

A Miraculous History

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A Miraculous History

by [Tsuki \(Tsuki_Taiyo\)](#)

Summary

When Tikki finds a cat demon in her master's temple, she doesn't know this will be the begin of an unlikely friendship. From now on the two of them are a team and assist humans in warding off evil, most times accompanied by their friends. All their adventures are collected in a thick, leather bound book, written in a language unknown to mankind. Until now...

There's a demon

Chapter Summary

In which a young Tikki finds a thief in her master's temple.

Chapter Notes

Okay, so this is my idea how the kwamis were bound to their miraculous. Since kwami apparently stands for 'quantic kamis' and kami describes Shinto gods, the story begins in the Japanese region. As a result, there might be names you don't know, which is why I'll put short explanations at the end of each chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I held my breath as long as he was close enough to my hiding place to hear my breathing. *It would be a miracle should it oversee my brilliant red hair*, I thought. *Or the glittering of the crown holding up most of my curls... Why do you always have to wear it openly, Tikki?*

An intruder had let himself into the temple of my Lord Kangiten and his lovely wife, gods of bliss. By pure luck our paths had crossed and I had followed the creature to the private chambers of my master. I knew the god of bliss to be absent due to a human settlement, which had called for his help, while his wife spent some time with her sister. That left me as the one in charge as the strongest and oldest novice of my master. *What is this thing anyway? Its fur looks a lot like that of an Iriomote cat, all brown and gray with spots and stripes... But no Iriomote would be dumb enough to sneak into the temple of a god. Animals are smart that way.*

While I still pondered what I was facing, the creature had slithered up to the treasure box of my Lord and Lady. Without hesitating I slipped in, very aware of the twitching cat ears poking out of a mass of blackish hair. Fortunately the carpet muted my steps as I slit into a shadow between a cupboard and the doorway I came through. *I wonder how long until this thing is noticed... It appears to have some kind of human form, despite claws and tail and ears. Must be a powerful Shikigami then, maybe a god of calamity envious of my Lord's respect with the humans? But why would they bother with treasures rather than let's say attack his wife or me while we are seemingly unprotected?*

The latch snapped open with an audible click. The cat ears swirled around swiftly, making sure nobody approached to check on the sound, as nimble claws pried the box open. I took this as my cue to interfere with his plans. "And what exactly do you believe you're doing there?", I demanded to know. The creature whirled around just as I stepped forth from the

shadows, my red kimono catching the light with each step. My small frame was wrapped in layers of silk with a glittering tiara adorning my red hair, pulled up into a traditional bun with two stands framing my pale face. It was a male figure I now ultimately knew. His green eyes

—

My eyes widened in shock: “Akuma” The creature’s lips curled into a cruel smile, showing off his fangs. *No, no, no, no! Normal Iriomote cats have amber eyes, not green eyes. This is a demon!*

“To be honest, I don’t care, how you call me, dear.”, he purred. “You won’t live to tell the tale.” Taking one step toward me, he paused since I didn’t turn to flee or made any other movement. *I need to make this as quickly as possible. Neither of my masters will be pleased to find out there is a wild demon in their private rooms. But I cannot kill him without direct provocation... Think Tikki!*

“Do you know, where you are? This is the temple of Lord Kangiten, god of bliss and protector against evil and demons. So excuse me, if I don’t tremble in fear, akuma.”, I replied easily. “Oh and by the way, I am not only a novice to the god of bliss, I am daughter of the god of creation himself.”

“Lady Luck must hate me”, the cat demon muttered, rubbing at his temples. “Lady Luck is a cruel woman. She tends to loose interest in her suspects rather quickly, wouldn’t you agree?”, I stepped further into the light. Instinctively the demon’s eyes roamed around to find the next possible exit. “I don’t quite see, why she would take an interest in you in the first place.”, I added with a dramatic sigh. “Her ways have always been hard to find.” An angry growl reverberated from the walls around us. Merely a way to try and make me fear him, although had the akuma wanted to attack me, he would have already done so. “The other gods always tell her to not take to a subject for too long or see it through until the end, but she is simply such a fleeting person. Never staying in one place. None of them can bind her.”, I went on as if nothing happened. His ears flattened further against his skull as another growl penetrated the air. “She also tends to act on whims, you know? She is unreliable like that.”

“Now, now”, a female voice spoke up. “If only my dear sister could hear you speak of her in that tone.” From a newly formed corridor strode my Lady, her white elephant head held high. “I apologize for being disrespectful, it was not my intention.”, I bowed before my Lady. “However we have a visitor.” My Lady merely raised a fine brow at the crouched form of the cat demon. His eyes narrowed in distrust, merely two green slits in his dark face, before a shiver went down his spine and his features turned more humanoid. “What did you do?”, he demanded from my Lady. “Why am I looking like this!”

“I pulled the side forth that is more like the humans. It is the side I prefer.”, she shook her head and it turned to that of a woman with blinding white hair framing her youthful face with dark brown eyes. “Now, dear, why don’t you tell me your name?” The demon threw his head back in laughter, showing off sharp canines his human appearance couldn’t hide. Instinctively I pulled my powers closer to me in case the demon chose to attack. But he only cackled at my Lady. “That was a good one!”, he barked between laughter. “Names hold power, why should I give it to you?” To my utter surprise my Lady gave a tight smile in response: “It was worth a try, was it not. Now then, but we need to call you by some name.”

“Why would you?”, the demon tilted his head, ears flopping curiously. *Why do I feel the sudden urge to touch them? Well, they are quite cute... No! Tikki, you need to concentrate!*

“We need your name because there is no way you’ll leave this temple without being put into the service of one of the gods. Or would you prefer, I allow her”, she pointed at me, “to kill you?” A ko-naginata found its way into my right hand while my left was filled with a metal tessens, a war fan embroidered with shuriken. I stood straight, fanning myself lazily with the tessens just to keep the appearance of a nonchalant fighter, albeit being slightly inexperienced in fighting against demons of his size. “That little girl will not be able to overpower me.”, he declared with an arrogant smirk. *Let’s see about that.*, I lightly narrowed my brows. *Prejudices against women are deadly when living with the gods.*

I flicked my fan a bit more violently in his direction, causing one of the throwing stars to loosen up and fly at the cat demon. He ducked his head to avoid being hit by the flying object, to then glared at me. “I believe Lord Fudo Myoo mentioned something about one of his novices dying during the morning practice. Again.”, I mentioned without taking my eyes off the cat. “The fierce and wrathful King of Wisdom? Hell no!”, the demon growled. “Nice idea”, my smile returned. “Lady Izanami always has a place for lost causes.” A snarl and crouch into a fighting stance was my answer. *I don’t mean to be cruel, but this demon tried to steal from my master, laughed about my Lady and personally insulted me. No need to grudge, right?*

“Calm down Tia”, my Lady’s voice cut through the air. “And you demon stand down or I’ll have to call my husband upon you.” With another growl the demon forced his stance to relax while I resumed my innocent fanning. “Li Shou, the cat goddess, should have time to take care of yet another kitten.”, my Lady announced. “Would you be okay with us calling you Akuma, since you didn’t provide us with another name?” The demon shrugged carelessly: “Whatever suits you best Lady.”

“Well then, I’ll inform Lady Li Shou of your arrival. Tia”, her sharp eyes turned on me, “Akuma will be part of your cadre. See to it, that he adjusts.” My weapons evaporated into thin air when I bowed to my Lady as she disappeared through the same corridor she had arrived through. “Now then, Akuma”, I tasted the name on my lips. “Follow me and no more touching of godly objects. Is that understood?” He flashed me a smile full of sharp teeth: “Of course not darling. How would I come to touch anything belonging to your mistress and master?” My eyes narrowed at him and my favourite tessens found its way back into my hand. *He doesn’t have my true name to work wicked magic over me, but neither have I his to control him. I need to keep him at bay until my friends are there to help me contain him. Oh I can already hear Trixx bugging me about it...*

Chapter End Notes

Kangiten - God of Bliss, Joy and Pleasure. He originally comes from India, but is also worshipped in Japan, especially by couples hoping for children. He is depicted either as a single elephant-headed humanoid being or as an embracing couple of elephant-headed

humans (thus the worshipping as a deity of pleasure and my interpretation of him as husband and wife).

Shikigami - are a small spirits, which can be conjured. Their power is bound to their master. Although they can develop their own free will over time, at first they follow the given orders like puppets.

Akuma - literally means demon, which is the context it is used in here. Not as in the evilised victims of Hawk Moth.

Naginata - is a traditional Japanese weapon. It is formed like a pole with a curved longer blade at the end of it. The prefix ko- indicates the version used by female warriors. It is smaller to compensate the lesser height and upper-body strength of women.

Tessen - is a war fan.

Shuriken - can be translated as throwing stars. This weapon can be used either for throwing or sometimes stabbing and slashing. They are mainly supplementary weapons and can take on many different shapes.

Fudo Myoo - one of the Wisdom Kings. His other names suggest him to be wrathful and violent, similar to a god of war. He is often depicted as angry faced and fanged with a sword in his hand that may or may not be enflamed.

Izanami - goddess of Creation and Death. She is the wife of Izanagi and created the world with him. She died, which resulted in her living in the underworld/world of darkness. Izanagi wanted to take her back, however he lit a torch to see in the darkness. Frightened by her appearance, he flees and seals the underworld off (while Izanami tries to hunt him down), thus creating the separation of the living world and that of the dead.

Li Shou - is a cat goddess. The gods assigned her to watch over the world, but falling cherry blossoms or patches of sunlight distracted her. So the gods decide to give this assignment to the humans, while Li Shou henceforth watches over the circle of day and night, with her eyes lightening up the sky.

A Partner

Chapter Summary

In which Tikki and Akuma team up for the first time - and are quite successful.

Chapter Notes

Here we have another chapter for the Miraculous History... As before, I'll explain foreign terms at the end of the chapter, just in case you want to look it up. Just a quick note on the change in names. Tikki (Tia) and Plagg (Akuma) do not use their given names due to the fact, that they don't trust each other. In some cultures it is believed, that the name holds power over its person, enabling others, should the name be known, to bewitch them. To avoid this Plagg and Tikki and the other future kwamis will not use their original names in the beginning. Have fun!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The demon and I exited the temple and went straight towards the aisle of the always-blossoming cherry trees. “Where are you taking me?”, the cat demon asked after we walked a good patch of the way in silence. “Where do you think I am taking you?”, I asked back. “And here I thought the confused looks and blank stare would have answered that already...” A light giggle escaped me, as I kept walking towards our destination. “I am taking you to Lady Li Shou’s temple, since I doubt you know your way around here.”, I caught his green-eyed stare, “Or are you not telling me something?” A sly grin stretched his lips, but he said nothing. *Akuma can’t have scouted the entire grounds before choosing to climb into my master’s temple and attempt to steal. There are other ways and more valuable artefacts hidden among the other shrines... Wait... How did he get in here anyway?*

We walked the rest of the way towards an especially large cherry tree in silence. Beneath the tree a black and white cat lay curled up and purring lightly. Akuma eyed her critically, before shooting me a look that clearly said: *Are you serious? A cat?*

I chose to not respond to that, instead bowing to the seemingly sleeping cat. “Lady Li Shou”, I breathed. With a sound somewhere between a meow and a purr, golden eyes slowly opened. “Ah, finally, you’ve arrived.”, the cat goddess purred. “Took you long enough.”

“You are a goddess? You are a cat.”, Akuma blurted. Not even my glare could shut him up. Fortunately Lady Li Shou only laughed at his comment, shifting her pose, so she was sitting on her hind legs. “My dear, I am not only a cat. I was assigned to watch over the world.

However neither my children nor me were very concentrated or suited for the task, so we gave it to the humans, who have done quite well until now, I think. Ever since then we have taken it upon ourselves to watch over the passing of day and night on earth. The Lady told me you, demon, want to be my novice?”

“Want is very dependant on its definition.”

“Ah, I see...” A light chuckle shook the cat. “Why do you want to keep me anyway?”, the cat demon grumbled. “You attempted to steal from a god, that has to be punished. Either by your death or by pulling you into our ranks and making you work. Your choice.” Akuma’s ears flattened to his skull, a low growl rumbling in his chest. Li Shou grinned: “Well then. You’re on board I guess. I love struggling kitten.” And just like that, within the blink of an eye the cat goddess transformed into a much larger version of herself. Akuma jumped back a few paces, half-transforming into his feline version. *Please stay calm, please stay calm, please stay calm.*, I chanted in my head. *Don’t attack a goddess that would be a bad idea. Stay exactly where you are and compose yourself.*

“Don’t fret kitten. What is your name?”

“They call me Akuma.”

Li Shou grinned, showing off her sharp teeth: “I didn’t ask what they call you. I asked for your name.” Akuma bared his own fangs defiantly. “He has just arrived from his home realm. He isn’t yet accustomed to our customs.”, I dared to say. However my interruption went seemingly unnoticed, the goddess and demon staring at each other in fighting stances. *If they choose to attack now, I’ll be unable to get between them. Who wants to get between two fighting cats, even more so since one of them is a goddess?*

Fortunately it never came to a fight. A strange sense of understanding passed between them and then Akuma’s green eyes were speckled with gold, making them even more radiant. “Welcome to the club, kitten.”, Li Shou purred, “Now go make momma proud.”, her golden eyes strayed to me, “Tia, make sure, my kitten returns safely from your job.” We blinked at the goddess in confusion, before my ears tingled with the human prayer, vibrating with fear, reached my senses: *Kami-sama please protect our village bring us luck. We are being attacked, nothing can help us, please, gentle, righteous Kami-sama, assist us in these dark times.* Akuma shuddered, having never felt this before. “What was that?”, he asked. “Humans are bidding for help. If they need assistance or guidance from the gods they tend to call our names, which we hear quite clearly. Seemingly this task requires the both of us, if you could hear it too.” *Although I wish you hadn’t heard it. There never comes anything good from a demon helping humans. I wish it were just me, I know how to handle these things... But oh well, there is a first time for everything, right?*, I added in my mind. “We need to go to earth and help them.”

“Why should I care for scared humans?”

“Humans give us cats a place to curl up in, feed us and are our descendants in protecting the earth. Gods are their protectors so they can protect what we created. We feed off their energy.”, Li Shou’s eyes gleamed. “So if you want to survive as my kitten, then shut your whiskers and help Tia complete her mission. It is your first act as one of mine.”

The reason why the humans had called for the gods became obvious once Akuma and I landed in the human gathering. A giant boar was rampaging through the huts, tearing apart everything in its way. “When did you change?”, Akuma stared at the armour I now wore, having materialised it without actively thinking about it. “Daughter of Creation”, I shrugged. “Runs in the family to create things I guess?” The demon grinned insanely, before shifting his attention away from my red leather armour towards the humans running around trying to escape the rouge animal. “They remind me of chicken when a fox is near.”, his green eyes gleamed hungrily. “We are here to help them, not eat them”, I told him sternly. “Try to keep that in mind.”

“Whatever you say, darling.”

Human cries reached my ears. *I have to concentrate on the task at hand. There is no time to dwell on whether or not I can trust him. My father created these souls to life; Izanami is trying to wipe them off the face of earth. I have to stop this useless bloodshed!*

With new determination I started towards the attacking beast, feeling my armour move with every step I took. A ko-naginata and tessen with shuriken materialised in my hands. “Let’s do it”, I told myself. The humans finally noticed my presence as the heightened calls indicated. They changed direction towards me, flailing their arms around to point at things around them. *Oh dear. It would be so much easier, if they stopped screaming at me... At least then I could concentrate on something.*

“Kami-sama!”, one man cried. “Please bind him!” I gave him a gentle smile, since my appearance alone was frightening enough. With a twirl of my wrist, the ko-naginata pointed downwards, but ready to cut through flesh and bone anytime. “Stand back. My partner and I will take care of it.”, I told them. “Partner?”, some humans mumbled and looked around in confusion. *Don’t tell me he disappeared please don’t tell me Akuma disappeared.*

A loud roar was my answer to that fear. The humans shied away from the sounds, trying to hide behind me. It didn’t work that well considering I was not exactly the tallest person around. My eyes scanned the area and landed on the feline form of my new partner. He wore his fur, eyes gleaming green and golden in the light, as his claws cut through the air in front of him, only inches from the boar’s hide, front legs already showing shallow cuts. “Akuma, what are you doing?”, I narrowed my eyes. The demon jumped in front of the boar. A squeak and the animal turned on its heel, effectively destroying another hut on the way. With a start, I ran towards the fight. “Lead it away from the huts!”, I called out. Akuma gave an answering growl. The closer I came the more details I noticed. The boar was indeed a giant, its tusks stuck out from its fleshy lower lip as long as my forearm. Tiny bead-like eyes shone with a mixture of madness, panic and malice – and they focused on me...

“Tia!”, Akuma roared, his eyes slightly widening. I however stayed perfectly calm, allowing the boar to close in on me, lifting the ko-naginata. My steps quickened, preparing to catapult myself over the back of the beast. The boar roared in victory, leaping at the same moment I pushed myself off the ground. The naginata ripped his neck and part of his back open. My weapon fell from my hands as the beast slammed right into me, blood splashing onto my

face. The air was knocked from my lungs, as we tumbled over each other, the animal pressing me into the ground with its weight and sharp hooves digging into my shoulder through the armour. *Oh dear, this is getting way too close. I don't particularly like the smell of its breath...*

The tessens felt heavy in my hands, which wasn't all that surprising considering there was a grown boar stood on top of me. Still I was able to free one of the shuriken. The boar turned its head after having recovered its bearings, staring down at me with drooping tusks. I forced myself to breathe despite the weight pressing down on my chest, racked my brain to formulate a plan along with a half sketched backup plan.

Suddenly a black shadow fell over us and the weight was lifted off my chest. Akuma, back in his humanoid form, threw the animal a few paces away before pulling me up to my feet. "What was that? Wanted to get some new jewellery or something?", he asked, one of his cat ears flopping down. "I had a plan. I didn't need your help", I snapped, feeling a sudden anger eat away at me. *Who does this demon think he is? He ruined my chance at killing the beast cleanly. I could have saved myself. I am no damsel in distress! Why does this insufferable, little, dumb –*

The train of thoughts stopped abruptly. My head shot around to stare at the boar, which was seemingly sneering at us. No, not seemingly. Sharp teeth flashed as the thing grinned broader. That was when I felt a looming presence in my back. "Don't listen to the things it whispers into your head, Akuma.", I whispered. "This is no ordinary animal, this is a demon."

"Do not give me this all mighty crap. I know how you gods always think you are so high and mighty, but just now you owe your life to me!", he growled at me. "And don't you dare tell me what to do." *Oh no, the demon has him in its claws already. Akuma is ensnared, what do I do?*

Akuma made the choice for me by lunging at me and transforming into a giant cat in midair. And by giant I mean he reached at least a hand above my hip when standing on all fours. Right now he was lunging at me with all fours outstretched... "Akuma, no!", I screamed in horror. If he chose to fight me now, I had to kill him to eliminate any danger, before taking on the wild demon. *I have one last option... It is dangerous, but-*

My body tensed, as I ducked away under the fast approaching claws. With a frustrated growl Akuma spun around his green-golden eyes gleaming dangerously. "In the name of creation", I began to invoke. "In the name of the eternal Lord of the Heavens, I, his daughter Tikki, cleanse thee. Shall thy foul acts be given mercy to, thou unfortunate soul." With my closed tessens I painted a tilted Z into the air, blowing against the glowing sign so it covered Akuma. His eyes suddenly cleared, anger exchanged for confusion. "How did I get here?", he wondered. "That is no normal boar", I pointed my fan at the now less grinning creature. "This is a demon."

"And it would have been so much easier, had you just killed each other.", said demon mentioned. *I am glad my incantation is inaudible to everyone except the one it is used on and even he will not remember my name once he is freed. Otherwise this could really go wrong. I felt my body ache with the power I had to use for the incantation. Or, more wrong than it already has.*

Akuma bared his teeth at the boar demon, a low growl rumbling in his chest. He resumed his animalistic form once more, pacing like a caged animal. "I hate to be manipulated.", Akuma snarled, his ears pressed to his skull. "Then why don't we show him?", I asked, as another ko-naginata found its way into my hand and the tessen was replaced with a shining katana. We had both fallen into the deathly calm of predators ready for the kill. "Come here, kitty." The large cat strolled over, curling its tail around my waist, his body protecting my back. Calmly we observed our opponent and for the first time since I had flung myself into the battle I noticed how oddly quiet it had become. The humans probably fled the sidelines to watch from a safe distance what happened in their village.

"Never thought I'd say that, but what's the plan darling?", Akuma wanted to know. I took a deep breath, the back of my hand brushing against the fur on his hide. "Do you trust me?"

"No"

"Good. Then this might work out after all.", my eyes traced every inch of the boar, from the sharp tusks to the bloody back and front legs, away to the strong hind legs. "Move with the flow. Nothing else matters. Got it?" Akuma nodded once. Without warning I darted away from him, attacking the right side. Not even a full heartbeat later Akuma shot to the opposite side. The boar didn't react fast enough. A painful scream ripped from its mouth as claws and blades hit true, somehow Akuma and I functioned without words, as we sprinted away from the demon again. "Look at this", Akuma grinned at me – and grinning giant cats look really scary. "How about we finish it quickly and then go back? I could use some good food to be honest."

"Can't argue with that. The faster I get away from you the better." He laughed at my obvious lie. "It would be a cat-astrophe if you were stuck with me any longer, huh?", my partner chuckled at his own pun. No words were exchanged as we fell into our deadly rhythm once more. Somehow we knew where the other would strike next, so we distracted the boar depending on who was attacking at the moment. It was one single dance of blades and claws and it was perfectly choreographed until Akuma pulled a trick from his sleeve I had never seen before. As the boar desperately tried to attack either of us, it didn't matter anymore whom of us since we pierced its eyes so the demon was completely blind, Akuma's eyes suddenly glowed a fluorescent green. Not only his eyes, but his claws seemed to catch green fire as well. Without missing a beat he pressed his claws against the demon's body. One final yowl and the boar demon was no more. There were only us in the middle of a destroyed human settlement.

"What was that?", I asked him dumbfounded. Akuma looked down at his claws: "I am not quite sure, but I think this is the ability someone mentioned my father to have had."

"What do you call it?"

"I don't know..."

Okay, at the moment he does not know, so let's concentrate on the pressing issues at hand. I'll just rebuilt the huts and then ask Lady Li Shou about it. Maybe she has an idea as to what it could be.

Twirling around myself, I let my abilities of creation repair the huts the fight destroyed. "Wow", Akuma mumbled, looking around. I smiled tiredly: "Thank you. Only side effect is it makes me always so tired." *Why are you telling him that? You don't even trust him completely!*, I screamed at myself in my head. *He just fought with me against a demon. Akuma deserves a chance no matter what he did in the past. Our fighting style was so in sync as well, this never happened before with any other partner.*, another part of me replied. "You shouldn't tell a demon that.", I heard the smirk in his voice. "We don't trust each other, remember?" My sole response was a quiet moan. *Somehow I feel, like I could trust him. Given some time. We worked perfectly during the fight. I have never ever experienced anything like it before...*

With another groan my knees gave out from under me and I tumbled to the ground, my weapons disappearing altogether. "Everything is going to be fine.", I mumbled. Akuma chuckled darkly: "How do you know, darling? You are at the mercy of a demon, ne?"

"Just get me home.", my growl sounded more like a whine, even to my ears. Strong arms lifted me off the ground. "Huh, and this is supposed to be a daughter of Creation? Oh dear, you are pathetic." I found myself unable to answer his insult properly, clawing at the darkness trying to draw me under, trying to stay conscious. "Well, then let's get you back to the likes of you, darling.", Akuma said calmly, starting to walk with me held against his chest. Although I wanted to force myself to stay awake the whole trip long to make sure he didn't kidnap me, I fell asleep about half way home with his steady heart beat as my lullaby.

Chapter End Notes

Akuma - literally means demon, which is the context it is used in here. Not as in the evilised victims of Hawk Moth.

Li Shou - is a cat goddess. The gods assigned her to watch over the world, but falling cherry blossoms or patches of sunlight distracted her. So the gods decide to give this assignment to the humans, while Li Shou henceforth watches over the circle of day and night, with her eyes lightening up the sky.

Izanami - goddess of Creation and Death. She is wife of Izanagi and with him created the world. She "died", which resulted in her living in the underworld. Izanagi wanted to take her back, however he broke his promise and turned around to look at her on their way back. Frightened by her appearance, he flees and seals the underworld off (while Izanami hunts him for breaking his promise), thus creating the separation of the living world and that of the dead.

Kami-sama - kami are the Japanese deities, while -sama is an honorific for people in high ranks and positions or gods. I chose not to use these kind of honorifics for the gods talking among themselves, because I figured they might not communicate in a "human" language, thus these honorifics are unnecessary.

Naginata - is a traditional Japanese weapon. It is formed like a pole with a curved longer blade at the end of it. The prefix ko- indicates the version used by female warriors. It is smaller to compensate the lesser height and upper-body strength of women.

Tessen - is a war fan.

A Friend

Chapter Summary

In which Plagg is misused as a pillow and Tikki explodes.

Chapter Notes

So here we have another chapter of our Miraculous History. Originally I would have liked to upload it on around saturday-ish, but that obviously didn't work out... Anyway, have fun with this newest chapter and, as always, any explanations you might need are at the end of the chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Slowly I became aware of my surroundings again. There was a low buzzing murmur of voices in the background. My body felt heavy, as if I had slept for far too long.

“*Tikki*”, a voice whispered in my head. “*Wake up, it is time.*”

Carefully I opened my eyes, thankful for the dim lighting in the room I now recognised as my own. My first look brought my eyes upon my master standing behind his wife, who sat on the edge of my futon. Both shone with calm happiness. “Welcome back”, my Lady gave me a gently smile. “How long have I been asleep?”, I wanted to know. The couple exchanged a long glance that spoke volumes, before quietly excusing themselves. *Okay, so at least more than a few hours.*, I thought. That had happened before. My powers of creation took their toll on me every time I used them. So it was no surprise that keeping my weapons and armour intact, despite attacks of the enemy, then concentrating a part of my powers on Akuma to keep the demon at bay, as well as repairing all these huts in the human gathering had downed my strength. *Speaking of the demon*, I thought, *were is Akuma right now?*

One turn of my head revealed the rest of the room to me. The constant murmur came from the assembled Seven Gods of Luck, all of which were in a discussion about something that serious, they did not notice I was awake. To see all of them assembled were a rare sight, let alone in an obviously longer discussion. A glimpse of fur caught my attention, bringing my slightly swimming senses back into focus on what I had originally been looking for. *Wow, I must have slept longer than I thought and maybe longer still...*

I turned my head to the left even more, where I thought I had caught a glance of my new feline companion. However what I now saw left me breathless. Near my bed rested Lady Li Shou. The cat goddess sat calmly on her hind legs, observing the Seven Gods of Luck with

attentive golden eyes. Her feline form, even seated, was still one head taller than the black-furred male sitting next to her. His eyes, in contrary to his mistress, his golden-green were focused on me. *As if he's guarding my weaker side. Like my partner would, had I one. Wait, I blinked. Those green-golden eyes...*

“Akuma?”, I whispered. The former cat demon now focused completely on me, eyes twinkling in hidden mischief. *I knew Lady Li Shou affects her novices, but I never heard of someone being changed this quickly...*

“How long was I asleep?”, I asked him. After one quick glance at Li Shou, Akuma strolled over, resting his chin on my futon. “For about two and a half weeks”, he told me. “That must’ve been some purretty strong swoosh you used to rebuilt the village, huh, darling?”

“That was no ‘swoosh’. That were my powers of creation.”, I retorted. “Now tell me how you got your fur changed to black when it was brown before.” Tentatively I reached out to touch his fur, tempted by the soft look. To my own surprise Akuma leaned his head forward, allowing me to pet him. “There’s nothing much to tell at all, darling. Lady Li Shou took me in her capable paws and told me some lessons – sometimes with the claws.”

“You do realise that rhymes?”

“Why do you think, I added that part, hn?”, Akuma grinned. “Anyway, they told me to be your partner, since something, I don’t know, they said something about matching and opposites, but I don’t feel very attracted to you. Do you?” For a second I didn’t know what to say. The cat demon had just revealed, that the gods believed us to be one pair of a whole. They would match us as fighting partners – maybe even more! *Oh gods! I can’t believe my luck... And here I thought being the novice of Bliss and daughter of Creation would bring me good luck. Oh well, let’s work with it. There is nothing else I can do at the moment. Everything will work out fine I just need to believe in it.*

“Darling”, Akuma gave me a teasing smile. “Don’t tell me you fell for an alley cat like ol’ moi. Because I am pretty sure I won’t catch you.” I gave him a flat stare: “I think you noticed by now, that I can catch myself just fine.” The black cat snorted. “Umhm. Like when I had to lift the boar off you? Or when you collapsed because you sparkly magic ate away at you? Remind me, who again helped you out?” With a light huff I narrowed my eyes at him. “As I told you before: I had a plan to get the boar off me. Hadn’t you interfered with that I wouldn’t have had needed to overuse my powers, its not magic, those are natural, and then I wouldn’t have slept for so long and would have been able to get home safely before sleeping. So to sum it all up for you, demon, I wouldn’t have needed your help at all. I did just fine before you came along.” With a low growl, Akuma moved closer to me, eyes gleaming dangerously: “Of course you didn’t need my help, darling. I just happened to be in hearing distance. And at the moment I hear a lot of ‘if’ in your sentences.”, he grinned broadly. “Not the best way to seem credible, ne?”

“I wish I had killed you the second I found you sneaking around in my master’s temple.”, I wrinkled my nose. “And I would have wished to keep my natural colouring and not be changed by training my abilities of destruction.”, Akuma kept a completely straight face. “We don’t always get what we want, darling.” *His fur changed because he trained his abilities? What would have happened had he trained powers of creation instead?*, I sat up in

bed. *Now I feel a little bad for simply assuming it was what he wanted to happen... Well, Akuma didn't want to be with the gods to begin with. I guess, I always thought it might change despite everything.*

“Black stands for stability right?”, my blue eyes travelled to his golden-green ones. “If we are indeed two sides of one coin you are the one I can always rely on. You will be my constant stability in an ever-changing world. I can offer good luck and prosperity and companionship in turn.” Akuma looked at me with an unreadable expression for a second. However before either of us could say another word, the gods chose to interfere. “Tia, I see you are awake.”, a voice said. “Good. I hope you rested well.” Reluctantly I looked away from my feline companion, to face the Seven Gods of Luck. “Yes, Lord Bishamon, thank you for your concern, but I am fine now.”

“You know that as the head of the cadre you are supposed to look after yourself extraordinarily well, Tia.”, another god added. I bowed my head to them in response and as an act of respect. “Lord Fukurokuju, it is an honour to meet you again. Yes, I am aware of the heightened expectations towards my person. I will keep myself in best health.” The Seven Gods of Luck shared quick glances with one another. *There's something coming. I can feel it in the air and I am not yet sure, if I'll like it or not...*

“Did you notice the ability of our newest member?”, Lady Benzaiten spoke up, her Geisha make-up not able to hide the slight blush dusting her cheeks from the prospect of having found a new talent. After a short look around the other gods, Lord Kangiten and his wife as well as Lady Li Shou were calmly observing our conversation with the Seven Gods of Luck, I turned my attention back to Lady Benzaiten. I nodded slowly: “I am aware of his talent for ... destruction?” Akuma winched slightly, which almost made me revoke my assumption. Almost. Lady Benzaiten's lips twitched into the eager grin of a child getting a long anticipated present. “Exactly”, she clapped her hands. “These powers are very rare! I still can't quite believe, that I finally found someone to have both destruction and an ounce of creation in their veins.”, by now she was practically jumping up and down, “As much as I love your way of creation with a hint of destruction, his talents are so fascinating.”

The other six gods looked at her with veiled displeasure. Apparently they hadn't wanted to reveal this to us after all. *Well, so much for being cryptically. Thanks to her love for rare talents. At least we now know where we stand in this.*

“Tia, you will understand, that naturally he will be added to your cadre.”, a wise, older looking man spoke up, straightening the scholar's cap atop his head. “I thought he was already assigned to be in the cadre, Lord Juroujin?”, I couldn't help but wonder out loud. The god nodded at me: “Yes he was, as part of the members under your protection. Now we want you to take him as your second in command. He will be your partner in combat.” Akuma's eyes shot wide in surprise, a small noise escaping his throat. In an instant Lady Benzaiten was at his side, cradling his head in her hands. “I know dear, it must be very frightening to not only be gifted with such a powerful gift but now be put in a position as high as this at your first day here.”, she frantically stroked his head. “However I would have never agreed to this, were I in some way unsure of your capability to be able to live up to the role to your fullest. Dear, please don't give up. We're all here to help you.”

“My Lords, my Lady, if you don’t mind”, Lord Kangiten spoke up from the background. “I think Tia needs some more rest. You can discuss the details with her later on. For now she should rest again and regain the rest of her strength.” The Seven Gods of Luck looked me over and I instinctively made myself look smaller and more fragile than I was. *I am only a novice, I cannot argue with them. Besides, I really feel a little tired after all these revelations.*

The seven gods around me nodded their head in agreement, drawing back out of the room without another word. Only as the door slid shut behind them did I breath again. My Lady hurried to the right side of my futon. “Are you alright? You look a little pale.”

“Just tired”, I murmured, suddenly unable to hold my eyes open one second longer. “Let her rest my dear.”, Lord Kangiten spoke up. “Come, we will see what the other novices are doing. Hopefully they used their time for training, because I feel like spontaneously testing their fighting abilities right now.”

“Don’t be too harsh on them. You know they all care for their sister deeply. So even if they didn’t train...” The rest of my Lady’s answer was swallowed by another door sliding shut. “We should get going as well, Akuma”, Li Shou said calmly. “Come, let her rest in peace.” *She’s going to take him with her... Akuma is my partner now. We need to learn to trust each other in life and death. There is no room for mistrust in battle.*

“C-Can he stay?”, I asked softly. “What?”, I heard the surprise clearly in the cat goddesses’ voice. “You want him to stay by your side? Just like that?” It cost much energy to open my eyes, but when I did I was faced with two very shocked looking giant cats. A small smile tilted my lips upward: “He is my partner now. I should trust him.” Li Shou eyed me curiously, analysing every inch of my expression, before allowing her muscles to relax somewhat. “You are a strange novice, Tia. No one would ever accept a former demon as their partner just like that, even more so when weakened like you are now.”

“Psst, maybe he didn’t hear that”, I stage-whispered. Li Shou snorted shortly, shooting the still staring former cat demon a glance. “You can call yourself lucky, kitten, to have been chosen to be this warrior’s partner. Other novices would have outright rejected you.”, her golden eyes wandered back to me. “Very well, I allow him to stay here for now. Have a good rest.” I didn’t know what else to say, so I just smiled at her.

And then it was just Akuma and I.

“She is right, you know”, he said after a moment’s silence. “Why did you accept me?” I raised a brow at him: “Why not? We fought exceptionally good together, you know.” His ears twitched as he heard my mocking imitation of him. *You didn’t assume I would go all soft on you just because we are partners? Far from it to be exact. I don’t plan on seeming weak in front of you, thank you very much.*

With a tiny snort Akuma sat back, away from the futon. “You don’t seem tired anymore”, he noted. “Don’t let appearances fool you, demon. That’s one important point around the gods: Things are not what they appear.”, I grinned at him. “But in this case you are – or, were – right. I am tired. Would you mind keeping me company while I sleep for a bit?” The black cat showed me his fangs in a wicked smile. “Are you sure you want to risk it? After all I am a demon to the core. A demon with the newfound ability of destruction.” My yawn interrupted

him. “If you think to bore me to sleep go on. Your tirade about how bad you are is getting quite old, don’t you think?”, I yawned again. “Now come up here, curl up and be quiet. Some people want to sleep.”

“What, if some people don’t want to obey you?”

“Then some people are going to stay on the ground for the rest of the day.”

Akuma gave a small grunt, but I ignored him, choosing to close my eyes and wait. After some moments the demon huffed in annoyance and I tried to hide my small smile of triumph. “I knew it was very uncomfortable waiting on the floor.”, I mumbled. A light shift was the only indication that Akuma had slid onto my futon, before his soft fur brushed against my arm. “Oh hush. You are sleeping.”, he retorted. “You never noticed me slipping onto your futon.”

Probably a few hours later I awoke once more, feeling more refreshed than before and ready to face whatever the gods chose to throw at me. *What has woken me?*, I wondered sleepily. *Something woke me up, I am sure of it, but what?*

With a content sigh I nuzzled deeper into my pillow. My moving pillow. Wait. Moving? There were a lot of moving things I knew of, some wardrobes trotted after their master’s like an obedient dog, but moving pillows? That was a new one. Carefully I analysed the moves it made.

Up and down.

Up.

And down.

Up.

Down.

It’s just like breathing... My eyes widened in shock as I remembered, whom I had invited into my bed. *Oh no!*

As quick as I dared I lifted my head off my furry – as I now noticed – “pillow”. Black fur. Black fur was all I could see. Black fur and my red strands dangling and curling above it. *Such a stark contrast... Quite pretty to look at...*

“Are you going to move anytime soon or just keep drooling on my pelt?”, a voice rasped. Blue clashed with golden-green. We stared at each other over his back. Akuma gave me a half smirk, as I felt my cheeks heat up. “How long was I asleep?”

“Before or after you curled against me and choose to make me your personal pillow?”, Akuma grinned as I reddened even further. By now my facial colour must rival my hair

colour. "All in all", I squeaked. For a long time a thoughtful hum was my only response, then: "About three to five hours. One of which you ended up using me as a pillow."

"I'm sorry.", I tried to hide behind my loose strands and my eyes fell on my state of dress. "Who put me into this nightgown?" The demon didn't even look at it, choosing to rest his chin on his paws. "Your Lady did. She wouldn't let you rest any longer than necessary in the armour." With a nod I explained: "Keeping the armour on would draw more energy from my system to maintain it. As soon as it is separated from my hibernating body it dissipates until I call upon it again."

"So undressing you from any clothes you created yourself, when you are in a coma due to an overuse of your magic, is a way to save you energy and help you to restore your energy quicker.", Akuma summed up. *Why again did you tell him that? He's a demon for kami's sake!*, a tiny voice screamed in my head. On the other hand Akuma was my partner, so I needed to trust him with my life since we would be fighting together. Sooner or later it would come down to the trust between us. "So undressing you is helping your energy", Akuma gave me a lewd grin. "Don't even think about it, demon. One touch and you'll find your personal treasure gone missing.", I growled at him darkly. "No need to be all bossy, darling", he purred at me with half-lidded eyes. "You and I both know it would never work between us.", I glared back at him. The cat only chuckled to himself, shooting me a daring grin: "Keep telling yourself that, darling."

"If I remember correctly, you are now assigned to be my partner and second in command of the cadre. How about I finally introduce them to you?" The change in subject was not the most smooth, but I had no nerve to throw subtly and not-so-subtly hidden messages and threats around. Fortunately, Akuma seemed to notice my shift in mood, so there were no more quick remarks thrown my way. "Would you like to get dressed?", he asked instead with an innocent tilt of the head. My eyes narrowed slightly. *He just plays around with me right now. I can feel it. Literally. Well then...*

"No, I planned on going outside in my nightgown. Do you see a problem there?"

"Absolutely not, darling. With your looks you could wear anything and look great."

The cat demon hopped down from my futon, practically sliding to the door with silent steps. *He doesn't really think I'd go out in just my nightgown, does he?*, I wondered briefly. But then I remembered, whom I was talking to and whom I was, so I simply swung my legs over the side of the futon and carefully stood up. My knees wobbled since the muscles hadn't been used in over two weeks. Quickly I sat back down. *I can't go get changed when my legs shake, as if I might topple to the ground any other second.* I took a deep breath, feeling the cat demon's eyes watching me carefully. *It's risky, but there is no other way, if I don't want Akuma to see me without any clothes on. Which definitely is not an option.*

Another deep breath and I felt my long hair braid itself back into a traditional hairstyle with an elaborate bun held together by pretty combs with red ornaments, then falling loose, only some strands in the middle braided down and ornamented with little red flowers. Soft layers of silk wrapped themselves around my body, the nightgown giving way to one of my favourite kimonos with embroidered flowers and golden leaves.

As I turned towards Akuma, he only looked me over once, giving me a half-smile. “And suddenly you don’t look half-dead anymore.”, he commented. “Such a wonder what the right choice of clothes can do to you.”

“Thank you, kitty. Now, let’s go on a stroll, shall we?”

Akuma shifted to his humanoid form and held the door open for me to walk through, then shifting back into his feline form he seemed to love so much. We strode down the hallway of my home until we reached the courtyard, where the rest of the novices lounged in the late afternoon sun. *They’re all staring at us... All of them...*, I noted with discomfort. *Some are practically fleeing the scene. Are they that afraid of a large kitten?*

A thought struck me: “How often did you visit me over the course of the past weeks since I fell into hibernation?” Akuma looked up at me with guarded eyes: “Every other day. Why do you ask?”

“Because then they should have gotten used to you by now.”, I told him. Without another word I turned towards a younger novice I knew to be very shy but polite. Her black hair had earned her the nickname Mel, from Melania, which literally means the Black. “Hey Mel”, I smiled at her. “Do you know what is going on here? They all seem kind of set off by something... You don’t happen to know anything about it?” Her huge doe eyes shot around nervously, not staying anywhere for longer than a few quick heartbeats. “Absolutely. Look at her. Dark circles beneath her eyes, I bet she hasn’t slept in days since the revelation.”, someone whispered close by.

“I... uh... I don’t know anything.”, Mel stuttered, still avoiding to look me in the eye. *She’s lying.*, I frowned. *Why would she lie to me? Mel is such a kind girl; she would never be dishonest about anything. We’ve talked about enough troubles in our education by now to not have any inhibitions about talking about critical subjects.*

“Oh that poor girl, having to put up with a partner, who might very well endanger her life just because he thinks it’s fun.”, another novice said to his friend next to him. Mel played with strands of her hair before abruptly standing up and raking a hand through her hair. “I-I need to g-go now.”, she mumbled. “I have training right now.”

“But in the afternoon is no training...” I stepped closer to her. Mel ducked her head, leaping backwards and weaving her way through the groups of novices away from the courtyard. “I would have killed him for his crime. Now all the holy treasures are sullied by his impureness.”

“What was that?”, my shoulders tensed. “Don’t pay her any mind, darling”, Akuma muttered. “She has been like that for some time now.”

“Something is bothering her, kitty. I can’t just let her be, she may need help.”

“Here he goes again. Why was he even allowed to be here? Damn demon.”, someone murmured. “She doesn’t, believe me.”, Akuma told me firmly, nearly forcefully. I whirled around with an angered scowl on my face, while he simply stood there and stared at the spot Mel had disappeared. “Tell me, what exactly do you know about her problems, huh?”

“More than you could imagine, darling”, he responded darkly. “Now, let’s go on, shall we? My fur is getting uncomfortably hot in this sun. Damn colour.” And with that my new partner trotted away, leaving me to follow him or be left behind. Hurrying after him, I caught more than one sympathetic stare. *Were they so worried for my wellbeing? I was just overusing my powers, nothing that hasn’t happened before to be honest. Why would they fret about that?*

“I heard he was assigned to Tia as her partner...”, a few girls to my right whispered.

“According to Dean, the demon broke into Lord Kangiten’s temple and attempted to steal.”, a novice a few steps behind me murmured hatefully.

At that point my eyes glued themselves to the figure of my giant kitten in front of me. Akuma held his head low; ears turned to the back, not folded to the skull, but turned to avoid hearing more than necessary and his tail flicking only slightly above the ground. A picture of stubbornness, but broken stubbornness. *They’ve been talking like this for a longer period of time!*, I realised with silent horror. *How cruel have they been to him, when I wasn’t around? Akuma certainly tries to make himself as invisible as possible...*

“Akuma”, I said sternly. My partner looked back at me over his shoulder. “How long?” He knew what I meant, I saw it in his eyes, however he only turned his head and resumed his, now faster, marching across the yard. His tail and ears flickered nervously. That was all the answer I needed and all the information I needed for my calm to snap.

“You know, my partner brought me flowers just yesterday, we are great friends even when not in battle.”, a novice boasted. “I bet that demon will never honour her how she deserves.” His friend nodded in agreement: “I think maybe she is too soft hearted. That monster will take her apart piece by piece.” A third chimed in, quieter than the others: “Maybe we should take care of the problem for her, she is too nice to do anything about it.”

In a flutter of fabric I loomed over the gossiping novices. They fell silent once my raging anger registered with them. “Oh, please continue, don’t mind me”, I told them with a too sweet smile. “You were just debating whether or not to take care of the problem, the gods obviously are unwilling to care for themselves, by yourself. Go on, I am very interested in how you’d do that.”

The friends exchanged wary glances. No one spoke. The whole courtyard was silent, awaiting the next words. I didn’t let them wait for long, since I was so agitated. “Who of you thinks, that Akuma is unsuited to be my partner, let alone a novice to a god – and that all just because he’s a demon?”, I called out. “Who of you does think that, step forward.”, no one reacted. “Don’t be such cowards. Just some seconds ago you were all discussing it lividly how unfitting he is.”

Still no one reacted.

All around me energy began to cackle in the air, my kimono melting away to reveal a blood red chihaya, wide red trousers and a wide sleeved shirt, both made from cotton. With a hiss my hair accessories disappeared and my red hair fell wild around shoulders and back, some strands floating on the energy in the air. My tessens found their way into my hand.

“Who do you think aided me in my last battle against a manipulative giant boar demon, which destroyed a small human gathering? Who do you assume caught me when my overuse of powers, to repair the village, destroyed by the rampaging boar demon, took its toll on me? Who do you think carried me back here when I fell unconscious due to mentioned overuse? Who do you think watched my back both during the battle and while I slept for over two weeks?”, my voice steadily rose with each question I fired at them. “Slight hint: He is standing right over there, pretending to be invisible so you don’t pick on him. He is attempting to become one with the ground below his paws because you, you so called ‘pride of all gods’, can’t see beyond a façade, beyond a scheme you were told, beyond whatever prejudices you have formed in your ridiculously short and obviously very miserable life.” Some novices turned to each other, frowning at my choice of words. “Miserable because you are so self-absorbed, thinking so highly of yourself, that you completely forgot, that we are all one, one team. Life and Death are brother and sister, husband and wife. They go hand in hand. So get yourself some brain – may the Kamis be in your favour – and think very carefully about what you did over the past weeks.”, I stared around with narrowed eyes. “And try to keep in mind, whose partner Akuma – yes, he has a name! – is, because I will not tolerate any funny business towards him.”

Silence fell over the courtyard, all novices staring at me with wide eyes, fear and astonishment shining in their depths. No one dared to say a single word to me, who I must look like the greatest warrior of all times reincarnate.

“Good”, I stood straight to my full height. “I see you got my point. Now get out of my sight before my hands slip. We don’t need any more accidents today now, do we?” The others scrambled to their feet, nearly falling over each other in an attempt to get out of my striking range as quickly as possible.

“I have to admit, I rarely show off just whose daughter I am, but when I do, it usually results in very polite novices for some decades.”, I explained apologetically once Akuma and I were alone in the courtyard. “It’s helpful to remind them of their place in the hierarchy from time to time. Just as a change from sweet lovable Tia.” Silence was my only response. *Oh god, did I go over the top? Is he angry with me for taking this over for him? Why doesn’t he say anything?*

Panicking about the implications of my partner’s lack of reaction, I slowly turned around. Akuma stared at me with huge golden-green eyes. In them was so much wonder it nearly broke my heart. “Why did you do that?”, he wanted to know. “Why did you speak up for me, defended me?”

“You are my partner” I blinked in confusion. “I care for you as a friend of sorts. We have to look after each other. Just as we do in battle.” A thud reached my ears as Akuma dropped down on his hind legs, staring off into nothingness. *Did I do something wrong? Why doesn’t he say anything? Oh dear, I bet now he wishes he had another partner.*

Finally the cat demon looked up at me: “No one has ever done anything similar for me.”

“Not even your friends? Any siblings? Your parents must have defended you, didn’t they?”

Akuma shook his head resolutely. “Between demons everyone fights for themselves. There are neither friends nor family bounds. The only ones looking out for each other are twins, because no one would bother checking, if the right twin gets punished for doing something wrong. So to prevent that to avoid being punished for their twin’s trysts. Other than that everyone is fair game.”

“Not with us”, I smiled tenderly. “The two of us are partners in battle. I still don’t know, if me trusting you was the best idea, I’ve had, but it cannot be helped. We are a team and we support each other no matter against whom.” With two large steps I was at his side, stroking him between the ears. “Now come, kitty, I’ll introduce you to the rest of the team. I promise they are nice – most of the time. However they don’t gossip behind your back that is for sure. Those five know better than that. Do you want to meet them?” Akuma looked up from beneath my petting hand and gave a tiny nod I probably would have missed, hadn’t my hand already rested atop his head. My smile widened: “Well then, let’s go meet some friends, hm?”

Chapter End Notes

Seven Gods of Luck - also Seven Lucky Gods or Seven Gods of Fortune; are believed to bring good luck, just as the number seven, which explains the amount and worship of this group of gods. (As well as the seven kwamis?)

Bishamon - one of the Seven Gods of Luck; also called Bishamonten, is believed to bring good luck in war and battles, so naturally depicted as a fierce warrior.

Fukurokuju - one of the Seven Gods of Luck; god of wisdom, luck, longevity, wealth and happiness, who is depicted as a hermit.

Benzaiten - one of the Seven Gods of Luck; the only female god of luck (at least in the "traditional" assembly of gods) and she was given the attributes of talent, beauty and music. Since she is also the patron of artists, writers and geishas (among others), I chose to give her the make-up of a geisha.

Geisha - are Japanese entertainers, who act as hostesses and entertain their most male guests with classical music, dance, games and conversation.

Juroujin - one of the Seven Gods of Luck; the god of longevity and the elderly, who is probably based on a historic person.

Chihaya - a robe usually only Mikos (priestesses/female shamans) wear, consisting of wide red trousers and a wide sleeved shirt, both made from cotton. In contrast to my depiction, the coloring is normally a white shirt and red trousers.

The Cadre

Chapter Summary

In which Plagg meets Tikki's friends and explodes.

Chapter Notes

So... Well, that update took longer than I anticipated... But then there was Christmas and exams. At least now I have more time to write again. So updates will hopefully be more frequent again. Explanations are at the bottom as usual. Then there is only one thing left to say: I don't own Miraculous but wish you fun with the new chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Where are we going?”, Akuma wanted to know. “As I told you before we are going to meet up with the rest of my cadre.”, I told him, which earned me a sideways glance. “Why is it your cadre anyway?”, he asked. Caught off guard I needed a second to think about it. This alliance between novices of different masters had been formed some hundred or thousand years ago. Not that long ago, I was well aware of that, but still the edges started to get slightly fuzzy. “I think it’s called my cadre, because I had the idea and got us all together. Along with the fact that I am the daughter of Creation, which kind of makes me the highest rank novice around and stuff.”

“So technically if you were overpowered by ... someone ... the cadre would be lead by him?”, Akuma had a glint in his eyes I absolutely disliked. I felt the need to crush his plan before the demon was even able to formulate it fully. “Sorry to shatter your little dream, but it’s just a name given to us by the gods. They consider me the leader, though, to be honest, we’re all a team. There is no leader. Everyone has their duties, which we fulfil to the best of our abilities.” His ears twitched, obviously trying to detect any lies hidden within my carefully chosen words. But there were none. Neither of us bothered to go into further detail on this point, choosing to let the topic rest for the moment.

Finally we reached the little pavilion we used as headquarter. My fellow teammates seemed to have assembled some time prior to our official meeting. Wayzz had his hands folded inside the wide sleeves of his green Chinese clothing. Despite probably having sensed our presence

by now his eyes stayed trained on the small lake beyond the pavilion. At a table nearby Duusu was arranging peacock feathers she had collected with different shades of greens. Pollen twirled around in a new yellow and black striped kimono while humming a happy tune – until Trixx in fox form ran around her and nearly tripped Pollen. Then the fox got a lecture from said woman. And finally I found Nooroo, who looked at the rest of the cadre with his sad eyes, before he turned around and smiled his pretty smile at our approaching forms.

“They don’t look that strong.”, Akuma murmured under his breath. “You don’t look that impressive either, kitty.”, I replied quietly. A pleased smile tugged at the corners of my lips as I noticed the demon staring up at me in offence. However Akuma didn’t dwell on the comment for long, choosing to move on for once. “You forgot to mention you had a kitsune in your cadre.”

“It must have slipped my mind.”, I said curtly. Akuma narrowed his eyes at me for a second, before going on. “And what’s it with all those different colours? I thought you were a team?”, he wondered. “We are a team.”, I explained calmly, making sure the rest of my friends could hear my voice. “It doesn’t have to show in our style of clothing.”

“So this is the long awaited new member?”, Pollen looked the demon up and down. “Hm. Nice cat.” Akuma stared back at her with bright golden-green eyes. “Nice stripes. Are you a bee?”

“Actually I am the novice of Lady Bhramari, goddess of the bees.”, Pollen straightened her back. “So technically speaking you could call me a bee, yes.” *Thank goodness Pollen is so aloof about everything concerning her ancestry. As long as Akuma doesn’t break rules or misbehaves she shouldn’t have a reason to dislike him... Probably...*

Akuma however didn’t look impressed. He turned his stare on me again. “Do they know that I am the new second in command?” The gasps of my friends were answer enough, honestly, but the demon chose to ignore to hear them. I was growling inside my head. How could he dare to bring this up so carelessly without even being properly introduced to all of them?! I glared back at the cat demon. “Might you tell me how I was supposed to accomplish that, when the gods decided it just now and I was recovering from hibernation until very very recently? Besides, you were literally at my side the whole time. You knew I had no chance to tell them beforehand.”

Akuma tilted his head in fake innocence. “Oh, right”, he finally said. “It must have slipped my mind.” By now I was shaking with silent rage. *Calm down Tikki. It’s done now. He did it as some kind of payback he thought I owed him for the thing with the so-called kitsune. There is nothing you can do about it, neither was it a personal thing. No destructive thoughts, you can do it.*

With a deep exhale I relaxed my inner tension – some flowers dying at my feet. “Wow”, Wayzz stared at the blackened ground to my feet. “Seems our new member brings out the destruction in you.”

“He is destruction.”, I responded without an ounce of humour. Trixx laughed lightly, getting closer to the cat demon – still in their fox form. From the upper-most step to the pavilion they

gave Akuma another scrutinizing look. “Are you sure he’s a demon? To me he looks like a giant fluffy kitten.” Within the blink of an eye Akuma shifted to his humanoid form, ears and tail flicking in agitation. “You were saying, Foxy?”, he drawled with a hidden growl. Just a second later Trixx had shifted to their humanoid form as well, a top and skirt hugging their curves, as white hair whipped around their shoulders as they snarled at the taller man. “Another shape-shifter?!”, Trixx bared their teeth. “How dare they try to replace me!”

“Calm down Foxy”, Akuma replied. “The gods never planned to replace you. After all, I am your superior.” *He is trying too hard to intimidate them. Trixx doesn’t easily step down. Even less so to another shape-shifter...*, I watched the two of them closely. “Who is he?”, Nooroo wanted to know. “This is Akuma. He was caught trying to steal from my master – about a year ago I think. It was either killing him on the spot or him getting claimed by a god. Fortunately Lady Li Shou took it upon herself to take the insolent cat in.”

“Insolent?”, Akuma chimed in, turning to look down on me. However neither my friends – except for the still snarling Trixx – nor I paid him any mind. “He will never be my superior!”, Trixx growled. “Never. We don’t have ranks, and we sure as hell won’t introduce them now just to please the demon.”

“Was his fur black from the start?”, Wayzz wondered. “Actually he had the colouring of an Iriomote cat. Only since Lady Li Shou had him train the skills of destruction his fur turned darker in shade.”

“Something else might turn a darker shade if you don’t stop ignoring and or threatening me.”, the demon threatened. Pollen looked down at him over the bridge of her nose. “We don’t make idle threats. And don’t you dare attack us. We are your family now as much as Lady Li Shou and her bunch of orphaned cats are. And we stand up for each other. Attack one means attacking all.”, she straightened even further. “You can call yourself lucky to be accepted by Tia this easily. Now, what is your real name?”

“Tell me yours, I’ll tell you mine, Queenie.”, Akuma sneered at Pollen. Duusu came one step closer to the steps, standing slightly in front of the rest despite her usual shy demeanour. “Do you mean to tell us, Tia doesn’t know your name either?” *Oh crap. Duusu is careful when it comes to strangers... Maybe she won’t trust him at all and that would ruin the dynamic of the cadre... I have to do something.*

“We gave him the choice to either die or be one of us. There was from the beginning no reason for him to trust us.”, I explained. “But if he sees how well we keep watch over one another, I am sure Akuma will come to trust us enough to reveal his true name.”

“A demon never gives his true name to anyone.”

“I didn’t think I’d tell them my real name ever as well in the beginning.”, Trixx suddenly drew back. They still looked angry but at least they weren’t snarling openly at the demon anymore. “And look where I am a bunch of hundred years later. They all know my name, could do all kinds of magic tricks to me, only it doesn’t ever happen in our circle. We trust each other. No one breaches that trust. Absolutely no one.” It almost sounded like another threat. Akuma leaned against the railing of the staircase. His gaze was full of arrogance and dark amusement. This was an Akuma I had only seen at the very beginning of his residence.

Ever since that first day I had had the impression, that slowly but surely we formed a bond and that he was opening up to me at least. Now everything was just as before. “How should I know?”, his voice was void of emotion. “I have never been part of your precious little cadre. Besides, all I see is one very tame kitsune. Let me guess: Lap dog of the great Inari?”

“I am not a lap dog!”

“Calm down Rukki.”, Nooroo told Trixx. He looked back at me in question. I gave a curt nod, knowing fully well I had to deal with her raging spirit later on but needed to get her to calm first. “Take Kwaan with you. Maybe he can help you.” Nodding in acknowledgment, Nooroo, Trixx and Duusu disappeared into the back of the pavilion. Akuma only laughed at the display. “What’s enough is enough.”, I turned on him. “I thought we were finally getting somewhere, why are you trying to destroy everything we worked so hard to achieve?”

“We?”, Akuma snarled and folded his ears against his skull. “I never asked for any of this, I already told you! You were always going on and on about how generous the gods were, how I would come to like it here if only I stayed long enough. Do you want to know something funny? I don’t want to stay. I have never wanted to leave a place more than this hell you call home. After you defended me I thought that maybe just maybe you were different from all the other people I encountered. That you really saw beyond the mask.”, his gold-green eyes narrowed. “Now I come to realise you know me just as well as you did on that first night a year and a half ago. You accepted me as your partner because you thought I was useful. And your so-called ‘wonderful friends’? Well, they really aren’t any better than the rest of the novices.” I stood there, stunned. Had I known Akuma still felt that way, would I have done anything different in the past? Would I have allowed him to fight his own wars instead of playing the ‘I am the daughter of Creation’-card? *No, I wouldn’t.*, I answered the question myself. *Because I didn’t do it for the reasons he thinks. I did it with his best interest at heart. It was never my intent to make him feel as if he owed me something...*

“I wish you would have killed me on that first night. Back then I was ready to die; I knew there was nothing coming from comrades other than pain. But I let you get me an adoptive family. I allowed you to worm your way inside my brain and make me believe in the good in people, make me worried for you and accept me oh so graciously into your little circle of friends and as your partner.”, Akuma backed away from the pavilion. “How could I be so weak?”

“This is not weakness!”, I called out as my brain slowly wrapped itself around what he had just admitted. “This is not what weakness is like. What you feel-”

“I don’t feel anything.”, Akuma interrupted me. His head was bowed and turned away from me. His whole body language was closed off and distant, as if he was already drawing back into his own world. *Oh no, I have to get him to listen to me!*, for a second I panicked. “Please, Akuma, listen to me!”, I cried. “We are partners. You can trust me with anything, I promise!”

“I don’t want your promises. Your word means nothing to me.” His voice was cold, void of emotion, as the demon shifted into his feline form and disappeared.

Numbly I stood there at the headquarters’ porch to everything I deeply cared about. And my heart was breaking for the one thing that would never set one foot upon these holy grounds

ever again. Somehow my instincts knew that this would be the last time I'd see Akuma, my kitty, for a long time.

An hour later came the news of a demon attack in the human world got to us.

Chapter End Notes

Kitsune - is a Japanese fox demon, they are tricksters and shape-shifters and can be either good or evil.

Bhramari - is the goddess of bee, wasps and hornets. She is typically depicted as holding a mace, trident, sword and shield in her four hands.

Li Shou - is a cat goddess. The gods assigned her to watch over the world, but falling cherry blossoms or patches of sunlight distracted her. So the gods decide to give this assignment to the humans, while Li Shou henceforth watches over the circle of day and night, with her eyes lightening up the sky.

Inari - is a god of foxes, of fertility, rice, tea and sake, of agriculture and industry, of general prosperity and worldly success. He is depicted as either male or female and usually is accompanied by white foxes.

The Attack

Chapter Summary

In which lots of shadow dragons are fought.

Chapter Notes

Look who's back with another chapter for the Miraculous History. I'm sorry for the long wait, but finally semester holidays gave me the time needed to write a little bit on some stuff. So, there's nothing left to say, except: Have Fun

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It turned out a group of demons had chosen a human village as its playground. It made my insides curl in anger despite the overall numbness I felt since Akuma left me. Of course I felt guilty, honestly, who wouldn't after what he had thrown at my head? *This is not the place or the time Tikki.*, I reminded myself. *You are here to save these humans from certain death no matter where that stubborn kitten of yours went.*

“Wayzz”, I asked calmly. “What do we see here?”

“A whole bunch of trouble.”, Trixx chimed in without being asked. I bit my tongue to not rise to the challenge. *Get a grip on yourself. This is a mission. There is no time for personal battles or sentiments.*

Wayzz's eyes swept over the village with practiced calm, always finding shelter, always knowing just what to do. I relied more on his capability to stay calm and think positive than anyone else. *Wayzz is protection and wisdom; Trixx is tricks and shape shifting. Nooroo can claim champions; Duusu sees the future and can call rainstorms if properly motivated. Pollen is able to call forth uncountable insects and wields her weapons with all of her four arms. We are a team. We can do this.*

“Three dozen humans either huddling together over in the direction of the main house or scattered and running, trying to get there.”, Wayzz listed. Pollen stirred, the glamour falling off her additional pair of arms, which already crawled with bumblebees. She was poised to attack to protect the humans. “We need to think before acting.”, Nooroo told her, gently pulling Pollen back down. I was thankful, that Nooroo was not afraid of being stung by Pollen's insects, since I did not quite have the capacity of mind to calm her down. The team was cut short of one member I had come to rely on more than I cared to admit even to myself and his loss cut deep. Forcing my lungs to fill with air the moment the wind changed and

blew the smell of smoke and burned flesh right into my face was not the best idea. It made me gag and the screams of fear that could be heard over the other battle sounds didn't help either.

Duusu curled into a ball, trying to become one with the background when faced with the cries of battle. "Wayzz", I turned my attention back on the oldest member of our cadre. "Protect the villagers. Don't let any of the demons roaming the grounds get near them. I don't care how you make sure of that, just do it. Trixx", I whirled to look into the fox-like features of my friend, "Make traps. Lots of them for the demons to fall into. I am still unsure how many there are, so..."

"Got it!" Without further question the kitsune darted away into the chaos of the village and disappeared. That left me with Pollen, Nooroo and Duusu. The first was already buzzing with energy, quite literally, and fury to protect the humans and make everything work out. Her four arms crawled with bees and wasps and spiders and what not, while her hands clutched her longsword, shield and trident. "Do what you do best.", I told Pollen and she disappeared in a blur, undoubtedly out to weaken the demons with the help of her poisonous friends.

"What do you want me to do?", Duusu asked tentatively. She was shy, yes, but by far not helpless. "Could you use your abilities to report back and forth between us all, please? We need to be absolutely in tune with each other.", I requested from her. With a bright smile Duusu nodded her head and fluttered out of existence somewhere into hiding until her ability of foreseeing told her where to be first. *She would have made a great warrior with her rainstorms and all that jazz, but that isn't her. She is calmer than that. Now, let's see, whom we are facing.*

I turned to Nooroo, the last member I needed to find a place for. "We are a team, there is no leader.", he told me again, his eyes stern. "We all know our place and still allow you to assign us to them, because it is calming us down." It was no question, so I simply looked at him without replying anything. "I'll look into the weaknesses of the demons and powers of the humans. Who knows, maybe we have a true hero among us?" That was no question either, so he didn't wait for my answer and swept away into the dust whirled up by the raging demons.

As it turned out it was a group of four shadow dragons, their bodies hidden in clouds of smoke emitting in constant streams from their muzzles. Although these dragons were not scaled, since this would reflect light and disturb their illusions, the skin was hard to crack. *A little bit of destruction would be great right about now.*, I thought automatically. My stomach dropped. Even if I reached out, my fingers wouldn't be met with the calming sensation of fur. *He left you behind. He left, because you were too damn proud to tell him how much you feared for him and how much he meant... There is no time for that now! Get it together Tikki. Get your head in the game!*

A growl came from my right side and my head snapped around just in time to see the muzzle of one of the monsters closing in on me with lightning speed. Instinctively I called for my power. A gate opened inside my chest. The power crackling between my fingers was not that of creation, the blade of the scythe appearing in my hand as black as the night. Destruction had been on my mind and destruction had answered my call. Dark armour materialised while

my stance broadened, muscled tightening. *Just come at me.*, I dared the shadow dragon silently. I lowered my chin, a grim smile spreading across my face as I ducked beneath the snapping fangs of the demon. And still while falling under jaw of the dragon, I rammed my weapon upwards into the armoured skin of the demon. It howled in pain where the blade struck.

Too slow., a dark voice in my head gloated. Without having to think about it I dropped to the ground and hurried towards the unguarded belly of the beast. Dark bladed Sais, short dagger-like, three-forked weapons, appeared in my hands and cut through the skin of the dragon's belly, making way for my destruction to seep into the demon's body. A high-pitched howl brought me back to my senses, turning my armour back to its normal red colour and letting the weapons disappear. Seeing the legs give out I leaped out from under the demon's stomach.

I tried to catch my breath and clear my head, warily staying just out of reach of the dragon. *Oh gods, where did all that destruction come from? Why did I call upon it instead of my natural birth right?*, I wondered. *Were my thoughts leaning towards destroying this beast instead of decapitating it? Heck, I really should concentrate more.*

Suddenly the mist around the shadow dragon cleared, startling me out of my thoughts I had sunk into without actively noticing it. What was revealed was a heap of black muscles and straggly fur-feathers and two sets of dull yellow eyes, almost fully closed. "Bloody hell", I cursed under my breath. The dragon was actually about thirty metres long, at least from what I could guess. My ko-naginata appeared in my hands, this time with a more ragged, but not black, blade. *Well then, let's get this party started.*, I felt my muscles go weak. *After I take a short break...*

Around me I could slowly make out the sounds of other fighters. Bees and scorpions could be heard scuttling after a screaming shadow dragon while Pollen constantly attacked it with her longsword, the trident seemingly lost somewhere in the battle. Nooroo must have found some human heroes, whose battle cries mixed with the general cacophony heard around. Apparently not all were as successful as Pollen with her little friends, screams of pain and death echoing in my ears and making them ring. "At least some of them might survive.", I told myself half loud. "The humans need to learn how to fight and Nooroo only chooses the strongest ones to be his champions." This reassurance however did nothing to help me recover quicker from the strain of using the ounce of destruction I called my own, but which always led to utter exhaustion since I was a daughter of Creation and not meant to destroy. But I had to stay up on my feet. I needed to prove to myself that I was able to fight even though a certain black cat was not circling around me. *Damn, get your head in the game. This isn't training. This is war.*

Before me the shadow dragon's four eyes slowly opened again as consciousness returned to the mighty creature, slowly shadows began to engulf it once more. I cursed myself for letting my worry for my friends and the strain of using destruction carry me away enough to not seize my chance of slaying the dragon while it was unable to fight back. *Or maybe I want it to be able to defend itself? Maybe I want equal chances for both of us? Ugh, Tikki, get it together and concentrate!*

The demon shrieked and lunged again. This time I swung my weapon gracefully in an upward circle. It caught the underside of its jaw, cutting skin and muscles. Another shriek and the demon tumbled to the side, nearly pulling me with it, since I still held on to my weapon. I fell hard on my back, as the massive tail of the demon swept my feet out from underneath me. The air was crushed from my lungs, leaving me panting for breath with the demon shaking its massive head and returning the focus of its four eyes to my person. Without thinking a shuriken appeared between my finger and imbedded itself in the upper left eye.

Unfortunately the demon was not entirely stupid despite being blinded by pain and it tumbled in my direction. My powers buzzed beneath my skin, making it hard to concentrate on anything really. They wanted to wash over the demon and force it to submit to the power of the gods. *No!*, I cried in my head. *That is not what I want. I mean it is, but... Fighting may not be any better on the other hand I am weakened from the usage of my powers. If I overdue it this time there will be no Akuma to carry me to safety.*

From the corner of my eye I noticed another demon closing in on me. My instincts drew me to my feet, weapon ready, shuriken close by. However, to my utter surprise, the demon crashed into my first attacker. The mighty jaws snapping shut around the shadow dragon's neck until a loud crack signalled its death. Carefully I treaded away from the looming form of the new demon, trying to find the best possible angle to attack. "Geez, calm down", rumbled a familiar voice as the shadow dragon turned around. Its purple eyes were rimmed with white just like Trixx's and even the baring of fangs looked more like a teasing challenging smirk. "Don't attack me and I won't attack you. Easy deal, right?"

"How?"

"Duusu", was the only answer I received. Quickly I thanked Duusu for his foresight. It was so much handier on the battlefield than anyone could imagine, even if he himself refused to fight for real.

Trixx in their thirty-metre dragon body hobbled past me and threw their weight into the next demon she could make out. Taking a deep breath, I followed their example and hurled myself into battle once more.

My strength could not rebuilt as quickly as I would have liked. I fought alongside human heroes against foaming shadow dragons. They were all breathing heavy by now and Duusu brought them back and forth between the shelter of Wayzz's shield to recover and the fighting scene to engage in battle. Not many returned once behind the shield. Even less survived the first battle at all. Most of them were slain by the claws of the dragons.

Even Pollen was now mostly relying on her insects to weaken the dragons and only deliver the last blow with her longsword. Had I had to guess in the beginning, I would have said there were around five shadow dragons, all about thirty metres long. Now I could guess there were around ten to fifteen or so cloaked in shadows and varying in size, thus probably being of different age. Which brought one question specifically to the front of my mind: If these

were smaller shadow dragons, then was there an adult close by and likely to kill us all upon arrival or were these just unfortunate hatchlings?

“Tikki”, Duusu called out over the noise. “Busy”, I panted between swings of my ko-naginata against the muzzle of the shadow dragon to distract it long enough for Pollen's highly poisonous scorpions to crawl all over its back. “Important!”, Duusu replied stubbornly. “Wayzz has all the humans under the protection of the shield.”

I ducked under the swipe of claws from one of the front paws of the shadow dragon. Sweat made my hair stick to my forehead. One Shuriken imbedded itself into the last seeing eye of the demon.

“Interesting”

Another swipe, another duck.

“Nooroo also said his heroes won't be able to hold out much longer. He asked for them to be returned to Wayzz as well.”

Pollen gave the signal for her minions and the scorpions simultaneously buried their spikes in the dragon from above and below.

“Fascinating”

With a last howl the monster collapsed, overwhelmed by the fast working poison, ultimately crushing a good hundred to thousand scorpions under its belly.

Now I had a short moment to breathe before the next one might choose to go behind my back for a sneak attack, so I turned to where I had heard Duusu's voice. Only he had already disappeared – along with all the human heroes Nooroo had sired. He himself wasn't to be seen anywhere either, probably completely drained of energy for holding up the transformation of at least twenty heroes at the same time. *Okay, that leaves me, Pollen and her insects and Trixx in the frame for... Well, however many shadow dragons may still be around. I wonder, where Trixx went, haven't seen them since they rescued me... Probably checking on the traps and killing off the ones trapped inside them.*

My thoughts didn't linger this time around, adrenaline making me hyperaware of everything around me. First I noticed Pollen having gone away and already engaged with the next shadow dragon.

At first I wanted to follow her, only a sudden burst of fire prevented me from doing so. The dragons had had the element of surprise on their side from the beginning, due to the shadows obscuring them. And apparently one of the beasts had chosen me as its new target. *Very well. My powers may not have recovered enough to use them in defeating it altogether, but at least my weapons and armour are holding out so far. Let's get this over with.*

This time I didn't smile or think of destruction, as the demon and I began the deathly dance. I merely avoided being hit and tried to tire the demon out. My tactic involved “poking” it with my ko-naginata while simultaneously eliminating eyes and tail in tandem with shuriken and

katanas. Only problem being the mighty claws suddenly appearing out of thick smoke to swipe at me. Not thinking for long, I jumped into the air to avoid the hit – another shadow appearing beside me. This time there was no room to evade the heavy tail crashing into my side and hurling my body to the ground. The air was pressed from my lungs and for a second, the armour wavered around my body.

I went into a kind of shock, my muscles refusing to work at all, leaving me lying on my back in the middle of battle. Completely helpless with no idea from where the next hit may come since shadow dragons were hard to make out amidst their shadows. *Oh darn, I have to get up or else this might be the last fight I will ever see...*

With a low groan I forced my muscles into working and heaved myself to my feet. It felt as if someone decided to repeatedly smash a hammer into my skull from within. Carefully I shook my head, flexed my muscles until they seemed to work. My sight returned to normal although I felt my power of Creation weakening as it repaired my body.

The shadow I could now see closing in however did not help to relieve the aches in any way. *Another shadow dragon. Great... As if it hasn't been hard enough to fight until now.*

There was clearly no time to loose, so I repaired my armour and called forth the ko-naginata. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the opened jaws closing in on me. *Okay. Now or never. I can do this, I can fight them long enough for Duusu to see and send some help. He did it before, He can do it again.*

My senses picked up movement behind my back. *If this is another demon I have absolutely no chance to defy it.*

The shadow behind my back leapt off the ground. Half expecting it to crash down on me with some kind of suffocating fog, claws or fangs, I swung around in a crouch. However the shadow didn't even seem to notice me. It dived down into the smoke where I suspected the back of one of the dragons was. My eyes widened. *That looked like... No it can't be. Trixx must have taken a new form. My eyes want to trick me into believing something that cannot be.*

But the word slipped from my lips in a silent prayer. "Akuma."

The answering roar nearly had me weeping at the feet of the demon. My kitten had returned to fight by my side once more! I felt the connection between us flare, return to a life I didn't know existed. Power flooded my senses as I whirled around to the shadow dragon. A smug looking giant black cat sat atop its back, calmly avoiding the snapping jaws. "Seriously", Akuma drawled. "I can't leave you alone for five minutes without you managing to throw yourself into some new danger."

"That's kind of part of the job, you know?", I retorted with a grin. *He's back! He's back. He's back!*, an inner voice chanted. I ducked beneath a swipe from the tail of the demon, as it turned around itself. At least its companion was keeping its distance now that the first dragon was slightly preoccupied and couldn't be trusted. "What exactly", a shuriken bore itself into an eye of the shadow dragon, "Are you doing here?" Akuma kept dodging the strikes and teeth before landing beside me. "Don't tell me you're not happy to see me?", he leaned his

flank into my side. My fingers tangled in the soft fur and for a moment there were no words needed.

With the cat demon off the shadow dragon the second one rejoined the fight once more, both circling us. “Why are you back?”, I rephrased my question and lashed out at the snapping jaws. “Don’t tell me”, Akuma repeated as he buried his claws in the paws of one dragon, “You’re not happy to see me.” I hurled another shuriken at my enemy and ducked beneath the swipe of claws. “You were just in time.” That was as close to a ‘Thank you’ we’d ever get and we both knew it.

The shadow dragon was quickly loosing all its four eyes. “Hey there”, I smiled before I kicked the demon in front of me square the jaw. A few fangs actually broke with the force of my strike but all in all it only helped to infuriate the beast even further. “We might have a problem.”, a new voice uttered. It sounded faint and uncertain. “What is it?”, I asked without looking up at Duusu. Naturally I didn’t exactly want to hear about problems in the middle of a fight against demon dragons in a human village. “One of the females is kind of”, Duusu fidgeted so loudly I even heard it above the crush of Akuma ripping into the side of the dragon and it howling in pain and anger. “What?”, he screamed at the top of his lungs, trying his best to stay upright on the dragon’s back. “It’s having a baby.”, the novice forced himself to say. “She asked for the daughter of Creation.”

“I’m kind of busy here.” My ko-naginata severed the head of the shadow dragon from its neck. In a whirl I was on Akuma’s heal, weaving my way around the cat demon’s attacks and ultimately ramming an oversized katana right through the thick skin of the shadow dragon into its heart. With a shudder the beast collapsed.

Once the fog cleared away, the mounts of four slain shadow dragons became visible. *Four. We fought against at least four of these creatures. Akuma and I killed two, I wounded at least one, blinded it with my throwing stars... The human heroes fought against two. Pollen and Trixx killed off I don’t even want to know how many.*, my eyes widened slightly. True, it was not uncommon for Trixx to kill a good part of the enemies, however they usually kept to trickery and deception. “Where’s Trixx?”, I called up to Duusu without really noticing Akuma now knew their real name. “Where are they?” The panic in my voice startled me. Duusu looked around frantically, seemingly seeing nothing with either his talent or his eyes. “The human...”

“Will get through labour even without the daughter of Creation by her side.”, I told her firmly. “I want to know where Trixx is. They never killed as many demons as They did today. It usually isn’t her style.” Duusu’s head snapped from one direction to the other seeming so on edge Akuma began to growl low in his throat. “Would you mind answering Tia?”, he asked the other novice directly. Surprised by his words the seer turned his attention back on us. “I don’t know, what this means, but I can’t see Trixx’s future anymore...”, he shivered. “It’s as if something either already happened to them or will happen in the immediate future that will decide whether or not they’ll stay a novice.” The young man chuckled nervously. “I may not be able to read the future of demons and creatures driven by instinct, but surely Trixx won’t become such a thing, right?”

“Did-”, my voice died out. A new shadow moved towards us. Akuma hissed. A strikingly similar one answered him. Within the blink of an eye a red fox snarling at the cat by my side was revealed. Trixx’s fur was stained with blood, both their own and that of our enemies. Their purple eyes shone with unearthly light. “Away with you, demon!”, they snarled. Duusu, whom had carefully landed on my other side, paled considerably. “They’re in a blood frenzy.”, the novice shook with fear. “And they think Akuma is the enemy. We have to get away from them until they calms down, get out of their way or...”

“Are you implying to leaver them on their own?”, Akuma bristled beneath my palm. “I know a blood frenzy when I see one and believe me when I say that leaving them to it won’t make anything easier.”

He speaks of it as if he knows exactly what it’s like. As if he knows how they feels..., I thought. I wonder in how many blood frenzies he found himself in with no one to stand by his side.

My heart clenched at the thought of my kitty in such a vulnerable state all on its own. “Go back to the others”, I told Duusu without directly looking at him. “Bring the humans to safety. Get the woman giving birth first. She and her baby need to survive this. Tell the villagers, they need to build themselves a new home. This one is cursed with bad luck by now. Not even I can purify it anymore.” Duusu nodded his understanding and disappeared in the next heartbeat to wherever the rest was hidden.

Akuma stalked in front of me putting himself between Trixx and me. “You have to go. Don’t look back. They’re dangerous.”, he told me. “No, I can’t leave them alone. I need to make sure they’re okay and does nothing they might regret when they comes back around.”, I shook my head, sending my red hair flying. *I owe them that much...*

Across the yard the red fox crouched low, ready to pounce any minute. “Tia, they are beyond recognition of anyone. They would attack you without remorse.”, Akuma urged. *He’s right you know.*, a tiny voice in the back of my head whispered. *Trixx doesn’t even look as if they might recognize you if you crashed right in their face. There is nothing you can do for them now except let Akuma do whatever he can to stop them from doing anything cruel.*

No!, I screamed back at that voice. *Trixx never was in a blood frenzy before, I may not know how to handle them but the least I can do is stay by their side and learn the tricks Akuma uses to calm them. I need to be prepared to save my friend should it occur again.*

The cat demon used my short rush of fear to push me back, away from the snarling kitsune. “I have to try.”, my stubbornness kicked in. “They’re part of the team, we are friends. Friends don’t abandon each other.”

Despite Akuma obviously preferring to fight the shape shifter on his own without me hanging around where I could get in the way, he didn’t outright protest. For a few precious moments the only sound around us was Trixx’s low hissing. Carefully I stepped around my demon cat towards my friend. Her fur stood on end and she bared her teeth defiantly the closer I came. “Trixx” I had to clear my throat. “Trixx, it’s me. Please come back. We miss you already.”

“There’s no sense in talking to them.”, Akuma told me. “We need to take them down before they can fall even deeper into their frenzy.”

“Do you intend to kill them?”

“If it can’t be helped...”

Being the devious thing he was, Akuma used my momentary shock. He slipped around me and pounced the same second Trixx did. The two animals met in mid-air, curling and biting at any unprotected flesh they could find. After the first round of toe curling sounds both had bleeding wounds along their hides. “Stop!”, I cried, unable to take any side in this fight. On the one hand I didn’t want to hurt Trixx, whom I had known for so many years and fought so many fights with, on the other hand my instincts told me Akuma was right that the friend I knew had disappeared for good. The only problem was with the two of them intertwined in battle I could do nothing without fearing to hurt either of them in the process.

“Please, stop”, I heard myself plead. While Akuma backed away in my direction, Trixx paced like a tiger caught in a cage. “They’re far gone.”, Akuma repeated, despite his withdrawal. “You can’t reach them where they are now.”

“I can at least try.”, I snapped back, my patience running thin with the nerves pricking at my senses. The cat demon turned its black head to look me over for injuries; maybe because my voice trembled more the longer I spoke. Unfortunately Akuma was right. Trixx was far away from being the playful kitsune I knew. Killing off as many demons as they most likely had – and not only with their traps – and consuming demon blood might have brought out their own inner demon. *Which is why we usually keep them away from the immediate battle. It always was their wish not to fight directly with demons. Only this time it couldn’t be avoided and now they pay the price...*

As soon as my partner turned his back on them the shape shifter sprung forwards with outstretched claws and snapping fangs. *No! Not again!*

Before I could even register what I was doing, my body was in front of Akuma’s shielding him from the impact. The force of their short claws digging into my suddenly unprotected skin took my breath away. *My powers are gone!*, my eyes widened in shock. *Why do they have to shut down now of all times?!*

Trixx’s teeth scraped across my neck, leaving burning marks all over. Far away I could hear Akuma snarling and howling as if my pain was his own. I saw the clearing purple eyes of Trixx, who stared down at me in utter shock before a black shadow pushed them over and away from me. My wounds ripped as the claws were dragged through them again, tearing a cry from my throat.

I felt my live run thin with every droplet of blood oozing out of the multiple cuts along with the complete drain of my power of creation.

Limply my head rolled to the side.

This is it., my brain informed me. This is the moment you'll die. Lying in the aftermath of two fights in some human village no one will ever care to remember. What an utterly useless-

Chapter End Notes

Kitsune - is a Japanese fox demon, they are tricksters and shape-shifters and can be either good or evil.

Naginata - is a traditional Japanese weapon. It is formed like a pole with a curved longer blade at the end of it. The prefix ko- indicates the version used by female warriors. It is smaller to compensate the lesser height and upper-body strength of women.

Pollen's powers and appearance are based on the ones used by her "guardian goddess" Bhramari (an incarnation of Durga) in her fight against the demon Arunasura.

There's a child of god

Chapter Summary

In which Plagg learns something new.

Chapter Notes

Happy New Year to all of you! Hope you had a good start into 2020!

Sorry for keeping you waiting for so long... I don't really have an excuse, except that I wanted to wait for the end of season 2 in case they revealed any new information and then things happened and suddenly season 3 is through as well and uh... I haven't updated in years?

So for the plan: I want to continue updating the story more regularly. However, I am nearing a very hectic time and I think I might not be able to update monthly. As it is, I plan to update every second month. I hope you can bear with me and thank you so much for waiting!!

Explanations as per usual at the end of the chapter, should you want them. Have fun reading ^^

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The second her body slammed into mine, her armour and weapons vaporized into thin air. The fight consumed all of her energy, so there was absolutely nothing left to protect Tia from the on coming attack of her crazed kitsune friend. They crashed to the ground. I howled when I saw Tia hit her head on the rubble below her. The shape shifter ripped the skin on Tia's shoulder and collarbone, their teeth grazing my partner's delicate neck until blood dripped from the wound.

My ears folded back against my skull, as I ducked, ready to attack. I lunged at the fox and ripped them off Tia. A soft cry ripped from her throat, which only helped to enrage me further. With another snarl, I placed myself between Tia and her attacker.

"What are you doing?" the fox wanted to know, their eyes having miraculously cleared. But I didn't care for their return from blood frenzy. All that mattered was that they endangered my first friend who lay behind me bare for the entire world to see.

"Stay away from her," I snarled. "You've done enough! Stay away!"

It didn't please me to see the kitsune stepping back in fear of my burning golden-green eyes and bared fangs. Nothing meant anything to me anymore. My partner was most likely gone. "Stay away from her," I told the shape shifter once more, then turned into my humanoid form and staggered to Tia's side.

Carefully, I covered her with my black haori, fearing what might happen if I moved her. I didn't like her skin tone, which was too pale to look anything remotely close to healthy. "I'm sorry. I couldn't protect you."

"But you did, remember?" a weak voice answered me. My surprised stare was met with tired blue eyes, only opened enough to see me. Tia smiled weakly, barely lifting the corners of her mouth. "All safe?"

"All safe." I nodded my head with tears in my eyes. Suddenly, I remembered very vividly why I hadn't wanted any friends to begin with. It was too painful to see them die, to lose them over and over again with nothing to do to stop it.

"Trixx?" Tia asked, her eyes slowly falling closed.

"If you mean that wretched kitsune, then yes, they're safe and back to their normal self, though I won't allow them anywhere near you for a long, long time." If I hadn't known any better, I might have thought Tia actually smiled. At least her face looked so peaceful, it broke my heart all over again. *What if I lose her? How am I supposed to live with that guilt?*

You'll live. Just kill the fox first. They're the reason for Tia's condition., another voice advised me.

A shadow neared us. Out of instinct I whirled around and hissed at whoever it was. "Calm down," a familiar voice said. "I am here to see what we can do for your little Lady." Li Shou padded up next to me. For a few seconds, I felt a burden being lifted off my shoulders. If my goddess was here then there had to be something I could do. She would tell me what to do, how to proceed, to move on.

What if only one of you moves on?, a tiny voice demanded to know. I shook my head to forget the mental image of burying Tia in the soft earth and feeling guilty for the rest of my eternal existence for the death of my partner.

"Hm..." Lady Li Shou sniffed again right above Tia's chest. "There is some destruction left in her system that suppresses her natural talent of creation to help her. She must have used the power although it isn't her birthright... Akuma, you are the only one with matching abilities to accomplish the following task: You need to draw the destruction out of her system or she'll die."

My green-golden eyes widened in shock. "I have never done anything like that before! How am I supposed to know what to take?" I reeled back from my Lady. "No, no I cannot do that, I don't have enough practice."

"Then you want her to die?" Li Shou narrowed her eyes at me. "And here I thought she actually meant something to you after you stayed by her side and drove everyone else away."

Of course my Lady was right. She was always right. As sick to the stomach as I felt only thinking about the whole situation, I had to do it. For her. For her life, her brilliant smile and our bickering. Taking a deep breath, I finally nodded my head to signal that I would do it.

“Thought so,” Lady Li Shou nodded once. “Now get into your feline form and curl up where it feels most natural to you and as close to Tia as possible. Concentrate on her heartbeat and feel the destruction she enclosed herself in. Draw that towards you until it leaves her and enters you. Since your element is that of destruction it should neutralize within seconds.”

I nodded my head and went to work while my Lady shooed the curious fox and other members of the cadre away from us. Somehow she seemed to know that I didn’t particularly trust that bunch of novices. Yes, they might be good at fighting but that was about it.

Transforming into my natural feline form, I prowled closer to my partner. Tia lay completely still, her breathing too soft. *A spot to curl up against her*, I thought. *Where would that be?*

My eyes swept over the place her heart was beating beneath and I felt heat rush to my cheeks. *That would be inappropriate*, I told myself. Despite that statement, I found myself magically drawn to where I could make absolutely sure my partner was still alive and not leaving me behind. With a roll of my eyes and a muttered curse about magic I curled my body around her so her head rested on my back while my own head was next to her ribcage with my ear pressed against her skin to listen to her heartbeat. For a few seconds I stayed still and listened to the steady rhythm.

My eyes closed on their own accord the longer I listened to the evidence that my partner was clinging to her existence. *She’s here. She won’t leave me alone like the rest of the world did*, I tried to assure myself.

“Red to call enchantment down, to call upon creation. Enchanted you a brand new gown, to rescue our relation.” something in my head whispered. Darkness surrounded me within a heartbeat.

“The heck?” I growled, trying to see anything. To my far right I made out a faint light, so I made my way towards it. *Where in all seven hells did I land? What is this place?!*

To my utter confusion the light was always at the same distance no matter how fast I ran.

Eventually, I sat down on my hind legs and chose to glare at it instead. The black ears atop my head twitched with every loud thud they registered, until they matched my own heartbeat. *Wait... Heartbeat?* my eyes must have grown to the size of dinner plates as realization dawned on me. *I rolled up around Tia with my head close to her chest. My eyes fell close to the beat of her heart. Somehow I must have found my way into the destruction she holds inside her.*

Looking around, I noted once more how dark destruction seemed to be. Just like my fur. *How ironic. A black cat caught in the black pit of destruction the bright daughter of Creation holds hostage within herself.* I gave a barking laugh. *Well then. How do I get the darkness inside of me and out of her?*

The light at the end of destruction forced my eye once more. Lady Li Shou had told me there was an ounce of creation within me that balanced out the destruction to neutral levels.

“Maybe I should create something?” I wondered out loud, mainly to fill the silence between the thuds. “She is clad in red and red stands for courageous, optimistic people. Maybe a poem might draw on her strings? Something pretty and creative to activate our powers of creation.” I held my breath for a second and let my own words sink in. Groaning, I threw my head back. “And here I am, sounding like some bloody poet head over heels into a Lady he cannot posses!”

Taking all my strength I had left, I searched for words to describe her and make my mission clear to her subconscious. *I can't believe I'm actually doing this. This is so humiliating; my only hope is she'll forget it as soon as I get the destruction into myself.*

Transforming into the humanoid form I threw my arms wide open in a dramatic pose. The first words came slowly, then everything seemed to click into place.

“Your hair as red as fire

Your pretty blue bell eyes,

I wonder who you are, beneath that spitfire?

Everyday we see each other,

And hoping that you'll be the one

To break my curse and break my armour,

Please would you be my partner above all?”

The light grew brighter until there was a soft line connecting my body to the spot ahead of destruction. It now came as easy as breathing and I called upon my strength of destruction, to which the power surrounding me reacted and retracted from the light pulsing stronger and stronger with every beat of Tia's heart until there was nothing but gentle light surrounding me and the darkness that pulsed beneath my skin for a few seconds longer. I felt a gentle stroke against my spirit before my eyes snapped open to reveal the real world around me.

Lady Li Shou had placed her body in front of us to shield us from curious looks. In the distance I could make out the cadre as well as a few other figures, probably their Lords and Ladies, all waiting for us to make a move.

“They don't like me,” Li Shou said, as if knowing I was back among the living.

“Then it's a good thing that I don't want them around here, isn't it?” I retorted.

The goddess turned her head to look down at me with burning eyes. “Brave kitten,” was the only thing she said before the strangely warm look in her eyes disappeared. “Now we have to get her back into her room where the doctors can see after her and treat her wounds.” She stood from her sitting position.

Without being asked to, I crawled underneath Tia's body and lifted her on my back. Anyone who attempted to take her, received an evil growl and smack with my claws. *She's my partner. It is my honour to carry her back to safety as I did before.*

It took three full weeks before Tia was even showing signs of possibly waking up. Three weeks, in which I stayed by her side, only leaving when I knew my Lady was watching her. Three full weeks in which I barely slept or ate anything. The cadre would visit occasionally, however none of them dared to stay for long considering I tried to stare holes into their heads. *They did nothing to protect Tia. She was hurt because no one looked after her. She may be the daughter of Creation but even she has her weaknesses.*

The morning Tia first returned to consciousness I was once again curled around her with her head resting on my back. At first I thought it was my imagination messing with my head. Her quiet groans were nothing new and I had gotten used to them.

This time however, it was accompanied by soft shakes of her head.

"Tia?" I questioned softly. Another groan. "Do you need anything?" *Why am I even asking her? She's never answered me before,* I wondered.

Maybe this time will be different., a tiny voice insisted.

"Tikki," a quiet voice said.

My ears perked up. "What?"

"My name," she took a shuddering breath, "is Tikki."

And just like that she was out cold again. I tried talking to her, extracting anything else about how she felt but nothing came. Carefully I changed into my humanoid form, resting her head in my lap.

Behind me, my tail twitched nervously. *Did she really tell me her real name? Or did I mishear something? Why would she do that? I never gave her any reason to trust me, not my name, nothing about my past except that one time, left her when things got a little bit harder...*

But there was no doubt. Tia had just revealed her given name to me, allowing me power over her spirit, entrusting me with her very life. My past self would have laughed at her foolish act, entrusting a demon with what anyone knew to be the source for any black spell.

"But I am not like that anymore," I muttered under my breath. There was no way I now would use her name to harm my partner in any way. *Wait... She gave me her name and now I would in theory be able to perform magic. Perhaps I can help her come back to her senses?*

The opening of the screen door drew me from my thoughts before I could formulate any plan at all. My Lady entered the room. "Hello kitten," she greeted. "Going human today, I see."

Suddenly I was hyper-aware that I was sitting there with Tia – Tikki's head in my lap, which could be read as something more than companionable closeness. "I am not... This isn't..." I felt heat creep up my neck. "It's different."

Lady Li Shou laughed, which sounded strange even to my ears coming from her feline form. Unsure of what to do now I simply settled back, unwilling to retreat into my feline form.

"It always is though, isn't it?" She closed her eyes and shape shifted. It was the first time seeing my Lady in her human body, her eyes still looked like a cat's. She was shorter than me although she made up for that with her aura of power that surrounded every god.

Scrunching up her nose, Lady Li Shou fingered at her black and white hair the same pattern as her fur. "Ah, now I remember why I dislike this form," she grumbled. "So much more grooming to do... Not much training either." *If she is able to make all this, maybe my Lady will be able to help me with my idea as well.* I found myself hoping against all odds.

"Lady Li Shou," I spoke up, pausing shortly when her sharp gaze snapped up to me, "I know her true name. She told me."

"Did she now? How interesting."

"Yes. And I wondered, if you would be willing to help me with something using this name."

Chapter End Notes

Kitsune - is a Japanese fox demon, they are tricksters and shape-shifters and can be either good or evil.

Li Shou - is a cat goddess. The gods assigned her to watch over the world, but falling cherry blossoms or patches of sunlight distracted her. So the gods decide to give this assignment to the humans, while Li Shou henceforth watches over the circle of day and night, with her eyes lightening up the sky.

Partners

Chapter Summary

In wich Plagg gets a surprise he never expected.

Chapter Notes

In which I missed to update the actual sixth chapter... But it's fixed now. Hope you have fun reading ^^

I don't own Miraculous.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Li Shou tilted her head as she considered my request. It would definitely take some getting used to her humanoid form.

“It is unusual,” she finally said. Her long nails left angry red scratches on her skin. Her eyes roamed over Tia and me. The heat in my cheeks ignited anew. There was no reason, really. I had watched over my partner for the past weeks. It was just that the intimacy of the moment, the trust involved in giving away your true name, was nothing I would have ever fathomed would happen just a few weeks ago.

“So what do you plan to do? Leave this plane of existence to go and find her and bring Tia back into her body?” Li Shou blinked slowly, a very cat-like gesture unbefitting her current body. I nodded slowly. The weight of Tia’s head in my lap felt heavier than before. *I really hope my Lady has an idea how to invoke this magic to help me. I have to find Tia and bring her back. That’s what partners are for.*

The screen door opened with a soft scraping sound.

Lord Kangiten stopped dead in his tracks. “Li Shou,” he breathed. My Lady met the god’s eyes calmly. They stared at one another. An entire conversation seemed to pass between them before Lord Kangiten looked back at Tia.

“How is she?”

“She told me her name,” I said without thinking about it. Instantly, I regretted it. Both gods fixed me with intense looks. Li Shou like a mother scolding her child she found with the hand stuck in the cookie jar. Lord Kangiten with the distrust of a god towards a demon. So no small and a normally justified amount. *But I’ve lived here for so long... How can he still not*

trust me? Even his oldest student entrusts her life into my hands again and again. Have I not proven that I can be trusted?

Anger coiled in my stomach. I forced it down and lowered my eyes. It was unbecoming of my status to stare at the high god for too long. Even, if he was questioning my loyalty to the only person in the world I might actually be unconditionally loyal to. My partner in crime.

Lord Kangiten took a deep breath. "And what are you planning on doing with that information?"

I don't even have to think about it. "Save her." The words tumbled out of my mouth. My eyes were fixed on Tia's face. She was as pale as a ghost. I didn't like it one bit. Maybe she'd die before I could help her. There was no way to enact any kind of ritual, if the gods decided to ban me from performing it. Even Lady Li Shou wouldn't be able to deny the god of creation, Tia's father, should he be asked to make a judgement.

My stomach dropped, muscles contracted at the mere thought of losing Tia. *Just when I got her back.*

"I saved her life before," I heard myself say. It sounded far away. "She used her power of destruction. It almost killed her. I pulled the destruction out of her body with my own powers. Why would I hurt her now, if I could have just let her die then?"

The silence that followed my admission was thick. Neither of the gods said a single word. I for my part only looked at Tia. I had gotten used to how fragile she looked, but now I noticed the lines around her eyes, how sunken her cheeks were. Tia needed to wake up soon or else her body might not be able to sustain her much longer.

"Is that true?" Lord Kangiten shifted his stance. I assume he looked directly at Li Shou now, although I didn't care to check.

Instead, I tried to reach for Tia with my powers. I wanted for anything within her to respond to me. To show me, she was still alive and fighting to wake up. But like on so many other days, nothing happened. *Did she even wake up at all or did I imagine that? Some kind of lucid dream? Maybe this is a dream? A nightmare, and when I wake up, she'll laugh at me for actually thinking, she might give me her name so easily...*

"Yes. Akuma cleansed Tia of the traces of destruction left in her system after their last battle. The destruction in her is also the reason for her current state. As you would know, had you cared to listen to me," Li Shou said icily. "But you chose to leave it to the healers to take care of your protégé." I heard the hiss barely concealed in her voice. "Did it ever cross your mind, that it goes far beyond any other bond for a partner to stay the entire time with the injured? Akuma only left her side, if I watched over Tia. I doubt he had any sleep at all that first week."

A heavy weight settled on my chest. *I did that, didn't I? And I would do it again, if it meant, I could protect her. No questions asked. Where the hell did my survival instincts go? One girl smiles at you and suddenly you're a love-smitten kitten?* I shook my head lightly.

“Of course I knew he was here,” Lord Kangiten said. “I am aware of my students whereabouts at all times. Unlike some other gods.”

“Are you trying to imply something?”

I was acutely aware of the gods behind me. Still, there was no time to pay their argument any mind right now. Tia gave me her name for a reason. She trusted me. Maybe my partner felt that she needed help to regain her powers completely. And I was the one with powers complimentary to hers. It was rare; the gods never grew tired of telling us that. It had to be good for something!

Something flittered at the edge of my senses. I paused. It was an insistent little tug as light as the beat of a butterfly’s wings. The wounds on my flanks flashed with burning pain. *What?! That healed weeks ago! How can they re-open now?*

But there was no mistaking it. The wet trailing down my sides was back – in the exact same spots Trixx had bitten me in our fight. I bit my cheek, muscles clenching and unclenching.

Without warning, the world tilted in front of my eyes. My powers flared, wrapping around Tia and me in a tight cocoon. Far away, I could hear Lady Li Shou and Lord Kangiten call for me. I couldn’t answer. My muscles wouldn’t budge.

Slowly, my eyes adjusted to the darkness surrounding me. Or rather, I noticed that the darkness was all encompassing. No light, no shades to tell me anything about where I was. My eyes were essentially useless.

I can’t feel Tia anymore. I’m not sitting down either... Panic flared in the pit of my stomach. If I wasn’t close to Tia, how was I supposed to help her? My body felt as if it simply floated in the air. *Okay, no sense in losing my head. Fear doesn’t get me anywhere. The last thing I remember is... My powers reacted to something. My wounds re-opened and my powers wrapped around Tia and me. Which means, Tia has to be somewhere here as well.*

As if conjured by my thoughts, the ground rose up to meet my feet. With some surprise I noted, I was in my feline form. A path opened. The only indication of it was a slightly less black patch beneath my feet. And, without anything better to do, I took the first step to follow it. *As long as I find Tia at the end of this and can bring her back to her body and the world of the living –*

Wait.

World of the living?

I stopped dead in my tracks just a few steps further down the path. With a sweeping look, I scanned the scenery again. Black. Black in every direction. Just like the power of destruction I had found in Tia after the battle. Not a single light indicating creation except in the path. A dull light, like a candle behind a sooty glass pane.

This was not inside myself or even inside Tia. This was not our power. No. I was on the best way to cross over into the underworld. The realm of destruction, of the goddess Izanami. Death and Creation unified in one divine being. *Even if her life in Yomi had some side effects...*

A supernatural breeze picked up around me. *I know that scent.* Before my mind could fully process what exactly I smelt, my paws were already pounding on the ground as I ran towards the familiar smell. Somehow floral and sweet. Vaguely like home, like the shrines I strolled past every day. Well, not anymore since I rarely left Tia's side. Too afraid to miss her waking up or losing her for good.

Oh no. That won't happen. I refuse to let that happen. I'll never forgive myself, if I allow this sunshine of a person to perish. I narrowed my eyes against the wind as it picked up. No way would I allow my closest friend to die so easily.

Well that's new, a voice in my head whispered. *Not so long ago you would have loved to turn your back on them. You did turn your back on them. And look where that got you. Back around and back to her like a good little kitten.*

I clenched my teeth, fighting the urge to snarl. Voices in my head were nothing new. I had them before. However, that was never a good sign for my mood. There was no time for sentimentality and musings about my nature as an akuma. I needed to get Tia. She, for some reason, trusted me. With her life and name. *I'd rather be dead than disappoint her now.*

A giant gateway appeared in front of me. It was nothing like I expected. Not a red Torii gate like on other temples. Neither was it a cave entrance with fixed sutras hanging from its top like humans tended to portrait the entrance to the underworld. No, the gate to Yomi presented itself to me in the form of a giant portal. Intricate carvings wound around the top and seemed to drop to the floor in random patterns. The left wing stood slightly ajar as if someone hadn't bothered to pull it fully closed behind them. *Or as if something escaped from its prison.*

I slowed to a crawl, eyes sweeping around for anything suspicious. The fact that everything was absolutely quiet did nothing to calm me. My instincts were on high alert. I crouched low above the ground, my belly almost scraping against the stones on the path. The whole set up was highly suspicious. As if something tried to lure me in, make me lower my guard.

Still, nothing. No wind, no snarling demons running to attack me. Nothing. It made my fur itch.

"Come out," I growled lowly. *I know there has to be something there. This is the underworld. I need to find her. I need to find Tikki.*

A loud groan rose from within the gateway. As if something was waking up, trying to get out. Definitely nothing I wanted to encounter on my first visit to Yomi. The fur in the back of my neck stood on end. A hiss ripped from my throat. I curled up, ready to strike. *This is not going to end well. And I don't like it at all.*

"Oh, you poor thing. All alone out here by yourself," a soft voice said. I whirled around. In front of me stood a woman. Clad in a traditional kimono of white silk. A necklace made of

green jade hung around her neck. She was breathtakingly beautiful. “Would you like to come inside? It’s warmer.”

I stared up at her. A sense of calm settled over me, soothing my nerves and fear of losing my partner while stuck here for whatever reason. Her eyes were dark and soft. “Trust me. I know how it feels to be all alone.” She smiled at me. It was such a sad smile I immediately wanted to fight whatever made her look like that. Still, she made it seem as if I was the most adorable cat she had ever seen.

No one has ever looked at me like that. There’s no distrust in her eyes. She somehow reminds me of someone.

“Come, kitty, your muscles must hurt from all the tension. I can help you. You don’t have to be alone. Let me keep you company and show you a warm place where no one will hunt you.” The woman held out her arms, the smile still in place. She was so beautiful. Her kimono turned into soft floral patterns at the sleeves. Trust and security emanated from her actions and words. *A warm place to stay. Yeah, that sounds nice.*

Slowly, I unfurled, stretching my sore muscles. My eyes didn’t stray from her. She was so beautiful. And some place warm to stay sounded comforting after I was out here for so long. My eyes almost fell closed. *It’s been so long since I slept for more than a couple hours. So long. A fireplace, that’d be nice. Just to curl up in front of it and sleep. Even my muscles ache with the need for sleep.*

“You’re so good for me, little kitty,” the woman cooed. She held me close to her chest, warm and safe. The sway of her steps lulled me into a wonderful half daze between asleep and awake. “Such an adorable cat. Whoever would want to hurt a lovely thing like you? I could never understand.”

A sigh fell from my lips as I felt the warmth of her body seeping into me. I hadn’t even noticed how cold it was outside. But with her close to me there was nothing that could hurt me. This woman would keep me safe, I knew it. A happy purr rumbled in my chest.

She laughed softly. “Yes, you can be happy and calm. There is nothing to fear. See, here is a fireplace so you can curl up and sleep off your fatigue.”

Carefully, she lowered me onto a soft cushion. It felt so nice, the texture soft under my paws. I didn’t bother opening my eyes. I was safe. The woman would watch over my sleep. Besides, I had everything I could possibly want. A fireplace helping me to warm up, a soft cushion to curl up and sleep on and – most importantly of all – a loving guardian.

Chapter End Notes

Li Shou - is a cat goddess. The gods assigned her to watch over the world, but falling cherry blossoms or patches of sunlight distracted her. So the gods decide to give this

assignment to the humans, while Li Shou henceforth watches over the circle of day and night, with her eyes lightening up the sky.

Kangiten - God of Bliss, Joy and Pleasure. He originally comes from India, but is also worshipped in Japan, especially by couples hoping for children. He is depicted either as a single elephant-headed humanoid being or as an embracing couple of elephant-headed humans (thus the worshipping as a deity of pleasure and my interpretation of him as husband and wife).

Yomi - Shinto-word for the underworld/land of the dead

Izanami - goddess of Creation and Death. She is wife of Izanagi and with him created the world. She "died", which resulted in her living in the underworld. Izanagi wanted to take her back, however he broke his promise and turned around to look at her on their way back. Frightened by her appearance, he flees and seals the underworld off (while Izanami hunts him for breaking his promise), thus creating the separation of the living world and that of the dead.

Friends

Chapter Summary

In which Plagg meets a goddess.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Hope you're all healthy and safe! Have fun reading ^^

I don't own Miraculous.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Hey,” the voice drifted through the air. My ear twitched and I groaned softly. *Not now. The fire is so warm on my fur and no one is trying to get me to move. I can finally rest somewhere. No duties to disturb my peace.*

“I thought, I allowed you to stay,” the voice went on. She sounded sulky. As if whoever owned this voice could hear my thoughts and was not happy with them. My ear twitched again. There was nothing around me to indicate another breathing being. No other sounds but that drifting voice. And even that sounded far away, almost like in a dream.

“I wonder why.”

Quit poking around in my thoughts, I grumbled.

“Oh yeah. So you can keep sleeping on that pillow. Come on, Akuma. Use your brain.”

That voice. She sounded familiar. Very familiar. I had to know her.

Slowly, images emerged from the depths of my mind. A young apprentice of the gods. Her bluebell eyes shining with steely determination. Her red hair a mess after a fight, her weapon still clutched in her hand.

The same hand stroking through my black fur as we walked among the cherry trees. On the porch of a temple with the sun shining on my back.

A still of her, head thrown back in a laugh I could almost hear. It had to sound like chiming bells.

A sense of belonging flooded through me, getting stronger with each image my brain conjured. More and more, scenes with her friends. Even though they were clearly sceptical in the beginning, they were warming up to me. Slowly but surely.

“This. This is your home,” the voice said. I could almost see the young woman say it, her eyes bright, the smile welcoming. She would reach out for me. *Tia. My partner. The reason I stayed and became an apprentice of cat goddess Li Shou. To atone for my crime and not get killed. Tia opened that path up to me.*

“It seems, your brain is still working,” she sighed. “At least with a little help from me.”

Where are you? I remember you getting hurt. You didn't wake up – Tia, I'm so sorry. I tried to help you, I couldn't.

“Calm down, kitten. We are in the Underworld. You fell under a spell. I can't tell, where I am, but I feel the destruction spreading through my body. You need to find me quick, Akuma.”

Her voice drifted off like a leaf in the storm. Growing more and more distant. I tried catching her, drawing her back to me, but I couldn't seem to get a hold of her presence in the air. My claws scraped through thin air.

“Oh no,” another voice drifted into my consciousness. “Don't worry about her. Your friend is safe with me. I can take good care of her. And you.” A wave of warmth spread through my body. “You need to rest, little kitten. Your days in the realm of the gods were hurtful enough. Take your time. They aren't going to miss you. But I will, if you leave me again.”

A content purr rumbled in my chest. Her words were true. Living among gods was a lot less fun than anyone could anticipate. Not only were they wary of me as a former akuma, they also had a general dislike for me as a feline apprentice of Lady Li Shou. She, who had lost the position of guarding the earth to the humans because she slept through the day.

And here was a lovely lady, who wanted to keep me. Safe and warm. I wouldn't need to worry about anything anymore. Never again.

“Yes, kitten,” she said. “I will keep you safe from those pesky gods. Always meddling in things they don't know anything about.” Fingers carded through my thick fur, massaging my back. My thoughts stuttered to a halt. A content purr I never would admit as mine rumbled in my chest.

“Really? A pretty face, a soothing promise and you become putty in her hands?” Tia sounded seriously offended. “And here I thought, fighting by your side and risking my life for you would somehow encourage you to trust me.” I could almost see her cross her arms across her chest with a frown. “Why did I even give you my true name, if you don't use it?”

I woke with a start. *No. Tia! Don't say that.*

The first thing I saw, was the fire glowing in front of me. Only, the longer I stared at it, the more I realised, it wasn't really there. Instead of the warm red light, it changed into a cold,

green light right in front of my eyes. My instincts flared to life. This was not how it was supposed to be. Definitely not.

I looked around in search of anything to tell me, where I was. The cushion underneath my paws was a dark brown, almost like my fur before I became one of Li Shou's kittens. It even showed some of the same spotty patterns. A few treads with my paws revealed the fur to feel scarily realistic. *Oh goddess, please tell me, this isn't real fur...*

To think, I might have slept on a cushion of a dead Iriomote. My stomach lurched. As quickly as possible, I scampered off the fur and onto the cold stone floor. With the green light illuminating the room, it became painfully clear, where I was. The Underworld. In the palace. Izanami's palace in Yomi.

Damn it. I let my guard down. I need to find Tia as quickly as possible and get us both out of here. I might survive chaos but she cannot.

"Where do you think, you're going?" A woman stepped into my path. Her dark hair shimmered in the firelight. Her dark eyes glittered dangerously. Gone was the warmth she had emanated in front of the gates. This was definitely no ordinary woman. *I need to be careful.*

With a purr and yawn, I made a show of stretching my muscles after a refreshing sleep. "Forgive me," my voice rumbled deeper than normally. "I only wanted to look around. If I want to stay here, I might need to get my bearings of where I am." Without missing a beat, I curled around her legs. The kimono was so soft against my side. "I won't stray far."

The woman looked as if she might protest me, but thought better of it. If she was actually trying to trap me here until I was too late to save Tia, she needed me to comply to her wishes. With a soft huff, she leaned down to me. "Okay. I trust you, kitten. Just don't go far. I want to keep you company."

With another loud purr, I separated from her. A soft shimmer caught my eye. The jade necklace glimmered an even darker shade of green in the unnatural firelight. Something about this necklace didn't seem right. *I can look into that once I have Tia. She is my priority.*

The farther I wandered into the empty hallways, the more I looked around. Even without the constant echo of my near silent steps, the lighting change would be enough to frighten lost souls into fleeing head over heels. *This is without a doubt the Underworld. And I walked right into its arms.*

It was suspicious how empty everything looked. Not a single soul moving within these stone confines. And Tia was hidden somewhere among them. With destruction slowly consuming her. I shook my head. There was no use in lingering on that thought. Not, when I was surrounded by eerily lighted halls, chambers with stone figurines that looked suspiciously like they had been alive at some point. I needed to find my partner.

The smell of sugar. Faint but definitely there. "Find me," Tia's voice echoed in my head. A simple plea. Only... Something wasn't right. *Why does she sound strained? I need to find*

her. Maybe the destruction is getting the better of her...

Caution be damned, I needed to get to my partner. She needed me to get her out of here as quickly as possible. *Don't worry, I'm coming for you.*

I clenched my jaw. This place was dangerous. Not only because it was in the Underworld. Izanami, goddess of the Underworld was very much a threat. I couldn't fathom what she might do to us, if she found the daughter of Creation – Izanami's estranged husband – hiding in her own realm. It definitely wouldn't be anything good. We were lucky, if we could make it out of here alive.

As quickly as I dared, I darted around the rooms, trying to find where the traces of my partner were stronger. There was no time to lose, Izanami might appear at any moment. It was a wonder she wasn't already looking for me for I rapidly realised just whom had brought me into the palace in the first place.

“And here I thought, the jade necklace would have given it away.” I could hear Tia roll her eyes. “At least you seem to be regaining some of your wits. Finally. Now hurry.”

I am. Quit whining. Or do you want me to run into another demon or alert Izanami to what I'm doing?

“No, but I do fancy a quick escape, Akuma.”

What do you think, I'm doing here? Vacation?

Tia didn't respond, which was just as well. I rounded a corner and her smell hit me. It was suddenly a lot stronger than in any other room before. It could have been perfect. The dark walls could reflect the same kind of light Tia seemed to emit on occasion. Moss covered the stones. A mysterious puddle of something no one wanted to identify any further.

Instead, I found myself face to face with the woman from the fireplace. Next to her, gagged and bound, knelt Tia. Her dark hair spilled over her shoulders in a tangled mess. I almost growled at the lost look in her eyes. The woman, however, was faster. “Now, kitten, don't be impolite.” She wagged a finger in my direction. “It's horrible manners to growl at your host.”

My stomach sank. This was worse than anything I could have fathomed. The necklace. It should have been obvious the moment I first laid eyes on her. But it hadn't been. Like a dumbass I had fallen right into the magic, entranced by a pair of pretty eyes and soft words.

With forced calm, I settled on the floor, tail curled around my front paws. “Lady Izanami,” I bowed my head. “It is an honour to finally formally meet you.”

The smile she threw me almost sent me back into her trap. “I'm glad you found your manners, kitten. After all, it is not every day that you meet the head goddess. But pray tell, kitten, what brings you to my realm?”

“I am here on behalf of my partner. She is an apprentice of Lord Kangiten and was seriously injured while protecting me. Upon overseeing her healing, I fell into your realm, though I don’t know how it happened.”

Lady Izanami glanced down at Tia. “An apprentice of Kangiten? Lucky bastard.” She carded her hands through Tia’s hair. It suddenly regained its usual glow. Shining, detangled and styled in two simple braids. “There, that’s better, don’t you think, little lady?”

Tia gave a curt nod. Even though the gag had vanished with the tangles in her hair, she didn’t seem inclined to speak. Her face was pale. Almost chalk white. *I need to get her out of here. The destruction is taking its toll on her.*

“It is a noble effort of you to rescue her. A life debt repaid. Still, it is curious.” Lady Izanami looked up from stroking over Tia’s head. “How come an akuma bonds to the child of a kami? And then such a strong akuma at that... Why do you submit, kitten. Surely, you must have felt the urge to destroy everything in your path more than once.”

Memories flashed before my inner eye. Memories of death and fights and bloodshed. No, I hadn’t been a saint before meeting Tia. Far from it. Other akumas had feared my presence to mean the end of their life, which it often did. My name wasn’t Plagg for no reason.

“It was difficult in the beginning. The gods have very strict rules and living among them, who hate my kind, is surely no stroll in the park.” I kept my gaze steady on Lady Izanami. Tia might know all of this, still, a small illogical part of me feared her reaction to hearing my thoughts firsthand. “At some points I considered stalking through the realm at night and picking some of the apprentices off their beds to never be seen again. Especially after they started to throw stones and other things, shout and curse me.”

Tia took in a sharp breath. My gaze wavered. Her eyes were wide with shock. I didn’t know of what, I didn’t want to know. Faced with Lady Izanami, I was more than willing to present my destruction for her in hopes of appeasing her enough to maybe let Tia go. Even though it could very well mean I had to stay behind.

As if on cue, Lady Izanami chuckled. “It seems, the little lady did not know about that. What a pity. Are you sure, you are fit to be partners?”

“Yes. As soon as she found out about the other apprentices mistreatment of me, she made a point of shutting them down. I just never told her, how bad exactly it could get on some days. Which I would do now that I know her better.”

Lady Izanami looked between us. She was contemplating something. Hopefully not how she might torture us most effectively. Her moods were known to be cruel. “You still haven’t told me why you are her partner.” Lady Izanami made it sound like a casual question. The glint in her eyes betrayed her tone. This was the true information she was after. Finding out how a godchild and a demon could work together in peace and even risk their life for one another.

I looked at Tia. If I told the truth, it might endanger us. Kill Tia in the worst case. Imprison us here in Yomi in the best case. If I lied, Lady Izanami might catch on and punish us anyway.

There was no easy way to get out of this. Not with the goddess of the underworld holding our strings in her hands.

“My master detected a trace of creation in Akuma that matched to the trace of destruction I carry inside me.” Tia’s voice was weak. Her eyelids fluttered as if she was about to faint. I rose and stepped towards her instinctively.

Lady Izanami spun on her. “A hint of destruction within a child of creation?” Her eyes raced between the two of us. “Well if that isn’t interesting.” A sly smile tilted her lips. “Did you think you could hide that information from me, kitten?”

“Of course not,” I hurried to say.

“Liar.”

“Please don’t hurt her.”

Lady Izanami narrowed her eyes. It was as if she saw me for the very first time. A black cat akuma turned apprentice of the gods. I was not cowering before her anymore. With the threat to Tia’s life now dangling over us like the blade of Damocles, I bounded over to her. Lady Izanami took a step back in surprise as I positioned myself protectively over Tia.

“Don’t fret, kitten,” Lady Izanami said. “I have no intention of harming that little sunflower. Why would I hurt a child of my own husband? He might be an insensitive jerk, but I do respect his offspring enough to reserve the violence for him only.”

Although her words sounded sincere, I did not budge from my position. Getting to Tia had been my priority from the beginning. Now that I had her within my reach, I would not stray from her side again. Within me I felt her destruction rising to meet mine. Her light was dwindling rapidly.

“Akuma,” Tia mumbled weakly. An airy sigh and she collapsed onto the ground. *No. No, I can’t lose you. I found you. I got to you in time, Tia! Hang in there, I’m going to find a way to get us out of here and back so Lord Kangiten or someone can heal you properly.*

“She is dying,” Lady Izanami whispered. “I see. The destruction is spreading.”

I snarled at her. “You don’t say.”

With an unimpressed huff, Izanami stepped closer. “I will overlook your impudence this one time. Only because your other half is dying. Now move so I can help her.”

I planted my paws more firmly around Tia’s unconscious body.

“If I wanted to hurt her, I could have done so long ago. Trust me. Why do you think, you heard her at all? I was curious, what you two were to each other. Had I known, you belonged, I would have never done this. Now move.”

Reluctantly, I changed my position to curl protectively around Tia and leave Lady Izanami a small opening to work her magic. It earned me an annoyed look and huff. But the goddess

didn't say anything else as she placed her hands on Tia's forehead.

Within an instant I felt the change in the air. Tia's body seemed to start to glow from the inside out. The colour returned to her cheeks. Still, she didn't wake.

Lady Izanami leaned back on her knees. "It will take some time for her to wake. Probably all the way out of here. Even though you'll have my guidance to find your way." She looked at me with her head tilted curiously. "You are a strange kitten, Plagg. One of my strangest kittens yet. I almost didn't recognize you when I stumbled upon you in front of my palace gates."

I blinked. "What?"

She laughed, a sound like chiming bells. "Where do you think, the original akumas came from? I made them. To hunt down my husband. It never worked out of course, but they were a big enough nuisance to distract him for some time."

My mind was still reeling with the revelation. Lady Izanami, mother of gods, goddess of destruction and creation alike, queen of the underworld, had created the akumas. *Does that make her my mother? Am I a son of Destruction?*

"You need to work on concealing your thoughts when in the presence of elder gods. My husband is not as lenient as I am," Lady Izanami gently reminded me. "But to answer your question: I am not your mother, in terms of creation. Still, when you were born, I felt it ripple through the universe. You and your partner are destined for great things. And I do feel inclined to help you along part of the way."

Carefully, she lifted her hand and reached towards me. I stood stock-still. No matter what had transpired, I was still not entirely sure I could trust Lady Izanami. So I chose to remain in a position where a sudden attack might not hurt Tia.

Lady Izanami touched two fingers to my forehead. Power immediately surged through me. With a gasp, I felt it attach itself to my destruction. Something changed, warped into a new shape. *What is happening?*

"You received my blessing." Lady Izanami's voice sounded as if it came through fog. "Now you may use your destruction to defend those in need without endangering them." My eyes fluttered closed, I felt Tia beneath my sagging body. "Use your power wisely. Together with Tia, you are destined to greatness." It was hard to concentrate on Lady Izanami's words. Everything seemed to be wrapped in cotton. "Don't waste your talent, my stubborn kitten."

Yomi faded from my senses.

Chapter End Notes

Yomi - Shinto-word for the underworld/land of the dead

Izanami - goddess of Creation and Death. She is wife of Izanagi and with him created the world. She "died", which resulted in her living in the underworld. Izanagi wanted to take her back, however he broke his promise and turned around to look at her on their way back. Frightened by her appearance, he flees and seals the underworld off (while Izanami hunts him for breaking his promise), thus creating the separation of the living world and that of the dead.

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The Team

Chapter Summary

In which Tia and Akuma return to the world of the living.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Hope you're all doing well and keeping safe! Have fun reading ^^

I don't own Miraculous.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The first thing I heard when I came to was low chatter just outside of the room. What drew my attention a lot more however were both, the presence of Tikki in my lap and another presence in the room. My ears twitched to focus in on the soft sound of breathing.

“Do not worry,” the person said, “I will not alert them to your waking just yet.”

Slowly, I cracked one eye open to see, which of the cadre had decided to drop by. It was surprisingly relaxing to find Wayzz looking back at me. His hands were folded into his sleeves, his posture almost serene. Only the hard glint in his green eyes betrayed any inner tension.

“How long were we gone?” I asked quietly.

Wayzz pulled his shoulders back ever so slightly. “Almost two days from what I was able to gather. Lady Li Shou and Lord Kangiten had an argument about your abilities and how you might help Tia with them.” His eyes flitted towards the screen door. “They even called in Lord Izanagi in fear of losing both of you to Yomi and the Lady. He was not too pleased to find out his daughter was heavily injured by one of her own.”

My thoughts drifted back to the fight with Trixx. They had been so out of their mind and Tia – Tikki – had tried so hard to get them to snap out of it. Blood induced rage was not to trifle with. Still, Trixx had attacked her. Hurt her. Was I really worried about Trixx being punished for something I would have punished them for as well?

“No need to get so empathetic,” Wayzz said calmly. The corners of his mouth twitched upwards. The reprimand was still clear for me to hear without him directly naming it as such.

“I admit I’m not entirely unhappy to hear, Trixx might face consequences for their actions. Still, they are not to blame for what happened. They were in a blood induced rage after fighting a group of shadow dragons quite admirably.” I met his gaze calmly. “And if I as a former Akuma can say that, it is a compliment. Those were not easy enemies to face while keeping each other and the mortals safe.”

“It’s good to hear you value my daughter’s friends so highly, Akuma.”

I almost startled upon hearing the deep voice from behind me. Carefully, to not dislodge Tia from my lap, I turned to look over my shoulder. Lord Izanagi loomed over us. His dark hair fell down to his shoulders in shiny curtains. Another jade necklace much like his wife’s hung around his neck, tucked into his robes and almost invisible when paired with the impressive sword at his hip and his bejewelled spear Ame no tama-boko strapped to his back.

My eyes swiftly scanned him for further weapons, finding none visible. But that barely assured me. In the face of the God of Creation, foresight was probably better than hindsight. Especially with his daughter still in my lap. Tikki had not awoken from our trip to the underworld yet.

“Your daughter holds her friends in high regards, my Lord,” I ducked my head respectfully, “I trust her judgement. Her injury was not a result of mal intentions, merely an accident with catastrophic consequences from what we know.”

Lord Izanagi raked his eyes over Tia and me with an unreadable expression. “Still, it is a risk to allow her to return to them. Injury, even accidental, is no laughing matter. Especially so, if it results in her departing to Yomi. She was lucky to escape at all.”

Something in his voice had the hairs on the back of my neck stand on end. *He wouldn’t take Tia away from her friends, would he?* I curled my fingers into Tikki’s robe. *He can’t. She loves them more than anything.*

Wayzz sat perfectly still, observing me and Lord Izanagi with a pleasantly neutral expression plastered onto his face. He didn’t say anything, although I suspected he might have quite a few things to say to our current situation. *But he’s more reverent of the gods than I will ever be. Maybe he’ll tell me his thoughts after Tia’s father leaves.*

I shifted Tikki’s weight in my lap since my legs were starting to fall asleep. “It’s a shame you think like that,” I told Lord Izanagi. “From what I could gather, Tia’s team is more than capable of protecting themselves and others. Especially, since they seem to be the only cadre I’ve come across to actually answer to the prayers of humans.”

It happened too fast to react in any way.

The cold steel of the blade touched my neck. Lord Izanagi stood above me. His frown was darker than any thunderstorm I could imagine at the moment. But I didn’t move. I stayed perfectly still with Ame no tama boko on my neck, biting into the skin there. Something warm trickled down my throat into my clothes.

“You will not speak like that to me.” Lord Izanagi curled his lip. “You are lucky, I even allowed you to stay this close to my daughter. You are not part of this community. You are an akuma. Filth of the lowest rank.”

Geez, tell me how you really feel. I suppressed the urge to roll my eyes. With a spear nicking my skin, it might not be the smartest idea to antagonise the head god any more.

“And you will not speak like this to my partner,” a soft voice declared.

We turned to stare at Tia, still lying on my lap. Her eyes were just slightly open, glaring up at her father with quiet steel. She looked exhausted.

“Put the spear away. Without Akuma, I would be dead already,” she went on. “He saved my life twice already. And he is not *filth*.” The last word dropped from her lips with the same distaste as it had her father’s but for completely different reasons. My heart did a strange stuttering thing.

Without waiting for a response from her father, Tikki fought to get into a sitting position. Ignoring the tension tangible in the room, she turned her gaze to Wayzz. “I’m sorry, you had to take over for such a long time. Akuma and I will be with you and the others shortly. As soon as I sorted this out and am cleared to return to training. Make sure, everyone is ready.”

Wayzz nodded solemnly. Without another word, he rose from his seat and bowed to Lord Izanagi. He was almost at the door, when Tia called after him “And let Lady Li Shou and Lord Kangiten know I am awake.”

Lord Izanagi narrowed his eyes at her. His mouth set in a thin line.

Tia ignored him completely in favour of looking up at me. “You took your sweet time finding me,” she said. There was no malice behind the words.

Huffing, I rolled my eyes. “Yeah. How about we go back and find out how long you need to find me. Especially with the Lady breathing down your neck.”

“You didn’t seem too opposed to her coddling you,” Tia pointed out. “On the contrary. If I remember correctly, I had to call you several times before you even realised what she was doing.”

I rolled my eyes at her. “Sure, whatever you need to tell yourself.”

The door opened. Before I could even begin to sniff the air for whoever had entered, they spoke up. “I see, you recovered already,” Lady Li Shou said. Her feline form slunk around the room, subtly trying to make a berth around Lord Izanagi. “Then perhaps, we might continue our training shortly.”

“I agree,” Lord Kangiten appeared behind Lord Izanagi’s shoulder. His eyes strayed between the God of Creation and us. With a slight bow to Lord Izanagi he stayed in place. “My Lord.”

“Lord Kangiten,” Tia’s father acknowledged him calmly. His lips turned downward. It was obvious, he wanted to say something else. His eyes flickered to Li Shou, who sat close to us

on her hind legs and observed the scene with calm detachment. “I am surprised, you allow my daughter to engage in battle as unprotected as she was.”

Unprotected? The hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. *How the hell was she unprotected? We were all there? Without my help she wouldn't be here right now!* Without really thinking about it, I shifted into my own feline form. Fur bristling, teeth almost bared in a hiss.

A hand on my side stopped me from outright snarling at the head of the gods. My head whipped around to find Tikki looking back at me with the same calm anger burning in her eyes. Minuscule, she shook her head. And of course she was right. Snarling at the God of Creation after just surviving the encounter with the Goddess of Death was counting slightly too much on my luck. Luck that had never been my strongest suit.

“I suppose, you could call it that, my Lord,” Lady Li Shou spoke up. “On the other hand,” she flicked her tail, “without Akuma’s help, your daughter would have descended to the Underworld without any way to come back to us. And without her cadre, humans might have stopped worshipping us, and decreasing our power at length. It is remarkable how well they handled their missions without her. Although it is painfully obvious they need her power of creation and strategic mind in their midst to optimize their successes.”

Lord Izanagi looked as if he might get sick. “Li Shou. I never suspected you would be so adamant about supporting a former akuma and a band of protégés. Then again.” He didn’t finish the sentence. The implication was clear. *Then again you forgot to oversee the creatures in the beginning because you fell asleep.*

Li Shou met his gaze calmly. Her right ear twitched. “Then again, I was appointed to watch over all creatures in the world. Which I still think is a rather dull exercise.” If cats could smile, Li Shou gave Lord Izanagi the most indulging smile I had ever seen. “Nevertheless, my kittens are my kittens, no matter, where they come from. Even more so, the reason for Akuma staying with us is his blessing with Destruction.”

A moment of silence stretched among us. Tikki and I were watching our mentors and parental figures stare each other down with varying degrees of disdain written across their faces. Lord Kangiten was quickly looking between Li Shou and Lord Izanagi, as if trying to decide, whom it was safer to side with. Li Shou and Lord Izanagi meanwhile were locked in a battle of wills it seemed.

Lord Izanagi was the first to speak. “You mean to say, the akuma is matched to my daughter due to their shared affinity for destruction and creation respectively.” It wasn’t a question. His eyes turned back on me. I felt Tia’s hand tighten in my fur.

“Yes, exactly that.” Li Shou looked me up and down. “And had you observed him further before insulting his prowess, your Lordship might have noticed the recent blessing by your Lady Wife.”

Well, if that didn’t get their attention.

In an instant, I felt the attention of every god in the room on me. *Oh great. Just what I wanted today. Being insulted by my partner's father, praised by Li Shou and outed as blessed by the Lady of Destruction.* I curled around Tia so she shielded most of me from the god's vision. Her hand petted my fur reassuringly; although that did nothing to disperse the tension I felt running through her body otherwise.

"What does the blessing mean exactly?" Tia asked no one in particular.

"It means he is your perfect counterpart," Lord Kangiten finally said. His eyes were wide, as if seeing us for the first time. "Both of you are blessed by opposing forces while containing a small portion of the opposite within you. A perfect balance, rarely seen in any kind of relation before." His gaze flitted towards Lord Izanagi, who had gone an unhealthy white.

Li Shou licked her paws, ears flickering occasionally. She seemed to be the only one utterly unimpressed by the recent turn of events. Neither my question to help Tia with her real name nor my sudden blessing by the Lady were any cause of concern for her it seemed. My Lady took it all in stride.

A few uncomfortable silences later, Tia was cleared to leave the rooms and return to her duties as apprentice of Lord Kangiten. Which, of course meant our first walk lead us towards the pavilion, I had first met the Cadre at in what seemed like a lifetime ago. Tikki insisted.

"I am not going about my day without seeing my friends. They were worried no doubt. They had to get by without me to aid the humans in their trials." Her eyes were hard, unrelenting as stone. There was no argument to be had here. Not that I particularly intended to have one. I had cut Tia and me off of them during the past.

Upon our arrival, we found out that Wayzz had done his job remarkably well. Duusu, Pollen, Trixx and Nooroo stumbled to their feet as soon as they caught sight of Tia's red hair. Duusu had tears in his eyes. A sparkling affair close to precious stones or something.

Pollen was already rushing down the stairs to meet us. "There you are. We were so worried. It's so good to see you – is everything alright? Oh, we missed you so much, it was just not the same!" She buzzed with all the excess energy.

My ears flicked in mild irritation. Tia merely smiled indulgently at her friend, grabbing a hold of her hands and giving them a squeeze. "I'm so happy to see you again," she said. "I'm sorry you were worried about me."

"Oh no, it's alright," Pollen immediately assured in the same hurried tone as before. "You were hit quite hard. It's only natural that you needed time to recover, no harm done. We're happy to have you back, don't worry we'll help you get back on your feet with the fighting. You'll be down helping mortals in next to no time."

All this chatter is making me restless. She's talking a mile a minute, as if she hadn't seen Tia – Tikki – in moons. It wasn't that long. I glanced up at my partner. *At least she doesn't seem to mind.*

Tia smiled at her friend, allowing Pollen to examine her as if she hadn't just been cleared by their superiors. Her eyes strayed over to the rest of her friends. She frowned. Instantly, my head snapped around to find whatever did not meet her expectations.

It wasn't hard. Trixx was folded into one of the shadows. Eyes downcast, shoulders rounded as if protecting their body from a storm. Their hair was shaggy, no shine to it whatsoever.

Without thinking long, I shifted back into my humanoid form. Tia and I exchanged a worried glance. With a little nod, I encouraged her to go to her friend and see to it that Trixx got back on their feet.

Pollen's eyes stayed on Tia as long as she could before snapping back to me. For a moment, she said nothing. Then, "So, you're back."

"I'm back."

She crossed her arms across her chest. "Are you going to stay this time or are you going to run again?"

"I didn't run." I narrowed my eyes at her just the second she did the same.

Wayzz appeared at her side from somewhere. "I suggest, we take this conversation into the pavilion where are less likely to be overheard." His gaze didn't waver, didn't indicate anywhere someone might be hiding to eavesdrop. *Still, something tells me, he might be not only trying to keep up appearances in front of other novices.*

Pollen merely huffed and stormed back inside.

"The little bee doesn't like when someone leaves the hive I take it." I forced a grin. "And here I thought, bees were group players."

Wayzz regarded me calmly. Without saying a single word he turned and returned to his friends as well. That left me standing outside in the open like an idiot.

Well if that didn't feel like he was reading me inside and out. Charming really. And here I thought fighting with them for as long as I did might have gained at least a little of their trust. Apparently not, if you stay at their leader's side and don't help them fight for mortals. Good to know.

Soft footfalls caught my attention. My head snapped up. Duusu came to a sudden halt a few steps away from me. "I saw your return," he said quietly. His eyes still shone with unshed tears, but something about him seemed happy at the same time. *What a strange expression...*

"I also saw your blessing," Duusu went on, even quieter, "I didn't tell the others."

"Why?"

"It is not my place to tell. They might react unwisely to such a revelation." Duusu nodded his head, as if agreeing with himself. "Such a blessing can be damning for anyone."

A shudder ran down my spine. *Maybe Wayzz was right. We should go inside to discuss all this. Or maybe at least re-establish normality. Whatever that means right now.*

I glance around quickly for anything out of place. A group of novices comes down the path from the gardens, chattering loudly. They hadn't seen us yet. And somehow I'd prefer it to leave it that way.

With an almost genuine smile at Duusu, I inclined my head. "Thank you for your consideration. I appreciate it. We should join the others."

Duusu nodded stiffly, turning on his heel as we strode up the steps into the pavilion. With another look around, I followed him inside. *I hope the rest of them aren't as suspicious of me as Pollen.*

Chapter End Notes

Izanagi - god of Creation and Life. Husband of Izanami. Together, they created the islands of Japan and are the head gods of Shinto. After Izanami died, Izanagi went into the underworld to get her back, however he broke his promise and turned around to look at her on their way back. Frightened by her appearance, he flees and seals the underworld off (while Izanami hunts him for breaking his promise), thus creating the separation of the living world and that of the dead.

Ame no tama-boko - bejewelled spear gifted to Izanagi and Izanami. After Izanagi stirred the saltwater with it, the droplets falling from its tip formed the first island of Japan, Onogoroshima.

Li Shou - is a cat goddess. The gods assigned her to watch over the world, but falling cherry blossoms or patches of sunlight distracted her. So the gods decide to give this assignment to the humans, while Li Shou henceforth watches over the circle of day and night, with her eyes lightening up the sky.

Kangiten - God of Bliss, Joy and Pleasure. He originally comes from India, but is also worshipped in Japan, especially by couples hoping for children. He is depicted either as a single elephant-headed humanoid being or as an embracing couple of elephant-headed humans (thus the worshipping as a deity of pleasure and my interpretation of him as husband and wife).

Yomi - Shinto-word for the underworld/land of the dead

Izanami - goddess of Creation and Death. She is wife of Izanagi and with him created the world. She died, which resulted in her living in the underworld. Izanagi wanted to take her back, however he broke his promise and turned around to look at her on their way back. Frightened by her appearance, he flees and seals the underworld off (while Izanami hunts him for breaking his promise), thus creating the separation of the living world and that of the dead.

Talking

Chapter Summary

In which the cadre sits down and has a talk.

Chapter Notes

Hey! Sorry for the delay, exams are a killer >.< So here's a new chapter, hope you like it.

I don't own Miraculous or any of its characters.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Upon entering the pavilion, I noticed a few things. First, Tia sat on one of the pillows, seeming already more relaxed than in the presence of the gods. Second, Trixx was curled in on themselves close by. Pollen hovered almost above Trixx, tried to talk to them or at least get their attention. She didn't seem to be getting anywhere in their conversation. Nooroo watched the scene with sad eyes, pouring tea with careful hands.

"It wasn't your fault," Pollen murmured, "You couldn't control yourself. And Tia survived. Don't blame yourself."

Well that doesn't sound very encouraging. Trixx visibly recoiled further and further from her friends. *This is not helpful. Usually I might enjoy such a display, but this... After the past weeks it just seems cruel.*

"I don't think it is wise to continue this line of conversation," Wayzz calmly interrupted Pollen's tirade. He settled on a cushion and accepted one of the cups from Nooroo with a grateful nod. "I suspect Trixx will come to ask for aid, should they need it."

"Don't speak about me as if I'm not here!" Trixx hissed. They curled further in on themselves, their clothes turning into fur, their face elongating into a snout. The fox hid their face under their tail.

With a sigh, I moved further into the room behind Duusu. While he settled on a cushion opposite of Trixx and took the offered cup of tea, I stepped up next to the fox. Trixx curled even more in on themselves, trying to disappear. Given their patron god and general ability for mirages. I didn't let that disturb me. Neither did I comment on it in any way. Instead, I just crossed my legs.

The conversation around me halted slightly. Pollen especially was glowering at me. I merely raised an eyebrow in response. *What? Am I not allowed to sit here? Try and stop me.*

Tia looked between us, before deliberately turning back towards Wayzz. “So, I hope they behaved themselves in my absence?”

A wry grin appeared on Wayzz’s face, as he very obviously didn’t look at me, Trixx or Pollen. “Mostly, yes. There were a few hiccups with some of the missions we were called to. Nothing I or Nooroo couldn’t handle.”

Nooroo slightly ducked his head, blushing. Apparently he was still unused to any kind of praise, although I had a feeling he was also pleased to be called upon as a positive example. Pollen huffed and threw Wayzz a sharp look. “No need to look like that Pollen,” he told her, “Even you have to admit you were not behaving very graciously or appropriately for a novice of Bhramari. Humans rely on bees to pollinate their trees and flowers for them to gather fruit. You had no right to snap at them.”

Pollen’s frown deepened. The illusion around her wavered until it fell away to reveal the extra set of arms, curling around her body and clutching at her robes. She remained stubbornly quiet. I decided to take a page from her book and ignore her for the time being.

Nooroo leaned over the table, staring at me with questioning eyes. “Tea?”

“Gladly, thank you,” I replied with an honest smile. *They might be wary of me for my heritage and the way I behaved before. Still, they know nothing of what happened between me and Tikki during her illness.*

I took the offered cup with another smile that Nooroo returned bashfully before quickly focusing his attention back on his friends. Next to me, I noted Trixx was slowly relaxing their muscles. The tip of their tail twitched every so often as the conversation around them picked up again and no one seemed to pay immediate attention to them.

“So,” Pollen settled back into a cushion, “what exactly happened during your recovery? There are wild and frankly ridiculous rumours flying about the mountains and gardens. Every novice seems to have heard or seen another version.”

Tia took her time answering. *Almost as if she doesn’t want to talk about it just yet. I can certainly relate. Dipping down into the underworld for a short trip and meeting the Lady is certainly nothing to retell amongst fluffy pillows, flowers and tea... Not to mention the fact that she told me her given name.*

“I mean, some are even saying you disappeared,” Pollen went on, “Someone from the afterlife department said they felt something shifting in the fabric of time or something and then someone fell unconscious before you awoke. They are running their mouths as if they had nothing else to do.” Pollen wrinkled her nose. With every word, she got more and more agitated, gesturing wildly. Duusu moved the teacups out of her range of movement.

To her credit, Tia didn’t allow any of her thoughts show on her face. Still, I could sense the slight change in her posture and smell. She was not happy with this line of conversation or

how others reacted to her situation. Our eyes met across Trixx's back, the fox glancing up from their paws as well to gauge her reaction.

Pollen seemed to get rolling the longer Tia didn't reply. Her explanations and examples of rumours spreading among the novices and even things she overheard the gods whisper about. Apparently, our bond was still regarded as some kind of anomaly. With both of us encompassing creation and destruction to some degree and my demonic heritage.

"Thank you, Pollen, I think, that's quite enough," I growled after the third variation of the same rumour.

Instantly, Pollen's dark eyes fell on me. "Oh, there are enough rumours going around about you and what exactly you do to fill an entire library, don't worry." She sneered. "Not to mention the new rumours of you having some kind of connection with the Lady."

I raised an eyebrow. *This is not very impressive. If news travel this fast among novices and they take it as and warp it with rumours... No wonder all of them are so preoccupied.*

"Alright, that's enough," Tia cut in sharply. Her eyes bore into Pollen. "Akuma is my partner. He saved my life. He is one of ours, just like all of you, so you will treat him like it."

Trixx ears perked up, they glanced away from Tia to look at me. I allowed a small smile to play across my lips. *Yes, you are included in this group. No matter what you think.*

"Now, to answer your original question," Tia set down her teacup, "I used too much of my destructive powers and my body gave out. Akuma here helped with his own portion of creation to pull out most of it. However, by then the Lady had already taken an interest and transported me to Yomi. Akuma somehow managed to follow and rescue me despite the Lady's attempts to seduce him into staying with her."

I noticed the missing parts in her story. Neither her telling me her true name nor the Lady's blessing were included in the report. All around the table the rest of the cadre listened with rapt attention. Wayzz considered the offered information the most critically. He folded his hands in his sleeves as he listened, tilting his head this way or that in thought. "So the rumours are true. The Daughter of Creation met the Mother of Destruction?"

"Yes," Tia confirmed calmly. Her eyes didn't waver, but she also didn't look in my direction. *She tries to smooth over the edges of our story. Take their distrust of me and my being an Akuma.*

Nooroo turned to look right at me. "You were in Yomi? How was it?"

Suddenly everyone's eyes were on me. *Well so much for Tia's strategy.*

"Dark," was the first thing that came to my mind, "Foggy and dark. Kind of cold mostly? It doesn't help, if the Lady is coercing you to sleep on a cushion in front of a bit of hellfire..."

Several eyebrows rose. Pollen looked torn between fear, disgust and distrust. Mostly directed at me, if I was able to read her correctly. But for once, she kept her thoughts to herself.

Trixx on the other hand actually lifted their head up from their paws. Violet eyes blinked up at me in mild curiosity. Maybe Trixx could come to the understanding, that we all had our darker parts to deal with and made mistakes. I met their searching gaze and gave a smirk. The fox seemed to get the hint that not everything was said in front of the others, although the most important information was relayed. They shifted softly as they resettled.

“That was a very apt description of a place of death.” Apparently Pollen could only keep silent for so long. Her voice dripped with sarcasm. “Would you like to tell us next that water is wet?”

I gave her a grin too bright and full of sharp teeth. “I am not a big fan of water, in case you hadn’t guessed.”

“Akuma,” Tia sighed.

“Yes, sugar cube?”

“Try to be nice.”

I quickly schooled my expression into the most faux innocent look I could manage. “But Tia, Queenie was mean first.” Between us, Trixx hid a snort behind a bushy tail.

“Do you really want to argue about that, Akuma?” Tia lifted a challenging eyebrow, but there was no fire behind her words. On the contrary, a small smile tugged at the corners of her lips.

With a grin of my own, I shifted into feline form. Ignoring everyone around us, I slinked up to her and curled around Tia’s back. “I would never dare argue about that,” I purred.

“Would you mind toning the flirting down?”

Everyone turned to look back at Trixx, as surprised as the novice themselves to have spoken up. Tia recovered slightly quicker, throwing her friend a teasing smile. “Why? Do we make you uncomfortable?”

Trixx stared back for a moment, then snorted. “More like sick.”

“Well that’s a tad rude,” I chimed in; voice lilting, “Although... Trixx is certainly speaking for my mind. We are too happy for my taste.” I threw a wink in Trixx’s direction for good measure. They blinked back at me, as if nothing was wrong but I could see their muscles slowly relaxing more than before we sat down.

Across the table, Duusu caught my eye. He looked between the three of us and gave a small nod of approval. Not that I needed it, but it felt nice to know that he was on our side should Pollen decide to poke further.

“I do think, Akuma might do good to take up his training once more,” Wayzz said calmly. He was still sitting serenely across from us, teacup now back in hand. The only indications of his racing mind were his slightly shifting eyes.

Training, huh? I gave him a feline grin. *Well, at least that's a chance to get Trixx to open up again.* I allowed my eyes to sweep over the assembled as if debating Wayzz astute observation. *It has been too long since I last trained. I wouldn't be any good in a fight right now.*

My eyes landed back on Trixx, still in their fox form. I shifted enough around Tia to stretch across her lap towards Trixx – ignoring my partner's protests. "Trixx, would you mind training with me? I'm afraid, Wayzz might be right especially when it comes to fighting in this form. I haven't had nearly enough training in the past weeks to still be on par with the rest of you."

Trixx considered me for a moment. Then a sly smile passed over the fox's muzzle. "Now that you mention it: I can see the big kitten has put on some weight." The smile widened slightly. "I bet, I could outrun you in a race to the cherry garden."

Mock hurt, I turned up my nose. "I sure didn't put on any weight at all. I am fit, just less endurance."

I almost jumped when Tia poked my side. She hummed thoughtfully. "No, Trixx has a point. There's a bit less muscle right here." She poked my ribs again. "You might want to start on that sooner rather than later."

"I'll show you less muscle," I playfully growled at her. Tia merely grinned back at me. As if previously arranged, we both jumped to our feet and raced out of the pavilion, Trixx hot on our heels. Pollen stopped at the top of the stairs with a disapproving glare. Wayzz packed the tea set and Nooroo and Duusu looked after us with matching grins.

Maybe this is going to work out better than I thought.

Chapter End Notes

Bhramari - is the goddess of bee, wasps and hornets. She is typically depicted as holding a mace, trident, sword and shield in her four hands.

Yomi - Shinto-word for the underworld/land of the dead

Sparring

Chapter Summary

In which the Cadre gets assigned a new mission from a mysterious source.

Chapter Notes

Late happy New Year everyone. Hope you had a nice holiday break. And now of course, have fun reading ^^

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See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

I never thought I'd appreciate sweat running down my face from exertion. But letting Akuma, Plagg, chase me through the gardens and across the mountain was truly the most fun I had in a long time. The sun and wind in my face, my friends laughing behind me as Trixx chased after us. It felt right. For the first time, the world seemed right again.

I don't want this to end. Please, don't let this day end just yet.

Akuma appeared so suddenly, I couldn't stop. He must have used the trees to catch up to me without my noticing. We toppled over each other to the ground. His fur tickled my nose, his tail swiped out from under my knees. Dust and sand flew up around us. I might have let out a surprised yelp.

"What was that about me putting on weight?" he asked, lying across my middle. I tried to wriggle out from under him but the cat was too heavy. Or maybe he just made himself heavier to keep me pinned in place considering his amused snort.

"Well, you certainly aren't light," I retorted with a grin.

Akuma's head shot around to stare at me incredulously. He huffed and shook his head proudly. "Muscle is quite heavy after all."

For a moment we just stared at each other, fighting fits of laughter. Lying in the sun somewhere on the mountains, limbs strewn across each other, tangled. Stones dug into my back but I didn't mind. After days on the pallet waiting to rise to consciousness I had more than enough of lying around helplessly.

I shoved at Akuma's shoulder. "Get off me, kitty. I want to get down to some training before night falls." Slowly, I managed to at least roll the cat off my torso onto my legs. Akuma sprawled happily across the floor, regarding me with half open eyes. In typical feline fashion, the sun seemed to lull him to sleep quicker than any warm blanket could.

From the corner of my eye, I caught movement. Trixx sat a few steps away, tail curled around their paws, head tilted as they observed us. Our eyes met and the fox offered a mischievous grin as much as that was possible with a muzzle.

"You look happy," Trixx noted almost absentmindedly.

"I have a lot to be happy for," I replied easily. Across my lap, Akuma craned his neck to look over at Trixx. Without even thinking about it, I reached out and scratched under his chin. The cat startled slightly before he relaxed into the touch. Eyes closed, head titled to give me better access, Akuma could almost pass for an ordinary overgrown cat. Especially once the purr started rumbling in his chest.

"Hey, big guy," Trixx called lightly. Once Akuma opened his eyes to look back at them, the fox tripled a few steps closer. "I thought you wanted to train with me." A teasing glint glimmered in their lilac eyes. "All I saw until now is a big cat chasing after a little bug and collapsing straight after. If that's all you have left in you, I seriously doubt we'll be able to take you with us on missions anytime soon."

Not even the blink of an eye later, Akuma was on his feet, staring the fox down. His tail flicked in anticipation of what was to come. I followed his lead, albeit a little slower. *If I have learned anything about Akuma, then that he tends to run off at a moment's notice if he wants to. And keeping up with a cat his size is not the easiest task considering his agility.*

As if reading my thoughts, Akuma tilted his head back to look at me over his shoulder. "What do you say, partner," he showed his fangs in a feline grin, "want to show Trixx what we're capable of?"

"Oi, I don't remember challenging Tia."

"I don't either. Who says I'm not just going to side with Trixx and take you down a peg? You could use it too; your ego seems to have inflated even more than before. Not long and you won't fit through the doors."

The affronted stare I got for that comment was enough to send me into a fit of laughter. Without even waiting for either of their approval, I manifested my fans. Lazily fanning myself, I met their eyes. "Maybe we should try and see how you two hold up against the literal daughter of Creation, hm?"

A challenge. One, that caused Trixx to twitch. No doubt they remembered the last time we fought. True, it was not a particularly fond memory but we needed to get over it in order to become an effective team for our missions. Akuma on the other hand shifted his stance at once. He received the message it seemed and was eager to take me up on the challenge.

“What are you waiting for, Trixx?” he asked. “Come on, she asked us. I trust her to do this. She knows what she can take. And I’m here to keep us in check if needed.”

His unwavering confidence seemed to soothe Trixx’s nerves. Trixx slinked up to Akuma’s side, ears perked forward to catch any and all sounds. Next to each other like this I first noticed the difference in height between them. Sure, in human form Trixx was not the most imposing figure but neither was Akuma most of the time. But now the black cat seemed to almost tower over the red fox, oozing confidence.

That confidence might just be his downfall. Akuma never had to fight against me. Especially not when I actually try to spar and not just teach strategy or techniques. Trixx on the other hand... My eyes slid over to my friend. Their eyes followed every move of my feet and fan as if they were the most intriguing sight they’d ever seen. Trixx knows my tricks. They fought alongside me long enough to have knowledge of my fighting style beyond the strange intuition Akuma and I developed. Especially given the fact that Akuma never sparred against me, just with me against others. A smile spread across my face behind the fans. *My, this promises to be interesting.*

Beyond the low stone railing I caught sight of the rest of my Cadre coming up. Wayzz seemed to sense the mood and stopped the others from coming closer. I met his eyes across the field. His gaze flicked between the three of us, reading the situation, before giving a small nod. Without further ado he settled cross-legged on the ground, shield resting across his knees just in case it might be needed.

“Well,” I began, “now that that’s settled.” Without giving either a warning, I dropped one fan in favour of my ko-naginata. I had no intention of getting in close enough range for their claws to catch me. Their eyes caught on the blade, not sharp enough to seriously injure them, but still able to leave bruises. I twirled it in my hand, waiting for their decision.

Akuma was the first to move. He rose back to his feet, tail dragging across the sandy floor, eyes sharp. And then he shifted into his human form. My surprise must have shown on my face, if his cocky grin was anything to go by. “What, thought you were the only one with an ace up your sleeve?”

“No, of course not.”

Trixx still looked between us, gauging the situation. A moment longer and they shifted as well. Short-cropped hair curled around their ears. They pulled their flute from their belt, poised to begin playing at a second’s notice.

A grin stretched across my face. *Well, this is promising to be interesting. We never sparred solely in human form. Or in this constellation.*

“What’s the matter, sugar? Afraid of the big bad cat?” Akuma almost purred. His eyes flitted down to his fingertips. “I have to admit, I am anxious to find out what a blessing by Destruction actually means.” A mischievous grin stretched his lips.

I almost forgot about that. But he was right. That was going to make our sparring infinitively more interesting. Especially, if he deigned to use the new powers. Untrained as they might be.

The fact alone that he trusted enough to think about using them was both humbling and worrying. With the sun high in the sky, I shifted into fighting stance and gripped my weapon tighter.

Akuma was first to move, lunging forward. I moved with him, turning to the side to avoid getting hit. As he came to his feet, Akuma sent me a wide grin. *That all you got?* He seemed to ask. I shifted my stance ever so slightly. Keeping an eye on Trixx just in case, I whirled at Akuma, aiming to hit his unprotected side this time. Akuma rolled out of the way with a breathless laugh. I followed him, ditching the ko-naginata. Range was not of any use, if he was going to swipe and duck at me. Blood rushed in my ears.

Trixx stalked around our tussle with keen eyes trained on my every movement. Every now and then they seemed to want to cut in but either of us would move out of the way for them to find an opening. The flute hung in the air just in front of their lips.

“Come one,” I called out, “Use it, don’t just stare at us.”

Akuma’s eyes strayed over to Trixx, his grin broadening. “Yeah, we don’t bite. Hit her with your best shot.”

I ducked out of the way of his swiping claws. “Why just me? If you keep being so uncoordinated,” I sidestepped another of the cat’s lunges, “they’ll hit you too.”

With a cloud of dust rising from his skidding halt, Akuma looked back at me. Crouched on the ground, he looked more than an actual akuma than I had ever seen since our first meeting. His teeth flashed. Claws dug into the ground, muscles coiled and ready to spring into action at the barest hint.

He clicked his tongue. “Well, that’s just poor form, sugar. Give me some credit.”

Before I could even blink, he pinned me to the ground. One hand behind my head to keep me from hitting it too hard after just recovering. I stared up at Akuma in surprise. He smirked. “I told you. Don’t underestimate me. Without weapons and your powers, I am very much capable of overpowering you.” And with that he pushed away from me.

For a moment, I stayed exactly where I was, just blinking. *How did that happen? When did he get so fast? I never saw him use that before.* I took the offered hand to pull me to my feet.

Trixx stood rooted to their spot opposite us. Blinking furiously. “What was that and why didn’t you do that sooner?” Akuma and Trixx stared at each other for a few heartbeats. “Had I known you could be so fast I wouldn’t have hesitated using my flute.”

“Well, you can always try again?” I suggested. A fan reappeared in my hand. “I might just up my game as well, since Akuma apparently developed teleportation skills.”

“If that’s what you want.”

Akuma and Trixx got into fighting stance left and right of me, trying to work out their strategy with glances and head tilts. Eventually, Trixx lifted the flute back to their mouth. A

single note signalled the beginning of round two.

By the time we stopped, I had managed to evade most of their attacks. Akuma meanwhile was covered in dust from head to toe. Not all of it was my fault. It was just more visible on his black clothing and his tactics included a lot of skidding and jumping directly into the sand. Trixx was the only one who seemed perfectly fine with everything. Clothing pristine and not a hair out of place.

“Tia,” Wayzz called from the side lines. I turned and found the others huddled around a messenger. *Oh great. Either one of the gods decided to summon us or the humans require our assistance. Although... I didn't hear any prayers.*

Stepping closer with Trixx and Akuma at my shoulders, I caught the tail-end of Pollen's conversation with the messenger. Her tone was sharp, as she interrogated him for the details. “And you're sure, the signal came from the mainland? Why would they ask us for help? Don't they have their own-”

“Yes of course,” the messenger cut in, “That's what surprised all of us. I have however no further information about any of it I could divulge. The gods requested the Cadre to go investigate. The human is very insistent. Apparently, he sent some of his own pantheon away, specifically asking for you. Although I can't quite understand why.” The last part was mumbled so quietly, I was sure we were not supposed to even hear it.

Pollen stared the messenger down, blue eyes sharper than before. She puffed out her chest and straightened to her full height, illusions falling away. *Oh dear, she's getting ready to defend our honour. And as charming as it might be, we really don't need that right now.*

I slid in front of my angry friend. The messenger seemed to have realised his mistake as well, paling considerably at the display of power. “Pollen, would you mind looking into gathering our proviant for the long voyage? I assume we might need a few peach tarts and healing pills. You know the sages like you best.”

A snort was all I heard before the crunch of steps indicated her huffing exit. I allowed my posture to relax ever so slightly. Without the imminent threat of a full out brawl, I looked the messenger up and down. His robes were an unassuming brown, falling loosely around his frame. He didn't cut an imposing figure at all. Even, if that wasn't any indication on raw power.

“Now, what was that about a petitioner from the mainland asking for us?”

“I really don't think, I mean, I already told your comrades.”

I pinned the fidgeting man with an unimpressed stare. “And I asked you to repeat yourself for me, did I not?” He nodded hastily. “Good. Then proceed. From the beginning and make sure you don't forget anything.”

For a moment, the messenger just stared back at me. I felt more than saw Akuma slink up to my side. “Well?” he purred. “You heard the daughter of Creation. What's the message?”

Without even turning around I knew he was putting on the façade of the akuma. Head tilted, arms crossed and a menacing grin tilting his lips. The messenger seemed to shrink back even further. He couldn't meet our eyes.

"A few hours ago, we received a message from over on the mainland. Apparently, a man who calls himself only 'Mage' requests the help or assistance, as he put it, from the daughter of Creation and her Cadre. He did not specify the kind of situation he needs help with or how long this mission might take. Which is why Lord Kangiten was not pleased at the prospect," the messenger paused, "None of your masters and mistresses want to let you out of their supervision for long, even though your group consists of senior novices."

Akuma waved a hand. "Yes, yes, get on with it."

At that the messenger furrowed his brows. Obviously, he was not pleased to be interrupted by a former akuma no matter how threatening he seemed. To his credit, he didn't actually say anything. Instead, the messenger continued on. "The Mage requests your assistance specifically without giving any context as the usual pleading humans do. Adding to that, as I said before, he defied help from his own pantheon for one or the other reason. Your gods demand you leave within the day to the mainland. Find out, what the Mage wants and report back to them before you do anything about it."

My eyebrows shot up. Don't do anything about it? That's certainly new. Usually, we're tasked to deal with whatever the humans require as fast as possible. Protecting them from evil or aiding their gain of knowledge. If the gods don't want us the help...

I looked around at my friends. Wayzz and Akuma seemed to be stuck in their thoughts, neither of them looking overly happy at the presented situation. Duusu and Trixx both worried their hands in their robes. Only Nooroo met my gaze. Calmly. Almost resigned. As if we didn't have any other chance than to obey without question. *Somehow, I can understand why Pollen was as agitated as she was after hearing all this.*

"Thank you," I told the messenger. "Tell our masters and mistresses that we'll be doing our best to fulfil this mission efficiently."

With a quick bow and not quite hiding his relieved expression, the messenger hurried off towards the main houses. I bit my lip. *Just recovered and suddenly I'm thrown into a new mission on another continent. Great. And Akuma was blessed by the Lady and we still don't know what exactly that encompasses.*

"We should probably pack our stuff," Akuma mumbled. "If they send a messenger it has to be urgent." He shooed the others away to pack. The fact that they did so without complaint spoke not only of the strangeness of the situation but also of their acceptance of Akuma.

I vanished my fan, still in my hand from sparring. My friends disappeared between the trees and terrasses. The sun burned down on the top of my head. *Something about this situation doesn't sit right with me. I just can't put my finger on it.*

"Hey, what's wrong, sugar?" Akuma asked.

My first instinct was to roll my eyes and tell him not to call me that. But I bit it back. He was just trying to help. “What do you think about this?”

From the corner of my eye, I saw Akuma turn to look at me. His eyes roamed over my face as if to find any trace of what I might be playing at. “What exactly do you mean? The suddenness of the mission? Or the location? That he specifically requested you and refused to give his actual name?”

I looked up at him.

“Yeah, I don’t like any of it. Refusing to give your complete name is one thing, but giving none at all? That seems suspicious.” Akuma ran a hand through his hair. “Besides, I don’t like getting all of us together on the mainland without a guard left here just in case. I know the other novices are also capable of protecting humanity and all, but as the messenger said. We’re the elite of the seniors. And you’re the daughter of Creation. Add that to our apparent bond and – no, I don’t like this at all.”

Pursing my lips, I turned back to stare at the canopy of cherry trees marking the surrounding of our pavilion. “Then we have the same train of thought. It doesn’t help that the gods demand that we don’t immediately help but report back. I don’t like that at all.”

For a moment neither my partner nor me said a word. We stared straight ahead, caught in our own thoughts. From whatever angle I looked at it, the facts the messenger revealed did not yield any more information to consider without further context only the human could provide. Around us the other novices and employees bustled about in their duties.

I hate this. Something is not adding up. It feels like I’m setting my friends up for some kind of trap. I tugged at one of my strands. Even with Plagg and me keeping an eye out we might not be able to keep them as safe as they need to be.

“Come on, we should probably go packing too. If they decided we have to look into it, we’ll have to obey them.” Akuma began walking, not even looking back at me. Mid-stride he transformed back into a cat, shaking the dust off his fur. Something dropped in my stomach. I knew Plagg didn’t intend to leave me behind anymore. He proved that by walking down into the underworld to save me from my destruction.

I followed Akuma back towards the pavilion. Following orders seemed for now like the easier solution. *Our gods gave us an order. If they want us to investigate this call from the mainland without their own direct involvement then so be it. I know the gods of the pantheons reconvene sometimes and exchange information, sometimes even strongholds of power.* The cool shade of the cherry trees fell over my face, breaking me out of my thoughts.

Around me, novices chatted with their friends or trained. It seemed normal enough, but I lived here all my life. I felt the stares behind my back. From the corner of my eye, I caught the moments when novices obviously looked back at me when discussing with their friends. Some of the words might be on the wind for me to catch, but I didn’t really feel like working through other people’s interpretation of our mission on top of figuring out what our masters and mistresses planned behind the scenes.

The sun had just passed its zenith when the Cadre met once more at their pavilion. The first thing I saw, even before my friends or their packs, was the carriage. Horseless of course, a simple drape to close off the back. I squinted to try and maybe find some indication of whom the carriage belonged to.

Unfortunately, it was as nondescript as should be expected from our mainland mission. No bells or sutras or symbols painted on as a safeguard. *We'll have to put up our own wards. Wayzz can't do that the whole way. Otherwise, he'll be exhausted by the time we reach the mainland...* I flipped through the abilities spread among our cadre to find the best candidate to share the burden. *Maybe Pollen? She likes to protect our little hive. Duusu might be able to help with sensing should danger draw near and Plagg and Trixx are a sure-fire way to get rid of anyone trying to attack us.*

Pulling my shoulders back, I approached the pavilion. Voices came from inside. One of the gods must have decided to see us off and issue last-minute instructions in terms of allowed behaviour in special cases. Maybe even just to ensure we left and see to it that I was well enough to actually survive the whole trip.

“Tia. Very good, we were just waiting for your arrival.” As if on cue, Lord Kangiten turned the corner to the pavilion’s steps. I bowed to him. He didn’t blink an eye, just turned back towards the steps. “This is a very important mission, even if we have despairingly little details. The human should not have been able to pick the pantheon he contacted for his worries. Let alone request your Cadre to indulge him.”

As I stepped up behind Lord Kangiten, I saw my friends lined up on the steps with their packs at their feet. For a moment, their positioning seemed strange to me. Wayzz and Akuma might be getting along well enough, but after today I felt my partner might be closer with Trixx than any of the others. And then it clicked. *They arranged them in some sort of hierarchy. Wayzz was my second in command before Akuma came along. But since Akuma took care of me and was literally declared my soulmate they cannot put him below Wayzz. On the contrary, technically, Plagg should stand just beside me in this scheme.*

My eyes scanned over the faces of my friends to try and gauge their feelings on this arrangement. Most of their masks were perfectly neutral. None of their thoughts showed through in front of my Lord. It was both remarkable and frustrating. Yes, it was preferable to let the gods think everything was going according to their plan and orders. That didn’t mean I had to be comfortable with my friends being forced into a hierarchy I had no intention of keep.

“Don’t worry, Lord Kangiten,” Wayzz spoke up, “I can assure you we will do everything in our power to ensure a desirable outcome. With Tia’s unerring leadership, we will be able to get to the bottom of this strange human.”

I could have hugged him. Wayzz must have seen my inner conflict and rather than waiting for the god to notice had taken it upon himself to keep his attention off me for as long as possible. Sending a thankful smile Wayzz’s way, I turned to Lord Kangiten. “He is right. We are the best for a reason. The Cadre will solve this mystery to your content. I trust them and they rely on my leadership without question.”

Lord Kangiten nodded his head once. "I trust you will report back as soon as you return. Travel safely."

"Thank you, my Lord." I bowed to him again. Steps crunched as Lord Kangiten strode away. *He must disagree to some extent with the decision to leave without any further approval or token to keep us safe on our travels besides his wishes.*

Taking a deep breath, I turned back to my friends. Without the god present, their masks slipped slightly to show their emotions. Pollen seemed especially miffed to be placed almost at the far back of the assembly. As if controlling insects was less valuable than being able to turn humans into heroes. Or predicting the future was more valuable in a combat situation than shapeshifting.

"Let's pack up and get into the carriage." I ran a hand through my hair. "You know, your powers are all important, I am no more our leader than any of you could be."

Pollen huffed as she picked up her pack. Her pride was always wounded when the gods refused to acknowledge her power in comparison to the others. *She'll calm down soon enough. As proud as she is, she also understands that we don't share the views of the gods regarding our supposed hierarchy based on either our parents or powers.* I looked at Duusu, who met my gaze head on. He nodded once.

Without another word, we loaded our packs and ourselves into the back of the carriage. Even before Nooroo could close the cloth, the carriage set itself in motion. We jostled, falling against each other with the sudden ascend off the ground. The gods really must wish to send us off on this mission as quickly as possible. Akuma looked a bit green around the nose.

"I really hope, we won't get into a storm," Pollen mumbled. "Otherwise, this will be a very interesting journey between Duusu and Trixx hanging over the back to feed the fish." She threw a look at the two, who looked both ill and embarrassed at the same time.

Wayzz folded his arms into his sleeves, leaned back against the wall as he settled in for the journey. "Be nice, Pollen. They can't help they prefer to stay closer to the ground." His eyes wandered over each of us. "We're going to be here for a while, so please, settle down. With the speed of our carriage, we should arrive sometime tomorrow or the day after. I'll take first watch with the protection sigils."

Silence settled over our group. Akuma watched on as we all took our packs and pulled blankets from them to wrap up in or sit on. "So, we just curl up and wait for our arrival by magic carriage?"

"Basically," Trixx shrugged. "We could play some games, but that usually doesn't happen until we're sick of the sky and nothing else to see. Until then you could easily take a nap or something." She shifted to stare out the back of the carriage. "I for my part am going to keep an eye on the horizon."

Duusu shifted to sit next to them, legs curled under him. "We'll need our strength to successfully complete this mission. The way is converging before us." He leaned his head

down on his crossed arms. “The Mage is not a normal human and not just because of his extensive knowledge of magic.”

Great. That sounds really promising for getting there, finding out what he wants and getting back as quickly as possible. And Duusu tends to be right about his prophecies... I leaned back against the wall. *Well, there's nothing we can do about it just now. In the middle of the air on the way to the mainland.*

When I looked back up, the rest of my friends had settled in to their usual positions on these kinds of trips. Trixx and Duusu kept an eye on the horizon to get over their motion sickness, Wayzz meditated and Pollen very obviously embroidered a piece of cloth. Akuma met my gaze as I turned to find out how our newest member took to the flying carriage.

After another beat, he shifted into feline form. Slowly, as if checking, if I was okay with it, he crept closer until he was rolled up around me with his head resting in my lap. A fond smile spread across my lips. *For all that he pretends to be a fearsome akuma or big predator, Plagg is really just a fluffy cat. A cat that loves napping in the sun and ear scratches.*

With the warmth of his fur under my fingers, I leaned back once more. Before long, I drifted into a peaceful sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Naginata - is a traditional Japanese weapon. It is formed like a pole with a curved longer blade at the end of it. The prefix ko- indicates the version used by female warriors. It is smaller to compensate the lesser height and upper-body strength of women.

Kangiten - God of Bliss, Joy and Pleasure. He originally comes from India, but is also worshipped in Japan, especially by couples hoping for children. He is depicted either as a single elephant-headed humanoid being or as an embracing couple of elephant-headed humans (thus the worshipping as a deity of pleasure and my interpretation of him as husband and wife).

Travel

Chapter Summary

In which we are still traveling.

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! Hope you're all doing well. Have fun reading ^^

I don't own Miraculous.

Tia slept almost throughout the whole first day of the journey. Her head rested against the wall of the carriage, hand laying atop my back. Trixx and Duusu remained by the opening, but the longer the two of them stared at the horizon, the more relaxed their posture got.

“I don’t think, I’ll ever get used to this flying,” Trixx mumbled around midday. “Whyever do any of the gods prefer this mode of transport over just teleporting or shapeshifting and riding the winds themselves...”

Duusu settled on his knees. “There are a lot of fates colliding up here.” And that was that. He rubbed a hand down his face. Without looking back at the rest of us, Duusu turned back to stare up at the sky.

Something tells me, he’s seeing literal strands of fate and futures tangling up there. I guess I’d get dizzy from seeing that too. I followed the lead of the rest of the group and left both of them to their devices. Instead, I turned to Wayzz. He sat across from us, legs crossed.

“I suppose, I should thank you for looking after Tia the way you did.”

“You would have done the same.”

Wayzz’s eyes wandered to Tia’s form half hidden beneath my own bulk. After a moment’s hesitation, he shook his head. “I don’t doubt any of us would have tried, however it is doubtful we would have been successful. Pulling the destruction out of her was no small feat. Not everyone can do that.”

The solemn tone didn’t sit well with me, but I felt it was the only way Wayzz was able express his fading concern and worry for his close friend. *It is a peace offering after the rocky*

start and general unease because of my being an akuma. So instead, of snarking back at him, I softly nodded against Tia's lap. "Thank you. I know she means a lot to you all."

Pollen snorted from her place a bit towards the opening.

"Got something to say?" The growl was almost involuntary. *She never liked me. Not even once I started working with them and not against them. It's not like I like her that much either, but I don't quite see the reason for it.*

Without even looking up from her embroidery, Pollen gave a huff. With as much fanfare as possible, she put the needles and thread away to look up at me. "You strolled into this whole thing by trying to steal from a god. Tia only has to put up with you because somehow you charmed your way into this." Her blue eyes narrowed even further. "And yet everyone seems to just roll with it. Especially Tia should know better than to trust an akuma."

It should hurt. Her words should hit their mark and make my anger rise. But they didn't. *I'm so tired of people assuming who I am based on what I am. Why should I try and correct them?*

Tia sniffled in her sleep. Her hand slipped across my back. It calmed some of the nerves. *Tikki. She gave me her true name. She trusts me with the power to work magic over her.* I turned my head to calm her sleep with a soft purr. *Let Pollen think whatever she likes.*

"What, got nothing to say?" she challenged.

I tilted my head in her direction, eyeing her up and down. "No. Not really. I cannot convince you of my intentions, so why waste that breath." And with that I turned my head to rest against Tia's hip.

Soft voices drifted through my sleep. I thought I caught the tail end of a discussion between Wayzz and Pollen. Something about trust and forgiveness. A hand scratching between my ears lulled me back to sleep. The next thing I heard was a soft murmur and the feeling of protection washing over me. *Tikki probably took the next watch.*

Slowly, I opened my eyes. The sun wasn't visible from my vantage point, but judging by the shadows across the waves towards the horizon it was drawing close to sundown. With a yawn, I stretched my back. Tia's hand fell away from my back to allow me to sit up.

"Good morning," she whispered.

I gave an answering hum. The silence around us was peaceful. Glancing around, I found everyone else curled up or stretched out along the floor to catch a bit of sleep. Only Wayzz remained sitting, although his eyes were closed as well and his chest rose with the steady breath of sleep.

"Do we have any way to guess our location and how long it'll take us to get to the mage?"

Tia tilted her head, a grin tugging on her lips. “Already getting anxious, are we?” She took my clawless swat with a giggle. “Mh, well, given our speed and time we already spent travelling, I’d say we should be there around midday?”

“Great. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t mind the travel, but running does sound like a great idea.”

“I can imagine, but you’ll have to wait a little longer for that.” Tia pulled her legs up to her chest. Then, as if thinking better of it, she shifted to lay down on her side, looking towards the entrance. “You could catch a bit more sleep. I just took over watch from Wayzz. My wards will disguise our travel from anyone that might try and attack us.”

“Yeah, I could,” I yawned, “But I’m kind of already awake at the moment. So no, not right now. Let me keep you company.”

A surprised smile lit up Tia’s face. She shifted further, patting the ground to invite me to stay. I took the invite and laid down on my belly close enough to share my body heat.

“Gods, you’re warm,” she muttered. “Why did I never notice that?”

“Because you only allowed me this close when you were ill or unconscious.” I laid my head down on my front paws. “Besides, I usually don’t run this hot, but we’re in colder weather. I used to trudge into the mountains over winter so I guess, I adapted to that.”

“That’s not how body temperature works.”

“And you’re the expert on akuma physiology?”

Tia huffed a laugh. Without turning towards me, she said: “No, I’m not. It still sounds illogical.”

“You would know after all the training you put me through. I even came back for you after I tried to run.” I blinked at the words tumbling out of my mouth. *Why the hell would I say that?*

Silence fell between us. Only broken by the soft sounds of snoring from Trixx.

“I’m glad you stuck around.” I almost didn’t believe my ears at Tia’s quiet confession. She didn’t move a single muscle, just lay facing the opening. “I don’t think, Trixx would still be here had you abandoned us. And neither would I. I’m sorry for all you have to put up with, but I don’t regret having you around.”

Well, what am I supposed to say to that? Thank you? I feel the same way? I decided against using words and just scooted closer to her back. Quietly offering my presence. Tia didn’t seem to mind in the least. Her weight dropped slightly against my back, a reassuring pressure.

We didn’t speak again for a long time. Around us, night fell, our friends slept on soundly. Nothing outside indicated any trouble. A moment’s breath before whatever this mage might throw at us. And the world only seemed to have the two of us in it. The partners in crime.

Blessed by Creation and Destruction. Ying and Yang. *Just like the gods predicted from the moment I showed up on their doorstep. Tikki and I found our way together. Ugh, I'm getting sappy...*

A shift of fabric. My eyes snapped up in time to see Pollen's eyes fall closed. She pulled her legs up against her chest as if just shifting in her sleep. I caught a glimpse of a frown that smoothed out the longer she curled in on herself and slipped back into sleep. *Great.*

Queenie might have seen and heard all that. I'm never going to hear the end of it. Tia sighed contentedly, almost cuddling up against my side. Something warm bloomed in my stomach. *Maybe it's not so bad after all... I got this far after all.*

Without needing to say anything, I took the next watch around midnight. Tia's tired smile glittered in the darkness of night. As soon as she closed her eyes, she was out like a light. *Keeping all of us within their protection has to be very draining. No wonder Wayzz didn't move a single muscle since Tia took over.* My senses were sharp after the nap around midday and up until then. But the night was quiet and the glide of the carriage was undisturbed.

Wayzz awoke with the first rays of the sun cresting above the horizon. He didn't say anything, just turned his head to look out across the sea.

The first noise came, when Trixx woke up. Small huffs and groans spilled from them. They sat up before they even opened their eyes. Without a word, Trixx turned to stare out the back. No doubt to stare at the line of the horizon.

"I hate flying," they said just above a whisper. "I hope the mage has a long tale to tell so we can stay a few days before getting back into this death trap."

"Is it a death trap, if we didn't get attacked in it at all?" I couldn't help asking. My smile must have come through in my tone, because Trixx's tail swished in annoyance across the floor. Wayzz merely gave a small smile.

"It definitely is a death trap. Doesn't matter we didn't die. One day we will," Trixx sounded dead serious, "And when that day comes, I can say to all of you 'I told you so'."

"Ah, yes, the ultimate reward."

"As if you didn't do something like that before, Akuma." Trixx turned enough to give me a challenging look. They were still a little pale around the nose, but generally seemed much more chipper than the day before.

Allowing for the banter to continue, I gave an indignant huff. Puffing up my tail and putting on the primmest aura I could muster, I looked at them down the bridge of my nose. "I would never."

"Now, now, Akuma," Wayzz interjected, "It is not proper to lie like that."

For a heartbeat, the carriage fell back into utter silence. Then, at the same time, while Trixx fell back in a heap of giggles, I turned on Wayzz. “Are you implying, I lied?”

Unperturbed by the playful flash of fangs, Wayzz raised an eyebrow at me. “Knowing you, I doubt you would leave any chance to rub your superiority under our noses, if given the chance.”

“He’s not wrong, you know?” I tried to hide my jump by readjusting my posture. Tia’s grin told me I had not succeeded. “You love being right. Given the chance, you would brag about all the things you were right about all day.”

“Did I miss something? Is it ‘Tease Akuma Day’ or something?”

“Or something,” Pollen untangled her multiple arms from the blanket someone had thrown over her during the night. “You are an easy target after all.”

I almost went to snarl at her, but noticed the lack of any real malice in her tone. *That’s a first...*

Tia nudged my side. “What’s the matter kitty? Bee got your tongue?”

“Ha, Queenie would like that, wouldn’t she? No, I was simply lost in thought for a moment.”

“I didn’t know you were capable of that,” Pollen shot back automatically. “Don’t strain yourself too much. We do have a mission to accomplish after all.”

I narrowed my eyes at her smug smile. “I should chase you. See who has the better stamina.”

“Please don’t,” Trixx said, “At least wait until we’re back on solid ground. Otherwise Duusu and I just might feed the fish after all.” They leaned against the wall right next to the opening. One eye still out on the horizon while keeping us in their peripheral vision as well just to make sure they could get a warning should any of us go flying towards them.

Duusu slowly fought his way up from his sleeping spot. Sleepily, he looked around the carriage. “Who’s chasing who?”

“No one is chasing anyone,” Tia repeated. “Pollen and Akuma are just getting used to kind of liking each other.” She waved away our indignant spluttering with a hand. “Don’t deny it. The heat between you is lost.”

“Heat,” Pollen squeaked.

Tia held the serious expression for about a couple heartbeats before she cracked up. She laughed so hard she fell back against my side.

Well, at least someone is having fun at our expense. Though I do have to admit something feels different this morning. Maybe Queenie finally came to some sort of conclusion about me from eavesdropping last night. I met her eyes across the space in the carriage. A small understanding seemed to pass between us. A sort of truce. For now. For however long we needed it.

“If that is all, who would like something for breakfast?” Wayzz asked.

Duusu and Trixx groaned in unison.

The Mage

Chapter Summary

In which they get an offer.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone, sorry I'm late... I'll try to get the next chapter out on time >.<

I don't own Miraculous.

Anyway: Have fun ^^

As soon as the carriage came to a rumbling halt, Trixx and Duusu leapt from it. Both collapsed onto the ground, eyes closed and just breathed in the surprisingly sweet air. The rest of us followed them at a slower pace. Akuma kept up with me. His ears swivelled atop his head.

“Where exactly is our strange petitioner again?” he asked no one in particular while examining one of the blooming flowers as if it was the most interesting thing he had ever seen. “The sooner we talk to him the sooner we can get back home.”

Duusu and Trixx whined. *Neither of them is willing to get airborne again any time soon. We'll have to let them get down before we can plan our next steps. Maybe even delay our departure for their sake just to be sure they're feeling okay.*

“I suggest, we rest for a while,” Wayzz spoke up. “It was a long and tiring journey these past few days. All of us could use a short rest and meal without the winds brushing against our sitting arrangements.” His gaze travelled over our small group until he reached me. Upon my raised eyebrow, he inclined his head ever so slightly.

From the grass, Trixx raised one hand. “Yeah, I second that. Break. Great idea. Food can wait a little while longer actually,” they dropped their arm to fold over their stomach, “Not really feeling up to that just yet.”

Pollen pulled a face. *She'd probably prefer to get our task done as quickly as possible and return to the gods without delay.* Aloud I merely said: “We are not only duty-bound to our gods, but also to each other. If you two need a break, we will wait until you're well enough to go on.”

“As her ladyship commands,” Akuma drawled. After a frankly exaggerated bow he dropped onto his side in the grass. “The sun’s really nice and warm right now anyway. Wake me once everyone is feeling up to the task, yeah?”

“Didn’t you want to see who has the better stamina by chasing me?” Pollen challenged, one eyebrow raised and her arms crossed over her chest. She met Akuma’s gaze with a smirk. “Unless that was just the bluff of a big tired kitty-cat, hm?”

Oh dear. That won’t end well... No sooner had the thought crossed my mind than Akuma lunged at Pollen. She twisted out of the way. Within the blink of an eye the two of them were chasing each other around the clearing we had landed in. *Just like young novices freshly entering their education. So much energy and nowhere to channel it.* I pinched the bridge of my nose between thumb and forefinger.

“I suppose we should be thankful, they followed Trixx request to wait for our landing before doing that,” Wayzz commented. When I glanced at him, he was watching the display with a small smile. “At least they can get their energy out of their system before we need to be presentable.”

“As long as they aren’t at each other’s throat anymore, I guess it’s a step in the right direction.” I settled in the opening of the carriage to watch my partner and friend frolic. *They’ll get along just fine once Pollen sees how much Akuma would do for our wellbeing. He proved his intentions towards me many times over by now. Not even our animosity from the beginning or the sharp comments have entirely survived between the two of us. He’s just a big fluffy cat underneath the tough act.*

Something bounced off my forehead. I startled and Akuma’s rumbling laugh filled my ears. In an instant, I zeroed in on him a few paces away, already holding the next flower bud between his fingers. “Sorry,” he pressed out between laughter, “Didn’t mean to scare you, Princess.”

A grin tugged at my lips. Slowly, I rose back to my feet. “Oh? You didn’t?” Akuma stepped a few steps back from my approach, still laughing. “Well then, I suppose it’s good I know you better now.” I reached into the earth. With the next step backwards, Akuma didn’t see the root rising from the earth. With a shout, he toppled to the ground.

“Hey! You cheated,” he immediately accused.

“Cheated?” I bat my lashes in false innocence. “Whyever would I do that?”

He narrowed his eyes at me. I could almost see his tail flicking in disgruntlement, as he slowly got back to his feet. “I am going to get back at you. Just you wait.”

“I suggest you wait with that until our return,” Wayzz interrupted before we could break out into another tussle. “At the moment I think it pressing to get to the mage and find out what he might want from us.” He looked at each of the Cadre in turn, folding his hands in his sleeves. “After that we may return here and reconvene about our next step.”

Huh, I straightened my back and followed Wayzz from the clearing. He seems to think we might need to make our own decision quickly and without knowledge of our masters. I wonder, what he gathered from the scarce information we have or if he picked up on something Duusu might have seen.

Akuma and Pollen fell in step at my shoulders. Trixx in their fox form jumped between trees and branches around us and Duusu took up the rear, keeping an eye out for unforeseen surprises.

Surprisingly, it didn't take us long to find the hut in which the supposed mage was awaiting us. Tucked between boulders at a mountain side and almost hidden between ancient trees, I almost mistook it for a trick of the eye. But Wayzz seemed to have a sense for our destination. With Duusu by now at his side, they lead us towards the entrance.

The closer we got, the more I noted the sutras bound around the branches declaring this a holy sight and to guard against evil. I chanced a glance at Akuma. *Destruction is not exactly a benign force for humans to play with. And his background as a demon might not be helping either depending on the inscription...* Almost on its own, my hand reached out and took his hand.

Akuma startled slightly. His eyes big as saucers, as he met my gaze. But just as quick his lips curved into a teasing grin. He didn't even need to say anything for me to get the message. *No need to fear, sugar cube, I'm right here. The big bad cat will protect you against any vile mortals we might encounter.* I rolled my eyes at him but didn't let go of his hand.

"Are we sure this is the right place?" Pollen asked. She looked around in mild disdain at the simple hut and mountains rising steeply just behind it. "Up there in the mountains would be a lot safer, give whomever we're talking to the advantage of far sight and it would look even more majestic."

Trixx hopped from the trees, once more in their human form. "Not all of us want to live in lush palaces. I for one prefer this outpost to any temple the mage might have called us to."

Judging by the way, Pollen puffed up her chest, she had a lot more to say on the topic. However, before she could say a single word more, Duusu stopped dead in his tracks. Without turning around, he raised his hand to signal us to stop. Immediately, we all fell silent. *Visions are a handy thing to have around on missions. I just hope this one isn't about us being in danger for once,* I thought as I readied my power.

We waited with baited breath for whatever Duusu had seen happening to occur. As if on cue, the door to the hut opened to reveal an older man. His grey hair was swept back from his kind face. He didn't seem particularly surprised to see a bunch of seemingly young people randomly standing in front of his home in the middle of the woods.

"Ah, welcome," he greeted us with a bow, "I was hoping, you would arrive soon." With a sweeping gesture, the mage stepped aside to allow us into his home. "Please, the matter we have to discuss is rather urgent."

The others didn't move a single muscle, staring at the man, then stealing glances at me. *Right. Daughter of Creation and at least formally the leader of our little ragtag band of novices.* I pulled back my shoulders. Next to me, Akuma did the same, stepping closer to my left. With one final breath, I lead them into the hut.

"We thank you for the welcome," I began as soon as the door closed behind us. The interior was sparse. A wooden table and shelves stacked with scrolls. A doorway covered by a curtain lead into another room on the right. Probably a small nook to sleep in.

We followed our host over to the table sitting close to one of the windows. I felt the tension rolling off of all of them. Pollen's gaze flickered all over the room, Duusu wrung his fingers, glancing around the room as well. Wayzz and Trixx masked their uneasiness a little better with slow sweeps of the room before their gazes focused on either the mortal or the table.

"So," Akuma began. "What exactly are we here for? Usually, humans tend to give us a bit more than 'It's urgent, please hurry.'" His eyes gleamed ominously in the half-shadow he had retreated to.

To his credit, the mortal didn't let that bother him. Instead of looking cowed at the presence of several novices of the gods in his home, he smiled at us all in turn. "Yes, yes," his eyes settled on me. "And I am terribly sorry to have troubled you so, my Lady. I understand the gods will not be thrilled to learn what I am going to request of you. I beg however that you listen to my request before felling your judgement." He dipped his head at me in respect.

He knows exactly who we are, I realised. He didn't just ask specifically for our Cadre, but he knows our identities at least vaguely enough to sort us in order of supposed importance. I shifted to pull my shoulders back even more. *With the cards thus far on the table his request seems more and more suspicious and possibly more important.* I motioned for the others to take their seats. *We might as well make ourselves comfortable while listening to this mortal's idea.*

The man nodded in understanding as the novices sat down. Carefully, he took the place at the other end of the table from me, hands clasped in front of him. "I have observed the machinations of our world for quite some time now," he began. "These have brought me to the realisation that humanity is in need of protectors against their own flaws. I did further research and a lot of people I asked, told me legends of the gods sending their children to their aid." He looked at each of us in turn.

"Not children," Pollen breezily corrected. "We are their novices. Not their children." She arched an eyebrow at him as if questioning the human's intelligence.

And for the first time, he seemed caught off guard. His eyes landed back on me, flickered back to Akuma, who perched somewhere on a chair behind my shoulder. "Are you not the daughter of Creation, my Lady? Is your partner not the son of Destruction?"

Akuma gave a gruff laugh. I looked back at him and found him with his head tilted back, eyes gleaming. He met my gaze and his fangs poked out of his grin. "Did you hear that, princess? He thinks, I'm the son of Destruction. Wouldn't that make me your brother? We might have been stuck with each other for an unbearable amount of time."

“You’d drive me up the wall. For longer than you’ve already done.” I rolled my eyes at him. “Besides, you don’t have what it takes to be a son of one of the two.”

Akuma growled at that, eyes narrowed. His fingers twitched where he knowingly folded them across his chest to keep them still. I turned back to the mortal on the other end of the table and offered an apologetic smile. “While you are correct in your assumption that I am the daughter of Creation, my partner,” I tilted my head in Akuma’s direction, “is not the son of Destruction.”

“But I am blessed by her.”

I knew Akuma was puffing up his chest without even looking back at him. “Be that as it may, you still have neglected to explain what you need us for and why you couldn’t tell the gods beforehand.”

The human blinked. Then he seemed to shake himself to return to the present. “I beg your pardon for wrongfully assuming. As I mentioned before, I observed human behaviour and found your Cadre the most active in assisting humans in need. The reason I did not ask your masters for permission and the reason I asked you specifically to come is based on the observation that you are the most powerful novices to help us mortals.”

“And how should we help you exactly?” Pollen interjected impatiently. “We did not make this trip for you to talk in circles.”

“Don’t be impolite,” Duusu mumbled under his breath. “He has an interesting offer to make, if only you’d allow the mortal to explain it to us.”

“So, you’ve already seen it? Can’t you explain it to us then?” Pollen glanced at our host from the corner of her eye. “That would be so much faster.”

“Careful, Queenie,” Akuma said in a sing song tone and nodded towards Wayzz, “he’s already looking at you disapprovingly.”

“If you all would like to concentrate again,” Wayzz said. “We are already misrepresenting our masters with how we are behaving in front of this mortal.”

The man gave a humble smile. “Oh no, you could never misrepresent the gods. However, I thank you for your consideration.” He offered another bow in Wayzz direction. “My idea going off of my research into human nature and your help with their issues is the following: It might be beneficial for mortals to have their own Cadre of helping gods to be quick in their aid.”

A Cadre at the beg and call of humans at any time of the day. Sounds like a good idea all things considered. Even though it’s beyond our usual scope of missions by far. I crossed my arms. How would we even know when and where they need us?

As if reading my thoughts, the man went on. “Of course, you would need some kind of contraption to know when and where your aid is required. Especially, if you are to reside over

a larger region than you have until now.” He turned around and rummaged through one of the shelves. We all exchanged glances around the table.

After a moment, the human returned with a big black lacquered box in his hands. Carefully, as if it was made of glass and not wood, he set the thing down in front of him on the table. “I made this miracle box to hold a special set of jewellery.” He pressed a combination of buttons and the box opened with an almost silent click. The opening lid revealed several smaller black boxes with the same motif on their lids as the miracle box.

“Jewellery?” Trixx tilted their head questioningly. “What is that good for helping us?”

“I practiced and learned the arts of magic and energies for a long time,” the mage explained. “The box and jewellery are intended to alert you should you be needed to help the mortals.”

Wayzz lifted his chin, peered closer at the boxes in front of him. “From what I understand, that would require binding us or our essence to the jewellery in question in some way, wouldn’t it?” He turned to look at Duusu and Trixx. Both of them slowly nodded their heads.

Trixx sidled closer to the lacquered box. “Considering what you described,” their eyes flitted up to the human, “You might even need to bind more than our essence to the jewellery or it might have unforeseen consequences for us.”

“Which would explain why you were unwilling to inform the gods of your plans. I cannot imagine any of them being too pleased with this plan of yours.” Duusu played with the hem of his sleeves. “And that would be inexcusable considering all the work you must have put into it. And the good we could bring humanity.”

More than our essence. Oh, my eyes widened. We might end up bound to and possibly in the jewellery to ensure we can help humanity whenever we are needed. However, that might also make us vulnerable to a mortal’s intentions with our essence in their hands.

“You are very wise indeed,” the man nodded. “I understand, if you have to think about this for a while and discuss amongst yourselves to come to a conclusion. I will leave you to it and go collect some herbs.” He bowed deeply in front of all of us before he shuffled out the door into the forest.

Leaving us to deal with the thought of giving up our autonomy for the benefit of saving humanity and keeping it safe on a grander scale than what we had accomplished until now. Wonderful.

A Decision

Chapter Summary

In which the Cadre fells a decision and their journey comes to an end.

Chapter Notes

So, this is the last chapter of this fic... It's been a great time, but here is where our journey ends. I had a lot of fun writing this and I hope you had fun reading ^^

I don't own Miraculous.

That certainly was an exit. I remained rooted to the spot; eyes trained on the door the mage had just disappeared through. *Leaving us to 'discuss amongst ourselves', whether we approve of being bound to an artifact to help humanity.*

My ears twitched in Tia's direction. To catch any decision my partner might indicate. But there was nothing to hear but all our quiet breathing. I glanced at my partner from the corner of my eyes. Bright blue stared right back at me. Sighing, I turned fully to face Tia, head tilted questioningly. *What do you think? Is it according to your codex?*

She narrowed her eyes back at me. *Don't be silly.* She crossed her arms, shifting her weight so she almost leaned against my shoulder. "So, what do you think?"

"What do we think," Pollen drew out the pause, "about giving up our autonomy for the well-being of humanity without consulting our gods first?" Her tone was cutting. Something seemed to buzz around or under her skin. A second pair of arms appeared to push into her hips. Tia shifted so she was not leaning against me.

"I don't think, that's exactly the way this will go," Duusu spoke up. "Besides, this is a decision about our autonomy as you pointed out. Our masters do not have to weigh in on that."

"They might have helpful insight into this we might not have." Trixx weighed their head from side to side. "We are after all their novices and not gods of our own for a reason." Their tail snuck out, swishing uncertainly behind them.

Pollen made a sound of disbelief. Her eyes were wide and she stared at the others, as if they had grown a second head. Her fingers rapidly ticked through different motions from tapping

against her arms to forming claws and balling into fists. “You cannot be serious.”

I caught Tia’s eye. This was getting out of hand very quickly. She nodded at my silently raised eyebrow. *Go ahead.* So, I stretched out my back until it popped. “I guess, that clears that up.” With a pretended yawn I stood from the table. “If we can’t agree on a course of action we might as well decline it entirely and return.” I threw a long look at the boxes full of jewellery. “I never was the type for this anyway.”

“Weren’t you trying to steal from my master the first time we met?” Tia raised her eyebrows at me.

“As if I would have kept whatever I stole. Don’t be silly.”

“You can’t be serious!” Pollen hissed. “We are faced with this decision and you two go reminiscing.”

I tilted my head. “Why are you so upset? I just said we might as well decline, if we can’t find common ground, because obviously this isn’t just a one-person thing. It’s either all or none of us.” Pollen and I stared at each other. Her eyes were still blazing with furious fire, fists shaking from how hard she balled them into fists by now. I blinked back at her calmly.

“He is right,” Wayzz said. He looked up from the boxes of jewellery on the table. “Either we do this as a team or not at all.” He leaned back, looking at each of the Cadre in turn. “And we will have to fella that decision without the help of our gods. We do not have time for anything else.”

The others looked around, as if the others might have a better answer than what they’d come up with on their own. Eventually, Trixx just shrugged. “Fine then. Let’s sit down and discuss this.” They sat down at the table, tucking their legs under them. *One down.*

Tia returned to her seat at the table. She stapled her hands in front of her, pointedly staring at the boxes full of finery. I looked around. Pollen’s shoulders were tense, her eyes glowing, possibly separating into several new pairs the longer we spoke. Duusu seemed very intent on melting into the ground to avoid this discussion altogether. Even Nooroo, who had been awfully quiet since we arrived, simply sat back down at the table. Albeit with his eyes firmly fixed on his hands and no one else.

I followed their examples, settling at the table on Tia’s left side so she was between Wayzz and me. The united front we had somehow worked out. Her seconds in command. Loyal to her before our masters, but willing to offer our honest advice no matter what.

As soon as we settled, Tia’s shoulders relaxed minutely. Her body shifted until our shoulders bumped against each other. I pressed right back. *I’m here. I’ll see what I can do. Trust me as I trust you.*

Across the table, Pollen stared at us a moment longer. With a put-upon sigh, she settled at the table, arms crossed over her chest. “Fine. Let’s settle this then. What is your idea exactly for this kind of situation we have never faced before and cannot ask anyone about?”

“We may have not faced this exact situation before,” Wayzz began, “But we did have to make decisions without our masters’ input plenty of times. Every mission to be exact.” He met Pollen’s glare with barely a blink. “This is no different. We are on a mission and we need to find a solution as a team. And we will not be able to do so unless we sit down and discuss our options and arguments with each other.”

Something like a snarl flitted across Pollen’s face as she settled across from us at the table. Her back was ramrod straight and she folded her hands neatly in her lap. Duusu and Nooro both carefully leaned away from her without making it too obvious.

“Now that we’re all assembled at the table,” Trixx brushed a hand through their bangs, “What do you think of this little offering? We can give up our autonomy and entire being to the will and help of humans or we could decline and return home. Keep humanity the way we’ve been doing until now.”

“Humans changed a lot in the past,” Nooroo quietly added, “They might forget of our existence and then we wouldn’t know when and where we should help them. This offer might be our chance to keep helping humans whenever their need is greatest.”

Tia’s eyes bounced around the room and between her Cadre. *Our options are limited. Helping humans has been our priority and their priority before I came along.* I looked around the table. *They’ve known each other for far longer. Maybe I should keep out of this decision for once and just lean back.*

I kept my eyes carefully on their faces, as the argument went around the table. Pollen was against offering our autonomy as novices in exchange for helping humans. She argued her point with pointed questions poking holes at the others’ arguments. Duusu and Trixx were mostly arguing over whether or not to include the gods in our decision or if we should just do it and let them find out afterwards. Nooroo offered insight into possible advantages of accepting the offer.

“What about you,” Tia murmured as Pollen and Trixx were once again shouting at each other. “Do you have an opinion or are you just going to agree with the majority?”

I snorted. “When have I ever not had an opinion?”

“That’s why it seems suspicious for you not to voice it.”

Damn, she clocked me right out the gate. Well, I guess that’s to be expected given how much time we spent together. I looked at Tia from the corner of my eye. “I was waiting to gauge the best strategy to establish my opinion.”

“Sure you were.” She sounded as convinced as I felt. “Now, what have you gathered from mutely listening to us arguing about this?”

“That you have very different opinions for very different reasons.” I offered her an arrogant smirk.

Tia rolled her eyes. “Very insightful, Akuma. Anything else?”

“Given the circumstances, we cannot wait to ask our masters about it. The time lost with travel and getting their approval or rejection of the idea which does not concern their well-being would take too long. It is our responsibility to protect humans.”

Across the table, arms crossed, Pollen scoffed. “Are you going to keep feeding us platitudes, because then you can save the air.”

I offered bared fangs in response. But I kept quiet after that. If they didn’t want to hear me out then so be it. I didn’t have the patience to get involved in their inane fights. *What, if I would ask the Lady about it? She did give me her blessing after all. Maybe she’d also have a look into the future for where our path might lead us...*

“I think, we should accept the offer and bind our essence to the jewellery.”

Everyone turned to stare at Wayzz. He’d sat back during the previous discussion just like I had. Observing and listening to the arguments brought forth and drawing his own conclusions. The buzz around Pollen settled ever so slightly and Nooroo and Trixx leaned forward to get a better look at the boxes between us.

Tia waved a hand to encourage him to speak. She subtly rubbed at her temple with the other as if fighting off an oncoming headache. I brushed my hand against her leg under the table. *You okay?* Tia shook her head minutely and focused back on the debate around us.

Wayzz drew one of the boxes towards him. He tipped the box to present the bracelet within it in the light streaming through the windows. “The mage did not make this offer without ulterior motives of that we are all aware. These trinkets were made by hand. There are several mantras, sutras and general protection spells woven into each and every one of them. They are personalised to different powers.” He let the information sink in, watching for our reactions. Trixx stretched, looking over the boxes. Their hand hovered over a necklace.

“Are they going to trap us inside?” Nooroo drew his hands close to his chest. His eyes were wide as if poisonous snakes might spontaneously rise from the boxes. Trixx withdrew their hand.

“I doubt that would activate without a spell,” I offered. “Still, better safe than sorry, so maybe don’t touch the magic artifacts just yet.”

Wayzz set his box down in front of him. “Akuma is right. Only the mage will be able to complete the spell and bind us to them. Once we are, I suspect, we will be unable to return home.”

“In that case we should probably make some demands of our own in compensation,” Duusu said. “I suggest electing a guardian of this miracle box. To prevent it from falling into the wrong hands.”

“Something to prevent us from telling each other, whom we serve to keep the human champions safe as well,” Nooroo added. “Just in case something does go wrong.”

“We should keep Tia and Akuma together as a pair,” Duusu suddenly added. They had a far-away look in their eyes that promised a vision. “Their powers balance each other out. They need to stay together. No matter what, if they get separated for too long, humanity will face a great calamity. However, combined under one their power will be endless.”

Tia and I exchanged a look. *Great. A prophecy. As if the gods cooing over our matching set of powers wasn't enough. Well, I might have protested more at the beginning of our partnership.* I shrugged at Tia. *There's nothing we can do about it, if Duusu predicts it.*

Wayzz slowly nodded his head. “Very well, then we have a few demands of our own to ensure our safety.” He set the bracelet back into the miracle box. With a light shove, the compartments clicked shut, the lid gliding back into place.

By the time the mage returned, we had all settled around the table. Wayzz had somehow managed to procure tea for all of us while Trixx had conjured up a few pillows. Duusu and Nooro lounged close to the window, watching the sun draw patterns in the trees in front of the hut.

“Ah, I apologize for taking so long,” the mage said as soon as he entered. A pouch filled to the brim with herbs hung from his shoulder.

Tia pulled her shoulders back as she rose from her slump over the table. Her smile graceful. “Don't worry. We had a long discussion about your offer as well.” She looked at the others still curled up around the hut. “And we greatly enjoyed your hospitality.”

The mage followed her gaze. A spark lit in his eyes upon the Cadre scattered about his home, completely at ease. “I am relieved to hear that.” Without any hurry, the man crosses the hut towards the table. He sets his pouch down at the far end, leaves tumbling out of the small opening.

Wayzz shoves a cup of steaming tea in his direction, which he accepted with a grateful nod. “We have come to a decision,” Wayzz looked to Tia for confirmation to go on, “But we have some stipulations of our own.”

“I have expected nothing less from the most. Powerful novices the gods can send.”

“For the spell to work, we have to give up our true names. Those hold the key to our power and thus should not fall into the wrong hands. Therefore, we demand that you and yours take responsibility of the artifacts.” Tia looked as regal as I'd never seen her before. “You will guard our power with your life.”

The mage nodded slowly. “A logical request. However, human lives tend to be rather short compared to your infinite ones. Is there a way to ensure the guardian does not have to change as often as would be usual?”

It would be rather strenuous for us to have to get used to a new guardian every eighty something years. And that's not even counting the novices in training to take over the mantle of guardian on the side. Too many variables that might endanger our safety.

Wayzz shifted to bow his head at the human. “I will stand by your side as the guardian of the artifacts. My own powers should aid in prolonging your own life long past natural cycles for a human. Thereby we will not have to look for a new guardian too often and ensure the secret be kept among those worthy.”

A pause followed his words. The air grew thick with unsaid words from all of us. *This wasn't what we discussed.* I clenched my teeth. *A guardian, yes. But giving one of us over to him?* Next to me, Tia listed slightly to the side until our shoulders touched. She seemed as taken aback by the suggestion as me. But she caught herself far quicker. Offering a tight smile, she nodded along to Wayzz's proposition. *Keep up appearances at least a little while longer in front of the mortal.*

“Thank you for your generous offer. I'd be honoured to work so closely with you. Is there anything else we need discuss before continuing?”

“A spell to prevent us from exchanging information about the humans we are aiding,” Nooroo's airy voice drifted to us. “A measure to protect us should anything does go amiss.”

“I can add that to the incantation,” the mage nodded along, “Very good thinking.” He pulled a scroll and coal from somewhere and began scribbling notes. It looked like an intricate pattern curling around the characters for miracle. “I should add this to the box as well just to be sure.”

“One last request,” I found myself saying. “We,” I nodded towards Tia, “need to stay together. Our powers would be unbalanced if used without the other.”

Intrigued, the mage tilted his head. The look he gave us made me want to snarl and curl in front of Tia protectively. “A mated pair.” His tone was too delighted even for my taste.

“Not mated,” Tia hastily interjected. “Just using the power of Ying and Yang. Creation and Destruction. It would be highly beneficial to keep us together as a pair to ensure better protection.”

A nod. A knowing look. I could have scratched his eyes out but a stern look from Wayzz stalled my claws. *Right. For the good of humanity.*

“Right.” The mage clapped his hands together. “If this is everything, I can offer to ensure your own comfort at the moment, then I'd like to begin.” The others meandered back over to the table, Nooroo trailing behind and looking around the hut with wide eyes.

With a click, the miracle box opened, boxes with jewellery appearing. The mage opened each smaller box, presenting the treasures to us. “Chose your artifact.”

Tia's hands remained folded in her lap as the others considered and picked their objects. Pollen, predictably, picked up a golden comb. Her eyes lit up with satisfaction at the craftsmanship gone into it. With a brush of her fingers, a small bee appeared in the middle, wings spread wide as if in flight.

Wayzz picked the bracelet he had presented to us before. The flat bead in its middle turned into the shell of a turtle, not dissimilar to the markings on his robes. He considered the bracelet for a moment longer, then nodded his satisfaction.

Trixx let their eyes wander over the assembled riches. I could almost feel the same urge that was fighting inside me as well. Those precious things, all laid out before us for the taking. Just one for our horde or to get a bit of money for from someone else. Unfortunately, that was not an option. Eventually, Trixx picked up a golden necklace. A fox's tail curled in on itself at the end of it.

A pair of brooches turned into a butterfly and peacock feathers for Nooroo and Duusu. Both looked on in awe and then exchanged a small grin with each other.

Which left me and Tia to choose our artifacts. A pair of black earrings or a silver ring. We looked at each other. "Ladies first," I gestured at the table.

Tia huffed a laugh. "My, discovering your inner gentleman at the last second, hm kitty?"

"You know it, sugar cube."

Trixx made some exaggerated gagging noises, while Nooroo and Duusu giggled behind their hands. Pollen merely rolled her eyes and shook her head at our antics. "Just chose. It's not that hard."

Tia grabbed the earrings. They turned a vibrant red with black dots like a ladybug. My partner looked delighted with this development, so who was I to complain? I would have looked great with earrings.

Nevertheless, I grabbed the silver ring. It immediately turned black. A green pawprint appeared in its middle. Glowing and dangerous just like my eyes must seem to outsiders.

"Aww, look, kitty is pleased with his gift," Trixx teased. They winked at my scowling face while Tia laughed next to me. I shoved her lightly, which only made her laugh harder.

"Very well," the mage bowed to all of us. "You have chosen wisely. Please, put your artifacts on and close your eyes. Concentrate on the flow of your energy."

We followed the instructions. For the next few moments, I did nothing but follow the energy coursing through my veins. Both destruction and creations twined around one another in an eternal dance. I felt Tia's power next to me answering the call of my own. The mage murmured words I had never heard before. Something wrapped around my shoulders. The ring on my finger warmed. The last thing I heard was Tia's soft whisper: "See you soon."

Something called me. It tugged at my senses until I couldn't resist the pull any longer. I blinked into the light. *This isn't the hut of the mage.* I turned to look around. *Where am I?* There were high trees and mountains in the distance. Mountains that reminded me of home, albeit different. Wider and taller somehow.

“Honourable Kwami,” a voice said.

I spun around. A human male stood in front of me, head slightly lowered but his wide eyes trained on me. My ears twitched in irritation. “Either respect me or gawk. You can’t do both at the same time.”

Startled, the human rightened his posture. “Forgive me. It is just such an honour to finally meet one of the Cadre. Mage has told us so much about your work in the past. He was devastated when it became apparent that the transformation had taken a lot of energy from you and you needed to rest.” He bowed to me once. “We are in need of your help.”

Transformation? I combed through my memory. *The last thing I recall is sitting next to Tikki at this table and the ring around my finger growing warmer while the mortal recited his spell to-* My eyes shot up. “It worked.”

A puzzled smile crossed the man’s face. “Yes. It worked. Your Cadre was bound to the jewellery known as the Miraculous. You have been asleep for a very long time, but we need your help.”

I raised an eyebrow at him. “What’s your name?”

“Hēi mǎo.”

My cackle echoed among the trees. “Black cat, huh? Couldn’t have chosen a more fitting name, young one. Well, if I’m here, I assume, the others aren’t far off?”

“Just a little walk from here.”

A broad grin, probably showing too much teeth, settled on my face. “Well then, lead the way.” *I’ll come find you, sugar cube.*

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