Blanc looked down at his claws, blanc white with the swirling ladybug red curling up his gloves like blood. They even looked like the hands of a monster.

*Tikki and Plagg were never meant to mix. It's against nature. Destruction and Luck can't become one... it isn't right.*

But nothing could stop him now, or the akuma for that matter. Even Chat couldn't undo it. He couldn't free himself. *All he wanted was to be free.*

Too late.

The cataclysm burned in his hand. It bubbled black and red. It promised more destruction. Closing his eyes, he slammed his hand on a pew and watched it crumble to black timbers. The akuma raved, frothing and foaming at the mouth in excitement as it urged him on. It was ecstatic.

A strange feeling coursed through his body, like an itch he couldn't quite scratch...

... and it drove him insane.

Within minutes, he was panting and howling as every pew in *Notre Dame* crumbled to tinder. A manic laugh bubbled from his chest. It sounded tinny and feral as it echoed back at him. It was unnatural. It wasn't him laughing, it was the akuma.

It was like he lost control of his own body. He was a passenger. Any consciousness he had was pushed to the back of his mind as the akuma took the reigns. It crowed with glee.

It called forth Lucky Charm after Lucky Charm. It coated the walls with thousands of litres of gasoline.

And it was so late at night, so strange a time for anyone to be in the Cathedral, that no one was able to stop him. He prayed and prayed and prayed.

*Someone stop me. I can't.*

It took hours. Dawn was breaking and Paris began stirring into life. He could hear it. He also knew that soon, the priests would be coming to the Cathedral, ready to start morning Mass.

But the akuma had a plan. And Chat Blanc was powerless to stop it.

Another Lucky Charm.

He climbed the bell tower again, leaping from banister to banister with a whoop of reckless abandon. As he reached the top, he turned to look down to where the stairs climbed down, down, down.
And he dropped the spotted match he held burning between his fingers.

Chat Blanc watched with a sort of sadistic fascination. The little light of the match tumbled down the centre of the bell tower, its flame almost dying but never quite going out.

When it landed, so far below in the dawn-hidden darkness, it exploded.

The gasoline ignited.

It was like a domino effect. Flames rippled along the floor and out of sight. But the akuma knew what was waiting.

The timber of the pews that he'd piled metres high was an explosion waiting to happen, coated in dripping gasoline just waiting to ignite.

And it did. But Chat Blanc remained stood at the top of the bell tower, watching as flames consumed the Notre Dame and smoked billowed up into his face. It dragged the oxygen from his lungs in a way that made him feel untouchable and unearthly.

The flames mounted higher, level with his eyes now. He had to move, even the akuma knew that.

The sirens wailed as the sleepy city of love was shocked awake. Its Cathedral was burning, and it was already too late to stop it.

Gasoline burned hot and fast. Any damage was permanent now. It would take years to repair the damage he'd caused, and the thought of so many Parisians scrubbing the stone on their knees made Chat Blanc smile.

Sirens, crackling flames and shattering glass created a cacophony of destruction to jolt Paris into consciousness. Soon, residents were filling the streets by the hundreds, all staring in shock as the flames melded into a deadly beacon of smoke and ash.

Firefighters swarmed across the steps of the Cathedral like ants, far below him. Their hoses looked pathetic against the monstrous hell demon that the fire had become.

Chat Blanc sent the end of his staff to the ground. "Cataclysm!" he hissed, brandishing his hand like a sword. Standing atop his staff, he willed it to shrink. As the ground grew closer and closer, his hand ran down the walls of Notre Dame.

The ancient stonework blackened at his touch.

Soon, the left bell tower was collapsing from the top, down. Rubble rained down around Chat Blanc. It seemed to race him to the ground that was rapidly rising up to meet him.

Suddenly, his staff buckled and launched him into the air. No longer was he falling, but flying. The deepest parts of his soul had hoped that the akuma hadn't noticed his thoughts; his plan had been almost fulfilled. He'd hoped that maybe the rubble and the ground would meet him somewhere in between the chaos. Chat had hoped he'd die.

He'd hoped he'd die; he'd hoped the akuma wouldn't save itself.

But as the dead weight of his body soared through the air, Chat Blanc knew it was hopeless. The akuma valued self-preservation over the anarchy it yearned for. Its angry hissing told him that it wasn't done wreaking havoc yet. Until that time, it wouldn't let him die, no matter how much torment and grief made him long for his suffering to end.
Bang.

The building came out of nowhere. His eyes were hazy. Until Chat Blanc had rather painfully crashed into it, he hadn't even seen it.

Stupid, stupid, stupid. *Stupid.*

After a few years of crime fighting, Chat had been volleyed across the sky numerous times and Marinette had always been there to catch him, or to help him up after he'd pinballed between a few cars. As the new face of the main Parisian super villain, nobody did him the courtesy of catching him.

*Bad kitties don't land on their feet,* thought Chat Blanc mirthlessly.

Scraping down the side of the building, the pain of the impact as he landed on the concrete made him more appreciative of his imprisonment in the Blanc suit. If he wasn't allowed to die, at least it stopped his physical suffering from biting too much.

Metallic blood rolled over his tongue. He spat some of it onto the pavement, and watched it trickle into the cracks like a crimson hand.

Crawling to his feet and clutching his ribs, Chat Blanc stood just in time to watch the roof of the *Notre Dame* protest loudly before collapsing inwards on itself. A cruel smile warped his shredded face.

Blaring from a car radio as it passed was the faint word stating one, blatant thing.

"*Chat Blanc is a terrorist.*"

Chapter End Notes

P.S- It only gets worse from here ^_^

Good luck, bugaboos x

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
Chat Blanc had been favouring fire. The hungry way it devoured things in lustful licks of flame was somewhat satisfying to watch.

But as *Notre Dame* burned before him, he couldn't bring himself to enjoy the destruction.

The reason?

Chat Blanc's marred face was being broadcast over every monitor in France, branding him a terrorist and issuing a warrant for his arrest.

Chat Blanc was fine with that. The akuma was *ecstatic*.

But the remains of Adrien Agreste were clawing their way to the surface of his mind, pleading for recompense and freedom and the right to mourn quietly.

Not enough of his former self was left, however, to fully rid Chat Blanc of the akuma snared in his mind. Certainly he loosened its grip, but the akuma was even overpowering the warped consciousness of Chat Blanc. Adrien Agreste stood no chance.

Even Chat Blanc had little control left.

Pulling himself together, he drew out his staff and set off back to where the hell was breaking loose. People were swarming in the streets by now, and camera crews were slowly gathering just beyond the police blockade.

The akuma howled in glee. If it were a tangible thing, he could imagine it dancing around a fire and roasting the remains of an enemy in the flames. Except in this situation, the victim was Paris and the flames were *Notre Dame*.

Nobody noticed him. Oddly enough, Chat didn't find this surprising. When he'd been Ladybug's trusty sidekick, it wasn't unusual for him to be the stoic figure smiling beside her. Chat Noir loved his Lady, and the attention she got never bothered him. In fact, he enjoyed being mostly ignored. It separated him from his constant attention as a model. Marinette deserved the attention she received, because without her, he was nothing. He'd been right. Now, as the Cathedral burned, the attention was once again not his. It was on the destructively beautiful flames mounting into the sky.

But for the first time since he originally said "*Transforme Moi!*", Chat Blanc craved the attention.

That was *his* pyre. The Cathedral was *his* bonfire. It was *his* to claim.

He'd promised anarchy. He'd promised revenge on all of Paris for Marinette's untimely death.

And no one was looking for the source.

Not once on his way nearer to the Cathedral had he seen armed police hunting him down, or an army squadron ready to take out the threat to France. Not once had a camera turned his way. Not once had a civilian pointed to where he stood overlooking the carnage from a nearby rooftop. Not once had he been noticed.
And it hurt him.

It writhed under his skin like an insect infestation. His blood boiled. The suit seemed like it was suffocating him. Then he realised.

He was jealous.

For once, after nearly a decade in the spotlight of modelling or being a hero, he was angry that it wasn't his. He had to do something. The Cataclysm fluttered in his hand. Oddly enough, he didn't even remember summoning it.


His vision tunnelled. If someone asked him- not that they ever would- the building fell down of its own accord.

But before he could watch Paris scramble to clutch the ruined pieces of its city together, there was one significant occurrence.

"Adrien Agreste."

Chat Blanc froze, his palm inches away from the cowering building.

Alya Césaire.

Alya was there, as she always was, to analyse the fight like the journalist she aspired to be. Only for once, she had no camera or phone. She was just... stood there, watching. "Adrien-"

"That is not my name."


It was his turn to frown. He approached her on the balls of his feet, using his height to his advantage. "Anyone in their right mind wouldn't miss _me_," Chat Blanc laughed mirthlessly, clicking his tongue. Alya's expression soured. He looked down at her, smirking to emphasise his point. "Adrien Agreste is dead. I killed him myself. Now... leave me alone."

He turned his back on Alya and began to walk away.

"You're a disgrace to Marinette's memory."

The Cataclysm was millimetres from her face. "Don't speak to me of Marinette. You know nothing. Everything I have done has been for _her_," Chat Blanc spat. His green eyes were acidic and seething.

"Then you didn't really know her at all, did you?" Alya's eyes were agonised and tearful. It struck him like a physical pain. She'd lost her best friend. And now she was losing him too.

Her courage made him slightly more hopeful for his own future.

_Weakness_, the akuma hissed.

_Not weakness. More strength than I am even capable of possessing_, Chat Blanc snarled in return.

With a sigh, he extinguished the Cataclysm and scrunched up his nose in a grimace. Alya took this
opportunity to reach her hand towards him. She flinched as he recoiled. Her expression became exhausted. Days of sleepless nights were evident in the sizeable bags under her eyes. Her cheeks were unhealthily sunken, and her skin was dull and waxy.

A surge of pity for his old friend rose in his chest. Perhaps there was some of Adrien left after all.

"Stop this. Please. If you ever truly loved Marinette, stop this. No one knows it's all been you. You could... come home," Alya pleaded.

He looked at her, misery blanketing his marred face. "Don't you see?" The purple akuma symbol flared over his eyes, emphasising his point. "I can't stop. I've tried... but I... I can't."

After a moment's hesitation, she said, "It's never too late. There's always something you can-"

"Alya," he said sharply. She stopped, uncertain. "I can't. Even if I tried, I can't make this right. I... I can't live with myself. Not after... not after everything I've done."

He could feel more and more of Chat Noir and Adrien dragging themselves from the peripheral of his mind. The voices of Tikki and Plagg had returned from where they'd been muzzled and bound away from thought. They were joyous.

Adrien's back. He's freeing himself, they seemed to cry.

"Adrien... your suit," gasped Alya. Glancing down, he almost stumbled.

The red from his suit was disappearing, swirling from the indestructible fabric like water down a drain. The earrings were getting increasingly getting hotter. Tikki was unbelievably loud inside his head. He felt like it would split in half from the pressure of it.

He couldn't put up with it any longer. Ripping the earrings from his ears, Chat launched them to the ground.

Immediately, the pressure in his head subsided. Plagg stretched his legs, happy to be the only kwami inside Chat's head. Chat Blanc laughed hysterically. But the akuma? No. It was furious. It was watching intently as the red swirled from his suit before exploding. Oh, the pain of it. It seemed to scratch away at his brain, determined to tear his sanity to smithereens. Chat tried to stop himself from screaming. In his efforts, he bit open his lip. Blood dripped from his mouth and the reopened wounds on his face.

The akuma was feral. It submerged Plagg in its anger. Repeatedly, the foul thing exploded and sent torrents of agony ricocheting through his brain. To Chat, it felt as if someone was repeatedly driving an ice-pick into his skull.

"Adrien? Adrien! What's wrong?" demanded Alya. Her brows were knitted in confusion and worry. He groaned, looking up from where he stood hunched. Chat's vision was foggy.

Then, the remains of Chat Blanc's consciousness curled into submission. Satisfied, the akuma subsided. Chat Blanc collapsed to his knees, heart racing and breathing erratic. Pressing his eyes closed, his vision was clear once again when he reopened them.

"My name is Chat Blanc," he said, his voice desolate and raspy. "Paris is mine now."

"Chat Noir." Another voice. It was so quiet that for a moment he could've sworn the voice was inside his head. At this point, nothing would've surprised him.
More people?

How did they find them?

Everyone worth bothering about were clustering around the shell of Notre Dame like cockroaches. Chat Blanc hissed vehemently. Wiping some of the blood that was clotting around his mask and eyes, a source wasn't hard to find.

Again, Chat Blanc was sure he was seeing things.

The warrior before him looked like a teenage mutant ninja turtle, except short and most definitely old. His stature was bent and deceivingly frail. A green suit made of the indestructible fibre clad his body, and thicker armour clung to his back. In his hands were two katana blades. Immediately Chat Blanc knew that this man was a force to be reckoned with.

He also knew that Plagg had boasted about the Turtle kwami's power, and that the holder of that kwami outdated the past three Chat Noirs and Ladybugs.

It couldn't possibly be anyone other person.

"Master Fu."

Chapter End Notes

A month without updating, he comes back with a semi-filler.

So I never did promise regular updates. Thanks for putting up with my month long hiatuses only to receive a half-arsed short chapter in return.

But I promise that next chapter, serious shit goes down so prepare for a reasonably long update time and a decently long chapter compared to this one.

I have my GCSE's coming up in April so I'm going to try update and finish this story as quickly as possible. Only 2 chapters left!

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
Fu looked down at Chat Blanc from the vantage point of a rooftop. Usually, being faced with an opponent would've created a flare of impish competitiveness in him. But Master Fu had been emphasised as being far superior to being simply notorious.

After weeks of feeling nothing but emptiness, and going to lengths to feel anything at all, the only emotion he could comprehend was fear.

Fu scared him.

The akuma was hissing at his cowardice; it goaded him and mocked his intimidation of this long-awaited legend. If anything, it proved that his fear was correctly placed.

If the akuma felt his fear was valid enough to rile him up about it, then it too was intimidated by Fu's presence.

A shiver ran up Chat Blanc's spine. Through terror or anxiety, he wasn't sure. A coin toss between both wouldn't determine for sure, but there was always the potential for the volatile, corrosive mix of both.

Gathering his courage, he simply said, "Fu."

The old man narrowed his eyes behind his green mask. His gaze didn't seem to look at him directly. It was like it seared through him and examined every fibre of his being. It was searching and scanning for answers as to why Chat Blanc still stood before him. It wondered how and why Chat Noir had been akumatised. It mourned Adrien Agreste. "Chat Blanc. We finally meet in the flesh."

The akuma forced a laugh. It sounded more like a crude cough than any human connotation to the word laugh. "And you, Old Man, seem to have very little flesh left to meet."

The remaining parts of Adrien Agreste were running in circles, screaming.

You are such an idiot, did you really just say that to FU?! he seemed to yell, waving his arms about like he was attempting lift-off.

But Master Fu simply smiled. He looked oddly peaceful, to say he had come equipped for a fight. His usually fluffed hair was slicked tightly back on his skull, reminiscent of the rounded skull of a turtle.
Chat Blanc processed this oddly.

It was in no way relevant, but he found himself so disturbingly fascinated by this man, that he felt it necessary to absorb every detail.

"You need to relinquish control over Chat Noir. You need to die, as Hawkmoth did and as you should've done," called Fu. For a moment, Chat Blanc's blood ran cold.

*He isn't talking to you, hissed the akuma, he's talking to me.*

So when he spoke next, it wasn't Chat speaking; once more it was the akuma. "You can't touch me. Chat Noir and I are one in the same. We are merged. And I am in control. You have no power over me, or the kwami, old man."

Fu narrowed his eyes. "Perhaps. Or perhaps not. Only true trials of the heart can determine the true strength of a person's character."

A laugh. "An optimist is usually disappointed."

"I take it you haven't met many optimists." Fu leapt from the rooftop and landed in a crouch a few metres away. "At least, not any who truly understand the meaning of the word."

Chat Blanc felt himself frown. From his perspective, he was a mere spectator to the conversation; he was a passenger in his own body. And that didn't sit well with him at all.

He'd done all this for Marinette Dupain-Cheng. He'd done it to remind Paris not to ignore the value of what it had, before it was taken away. And to be put into the backseat like a sulking child? That was *not* acceptable.

Chat Blanc took two steps closer, a definite swagger in his walk and a smirk curling his mouth. "Or perhaps," he hissed, electric eyes narrowing venomously, "you've simply been ignoring the reality of this world for far too long."

It was Fu's turn to narrow his eyes. He seemed to examine Chat's sneer like it was the subject of a PhD Thesis.

"Cat got your tongue, old man?"

"Certainly not," he replied. Maddeningly, Fu was smiling an infuriating smile that made the akuma seethe with distempered rage. His refusal to elaborate only furthered the akuma's anger.

"Say something!" howled the akuma. Its unbridled venom exploded like a hellfire geyser. His clawed hands lashed out and snapped around Fu's neck. Their faces were inches apart. Chat's lips curled into a deadly snarl.

And Fu continued to smile. "How ignorant of the world you are, dearest akuma. Your youth betrays you. Chat Noir was much wiser. It's a shame that someone, who was once such a promising hero, has been demoted to such... idiocy."

The akuma howled. Determinedly, it unleashed a cataclysm. It hoped nothing more than to crush... to dissolve... to *end* the impertinent old man that was clutched in his grip.

But Fu had vanished.

Well, Chat Blanc thought he'd vanished, and for a split second felt a toxic cocktail of pride and
disappointment surging in his chest.

Then Fu's foot planted itself onto his coccyx and launched him several metres across the concrete on his face.

Spitting stones and curses, Chat Blanc clawed to his feet. Fu remained out of sight.

Another transparent kick swept his feet from beneath him.

Growling bitterly, he made malicious swats around him. Some foolish part of him hoped that Fu was stupid enough to linger near enough to catch off guard. But Fu was far too intelligent for that.

However he was attacking, Fu came in from a distance and managed to put that space between them again by the time Chat regained his composure.

And it was infuriating.

It happened again and again and again. Both the akuma and Chat were furious beyond measure. His anger beforehand had been a quick rain shower, but this was a hurricane. The static rolling off him was charged and ready to spark. It wouldn't take long to catch alight.

One last roundhouse to the ribs created just enough friction.

And Chat Blanc exploded.

"Enough!" bellowed Chat. "Face me, you coward! Fight me, man to man!"

"Why should I?" Fu's voice seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere simultaneously. "All that you have done, and you confronted none of your victims man-to-man, as you say."

Now, Chat Blanc wished more than ever that he still had Tikki. He'd call for a Lucky Charm and kill the-

The akuma mentally reigned him in.

Be sensible, it threatened, Fu is better. You know this.

Ladybug would've laughed at that. A rationally thinking akuma? Especially one that had been so unpredictable, even when they shared a mind? It would've made her laugh for hours. Thinking of her laugh, the soft and purely blissful sound it made...

Goosebumps pricked his skin. Spinning, his foot landed a reverse roundhouse and Fu was knocked flying.

His suit flickered from invisible to visible like a dying light. Master Fu leapt to his feet instantaneously, seemingly unperturbed.

There was a frozen moment between fighting and brief stand-off. Chat Blanc locked eyes with Fu. His opponent's expression was unreadable; neither inviting a fight nor dissuading one. Master Fu was a pillar of unbreakable calm in the face of an oncoming storm.

But Chat's features expressed his thoughts clearly. Everything from the invitational smirk of his mouth to his lazy yet predatory stance provoked violence. Acidic eyes locked onto softer ones. The unrelenting kindness in Fu's eyes did little more than infuriate Chat. It ran through his blood like venom and suddenly he was running, a rabid battle cry tearing from his throat.

A fight like this had no honour or code. It was dirty and brutal and, oh, how the akuma relished
A fight like this had no honour or code. It was dirty and brutal, and oh, how the akuma relished it. Perhaps, even the smallest parts of Chat liked it too. Being a hero meant playing by the rules. But a villain? They had much more freedom.


Every advance Chat Blanc made, Fu knocked him back. Infuriatingly, he refused to go on the offensive. Why won't he fight back?

Chat would force him to. Fu would change his deposition soon enough. And Chat's balled fist collided with the old man's cheekbone. His neck flayed backwards like tree caught in a storm. To Chat's surprise, Fu stumbled and for a moment looked as if he might fall. The Master's expression was shocked. He hadn't expected Chat to get close enough to land a hit.

A single drop of blood rolled off his lip.

Chat smirked, cracking his neck cockily.

Fu closed his eyes. "Forgive me," he muttered, too inaudible for Chat to hear. Then his eyes snapped open, alive with a determined flame.

A cold shiver ran down Chat's spine. Oh fu-

In an instant, Fu lunged. His moves were cold and calculating; his experience as a hero was clear in the precision of his actions. A well-placed lash to the neck sent him reeling. Chat's throat burned like it'd had an unfortunate encounter with a branding iron. He sprawled, coughing.

A green boot pummelled his chest and ribs. Every kick held a force that was surprising from an old man. It knew exactly which points would inflict the most pain. A kick to the navel. A passionate stomp to the sternum.

Then they were vaulting through the air. Fu sprinted across rooftops determinedly, dragging Chat in a choke-hold he couldn't twist away from. His feet scrambled for purchase on the tiles as Fu raced relentlessly, but his boots never caught a grip. Blood seeped into his eyes. One of the blows had caught him low in the diaphragm, so he sprawled behind his foe as paralysed as any winded man. It took all his willpower to stop himself from gasping in pain with each jolt as Fu leapt from rooftop to rooftop.

Finally, Fu crashed through the glass ceiling of a familiar building, hurling Chat to the ground while he found a more comfortable descent to the ground floor.

Stumbling to his feet like a drunkard, Chat barely had a moment to get his bearings before Fu landed in front of him. "Do you recognise this place, Chat?"

Of course he did. Even wounded and dazed, it would be impossible to forget such a dreadful place. It was where Hawkmoth was defeated in the penultimate battle. It was where Marinette had died. "How dare you bring me here you-"

Before giving him a chance to finish his argument, Fu had knocked him to the ground in a ferociously strong tackle. Fury tickled up Chat's spine like a ghostly hand but Fu had him pinned and was raining blows at every available opportunity. Panic rose in his throat.

Fu trapped Chat's scrambling claws to the floor with a boot, twisting his foot. Searing agony raced up his arm. His fingers felt limp and useless. Every attempt to move them felt like he was slamming his fist onto an ice-pick.

Chat was dragged to his feet. Liberated from being pinned to the floor, he used the space to his
advantage. Any feasible way he could land a hit, Chat used: his staff, his feet, and his uninjured hand. At first, there was guilt, an attempt to pull his punches, but soon the akuma quickly squashed that feeling. It reminded him how much of a thrill it was to physically beat an opponent rather than attack from a distance. With every impact, he felt a cruel zeal wash over him. It was a buzz that he craved, as it was the only thing that made the emptiness go away. In the heat of the moment, Chat enjoyed the sting of the fight.

Then Fu was back on the offensive. The fun stopped.

His seemingly arthritic hand wound into Chat's hair with surprising grip. In seconds, he had Chat pressed against the side of the building and slammed his head into the bricks over and over and over again until blood splattered the wall and floor alike.

The wounds from his breakdown nearly a week before reopened and seeped crimson. His mouth was metallic and his lungs were melted iron. One thought passed through his head. *Why is this the end?*

Chat Blanc knew this was the end. Only one person would leave this fight alive.

And Chat could barely stand. Fu was practically untouched.

Just when he thought his head would explode from being pounded so much, Fu stepped away and Chat collapsed to the floor, his back scraping down the wall. His lungs screamed for air. He rested his head back, panting.

Master Fu glowered down at him. His stance was alert and ready for a fight, but his eyes were surprisingly gentle considering that he'd almost literally beaten the life out of Chat mere moments before. Fu took a deep breath, exhaling slowly. "Chat Blanc, you must understand-"

"What's to understand?" Chat snorted. The action made him choke on his own blood, sending him into a fit of coughing. Fu waited silently. Spitting blood, Chat looked up at his opponent through his eyelashes. "I've been a bad, bad kitty."

"Yes, but you must-"

"What? I've done enough! Bad kitties get put down." He met Fu's gaze. The akuma made him feel venomous, like a snake backed into a corner. But Chat's expression was emotionless, broken only by the lingering flicker of sadness in the vastness of his eyes. "And don't pretend that that isn't *exactly* what you're here to do."

"I won't lie. I came here to put an end to your torment, but that can have many results," Fu rejoined. Unsteadily, Chat clambered to his feet, using his staff as a crutch. Quickly, Fu dodged a clumsy kick.

"Oh yeah? Do enlighten me." He threw a punch that wouldn't have harmed a fly, and Fu caught his hand in a shockingly tight grip.

"One: You die."

"Predictable. I have several exit plans thought out." A kick to the stomach sent Fu sprawling and Chat staggering back into the wall.

Fu strained as he got back up, clutching his stomach and wheezing. "Two: I destroy the akuma and you are free from its reign of terror. However, the city would make you answer for your crimes."
A beat. "I can't to that." The akuma, momentarily tense, stretched the stress from itself. *You are nothing without me. You know that. You'd fall apart.*

And he would.

Crying over the corpse of the love of his life, the grief had come in waves of disbelieve and unrelenting loneliness, engulfing and overwhelming him. It had clutched his throat, making it impossible to breathe. It had felt like the weight of the world passed onto him, and he was collapsing under the weight of it, yet he couldn't relieve himself of the burden. In his head, every part of him had chipped away until so little of him was left. There was an emptiness in his heart in the shape of her, and with every heartbeat, it grew more insurmountably agonising.

Then the akuma had overtaken him. It consumed him in a blanket of darkness that was so intensely, wrongfully appealing in comparison. It held together the pieces; they were haphazard and disjointed but still in one broken bundle.

Even as time went on, when the pieces were being compressed tighter and tighter until it felt like the oxygen was being stolen from his lungs, Chat found comfort in the darkness. It made him numb. He didn't want to face what lay beyond that numbness. It terrified him.

"Three: I can stop the hurt. I can make you forget."

Blood rushed in his ears. His vision blurred as they welled up and over, tears streaking through the bloody grime on his face. A flurry of fists and yells and strings of curses. "I don't want to forget her! You- can't- make- me- forget!" Every bloodcurdling word was accentuated by a grief-blind strike to wherever he could land a hit.

Fu reeled after each rain of body blows, protecting himself as best he could. But Chat Blanc was rage and grief and nothingness all at once, and self-defence was futile. "Chat Blanc! You can't fight this!" he shouted over the din. "Ignoring your grief will only make you suffer more. Please, I beg you-"

"No. I won't. I can't lose this. It's all I have." Fu wished he was surprised by the sunken, haunting emptiness in Chat's eyes. But he wasn't. Chat Blanc's face was a marred mess of blood, open sores and a heartrendingly broken desperation. His voice grew quieter, and his fighting stilled. "She's all I have."

*Torn mind, tortured soul. That's all you are,* the akuma hissed. The tears came and fell quickly and Chat was ugly crying and his face ached and his heart ached and all he wished for in the world was for it to stop. Grief surged with every expelled breath.

*I won't lose her again.*

Fu sighed, stepping away. "Or four: You destroy the akuma. You hand over your Miraculous. You go to your friends, who miss you. I give you peace, but not by removing your memories."

Panting, Chat closed his eyes. He could image it, and how peaceful it must be. *No akuma? No imprisonment? No more resentment or agony?*

But there'd also be no Plagg. No true mourning for Marinette, just the happy memories with her. Friends who knew who he was and what atrocities he was capable of. He doubted he could ever look them in the eye. Was that what he wanted?

After all this, nothing could be the same as it was. Who was he without his grief? Without Plagg?

The truth of it all was like a lead weight in his chest. He was nothing. He never would be
anything. Without the drive of the akuma, he was the shell of a person. There wasn't enough of Adrien Agreste left to continue on.

"I am nothing without this." Gesturing to himself, his voice betrayed him, cracking with such emotion he was surprised he'd managed to speak.

"Why do you make your own suffering worse?"

"You don't understand."

"Then let me-"

"You - don't - understand!" Chat hissed quietly. "The akuma is all I have. Plagg is all I have. I am nothing, not anymore. What would I be if this all conveniently disappeared? Nothing."

"Chat, that is not the case. You would be a normal boy once more, at peace, despite it all," insisted Fu, his voice a plea. Chat felt his tears roll of his chin.

"I can't be. I'm implicated in it all and I couldn't... can't live with myself. Not after what I've done."

"Chat-"

He growled impatiently, throwing his staff to the ground with an echoing clatter. "No! I did this for her! I did this because I was mad at Paris for letting her down! And that's done. I'm done. I can't do this-"

"No, you're not. You're not mad at Paris and you never were."

Chat spluttered indignantly, ready to fight his corner. Fu continued before he could get a word in edgeways. "You were mad at her. You were mad because she was just a little too far away to catch. You were mad because-"

"Don't pretend you know-"

"You were mad because she left you alone. Because you didn't get the chance to say a proper goodbye," Fu stepped closer, surefooted but cautious. "And because you lost the two people who mattered most in the space of a few moments, and you had no one to vent that anger towards, you chose the target easiest to blame, and that was Paris."

"No-"

"Have you stopped to think, throughout all your troubles and malevolence, why you thought that made sense? Blaming the death of one girl, hero or not, on a whole city is foolish. You know it is. So why can't you admit that to yourself? Don't pretend you were doing this for vengeance on Paris. You're doing this to hurt yourself. You're the only person you're really trying to inflict vengeance upon."

"Because it was my fault!" Chat screamed.

Everything went absolutely still. No breeze rustled through the gaping maw of the empty building, disturbing dust as it went. The sky through the glass above was entirely empty, beautifully blue like it had been painted that way. Fu's breath seemed to dissipate as he exhaled. It was an eerie sort of tranquility, one that didn't belong in that moment. It seemed too picturesque to be in the midst of a battle, but was also unnerving enough to set his teeth on edge. It was as if the world was holding its breath, waiting.
And through the stillness, all that could be heard was the turbulent panting of Chat Blanc.

Silence.

Chat felt like his lungs were encased in iron. Dizziness- from the head wounds or the breathlessness he wasn't sure- made his vision swim. "It was my fault," he whispered hoarsely. "It was all my fault."

No. It was the fault of Paris. They did not assist you, hissed the akuma. It's apprehensiveness spread like a grey fog in his mind. It blanketed his thoughts, but failed to hide the akuma's fear. It was frightened. For once, it couldn't predict Chat's next move.

"You could not have predicted the abruptness of her death."

"But I could've saved her! She was... so close," wailed Chat, melancholy. Wracking sobs overcame him until he was crying in such an ugly, desolate way that Fu could hardly meet his eyes. His heart-wrenching howls were only interrupted by his need to draw a breath. Yet he found himself so incapable of doing so that his tears fell silent.

And Fu could only watch.

"It was her fate from the beginning," he said quietly. "All Ladybugs are doomed to die."

When Chat looked up, he expression was feral. "What?" he seethed. Fu was unperturbed and continued to stare at Chat with sorrowful eyes.

"I cannot predict when, or how old. But all Ladybugs die. They always meet their match, some sooner than others. It just so happens that Marinette encountered hers earlier than most."

"Why didn't you tell her?"

"I cannot. The anticipation and fear of death drove one of Tikki's heroes mad. My predecessor swore to her that no other Ladybug would suffer such a fate. I, too, was sworn to secrecy."

Chat felt his face dip into a frown as a swarm of emotions plagued his thoughts. They drowned out even the voice of the akuma. They settled like ice through his body, making him numb and cold. "She didn't need to die like that," he muttered, trying to make his voice louder but barely achieving a whisper. "Marinette... she didn't have to leave me."

Fu sighed, stepping closer and outstretching his hand. Chat flinched at the movement, expecting the blunt impact of a punch. Instead, the old man's hand rested gently on his shoulder. "Chat Noir usually follows, because yang cannot endure without yin. But none before have done as you have, or endured as you have. The akuma has helped, I'm sure, but it was never intended."

"Why am I not surprised?" laughed Chat Blanc mirthlessly. He gestured around him at the empty building, where nothing else stirred but the particles of dust suspended in the air, waiting. But Chat gestured beyond, to the destruction which lay beyond the walls. "Look what I've done. I caused so much pain, and devastation, all in the name of Marinette. And you know what the worst part is? You were right. It wasn't for her."

"Then what for?"

"For me. Paris needed to hurt as much as I did... as much as I still do."

"What is done is done," Fu said simply. "Neither you nor I can change what you've done. You can try to make up for it, to do the right thing. However, what is right is not what is always easy."
You know this."

Chat stared at Master Fu. He could see the sadness behind his old eyes. They'd seen so much suffering, and Chat realised this wasn't the first time he'd outlived the young pair of heroes. What did Fu see when he looked back? he wondered. Perhaps he'd see wasted potential, or a pity case, or maybe he'd just see a boy, one who'd been worn away to the nakedness of a person who'd known true grief and didn't know how to fix it.

That was who Chat was, beneath it all. A boy who'd seen too much, and lost too much, and taken too much. "I don't know how to fix this."

"You can't fix anything. You can only do your best, and although that may not be enough, at least you will have tried," replied Fu firmly. Something in the sincerity of his expression reminded Chat of her. It reminded him of the nights spent on the rooftop of Notre Dame, and the countless times he and Marinette had saved each other from danger. Now, here he was, standing where his Lady had taken her last breath, and wishing that she was here to save him just one more time.

But she was gone, and there was nothing he could do to change that. "Then I will try. She deserved better than this. And so did Alya, and Nino, and Natalie, and Plagg, and all the others I've failed. I can't fix this. I can't undo all my wrongdoings, or make them go away. Don't let Chat Noir end like this, Fu. Don't let this legacy die with me." Chat choked up. The akuma suddenly roared into life, but it was incapable of seizing control. Fu simply watched. He'd predicted how it would end. "Cataclysm," he whispered.

Then he pressed his churning black hand against his own skull. For a moment, his suit returned to its former glory, with swathes of black leather-like material and not a spot of white in sight. Plagg swirled from his ring with a howl that shattered several windows. The akuma hissed free and crumbled into dust.

With no active Miraculous, his suit melted away, leaving only Adrien. He was disfigured, and bloody, and exhausted. But he was clearly Adrien once more. He smiled faintly.

Then his eyes lost what little light they had left, and his body collapsed onto the ground.

Chat Blanc was defeated. For a mere moment, his breath lingered. The heart that had seemed to stop after Marinette's death spurred into noticeable life for a fleeting second, before stopping once again.

And in the very spot that Marinette had met her end, Adrien did too.

Chapter End Notes

Stick around, for this is only the 9th chapter. There is one to follow!

Also, is AO3 dead? No one's been updating, myself included. Hmm, oh well. I hope you enjoyed this chapter, and don't hate me too much. And I notice there's a lot of innuendos in this chapter, so... sorry but I found them really funny so ^-^

~ Kai [EggboyDraco]
A week. A *week*. So much could be done in a week.

The emergency services, sirens ablaze, found the almost unrecognisable body of Adrien Agreste after an anonymous tip-off. They launched a full murder inquiry, but the search was fruitless and his death was ruled a tragic accident following a lack of evidence. If only they knew.

In his final moments, he'd thought of his guilt. He thought of how many people hated him for what he'd done, and those he'd left in mourning. He'd thought of Marinette, and how much he missed her. And how much he would've disappointed her.

But he was feeling *something*, in those fleeting seconds. He'd been Adrien Agreste once more.

And it wouldn't matter. Moments later, he was dead. Days later, Chat Blanc was ruled as dead after unidentifiable remains were found in Notre Dame alongside a suspiciously impervious silver staff. Planted, of course, but it was sufficient enough to close the case.

A week later, Adrien Agreste was laid to rest in the family plot, alongside the coffins of his parents and far from the grave of Marinette Dupain-Cheng. The world didn't know what a cruel irony this was, for Adrien to be buried alongside his treacherous father after all he'd done. Perhaps monsters were always shackled together in both life and death, destined to be forced together when the lovers were always forced apart.

Monsters always had a shell, a second skin to blanket themselves in so they weren't recognised. Hawkmoth had Gabriel Agreste's esteem and high regard. No one had suspected him.

Adrien had his popularity, and his looks, and his father's name. He wasn't suspected either, simply written off by the coroner as one of the tragic victims of the unidentifiable Chat Blanc's rage. The difficult part was that wasn't too far from the truth.

However, because his shell protected Adrien from the catastrophe that was Chat Blanc's legacy, mourners gathered in their thousands. So many more than his father, or even Marinette.

If he could see them, weeping over his hastily buried coffin, he would've been disgusted. Adrien Agreste, through all his faults had been good, but Chat Blanc was undeserving.

The mourners clustered like cockroaches, desperate to get close enough to see the recently engraved epitaph, now bearing Adrien's name beside his parents'. One name was clearly much older, as green moss grew in the indentations of each letter. His *Maman*'s.

Candles flickered in the darkness of the stormy day. Rain flailed, attempting to rid the mourners of their umbrellas, warning them away from Chat Blanc. But they didn't heed it.

Alya, Nino and Chloe, the only people alive that were ever truly close to Adrien, stood by the graveside with solemn faces. Nino's face was blank, too shocked by the loss of another friend to comprehend his loss. Chloe, despite her faults, stood a little ways apart from the others, her face ashy and tear-stained, mourning a childhood friend and longing for answers.

But Alya? Her face was carved marble, cold and unfeeling but still with the slightest hint of emotion like she was desperately trying to feel *something*. Anything. Yet she couldn't. Only she
knew what Adrien was and what he'd done. She too was disturbed by the mass entourage of mourners crowding around them. Adrien had been her friend, and as much as she had longed for him to come home, there was nothing left now to lessen the blow. There was no hope he'd return, or fix what he’d done. Just the unforgiving truth and no one to blame. Internally, she warred with herself: to mourn her friend as the rest of Paris did, or to see him for what he'd become.

A monster.

As the storm above grew more ominous, many mourners left to seek shelter from the blistering wind and pouring rain. Those who remained began to sing. They sung lullabies, mainly, or old folk songs. The notes drifted through the crowd like a curling mist, drawing people in until everyone sang out the same haunting tune like a macabre symphony.

The candles hissed in the rain, but lingered on, their flames dim but persistent through the gloom.

At the back of the crowd, bundled in a scarf and a winter coat, face hidden by a fur-lined hood, was a woman.

Contrary to Alya's lone knowledge, this woman also knew who Chat Blanc was. She knew what he'd done. Unlike Alya, however, this woman's regard for him remained unchanged.

To her, he'd always been lost, too distant for her to regain. If he'd seen her, in the pregnant pause between Marinette's death and the akuma poisoning his body, perhaps he wouldn't have fallen into despair. Perhaps, just perhaps, she wouldn't have had to watch his coffin being lowered into the ground and recovered with a claustrophobic smothering of dirt.

She could've prevented the deaths of over one hundred people. But she'd been too afraid.

Afraid of what he'd think, of what he'd say to her after so many years.

Nervously, the woman clutched the peacock shaped brooch pinned at her breast, above her heart. She'd rummaged through the rubble to find it, after she'd discarded it on the doorstep as she left for the last time. Perhaps, just perhaps, it would be of use to her now.

A child, no older than four, peered around the legs of her father to look at the woman. Her dark eyes were inquisitive, as Adrien's had once been. She found herself smiling.

The girl smiled and pointed, tugging at the hem of her father's rain-soaked coat, desperate to make him see the angelic woman stood behind them, with golden hair that seemed to flicker in the candlelight and emerald eyes that seemed ablaze in contrast to the shadows cast on her face by the flickering light in her cupped palm.

The woman raised her finger to her lips, and with one last glance towards the crowded grave of the tragic Adrien Agreste, she departed.

The girl's father turned and sighed in annoyance at the pestering of his daughter, only to catch the gleam of the candle weaving between the gravestones as Mrs Agreste made her light escape, pausing only momentarily to watch a black cat curled on a gravestone, a ladybug resting gently on its paw.

Chapter End Notes
And that's it. Sorry.

But please, feel free to subscribe to my account if you liked this story, as I will be posting more Miraculous stories (mainly fluff ngl) and I wouldn't want you to miss any ;)

My new Miraculous story: http://archiveofourown.org/works/11265606

Thank you guys, so much

~ Kai [Eggboydraco]

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!