Guiding Light

by lifegivingwords

Summary

Eggsy is desperate for help.

Harry, a social worker, wants something more. When a colleague needs help with a case, he is more than willing to lend a hand.

This is the story where an aging social worker meets the love of his life.

Notes

This fic has been in progress since January 2016. It's been a trial; it's been a joy.

The fic is finished, but I will be posting in chapters to complete some final editing.

I hope you like it!

See the end of the work for more notes
Life is a bitch. There is seemingly no rhyme, nor reason, to the way the world operates, and this chaotic motion always seems to leave Eggsy helpless. He was helpless when his father died. He was left helpless as he watched his mum choose Dean, a man he knew would never be good enough. After awhile he felt that feeling of helplessness turn into grudging acceptance. That acceptance was more dangerous than just the helplessness. The acceptance told him to just take the punches, the slaps, and the other abuse Dean handed out on a daily basis. He learned to believe that he was worthless, or more correctly worth fifty pounds an hour. This is how his life went for years. A constant stream of physical and mental abuse that broke him down until almost nothing of the real Eggsy was left. Until Daisy.

Before Daisy, Eggsy sought an escape in the military, and for a while this worked. He became stronger, faster, a better version of himself. The draining acceptance that had plagued him since he was young was finally drifting away leaving a young man with hope. Of course, Eggsy’s life never went to plan. The day his mother called him crying was the day Eggsy firmly stepped over the line into adulthood. He knew she would never be able to care for a baby while under the influence of alcohol, and the nonexistent support from Dean certainly wouldn’t help. His mum had never wanted him in the Marines anyway; the baby was simply a definite way to persuade him to leave the company. Even though he should have been bitter about having to leave, Daisy was like a breath of fresh air in a life full of murky, suffocating smoke.

He made sure his mum stayed clean throughout the pregnancy, or at least as clean as possible, and tossed any alcohol that she tried to hide from him. It was a long nine months, but the moment he held Daisy (and he was the first) made everything worthwhile. For all the trouble surrounding her existence, Daisy made a quick and smooth entrance to the world. No complications at birth, and Eggsy was finally able to relax when the tests for fetal alcohol syndrome came back negative. Michelle tried her best for the first few weeks, but ultimately the drugs and alcohol were too seductive for a woman who had lost hope of anything better, and soon they took precedence in her life instead of her infant daughter. Eggsy mourned the mother that made sandwiches for lunch, the mother that laughed and played, and the mother that would never allow a man to hurt her child. Michelle loved her children, no one could ever doubt that, it was simply too hard for her to take care of them. Soon enough she was forgetting Daisy’s feeding times, letting the laundry pile into mountains, and even food shopping until Eggsy was forced to take over the daily care of his sister.

He may not have asked for this type of life, but it was his life and he was going to do the best he could. He made sure Daisy attended every single doctor’s appointment, and celebrated every good health check up she received. Eggsy would never admit it, but he felt invigorated when the doctor’s praised him on his ability to take care of his sister. For too long people had doubted his abilities, and his success at supporting Daisy made a world of difference for the struggling young man. At 25 Eggsy was technically “missing” all the fun that his best mates, Jamal and Ryan, were having,
but late at night when Daisy gripped his fingers tight as she finished her bottle, he couldn’t make himself care. Life went on like this for a while. It was a comforting cycle of feedings, nappy changes, play time, doctor’s visits, etc. He still had to deal with the feelings of revulsion and shame every time he was ordered to his knees, but Daisy is worth it. He reveled in watching his little Daisy grow and develop, and the first time she was able to mumble ‘ggsy was the best day of his life. Unfortunately, life decides to kick Eggsy in the balls one more time.

It started when Dean demanded Eggsy go to the store to pick up cigarettes and alcohol for him and his boys. Eggsy of course did as he was told, but he decided to stop for a drink with his friends before heading back to the apartment. Dean could fucking wait for his shit. He’s feeling good when he steps into the pub. At least until he sees Rottweiler and some other associates of Dean’s sitting at the corner table. Reminding himself to take deep breaths, he walks over to the table where Jamal and Ryan are seated.

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“Eggsy, mate! We were about to send out a search party!” Jamal practically shouts. Eggsy grins in response.

“Come on, now. I ain’t that late. Just a few minutes is all.” He sits down at the table and makes sure to keep Rottie in view at all times. “How’s it been? Feels like I haven’t seen ya in ages!”

“I got a job,” Ryan shares with a sheepish smile. “It’s not much, but it does help put food on the table.”

“That’s aces! Tonight’s a night to celebrate!” Eggsy crows. He quickly jumps up and flags down a bartender to request new drinks. For the next hour or so the three friends are joking and playing around with each other. Eggsy truly hasn’t seen the boys in ages, and it is nice to just relax for a bit without having to worry about a fist coming at your face. Soon enough the merriment dies down and Jamal and Ryan both seem to be concerned.

“Eggsy? Have you thought any more about taking Daisy and leaving? Last time we talked about it, you were working on a plan.” Jamal glances nervously at Ryan before continuing. “We want to help, Eggs. Daisy doesn’t need to grow up in that environment, and you never should have been exposed either. Let us help,” he implores.

Ryan is vigorously nodding his head as Jamal is speaking, but Eggsy knows he cannot accept the goodwill of his friends. His problems are just that: his problems. He takes another slow sip of his lager and slouches against the back of his chair.
“I appreciate it guys, I do. I just can’t ask you to get tangled up in my mess. What kind of friend would I be then, yeah? Now you and Jamal both have jobs. You’re respectable. I’ve got to get on it, man. I just can’t find anything above board. Especially with that wanker Dean around,” Eggsy murmurs darkly. Jamal and Ryan both look over into the corner. “I just wish I could bash ‘is head in. One night when he’s drunk off his ass get a nice swing in.” Jamal shakes his head with a rueful expression.

“Nah, man. He’d just get that lot to do you,” he replies pointing in the direction of the group in the corner.

“Ey!” Jamal slams his hand under the table and all three tense up as Rottie jumps up to confront Eggsy. “Think you can just talk shit since Dean’s banging Eggsy’s mum? You’re nothing but a cheap whore.”

Eggsy freezes. He hates that Rottie knows what Dean forces him to do. It’s bad enough he sells himself to the highest bidder. Jamal and Ryan immediately drop their gazes to the table and shrink in their seats. Seeing his fun loving friends reduced to nothing more than frightened boys obliterates whatever common sense Eggsy has left.

“Yeah, yeah I do,” he growls. He braces for the punch that he knows is coming, but instead of a fist, a laugh knocks against his skull.

“Right, you little mag. Like you could do anything except fall on your knees,” Rottie smirks. “Apologize to me mates. Go on, before I make a quick call to Dean.”

Eggsy knows he could continue to fight which would eventually lead to bruised ribs and a black eye, or he could just fucking apologize and go home. He catches a glint out of the corner of his eye and zeroes in on Rottie’s keys. Eggsy has many more skills than just sleeping with people for money; he’s a prize-winning pickpocket. Adopting a conciliatory expression, he softly rubs Rottie’s arm and moves just a bit closer. Rottie’s expression switches from angry to sickeningly aroused. Eggy’s skin crawls as a smile slides greasily across his face.

“Sorry, mate. Didn’t mean to start nothing.” Eggsy brushes his right hand one more time against Rottie’s side as his left slides the keys free. Rottie tilts his head and motions for Jamal and Ryan to get up.

“Go on. Don’t need your lot taking up space,” he says in a snarky tone. Eggsy, Jamal, and Ryan
quickly move to the door of the pub, bracing themselves for the chilly, damp night typical after a sweltering July day.

“Why you do that cuz? You know he’s just going to beat ya later?” Jamal grumbles as the trio steps down onto the pavement. Eggsy stops and waits until they notice he’s no longer in between them. Pulling his hand out of his pocket, he softly jingles the shiny keys.

“He can only hit me if he catches me. And he can’t catch me if we nick his car,” he says smiling. “Come on! Get in the car!” He rushes over to the bright yellow car and unlocks the doors. Incredules, Jamal and Ryan can do nothing but stand and watch as Eggsy starts the engine. All at once they both jerk into motion with a murmured “shit.”

Eggsy waits until they are both buckled in, safety first, and then revs the engine loud enough to be heard in the pub before peeling off to make a series of tight donuts. All three boys are cracking up as they see Rottie rush out of the pub face red as a tomato. Deciding that they need to leave before anyone else comes out, Eggsy jerks the steering wheel back to the center and floors it. He hasn’t had this much fun in ages, and Jamal and Ryan are cackling with joy at finally besting Rottweiler at something. Cars are flying by at an immense speed, horns blaring, and the occasional slur thrown at the flashy car. Exhilaration and adrenaline flood through Eggsy’s body, and nothing matters in these fleeting moments with air whipping through the open windows followed by sprinkles of rain. Eggsy can’t believe he hasn’t done this before; on the other hand, he knows exactly why he has never done it. They are zigzagging through traffic forwards and then suddenly backwards when flashing police lights assault their eyes. Soon the piercing wail of the siren is drumming against the windows. Yup, reason number one. He continues driving backwards slipping between double decker buses, black cabs, and personal cars. He knows this isn’t the safest way, but he’s going to take as much joy as possible before it all crashes down around him. Before he realizes what has happened, the police have effectively cornered the bright car in a more residential area. Much safer to stop them here than causing a catastrophic accident out on the main roads. Feeling the walls closing in around him, Eggsy makes a split second decision to turn down a narrow, winding street with the goal of losing the boxier police car. Unfortunately, a poor fox has the same idea. When Eggsy sees the animal creeping across the road, his mind freezes. He can’t kill the fox just because the bloody police are after him. Jerking the wheel to the left, the car goes sliding tail end first into the garbage bins and light post on the corner. Through the front windscreen Eggsy can see the police car coming to a slow stop.

“Uh, come on mate. It was just a fuckin’ fox,” Jamal groans from the backseat.

“They’re vermin, Eggs. You should have just run it over,” Ryan agrees with a moan. Eggsy quickly glances into the back to make sure both his mates are physically unharmed from the abrupt crash. Once he is satisfied he turns back to focus on the police car that is currently ordering him to
get out of the car with his hands up.

“Get out of the car!” Eggsy says, feeling anxious and sick to his stomach. Jamal and Ryan both have jobs; they can’t suffer because of Eggsy’s poor life decisions. The two idiots delay moving until Eggsy shouts a second time. “Get out of the fucking car!” Finally the two grab their jackets and bolt. Taking a deep breath Eggsy decides to go down in a blaze of glory. Shifting back into drive he presses the pedal down hard enough to touch the floorboard and shoots across the street. Closing his eyes he braces for impact and then slams into the police car. “Fuck!” The seatbelt cuts into his chest, and he worries about breaking a bone. He can see the police officers grab to brace themselves as well as try to quickly get out of the car. The previous pressure on the broken light post was simply too much, and the heavy metal pole crashes onto the top of both cars. He stares out of the fractured windscreen and shakes as he watches the constables stalk closer to the door. He’s fucked. Daisy’s fucked.

“Shit.”
July 7th:

“Gary Unwin, on the charge of TWOC, taking a vehicle without the owner’s consent, the court finds you guilty,” the solemn circuit judge says. Eggsy sags a little at the verdict. Even though he knew he would be found guilty, thinking the word and hearing it said by a court official are two very different things.

“The owner of the vehicle refused to press personal charges,” the judge continues, “therefore you are being sentenced on the damage you inflicted on police property. Since this is your first offence, and I’m not sure how this is your first driving offence given the list of other charges you have, you are sentenced to a stay in jail of one month. You will be responsible for repaying half the cost of damages. This sentence is to start immediately.”

Eggsy doesn’t resist as the constable standing behind him swiftly grabs his elbow and pushes him to the exit on the side. He knows it could be worse, but he can’t help but think about his flower. How in the world is she going to survive with Eggsy not there to protect her?

The transport from the courthouse to the jail is quick and silent; the silence grates on Eggsy’s nerves. He winces as the cloying humidity soaks through his jacket, the unusually strong sun beats down on his head. He breathes a sigh of relief as they pass through the sliding glass doors to blessed cool air. July in London is no joke.

Once inside, Eggsy is forced to change into a drab uniform, and he uses his last phone call to try and reach his mum. Unfortunately she must be out, or at least too drunk to hear the phone ring. God, he’s fucked up so bad! Sighing heavily, he follows the sallow faced police officer down the hall to his cell. The other prisoners are shouting obscenities and other unmentionables as they pass oh so slowly. Eggsy can feel the shaking starting again, and he knows the slow pace is meant as a scare tactic. Hearing the clang of the metal door shutting jars Eggsy out of the stupor he has sunk into. He begins to panic. He can’t leave Daisy alone with Michelle and Dean. She’ll starve to death, or they’ll forget her in the tub. There are so many possibilities that Eggsy makes himself physically ill thinking about them. Worst of all, he knows his dad would be so ashamed at what he has become.

When Lee Unwin was alive, Eggsy and his Mum never lacked anything. Lee was a hard working firefighter who would give the shirt off his back to anyone in need. It’s one of the best qualities
Eggsy inherited from Lee; selflessness that often ignores self-preservation. There were trips to the zoo, trips to Brighton, and even movie nights; life was good. Michelle was always laughing and smiling, and she made sure Eggsy had everything he needed. It wasn’t until Eggsy was eight that the good life changed. One cold, cold night in December, the 23rd to be exact, a fire consumed a local school. The fire was so severe they needed to call in extra firemen, and of course Lee was one of the first to volunteer. Michelle begged him to reconsider, it was their weekly family night, but Lee was not the kind of person to let another do his job. He was not the only fireman to lose his life that night, yet that was no consolation for his grieving widow and confused son Eggsy remembers with vivid clarity. They had just sat down to dinner when his dad’s buzzer went off. He immediately glanced at his mum’s face and saw the tiny lines around her eyes tighten with tension. Those little lines always tightened when she was scared or nervous. Before he could really understand what was happening, his dad was kissing him on the head, giving his mum a hug, and was then out the door. He woke up the next morning to hear his mum shouting and sobbing. Christmas was forever tainted after that year.

His mum continued to be a great mum for a little while, but eventually being a single parent to a rambunctious boy became too much. Turning to alcohol helped, yet the struggles continued to pile up. Dean, a low level drug dealer, saw the vulnerable woman and decided to move in. Two years after her husband’s death saw Michelle Unwin addicted to a host of drugs, and the Unwin household lost the glow of happiness. Dean was smart about not revealing his abusive tendencies. He waited until he had moved the Unwins into his shit flat (Michelle could no longer afford the old flat) and made them completely financially dependent. After the first slap Michelle lost all of her fire for life, and descended into a fanciful world where the only thing that mattered was the next drink or the next fix. For a while Eggsy blamed Michelle for a lot of what was happening. From his perspective as a young boy, his mother was supposed to be the one to protect and provide. What he couldn’t understand was that Michelle was completely incapable of protecting herself, let alone her son. It wasn’t until he saw the same desperation in her eyes that he realized she was just as much a victim. Even with that realization, however, there are times when he hates what she has allowed to happen. If she had just been a little bit stronger, more capable on her own, things might have turned out better for everyone involved.

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His mum’s journey from loving mother to drug addict was the impetus Eggsy needed to push him to get out of council housing and make his dad proud. Dean certainly made it easy to want to leave as well. He joined the marines as a last ditch effort to make something of himself, but look how that turned out. Maybe he deserves to be in jail. He logically knows he never deserved the repeated smacks and punches, but the thought brings a sense of cold comfort. The shadows filtering through the small window lengthen as Eggsy ponders the path his life has taken. He jumps as the tiny door along the wall is pulled open revealing a tray of questionable food. The guard grumbles incoherently as Eggsy takes longer to grab the tray than he thinks it should take.

“Thank you,” Eggsy murmurs. There is no response other than an irritated grunt and the slamming of the door.
Eggsy has two options for dinner tonight; he has to choose between a congealed mass of what looks like shepherd’s pie, and an apple. Honestly, it looks a sight better than what his mum makes on the rare occasions she tries to be an actual mum, though not much better. Deciding he would rather have a hot, somewhat tasteless meal than the unknown, he quickly settles back down on the warped cot and digs in. As he munches, he surveys his home for the next month. It’s gray. Square. Cold. Yep, that is as good as it is going to get. The warped cot is kitted out with a lumpy mattress and a worn thin blanket. Even though it isn’t perfect, Eggsy knows he can live in the room for a month. Thirty days is his sentence, and he will serve all thirty days. He sure as hell isn’t going to disappoint his dad even more by trying to break out or some other stupid thing. This is definitely a wake up call Eggsy never wanted, but it might be the thing that he really needs.

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It takes four days before Eggsy is able to get in touch with his mum. One of the guards took pity on him and allowed him to make extra phone calls as needed. Saying please and thank you comes in handy when you are begging for your sister’s life. When his mum finally answers the phone on Sunday morning, Eggsy feels even worse. He can practically smell the vodka on her breath, and it takes three tries before she gets his name right.

“Eggshy. Where ya been, babe? I been worried about you,” she slurs drunkenly. Taking a minute to pull in his anger, Eggsy replies slowly.

“Mum, I’ve been arrested,” he says. “I’ve been locked up for a month, and I’ve got to make some money to pay back the damages I caused.”

“You been arrested?! Wha’ for, Eggs? How am I supposed to watch Daisy without you to help?” Michelle begins to panic. Eggsy slumps against the cinderblock wall and closes his eyes. This is not going to go well.

“Calm down, Mum. Calm down. I’ve got 25 more days, yeah? Just keep marking them off the calendar, and I’ll be home before you know it.” Eggsy thinks about any appointments Daisy might have and the supplies that he has stocked up. “Daisy has an appointment with the doctor on Wednesday Mum. Make sure you get her to the appointment by 12:15. She also has a social worker appointment next Tuesday at 9 am. Don’t forget these appointments, Mum. I’ve written them down on a sticky in my room. Go make sure you can see them and write them on the fridge. They are important,” Eggsy states clearly. He waits as he hears her stumble around the apartment.

“Alright, where do you need to take Daisy?”

There is silence on the other end of the phone before Michelle’s voice filters through the cracked earpiece.
“Daisy’s got a doctor’s appointment on Wednesday, and I’ve also got to take her to the social appointment next Tuesday. That it?”

Praying his mother actually scribbled the appointments on the fridge remind sheet, Eggsy nods before remembering he’s on the phone.

“Yeah, that’s right. Now, for her formula and other things I have a supply under my bed. There should be enough formula for the month, but make sure you are changing her diaper. I used the last of the nappy rash cream last week,” he replies. “If you need to get more I have a few quid stashed under the mattress.”

He can hear his Daisy crying through the phone and his heart practically breaks. Even though it’s only been four days, his arms ache to cradle her soft weight. He hopes and prays that she will be fine exclusively under his mum’s care. He can also hear the harsh tones of Dean’s shouting at Daisy to shut up. The man makes his blood boil, and if he wasn’t already in jail, he might be there for murder.

“Listen babe, I’ve got to go. Daisy seems to be needin’ something. Be safe, and I’ll see ya soon,” Michelle says. From her distracted tone Eggsy knows her attention has already been pulled away from him and is focused on something in her line of sight. Before he can say a word in reply the phone shuts off and he is left holding a dead line. Slowly replacing the phone he lets his forehead thump against the cinderblock wall. The guard discreetly tugs at his arm, and Eggsy knows his time is up.

“Thanks, bruv,” he says quietly. The guard doesn’t reply, but he does give a fatherly squeeze to the back of Eggsy’s neck. His throat goes tight; his dad always gave him a squeeze before he left for work. All Eggsy can do now is hope and pray that Michelle will understand the necessity to stay somewhat sober. He’s got 25 more days; he can do this.

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She can’t do this. She really cannot do this. It’s only been two weeks since Eggsy left, and she is at the end of her rope. Michelle cradles her head in shame and regret. Her sweat damp blonde hair hangs over her shoulders and tickles her under her trembling chin. The apartment is too warm because the air conditioner is broken, yet it is simply too hot outside to open a door or window. Dean is in another one of his moods, and Daisy refuses to stop crying. Nothing will calm the seven month old, and the crying is really starting to grate on Michelle’s nerves. Sighing in defeat she picks up her screaming daughter and begins pacing around the room gently bouncing Daisy up and down.
“Come on love, what’s wrong with the little miss?” she asks with desperation. “Do you miss big bruv as much as I do? Eggsy’ll be back soon love, promise.” The sound of Eggsy’s name makes the little girl hiccup and stop crying. Soon she is back to the wailing, as her big brother doesn’t magically appear. Growing frustrated, Michelle gently places Daisy back in her playpen. Glancing at the counter she eyes the bottle of vodka. She promised Eggsy she would stay mostly sober, but that promise is getting harder and harder to keep. Life is just easier when she drinks. The powerful punches don’t hurt as much, the shouted words don’t hurt, and the feelings of failure and disillusionment melt away. She hates herself as she moves to pull down a glass, but the pull of that elixir is simply too much for her to ignore. Just a small glass or two, and she’ll feel better.
Chapter 3
Chapter Notes

Taking some free reign in regards to the judicial policies of the UK.

“Harry? Do you have a minute?” Roxy’s voice floated into his office before he could hear the soft clicking of her heeled boots. He glances down at his cluttered desk and takes a deep breath.

“Can you come back in 15? I’m finishing up some paperwork from the Freeman case, but I should be done soon,” he calls out. The soft clicks pause, turn, and then continue in the opposite direction.

“Of course! I’ll be back,” Roxy replies.

Harry settles back down and finishes the dreaded paperwork that he has allowed to pile up for weeks. Before he realizes it, the fifteen minutes have passed and Roxy is knocking gently on the open door.

“Ready?” she asks.

“Come on in! Take a seat at Merl’s desk,” Harry says. “You know he won’t mind,” he adds with a small smirk. Roxy blushes just a tad as she sits down and places her bag beside her.

“So, I was assigned to the Unwin case about five months ago. The home life is about as bad as it gets. I’m certain the father of the baby is abusing the mother, but she refuses to press charges or say anything against him. The son, Gary, is in his mid twenties, and he seems to be the primary caregiver for the almost seven month old baby girl. I haven’t been terribly concerned because Gary takes such good care of the baby, and he has been searching for a job to hopefully move out of that dingy apartment and take his sister with him,” Roxy starts. She can see the frown forming on Harry’s face and pauses. “What’s wrong?”

Harry sits in disbelief for just a second before muttering “Unwin? I know that name.” He shuffles around some things on his desk and unearth a framed photo. Roxy can see Harry with Merlin and an unknown third man standing outside what looks like a London fire station. Harry hands the photo over to her and she gets a better look at the unknown man.
“The man between Merlin and I is Lee Unwin. He was one of the best firemen I ever knew; he was always willing to take on extra shifts wherever needed. Our first case together involved a mother intentionally setting her home on fire to try and kill her three children. Luckily Lee was able to grab all three children, and we took them into custody. We hit it off and continued to hang out for a while until he was killed in a fire. I visited his son and widow after, but the poor woman was just torn to pieces, and the boy was a quiet little body sitting on the floor beside a Christmas tree,” Harry’s voice trails off as he remembers that evening clearly. “It was simply heartbreaking to see such a caring man taken from life much too soon. What kind of solutions have you tried?”

Roxy shakes her head sadly. Reaching into her bag she pulls out the thick file with Unwin written in black sharpie down the side.

“Hearing what you just described makes me feel even worse. When I spoke to Gary at our first meeting he made it clear that he was the one I needed to speak with. We devised a meeting schedule and more frequent doctor checkups to try and keep a closer eye on the baby. Gary seems to be doing his best, but I’m worried. Daisy has missed her most recent doctor’s visit, and she was a no show at our meeting yesterday. Now, there have been problems before with Gary getting her to her appointments, but he always calls ahead and we simply push back the meeting time to account for public transport. I have also gotten a couple of reports from neighbors. They don’t want to be named, labeled a snitch, you know? Apparently Gary has been missing for about three weeks now, and Michelle is losing her grip on Daisy. I want to do a home visit, but I need back up. I can handle myself, stop frowning,” Roxy says sternly. Harry obediently wipes the concerned look from his face.

“I can handle myself, but this Dean guy gives me the serious creeps. Honestly, I might need both you and Merlin. I have a feeling there might be weapons in the home,” she finishes with a frown of her own.

“Sure, Rox. And I know you can handle yourself; I was just concerned because you never ask for assistance. Merlin should be back around five. Once he is here I’ll talk to him and see what he says. Stop back by the office before you head home, alright?” He replies. She smiles in gratitude, gathers her bag, and stands.

“Thanks, Harry. I know it’s asking a lot, but I’m worried about these two. They are definitely the innocent ones. I’ll be back in a bit,” she says as she walks out of his office and heads back to hers. He can once again hear her clicking heels for a bit before the office goes silent once again.

Harry leans back in his brown leather chair and thinks about Roxy’s predicament. His heart absolutely breaks for those unfortunate souls who are trapped in situations that are beyond their control. He wanted to become a social worker to hopefully help some of those that cannot help...
themselves. Once he earned his degree at 25, there was no stopping him from doing his very best. Kingsman was the second social work firm he worked at, and once he met his coworkers, he stayed. It’s been fifteen years since he was first hired at 30, and every day he enjoys his job more and more. The only regret that he has is his immediate boss, Chester King. The older gentleman is never directly rude to clients, but there is a certain expression ever present on his face when he deals with the lowest of the low that always puts Harry off. He has never understood why Chester chose to work in a career that would put him in contact with people he seems to despise.

Kingsman Social Work has been helping those in need for almost forty-five years, and is one of the most prestigious private social work firms in the country. It was founded by Chester’s father, and was an almost immediate success due to Carlyle King’s amazing capacity for love. Unfortunately Chester has not carried on his legacy, and the firm has turned into something that Harry is not always comfortable with. They are taking fewer and fewer cases where the people are in dire need and are instead taking cases where the families are more capable of helping themselves. Giving out of five thousand dollars to a public school like Eton instead of the more diverse private schools, finding jobs for middle class lazy kids instead of finding jobs for the desperately searching young men and women on the streets are just a few of the examples of policies that Chester has implemented in his ten years of leadership. Harry was never in this business for fame or fortune, and the constant pressure by Chester to just pass off the more difficult cases is really starting to weigh heavily.

He thinks back to the time of the photograph; Lee Unwin truly was an incredible man. He was always willing to do anything to help others, and he never asked for anything in return. It was amazing to see him interact with his son and wife, because the love was practically visible. Everyone knew how much Lee loved his son; Lee always had a wallet full of photographs that he took pride in showing off. The son Harry remembers was a mischievous little boy that always had a grin on his face. He only met the boy once before his very last visit, but he seemed to always be happy. What Roxy described sounds like a stark contrast between that boy and the young man dealing with a terrible situation. Heaving a sigh, he gets back to work on the pile of paperwork on his desk. He may love his job, but the paperwork sucks.

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Soon the sunlight streaming through the half open windows casts long shadows across the carpeted floor of the office. Harry is nodding along to the music filtering through his headphones when a heavy hand resting on his shoulder startles him. Jerking back, he looks up into the grinning face of Merlin.

“You arse!” he grumbles as he pulls the ear buds out and turns his chair to face his case partner. “What are you doing here? I thought you were going to pick up the Wingate boy?”

Merlin crosses the office to sag down into his own leather chair behind his immaculate desk.
Anyone who walks into their office knows immediately which desk belongs to each man. Harry is not a messy person, but compared to Merlin he is an absolute slob. The man gets down right testy when his stapler is not precisely lined up with the edge of the desk; it’s quite fun actually to move things mere centimeters and watch him sweat.

“I did pick him up, Harry. Just dropped him off at the foster home actually. It’s already half past five. What time did you think it was?” Merlin replies with a small smile.

Harry is honestly astounded it’s already so late. Last time he checked it was just three o’clock. As much as he hates paperwork, he has to admit it is a good way of passing the time. Wait a minute…

“Have you seen Roxy? She needs assistance with a case, but she requested your help. You must be special,” Harry teases. Merlin bobbles the cup of tea in his hand and his ears turn pink with embarrassment.

“Oh, stop Harry. I’m sure she needs assistance from both of us. I haven’t seen her though. When I passed her office, her light was on and the door was partially closed. Maybe she’ll stop by on her way out. In the meantime I’ve got some paperwork to finish. Woohoo,” Merlin mutters sarcastically as he powers up the ancient desktop computer. He has put in a request for a more advanced system; he even volunteered to write the bloody code, but Chester would have none of it. Kingsman was a traditional social work firm whatever the hell that meant. Of course in this case traditional led to killing hundreds of trees each year and painstakingly entering redundant information into an outdated database. Sometimes it drives Merlin up the wall how stubborn that man can be.

“I’ve got a few things to finish as well,” he hears Harry say before he sees the man put his ear buds back in. Ten pounds he’s listening to ABBA Merlin thinks as the computer finally comes to life sounding like a jet airplane. The two men work in companionable silence for about half an hour before Merlin can hear the clicking of Roxy’s shoes against the floor. For a split second he feels faint with panic before he gets himself under control and straightens the crooked mouse pad. Making an effort to appear calm and collected, he stares down at the blurry paperwork in front of him. He glances up, as if startled, when he hears the soft tap tap on the door frame. Roxy is standing in the doorway looking gorgeous as always with her bag slung across her shoulder. She has a small smile on her face as she greets him.

“Hi Merlin. How was your day?”

He stares for a moment before he processes the fact that she asked him a question. Damn.
“Hi Roxanne. I had a great day. I was even able to place a child in a foster home,” he smiles as he remembers the smiling visage of the young boy from earlier in the day. “How was yours?”

She slowly walks farther into the office before carefully leaning her hip up against the edge of his desk. Taking care not to mess up any of his organization, she takes her bag and places it on the floor beside her feet.

“Well, if I’m being honest not too well. Did Harry tell you what I need your help with?” When Merlin shakes his head with a frown, Roxy tosses an exasperated look over her shoulder at the other oblivious social worker in the office. “Of course he didn’t tell you. Well, the short explanation is I’m worried about one of my cases. The brother is actually the main caregiver for his sister though both live with their mother and the baby’s father. The stepfather and mother are almost always strung out on drugs and alcohol, and this leads to Gary being the one to feed and care for Daisy. He never misses her doctor’s appointments, and he never misses appointments with me. Over the past three weeks he has missed both a doctor’s and an appointment with me. The neighbors actually contacted me yesterday and voiced their concerns over the situation as well. Apparently no one has seen Eggsy around the estate in about three weeks. I want to do a home visit, but I need some backup. I think the stepfather might have some weapons in the home,” Roxy explains in a rush.

Throughout her telling Merlin had been nodding along with his eyebrows drawn down in concentration. At the mention of weapons he straightens and frowns in agitation.

“Harry and I will certainly go with you. No social worker should ever go into that kind of situation alone,” he replies. Seeing her train of thought he continues. “Even agents as well trained as you Roxanne. Harry, for all his foolishness, would have asked for assistance as well.”

“Hey! I take offense to that. I am certainly not foolish,” Harry decrees, finally taking notice of the conversation happening in front of him. As he moves to stand he accidentally pulls his headphones free of the audio port on his phone. The jangly sounds of ABBA suddenly fill the small office, and Merlin grins in triumph. It’s always ABBA. Harry scrambles to shut off the music and regain some of his tarnished dignity. “Okay, so maybe my music taste isn’t the best, but they are classic! So, Roxy here filled you in on the situation?” At Merlin’s nod Harry sits back down. “Did she also mention that this Gary is Lee Unwin’s son?”

Merlin’s jaw drops and he leans back in his chair. He hasn’t thought about Lee Unwin in years. The man was absolutely incredible, and he had been a great friend until his untimely death. Sharing a significant glance with Harry, the two men nod in unison. Anything for Lee.

“Well, Roxanne this is your case. Just tell us where to go and we will follow. At the moment my caseload is clear, and I’m sure Harry is not going to back out.” He is almost blinded by her gentle
“Thank you both so much. This case has been bothering me for a while, and I’ve been trying to help Gary find a job so he can petition for full custody. He is so stubborn though. He always thinks kindness is going to come and bite him in the bum.” She pauses as her phone dings. Quickly pulling it out she frowns at whatever message is being displayed. Merlin pushes down any jealous feelings. She doesn’t have a significant other does she?

“Oh my goodness,” she says looking back up. “I had one of the interns doing some research into Eggsy’s disappearance. He was arrested exactly three weeks ago on a TWOC, and he was sentenced to a month in jail. Okay, this just moved up to critical. That baby girl is not going to survive without her brother. Are you available to go to the jail with me tonight? I want to check in with Eggsy.” She waits as the two men consult their mental schedules.

“Aye, I’m free. We can take my car,” Merlin replies first. He glares at Harry before he sighs and also agrees.

“Tonight is clear for me as well. Let me just gather my things and we can head out,” Harry says as he begins packing up. Merlin follows suit and soon enough the trio is walking out the front doors of Kingsman. Gently taking Roxy’s arm, Merlin escorts her down to the parking area and then helps her into the passenger side of his black Audi A7. Harry grumbles as he is forced to fold his legs up to get into the back, but Merlin just smirks and shuts Roxy’s door. He quickly walks around the vehicle and slides under the wheel, turning the ignition on as he does so. He takes a silent moment to appreciate the hum of the pristine engine before carefully backing out of the space.

“Alright, where am I going?” he asks quietly. Roxy takes a quick glance down at her phone before looking over at him.

“Looks like he is at the Holborn police station. Amy said he hasn’t had any visitors, but he is eligible. We need to be there before nine in order to see him though,” she says. Merlin nods and pulls out into the flowing traffic of London streets. Even though he is driving to the police station, and Harry is in the back, Merlin can’t feel anything but happiness at having Roxy near him.

Though Holborn is not exactly a slum, Harry still winces as he enters the police station. He hates the smell of hospitals and police stations. There’s just something sterile and spooky about the two places. It’s a cruel twist of fate that his job often has him jumping from one location to another.
Since he and Merlin are not the lead on this case, they stand back and let Roxy take charge. Soon enough the constable stationed at the desk is giving them the pass needed to enter the jail that is located just across the street. Harry is silently taking in everything as they are led to the room where Gary Unwin is supposed to be waiting for them. The walls of the jail are a drab olive gray with flickering fluorescent lights casting crazy shadows along the walls; the cell doors are intimidating even for someone who feels perfectly safe, and there is a stifling atmosphere. Harry already feels sorry for the boy, and he hasn’t even met him yet. What could have possessed him to steal a bloody car anyway? If what Roxy says is true, and he is the sole provider of the little girl, why would he put her at risk?

Abruptly the trio are pulled to a stop and given final instructions about not touching the prisoner and the rules about items that are allowed inside. Once they agree to the rules the guard pulls open the door and Roxy leads the way inside the grim little room where a young man is slumped against the metal table. Harry aligns himself with Merlin and stands against the wall as Roxy takes the only other seat in the room, which is across from Eggsy. He’s interested in what the boy has to say for himself, and how he thinks he’s going to fix the situation he is in.

“Gary?” Roxy asks quietly. “It’s Roxanne Morton. From Kingsman?”

Gary’s head immediately jerks up at the mention of the social work agency. Harry is quietly stunned as the brilliant green eyes suddenly fill with panic and pain.

“Is it Dais? Is she okay? I told mum to make sure she was getting her formula on a schedule!” The boy’s voice was rough from disuse, but it was obvious he was panicking. Roxy immediately reached out, but had to quickly pull her hands back as the guard banged on the door. Harry watched as Gary flinched and seemed to shrink down into himself. He frowned. That was a clear indication of physical abuse and sensitivity to loud, sudden sounds. Roxy also noticed the flinch and lowered her voice even further.

“That’s why we are here, Gary. Your mum has not taken Daisy to any of her appointments this month. I only discovered today that you had been arrested. Can you tell me what happened?”

The boy scoffs before leaning back against his chair. He crosses his arms and takes up a defensive posture. Harry almost smirks at the picture in front of him. Even in the drab prison uniform Gary Unwin has the same stubborn jaw as his father and the same look of determination. He subtly pokes Merlin in the side and nods to the boy. Merlin takes a minute to fully catalogue the facial features, the posture, and the voice before he also smirks just a tiny bit. There is no doubt at all that this boy belongs to Lee Unwin.

“I’m here because I was a fucking idiot. I was mad at Rottie and decided to do something about it for a change. Of course the world had to kick me in the teeth, and now I’m serving my just
punishment for being a bleeding idiot. But I’m not worried about me, what is going on with Mum and Daisy?” he asks in a defeated tone.

Roxy again has to pull herself back from reaching out. Glancing over her shoulder she motions for the other two men to step forward. At their movement Gary jerks his head up and focuses those brilliant green eyes on Harry and Merlin. Taking a quick glance up and down both men, Gary turns his attention back to Roxy. Giving him an encouraging smile, Roxy begins.

“These are my colleagues, Harry Hart and Merlin Graves. They are also social workers at Kingsman. I have asked them to assist on this case due to the volatility of your stepfather. Since your mother has missed both appointments, and some neighbors have logged concerns, I am required to do a home visit. Now Gary-“

“Eggsy.”

Roxy stumbles to a stop and her forehead crinkles in confusion.

“Pardon?”

“My name is Gary, but I go by Eggsy. You’ve seen me at my lowest so I guess you should know what I actually go by,” Gary, no Eggsy, responds.

“Thank you, Eggsy. As you know, we have not had to do a home visit since our first meeting. I must warn you, with all the extenuating circumstances, if we go to your home and the environment is not fit for a child; well, we will be required to remove Daisy and place her in a foster environment.” Roxy’s voice slowly trails away as the three agents watch as Eggsy’s shoulders slump. “I’m sorry Eggsy. I know you are the only parent your sister really has, but my hands are tied.”

“I understand Ms. Morton. Believe me, I do. I just wish me mum would give up the drugs and the drink. She used to be the best, you know? And then me da died and the world went to shit…” He hangs his head in defeat. “Just went to straight shit. I have one request. Can you postpone the visit until Friday the 29th? That is the day that I am supposed to be released. Apparently I’m getting out a week early for good behavior. If you can’t I understand, but I would love to be able to hold Daisy again.”

Roxy hesitates and looks to the two more senior agents behind her. Eggsy sees the glance and slips
even further down the chair. Harry has had enough of seeing the sad expression on the boy’s face; he got in this profession to help those less fortunate damn it. Ignoring the alarmed look Merlin aims his way, Harry steps forward and rests his hands on the back of the metal chair Roxy currently occupies.

“I don’t think that should be a problem Mr. Unwin. It is Wednesday after all. That’s only putting the visit off for one day. We will be at the estate at noon sharp. I hope that makes you feel a bit better,” he says quietly. Eggsy glances up at him and the harsh line of his mouth softens just a bit.

“Thank you. I…I know you don’t have to do that. Daisy is just the best part of my world, and I really don’t want to lose her. I’ve been kicking myself all month for getting myself in this kind of situation.” He flinches as the guard bangs on the door again, though this time it signals their time is at an end. Eggsy slowly stands and Harry is quietly charmed by the small smile that he throws their way. The trio of agents stands still and silent as the guard leads Eggsy away down the grim corridor back to his cell. They remain silent as another guard returns and leads them in the opposite direction.

Stepping through the sliding glass doors of the jail’s entryway, Harry almost laughs at the identical sighs of relief that they all release. Even the polluted air of London smells and tastes sweet after the filtered and recycled air of the jail. Merlin leads the group like a mother duck straight to his car, which he unlocks with a press of a button on the key fob. They do not speak until Merlin is once again driving on the clogged London streets.

“The lad seems to be genuine,” Merlin says quietly. Harry watches as Roxy turns to look out the window.

“He is probably the most genuine person I know. When he is with that little girl, they are practically one person; it is actually more like a father-daughter relationship than brother and sister. It absolutely kills me that he is in this situation. It will make more sense when you meet the mother and stepfather. They came by my office one afternoon to prove they have income, and it was just sad how disinterested they both were with the baby. I held her more than her mother did. I just….I hate this system sometimes. I know Eggsy has made mistakes, and now he is in jail, but that little girl needs him. I just wish I could fix it all for them,” she trails off quietly.

Before he seems to think about, Merlin is resting his free hand over hers that is resting on the center console. Harry smiles secretly as they unconsciously link fingers. The rest of the car ride is quiet with just small conversation, and soon enough they are back in front of Kingsman.

Harry slowly and painfully unwinds his long legs and steps out of the car. When Roxy begins to follow, Merlin pulls back on her hand.
“Ummm…would you like a ride home? I know you’ve mentioned how troublesome the tube is at rush hour,” Merlin asks hesitatingly. Roxy falters before settling back down into the butter soft leather seat. Relinking their fingers, she nods with a smile.

“That would be perfect, Merlin. Thank you,” she replies. They both turn to look at Harry, who is beginning to feel like a third wheel. Taking the hint, he gathers his briefcase and umbrella from the backseat and shuts the door. Raising a hand in farewell, he watches as Merlin navigates the car back on the road; this time the car is pointing toward Camden Town.
Those two will be married in a year, Harry thinks to himself. He’s watched the slow office romance develop ever since Roxy was brought in as the newest agent. Merlin was immediately intrigued with the young woman who seemed to have a heart on fire for others. Sighing with secret longing, he crosses the parking area and unlocks his own car. An Audi like Merlin’s, Harry’s is a rich navy blue with black leather interior that is so comfortable he could probably sleep in it if it weren’t for his back. Harry quickly places his belongings in the back seat and slides under the wheel; he is anxious to finally get home and relax for just a bit. His meandering drive from Kingsman to Stanhope Mews is filled with the soft sounds of music filtering through the car’s stereo system. Currently in a Bowie mood, the songs range from “Under Pressure” to “Space Oddity,” and Harry is bobbing his head along in time as he pulls up in front of his house. His house. A family property that he honestly adores, but wishes it were a bit less…well, lonely. Since his terrier Mr. Pickle’s death, the mews house has been a tad empty. He smiles as he surveys the children from next-door playing on the cobblestones near their front door.

“’Ello Mr. Harry!” Amelia, the youngest daughter, cries as she rushes up to attach herself to Harry’s leg. For some reason the little girl always makes it her duty to say hello whenever she sees Harry out and about. He crouches to give her a quick hug.

“Why hello Miss Amelia. Have you had a good day?” he asks. She nods her head so vigorously that her entire body shakes with the momentum.

“Yes! Mummy took us to the London Zoo, and we got to get ice cream,” she practically screams in excitement. “It was the best day ever! What about you Mr. Harry? Have you had a good day?”

He glances up as he hears Suzanne, Amelia’s mother, come down the walkway to gently steer Amelia back up the walk after directing her son Trevor inside as well. She smiles at Harry before speaking.

“I’m so sorry Harry. If I let her she’ll talk for hours about the zoo, but we still need a bath and dinner.” Harry almost laughs at the soured expression on poor Amelia’s face. Apparently the little girl is not a fan of bath time.
“Not a problem, Suzanne. I would love to hear about the zoo another time Amelia.” He says to reassure the young girl. Suddenly the sour expression is gone and is replaced with a beaming smile. Breaking free of her mother’s grasp, she rushes to grab another hug before returning to her mother.

“Bye Mr. Harry!” she calls as mother and daughter disappear into their home. Harry takes a minute to admire the warm glow seeping out from the home’s windows.

Turning to face his own home, he is once again confronted with the feeling of loneliness. His house is a dark façade against the fading and weak sunlight of summer London. With a deep sigh he enters and flips on the lights one by one. Deciding to forgo a full on dinner, he tosses together some grilled chicken and a simple salad. He loves to cook, but cooking for one is often a challenge; therefore, he tends to prefer simpler fare when he is alone. Dinner, and the subsequent dishes, is soon taken care of, and Harry then finds himself changing into his pajamas at eight with a soft playlist of music providing a soothing backdrop. I’m turning into a grandpa, he thinks morosely. Picking up his book from the bedside table, he settles down to enjoy the story of Marianne and Elinor from Sense and Sensibility. However, even the misadventures of Marianne and the twisted actions of Fanny cannot distract Harry from the unsettled feeling from earlier. Somehow the boy got under his skin with just a look and a few words. He reminded Harry so much of Lee, which led to Harry remembering the young Harry that was idealistic, that wanted a family more than anything in the world.

But gay men, especially gay men under perceived public scrutiny (his family was part of the peerage) are not allowed to have a family. Or at least that is what his mother and father always told him. They weren’t cruel about it, no. In their eyes they were simply trying to prepare Harry for the life he would have. A life of anonymous hookups in bars, in airports, anywhere that was out of the eye of the public. Even in the face of these struggles, Harry always nursed the dream of a family, but every year chipped away at his confidence. He can’t say for certain when that desire for a family died, but it was around the same time as Lee. After Lee’s death, Harry and Merlin both slowly lost their fun loving attitude and really focused on their careers. Harry is sad to say that after a few years he stopped checking in on Michelle. Every time he called she seemed to be doing well, and he was busy trying to start his social work career at Kingsman. He just always assumed they had moved away when he called one afternoon and the number had been disconnected. If only he had pushed the issue a little bit more. Maybe he could have saved Michelle, and Eggsy, from the obviously difficult life they have had. After brooding most of the evening, Harry eventually falls asleep to the image of bright green eyes filled with longing and pain.

Eggsy wakes up Friday morning immediately seized with the need to be home. Today is the day that he is supposed to be released, and he cannot wait to finally hold his Daisy in his arms once again. All through the filling, yet mundane breakfast, Eggsy is constantly in motion. Tapping his feet, wringing his hands, everything he does is a way of trying to fight off the anxious feeling that is welling up inside. He finally decides to just pace back and forth until the guard eventually shows up to begin his process of being released. He doesn’t know why, but it seems to take five times as
long to release him than it did to arrest him. He has to sign this form and that form, promise to provide an address and an employer for the wage garnishment. *Fuck me, there’s so much bloody paperwork*, he thinks. He watches the clock tick closer and closer to noon as the guard files page after yellow page. He doesn’t even want to acknowledge that he doesn’t exactly have an employer at the moment; at least not a legal one.

Finally, finally, the constable hands him his personal belongings and clothes from the night he was arrested. Quickly changing in the available bathroom, Eggsy is soon exiting the jail. The London morning is chilly, so Eggsy huddles a bit farther into his threadbare track jacket. Checking his possessions, he counts out about fifteen pounds in cash. He wants to get back to the estate as quickly as possible, but he also doesn’t want to get caught in the morning traffic rush on the tube. Making a split second decision, he flags down a cab and jumps into the first one that pulls up. He can spare what bit of cash he has, he reasons; it’s for Daisy. He sits back in the cab and watches the sights of London pass by his window; in his lap, his fingers are twisting and curling to cover the nervous shaking. He just hopes his mum has been taking care of Daisy.

**oooOooo**

Roxy was nervous. In the two days since she and the guys went to talk to Eggsy, she has still not seen or heard from Michelle Unwin. This is the part of her job that she hates, the waiting for something, anything, to happen. Potential child removal is one of the most difficult things to do in her opinion, especially when there is someone who really loves the child but simply can’t take care of them. Gary, sorry Eggsy, clearly loves his sister and is trying to do the best he can, but sadly his stepfather is continually making things difficult. To help combat the nerves she can feel tensing her shoulders, she organizes her desk and begins to color code her appointment book.

The routine and restoration of order quickly calms and settles her nerves. Glancing at the clock, she is shocked to see the neon green numbers reflect 11:15. *Shit.* She rushes to grab her things and then hustles down the hall to knock briskly at Harry and Merlin’s door. A large thump and crash can be heard along with a low, exasperated groan.

“Come in!” is shouted in that same exasperated voice.

Pushing it open she almost laughs aloud to the sight in front of her. Merlin is cradling his head in his hands, and the only part of Harry that is visible is his bum sticking out from under his desk. A cracked lamp and pile of papers rests on the beige carpet, and intense muttering is filtering up from under the desk. Merlin glances up at her muffled snort, and a wide smile spreads across his face.

“Roxy! Are ye about ready to head over to Eggsy’s? This git over here is trying to “organize” his desk, but as you can see is failing miserably. Please, tell me you are ready. I’ve got to get out of here,” Merlin says as he stands up to grab his suit coat. She grins and switches her bag to her other
“Then I am here to save you. Sorry, I’m late. I was doing some work and lost track of time.” She winces as there is a thump from Harry’s desk, and then his butt is backing up. Soon his head pokes up over the edge of the desk and his usually tamed curls are spilling across his forehead like a chocolate river. Even though he’s in his late forties, with his hair flopping he looks like a university student. Once he is back on his feet, he brushes the lint off the legs of his trousers and straightens his tie.

“Well, what are we waiting on? We mustn’t be late for our meeting,” he says with a dignified air. The other two in the room smile with amusement before shaking their heads. Like Harry Hart has ever been on time for anything in his life.

“And you’re just going to leave the mess there on the floor?” Merlin asks. Harry barely glances down at the shattered lamp base before shrugging and grabbing his own suit coat from the hook on the wall beside his desk.

“Yes, I do believe I am. Do you have a problem with that?” he replies with a huff. “If I take the time to clean it all up, we will certainly be late. We can’t keep Miss Daisy waiting, now can we?”

Merlin shakes his head before walking towards the doorway. He ushers Roxy in front of him and reminds Harry to shut and lock the office door behind them. The three agents make their way briskly to the car park and make the decision to once again travel in Merlin’s car. Harry doesn’t even wait for Merlin, but instead he contorts his long legs to fit in the back seat. Silence fills the car as Merlin, Roxy, and Harry prepare themselves for what is arguably the hardest part of their job. If they were just taking Daisy away from Michelle it would be easier, but Eggsy’s love and commitment to his sister make them all want to give him a break.

Too soon, much too soon, Merlin pulls up in front of the line of estate flats where the Bakers live. Harry glances down at the watch on his wrist. Noon exactly. Roxy heaves a great sigh before opening her car door.

“Well, boys. Let’s do this,” she says as she gets out and reaches back into the car to grab her bag.

Merlin and Harry are slower to follow, but follow they do. They make their way up the stairs that are covered in graffiti, human waste, and trash. It should be against health code, it should. They all know the people living on these estates are not considered real people by the government, so health codes don’t matter much. Finally they reach apartment 4C, though they can clearly hear a child crying from at least two doors away. A neighbor woman is standing in her front door and nods to
“It’s about time you people showed up. Poor lass is left to her own devices when Eggy ain’t there. I’m the one that called in the complaint last week. I sure do hope Eggy gets back soon. His girl has been missing him something fierce, far as I can tell,” she says in a voice gravelly from smoking.

Roxy smiles and murmurs a thank you before briskly knocking on the front door. The crying on the other side reaches a crescendo, and they hear thumps signaling someone coming to the door. A stocky man with greasy hair and a cruel set to his mouth wrenches the door open. Even Merlin wants to take a step back at the look in the man’s eyes, but they all hold firm.

“Yeah, watcha want, then?” the man demands rudely.

“Hello, I’m Roxanne Morton from Kingsman Child Services. Due to missed appointments and a complaint, we need to do a home check, and check on the status of Daisy Baker. May we come in?” Roxy states in a clear and concise tone.

They can all see the man make an aborted movement to slam the door, but Merlin subtly draws his attention and begins to step forward. The scare tactics work, amazingly, and the three agents soon find themselves in nothing short of an absolute hell.

Eggsy can see the fancy black car sitting in front of the row of apartments, and he cringes. He’s only about ten minutes late, but he should have known the agents would be punctual. He just hopes he can make some kind of argument about why they should leave Daisy in his care. The cabbie grunts hinting to Eggsy that he is ready to get back to regular civilization and safety. He thanks the cabbie and hands him all the cash he has before quickly exiting the cab. Sprinting up the stairs, he barely slows down before shoving the front door open. What he sees stops him in his tracks.

Merlin is standing behind Roxy with his arms crossed and a fierce expression on his face. He is staring at Dean; Dean is trying to use his size to intimidate Roxy, but it isn’t working in his favor. Eggsy has known Ms. Morton for almost a year, and he knows that look on her face. She is pissed. What frightens Eggsy is the terrible screaming that is coming from his room. If he recognizes Ms. Morton’s expression, he definitely recognizes that sound; his baby girl is scared and hungry. Without acknowledging his mother, who is passed out on the couch with an unlit joint cradled in her fingers, Eggsy rushes to his bedroom door. Once again he finds himself frozen. The third agent, Harry Hart, is sitting back on his messy bed, cradling Daisy in his arms. He’s slowly rocking back
and forth trying to soothe the poor little girl, but Eggsy knows nothing will stop the crying other than a warm bottle of milk. Harry glances up when he hears the commotion of Eggsy plowing into the door. When Eggsy starts towards the bed, Harry tightens his grip on the baby before handing her over slowly.

As soon as Daisy recognizes Eggsy’s smell and the crooning voice, she quiets down to just whimpers. His heart breaks at the blue eyes pooled with tears, and the red streaked cheeks. He nuzzles his face closer to his girl and feels his own heart slow at the comfort radiating from her small body. He avoids the bed, but he does sit in the rocking chair pushed into the corner and begins to rock gently. He nods his head in Harry’s direction.

“Check under my bed for the emergency formula stash. She won’t calm completely until she’s fed,” he says tiredly. Harry follows the directions and discovers one small tin of baby formula shoved up against the far wall. Without speaking he leaves the room, yet returns quickly with a bottle all ready for the little girl. Eggsy takes it with a murmured thank you, checks the temp, and quickly pops the bottle in Daisy’s mouth. Almost immediately the crying and whimpers stop, and the only sound that can be heard is the suckling of Daisy.

“Do you know how long it’s been since she was fed?” Eggsy asks quietly. He dreads the answer, but he needs to know what his mum has been doing for the weeks he was gone. He watches as Harry hesitates before reseating himself on the bed. He notices that Harry has already packed Daisy’s bag with the few toys she has and her favorite blanket. They are really going to take her from me. There’s nothing I can do. Once again Eggsy feels the tides of helplessness crash over his tired body. But he can’t let it win this time; this time, he has Daisy to protect.

“According to your neighbor down the way, Daisy has been crying off and on for at least a day and a half, if not longer. Merlin and Roxy are discussing arrangements with Daisy’s father, and your mother has been sleeping since the moment we got here,” Harry replies in a monotone voice. “I actually found Daisy in the middle of this bed all alone. Your mother was on the couch, and Dean had apparently been watching the telly with the volume turned up to drown out the sounds of crying.”

Eggsy is sad to say he isn’t terribly shocked. That is how Daisy would be treated every day if it weren’t for him and his mates. He knows the agents are going to have to take her. There is no way in this universe they would walk away knowing what kind of environment Daisy is living in. Though it is killing him inside, he knows this might be the last time he gets to hold his girl. He closes his eyes and ignores Harry sprawled out on the bed.

Harry has remained silent since his revelation and simply watches Eggsy slowly rock back and forth with Daisy cradled in his arms. It is obvious he feels comfortable with her, and the little girl immediately calmed when she realized who was holding her. He doesn’t want to have to take her away from her brother, but he cannot leave her in this situation. Surely, there must be something
that can be done, but what?

Both men are startled when the front door to the apartment slams shut. It feels like the entire apartment takes a breath and relaxes, and the only sound that can be heard is the creaking of the rocking chair. Merlin appears in the doorway and motions to Harry. Again Eggsy ignores the movement of the two men in favor of focusing on Daisy. She has finished her bottle and has wrapped her little hands up in Eggsy’s threadbare jacket. Those pretty blue eyes that he adores are slowly closing as the milk makes her sleepy, and soon enough she is snoozing against his chest. Eggsy can’t even bring himself to be bothered by the murmuring he can hear in the other room. The only thing that matters at this point is the tiny body resting so trustingly in his arms.

He’s not sure how long he has been rocking when a body appears in the doorway. Instead of Merlin or Harry, it’s Roxy. The stiff expression on her face lets him know his time is up. He nods before slowly standing up and making his way to the door. Daisy doesn’t stir except to curl closer and wrap her hand up tighter. With every step he takes he can feel his cracked heart shrink down into nothing. Roxy respectfully dips her head and moves to follow him once he is through the door. Merlin and Harry are stationed at the front, and his drunken mother is still passed out on the couch; Eggsy hates to think of the confrontation that will occur when she finally wakes up.

“Can I please place her in the car? I don’t want her to become frightened at the change in sound,” he asks, his eyes firmly on Daisy’s face. He can’t bear to see the pitying glances that weigh on him heavily. A warm hand settles on his shoulder and guides him out of the building. He glances back to tell Roxy to grab Daisy’s packed bag, but the young woman already has the bag in hand and is following closely behind. Merlin guides Eggsy and Daisy safely down the concrete steps and down the street just a bit to where the sleek black Audi is parked. Eggsy steps back as Merlin opens the door and double checks the temporary baby seat that is buckled in the back. Too soon, much too soon, the three agents are standing around Eggsy waiting for him to calmly hand over his life. Taking a bracing breath, he slowly settles the sleeping baby into the seat and secures the buckles around her small body.

“Don’t ever forget how much I love you baby girl,” Eggsy murmurs into the sparse gold hair. “I’ll find a way to see you again. I promise you.” He backs out of the car and gently closes the back door.

The three agents are respectfully silent as they watch Eggsy say goodbye to his sister; however, their expressions show how much they are affected by the obvious love Eggsy has for the baby. Eggsy steps back and crosses his arms as if to protect himself. Roxy hands him her card while Merlin and Harry get into the car.

“She is going to have to have a medical evaluation, but I want you to come by the office tomorrow about nine if that isn’t too early. I won’t place her in foster care immediately, so you can come see her. I truly am sorry Eggsy. I’m going to do my best to find a solution that works. For you and for
Daisy,” Roxy says softly. She braves his personal space to give a quick, squeezing hug before getting into the front passenger seat opposite Merlin and driving away.

Left gripping Roxy’s card in a tight fist, Eggsy can finally feel the tears welling up in his eyes. He can’t bear to go back into the now barren apartment devoid of Daisy; instead, he walks the four blocks to Ryan and Jamal’s flat. He ignores the prostitutes on Smith Street that prowl along the pavement, even in the daytime looking for anyone to help put money in their pockets and food on the table. He doesn’t even flinch at the sound of honking horns and screeching tires. The rank smells of rotting garbage and fried food don’t even register to Eggsy as he walks down the road. It all fades into the background, and he is simply too numb to care.

No one is at the flat when he arrives, so he nicks the spare key from under the potted dead flower and lets himself inside. Finally, blessed silence. Ignoring the clutter and clothing spread all around, he crashes face first onto the couch. He’s just going to take a little nap. Maybe things will look brighter once he wakes up. At least he is laying on something comfortable, not the stiff bed he’s had for the last month. He finally drifts off with his face smushed against the back of the couch and his fist curled up under his chin, Roxy’s card with a phone number scribbled on the back barely peeking over the edge of his thumb.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Thank you SO much for reading! I truly appreciate all the comments and kudos. You guys are awesome!

Daisy sleeps through the journey to Kingsman, the following medical exam, and the movement of Harry carrying her to his office. Amazingly enough the baby passes the medical exam with just a few minor issues. She is underweight, expected really, and she does have significant diaper rash; however, she is relatively healthy. Harry is happy to pass the info along to Roxy who quickly makes a note in her Unwin/Baker file. It will certainly be a point in Eggsy’s favor. The car ride over was the perfect opportunity for Merlin, Roxy, and Harry to discuss their plans on allowing Eggsy to keep custody of Daisy. While Merlin and Harry may have had doubts about the young man’s ability to care for the baby, the first hand experience of the love and care that Eggsy showed more than alleviated their concerns. Now they just needed a plan on how to prove Eggsy was a fit parent for Daisy, while also making sure Michelle and Dean would not be able to put her in danger again.

Just as he sits down, blue eyes peek open and rove around the room trying to locate something familiar. When she can’t find her brother, or anything familiar, her nose scrunches up in preparation to cry. Harry quickly bounces her a bit and begins mumbling nonsense. She calms down almost immediately seeming to recognize the deeper voice as someone who cares for her, or at least realizes his voice is not one that means she is in danger. Harry smiles softly and tickles her under her chin. She gives a little grin and grips his hand with a firm hand, curling her tiny fingers around Harry’s much larger ones, the sharp nails scraping gently against his fingers. *Goodness, she is precious,* he thinks. It’s no wonder anyone would fall in love with the little one. She is simply perfect. He is so engrossed in playing with the baby that he completely misses Merlin entering the office and sitting down with a huff of air.

“Well, this is certainly an improvement on my normal view,” he chuckles just loud enough to startle Harry. “Don’t get too attached to the little lass just yet Harry. We still need to figure this whole thing out. Roxy has another home visit later today, but she said she should be done around 3. Think we can handle the little miss until then?” Dodging the curious hands grabbing for his glasses, Harry gives a grin as his reply.

The afternoon flies by in a series of stages: Daisy playing, Daisy crying, Daisy stinking, Daisy smiling, etc. Throughout the whole ordeal Harry doesn’t once lose his smile, and even Merlin laughs along as she tries to climb on top of the desktop computer. It has honestly been the best day in their office for a while, and both men wish they could keep her. Soon enough Roxy is strolling into the office, but she is pulled up short by the sight in front of her. Daisy had gotten tired of playing with Harry’s glasses and crawled over to Merlin. Roxy was shocked, yet intrigued, to see Merlin on his hands and knees tickling the little girl until she was shrieking with glee. The sight of
both older men held completely in thrall by a tiny baby is something that Roxy will never forget. She breaks out into loud laughter startling the others in the office. Merlin jerks up and almost bangs his head on the corner of the desk. Roxy giggles but motions them both to stay where they are.

“I’m sorry to startle you! And here I was worried about her all afternoon, but you both have fallen under her spell haven’t you?” She walks around Merlin’s desk to plop down into his chair. Merlin sits up fully and pulls the still giggling child onto his lap while he leans against his desk. “Well, gentlemen. We need to come up with some kind of a plan to present to Eggsy when he stops by tomorrow. I was doing some research earlier, and I think I might have a solution. However, I’m definitely going to need your help.”

She hesitates before reaching into her bag and pulling out a file folder. Setting it on the table, she motions for Harry. Once he has rolled himself over, she begins to give her sales pitch.

“In order for Eggsy to prove he is a fit guardian for Daisy, he must have a steady paying job that is legal in every single way. The police cannot pick him up, or his application will be immediately revoked; therefore, he will never be allowed to have contact with her. He also needs to have some kind of lodging for her that is safe, clean, and appropriate for a child,” she barely takes a breath while listing all the regular requirements. Harry is nodding along, and Merlin is staring at the ceiling with his thinking face on. “Here’s the snag. Eggsy doesn’t want Daisy to go into foster care because he fully intends to get her back. I also do not think it would be a good idea to place her in foster care. She needs some stability, and I’m not sure we can give that to her in a foster right now. We also have the added issue of Eggsy not really having any credentials for a job other than fast food, or other menial tasks. That wage is not going to get him that kind of safe lodging for Daisy. So. Here’s my idea. Harry, you are the most stable of the three of us. You have a home, a car, and a job. I live in a small one bed flat, and I’m sure Merlin is the same. You have the most living space. Daisy seems taken with you, so I propose you be her foster parent for the foreseeable future. In addition to that, I suggest you let Eggsy intern here in the office with you and Merlin. Technically he will need to go to university for the degree, but right now he can be a glorified organizer and get paid for it. Also he will be living with you until he can save up enough for his own place. There. What do you think?” she finishes and flops against the back of Merlin’s chair.

The room is swathed in silence. Harry is randomly staring at the wall trying to process the proposal, while Merlin is smiling a mile wide. Roxy waits anxiously for one of them to say something. She knows it’s a little unorthodox, and maybe not quite legal, but when has that ever stopped a true Kingsman from protecting those in need? Soon the silence becomes too much to bear. She breaks the tension with a sharp, “well?”

Standing up, Harry walks around his desk and sits on the floor in front of Merlin. When Daisy sees her new best friend, her face splits into a bright smile. Launching herself from Merlin’s lap, she crawls across the carpet babbling constantly. Roxy and Merlin both watch in fascination as she grasps Harry’s tie and pulls herself up into a sitting position between his legs. Harry meanwhile has a soft, besotted look on his face.
“I don’t think it should be a problem Roxy. As long as Eggsy says it is okay, I will be more than happy to take care of this beauty for a little while,” he murmurs as he brushes his hand through her silken curls.

Roxy can happily feel the tension bleed out of her shoulders. Merlin, noticing the slump, gently grabs the ankle closest to him and rubs his thumb up and around her ankle bone. She relaxes into the soft chair even more and sighs gratefully. It’s been difficult for her to sleep these past few days due to the stress of figuring out Eggsy’s situation. All she really wants to do is fall into bed, cover her face with the duvet, and sleep for a week. She only allows herself a few minutes of quiet relaxation before she gently pulls back her foot and stands.

“Well gentlemen, I have to type up all this paperwork before tomorrow, so I am going to take my leave. Harry, leave Daisy with Merlin for a bit and come pick up her bag from my office,” she says reaching down to grab her tote. As she turns to leave, she surreptitiously brushes her hand against Merlin’s shoulder and gently squeezes. She quickly exits with a second pat on Daisy’s head. Harry wants to roll his eyes at the antics of the two idiots, but he magnanimously restrains himself.

“Here you lovesick fool,” he says as he hands Daisy over. The little one is all too happy to be bounced from arm to arm, and she makes grabby hands at the tie buried under Merlin’s cashmere sweater. “Seems she might have a thing for ties.”

“Just go get her stuff. I do still have work to do, you know,” Merlin grumbles. Harry just slowly walks out the door. He glances back quickly and sure enough Merlin is already grinning and making faces to entertain the baby. The big softie.

It’s close to seven by the time Harry parks in front of his home. Maybe he had been naïve, but he honestly thought this foster thing would have been much easier. Looking in the backseat, he grins at the snoozing baby in the borrowed Kingsman car seat. Of course Daisy has been perfect, but gathering all the various items she would need while staying at Harry’s has taken much of the evening. From bottles and burp rags to nappies and a crib, Harry has been running around London since he left the office at four. He began his journey at John Lewis, a popular baby store, and promptly became overwhelmed with the plethora of baby supplies. After fifteen minutes of aimlessly walking around with a drooling baby, Harry finally stopped a passing employee and practically begged for help. After the sales man clued in that Harry would be willing to spend an outrageous amount on Daisy he was incredibly helpful in showing Harry the necessities a baby needs. He must remember to come home for lunch so the store can deliver the new changing station, rocker, and crib he bought. Daisy certainly had more fun picking out a few outfits, some toys, while Harry dealt with the less fun items such as bottles and nappies. Once they had packed
the car full, the two set off for their next destination: food. He stopped by Sainsbury’s and was happily picking out fruit with Daisy tucked into her new Ergobaby carrier until he realized he had no idea if Daisy relied solely on formula, or if she was eating some solid foods. One panicked call to Roxy later both exited the building with enough food for the week, though Harry was still a bit unsure about some of the baby snacks he had bought. And that leads to Harry parking the car with a weary yet content sigh. Trying not the startle the sleeping baby, he quickly unfastens the carrier from the seat base and takes her inside. Deciding it is safe enough to leave the seat on the couch, Harry runs back to gather up the bags and boxes and brings them inside as well. He debates cooking a full meal, but the late-ish hour plus the level of exhaustion persuades him to just fix a simple cheese plate.

He carries his simple dinner upstairs to the spare guest room and then turns to bring Daisy and the rest of the bags up as well. Turning on some soothing music he gets to work. Soon enough Harry has most of Daisy’s things unpacked and organized, and a few of the decorations are already making the room feel like a proper nursery fit for a princess. He begins to anxiously look at the clock wondering why she is sleeping so deeply so early. Gently he pokes at her chubby cheek but gets no response other than a small squeak. He places his big hand on her slight chest to double check she is in fact breathing and breathes a sigh of relief when her chest gently rises and falls. Deciding it must just be a baby thing, he gathers her up and heads upstairs for bed. Without a crib Harry is a little concerned about sleeping arrangements, but the expert at the baby store said co-sleeping would be fine for a night or two. Of course Harry takes as many precautions as possible by piling a row of pillows down the left side of the bed. No way is Miss Daisy going to fall off the bed on his watch. Finally at eight thirty Harry is sliding under the sheets and cuddling close the warm little body beside him. While this certainly wasn’t the way he originally thought he would spend his Friday night, but so far the addition of a baby to his life has been relatively seamless. As the soothing snuffles of a baby slowly lull him to sleep, Harry smiles. Yes, this was wonderful.

Unfortunately Harry did not express those blissful feelings when a screaming Daisy woke him at four in the morning. Brilliant.

Bleep! Bleep! Bleep! Eggsy shoots straight up from his cramped position on the couch. Scrambling to identify the blaring sound, he finally zeroes in on the phone on the floor. Once the piercing sounds are silenced, Eggsy shoves his face back into the cushion. He can feel himself drifting off when he registers the stiff piece of paper practically poking his eye out. Grumbling he grabs at the paper intending to toss it to the floor when something stops him. It’s some kind of business card he realizes before he flips it over to see Roxy’s number scribbled with nine am underlined. Shit! He was supposed to be at Kingsman by nine in order to see Daisy one more time. Diving for the phone that is still on the floor he realizes he flips it over to see Roxy’s number scribbled with nine am underlined. Shit! He was supposed to be at Kingsman by nine in order to see Daisy one more time. Diving for the phone that is still on the floor he realizes it’s only seven in the morning. His small nap turned into an all-nighter it seems, though he feels nothing but grateful for those hours without consciousness. Sniffing himself, he decides a shower is definitely in order, and he also needs to change into more presentable clothing. He may not be able to win Daisy back immediately, but he is starting his campaign today.
By 8:45 Roxy is pacing back and forth in front of her office door. She barely slept at all last night working on a contract laying out the specific needs and procedures around Eggsy’s case. And now? Well, by Harry’s empty office, and the nonexistent Eggsy, her plans may be going down the drain. Wonderful, she thinks fitfully. Suddenly arms are coming around her waist and pulling her up against a solid chest. Merlin.

“You need to stop worrying,” he murmurs. “You know Harry is perpetually late. The man will be late to his own funeral guaranteed. Eggsy is probably coming by public transport, and it can be a bit unreliable. They both still have fifteen minutes to make it. Why don’t we put the kettle on and make sure Eggsy feels welcomed when he does arrive. I can only imagine what the boy is feeling now that his sister has been taken.”

Roxy slumps back against the warmth and nods her head slowly. “Okay, let’s go. I want everything set up by nine. I want this to work out so very badly.”

“I know, love. I know.” Merlin freezes as the endearment slips out. Roxy, feeling the tensing muscles, chooses to ignore the endearment that makes her stomach flutter. Hiding her smile, she disengages and heads towards her office while Merlin returns to the kitchen. Tea must be made after all.

At nine on the dot Eggsy comes barreling into the office. Unfortunately he bumps into Chester, who is on his way to a court hearing, and knocks his briefcase out of his hand.

“Watch where you are going,” Chester grumbles before he gets a good look at Eggsy. “Who are you anyway? Should you be here?” His voice steadily rising higher and higher until even Roxy can hear from her office at the end of the long hall.

“Ummm…I’m sorry, bruv. Didn’t see ya there,” Eggsy barely gets out before Chester is back to yelling.

“I asked you what you were doing here. Do you have an appointment or something?”

Realizing that the confrontation is only going to get worse, Roxy rushes out from her office and grabs Eggsy’s elbow once she reaches the two men.
“My apologies Chester. This is my nine o’clock appointment, Mr. Eggsy Unwin,” she states firmly. “Come along Eggsy. We have much to discuss.”

As Roxy quickly guides Eggsy away from the front door, they can both clearly hear the grumble, “what kind of a name is Eggsy? Bloody chav.” Eggsy tenses at the poor first impression, but Roxy just briskly rubs his arm and directs him to the chair in front of her desk.

“Good morning Eggsy. I know this is a rough time, but how are you doing?” she asks once they have both settled back into their seats. Eggsy shuffles the scuffed dress shoes, borrowed from Jamal, and picks at the sleeve of his button-down. Huffing out a breath, he begins to reply.

“Honestly? Not too bad considering all that has happened in the last month. I actually had steady meals for once, I was safe from my step-dad, and I was given the opportunity to work for some cash. The only downside is that my stupidity has cost me Daisy. Mum hasn’t even realized Daisy is gone yet, otherwise she would be blowing up me phone. So while physically and mentally I’m in a better place, emotionally I’m drained. I’m just so tired of being tired, you know?” he stops when he realizes he’s been rambling along.

Roxy is just sitting and listening to what he has to say, and she can feel her heart break just a little more at the tone of hopelessness she can hear in his voice. Once again she vows to do her best to ensure Eggsy reaches his potential.

“I can’t say I’ve ever been in your position before, but I can say I know it’s going to get better. Merlin, Harry, and I have come up with a plan that we think will work for everyone and have an end result of you having full custody of Daisy. What do you think?” she asks with a half smile on her face.

“I’ll do anything to keep Daisy safe and well-cared for,” he replies with a smile. “I guess I was willfully ignoring how bad Mum had gotten. I really thought she would be capable of taking care of ‘er own daughter, but apparently not. Where is Daisy anyway? I thought I was going to see her this morning,” he asks, the smile fading.

Roxy shifts nervously and glances at the clock. Eggsy, seeing her restlessness, leans forward.

“Ms. Morton. Where is my sister?”

“Right here.”
Harry quickly parks the car and grabs the baby bag from the passenger seat. Unbuckling the gurgling baby, he can’t help but smile and kiss the chubby cheek.

“You are such a good girl, Miss Daisy. Even when you wake me up at an un-polite hour, you are perfect,” he practically coos. Knowing he is late, he’s always late, he makes fast work of locking up his car and crossing the car park to Kingsman. He sees Chester marching towards his car with a frown on his face, but Harry keeps his face averted. He’s not really in the mood to be interrogated about why he is suddenly carrying a little girl into work with him. He bounces Daisy in his arms as she begins to fuss just a bit, and she quickly settles down to playing with his tie.

Finally he enters the shared office with Merlin and practically drops into his leather chair. Merlin glances up at the almost violent creaking from across the room, and a huge smile spreads across his face once he sees Harry and Daisy.

“Well, look who decided to finally show up,” he says with a smirk. “Mr. Unwin is already here, you know. He actually arrived on time.”

“What? He’s already here?” Harry replies. “Alright Daisy, let’s go see your brother. Merlin, are you coming?”

Merlin nods, grabs his copy of Unwin’s file as well as the tea tray and follows Harry down the hall to Roxy’s office. The journey was short, but Merlin still had fun making faces at the baby over Harry’s shoulder. Something about those big blue eyes widening in glee makes Merlin’s heart so soft. Daisy Unwin is such a precious little girl. Voices float from Roxy’s office the closer they get.

“Ms. Morton. Where is my sister?” Eggsy’s voice was tense, and Harry can clearly hear the fear underlying the brusque words. He quickly steps through the doorway and announces Daisy’s arrival.

“Right here.” He continues into the room and takes the vacant chair that is parallel to Eggsy’s. “She stayed with me last night, and I tend to run late for almost everything. So sorry we are a bit late,” he says with a smile.

Eggsy barely waits for Harry to finish before he is reaching out to pluck Daisy from his arms. Once
she realizes who is now holding her, Daisy squeals in delight and grabs at Eggy’s thin cheeks.

“There’s my girl! Oh my Dais, I have missed you so. I hope you have been a good girl for Mr. Harry,” he coos as Daisy nestles in under his chin. His girl has always been cuddly in the morning. The next few minutes pass in a blur for Eggy as he reacquaints himself with his sister. Even though he saw her less than twenty-four hours ago, the weight of her solid body and her soft babbling ease the ball of tension that has been lodged in his chest since he woke up.

The other occupants in the room sit back and watch sister and brother with wide smiles. They exchange a look between the three of them that conveys what they are all thinking. These two siblings need to be kept together at all costs. They simply depend on each other too much. Roxy finally moves to gain Eggy’s attention.

“Eggy? If you’re ready I would like to get started on our contract discussion.” She waits until Eggy has directed his attention from Daisy to her, and then she slides a contract across the table. Keeping one hand wrapped around the solid warmth of Daisy, Eggy reaches out to take the contract.

“So, this is it? What does it all mean? I told you I would do anything, and I meant that. Do I really need to read through a long contract?” he asks.

Merlin speaks up. “This contract is a little more in depth than our usual cases. We need a contract in order to set up a legal precedence for when you actually sue for full custody,” he explains.

“Full custody? I have the potential to have full custody of Daisy?” Eggy asks hesitantly. He moves the now snoozing baby into a more comfortable position and focuses his attention back on the contract. “I’m not stupid, but legal talk is way above my level. Could you just explain each section for me and I can agree or disagree to what is said?”

“That is perfectly fine,” Roxy begins. “If you will look at the top portion you will see the clause dictating where Daisy, and yourself if you choose, will be staying for the duration of the contract. Harry has volunteered to be the foster parent for Daisy so she will be close by, and we know beyond a doubt that she will be taken care of. If I’m not mistaken Harry practically bought out John Lewis last night getting supplies, and I know he has already planned more shopping for this weekend. What is your opinion on this so far?”

Eggy hesitates and turns to look at Harry. The man has obviously taken great care of Daisy since Eggy handed her over yesterday, and Daisy looked perfectly content to be perched in his arms as he walked through the door. Taking a second glance at the warm brown eyes, Eggy nods.
“Yeah, that sounds alright to me. What’s next?”

“The next clause regards your employment,” Merlin butts in. “In order to prove your candidacy for custody, you must have a steady, paying job and somewhere to live.” He stops as he notice Eggsy shaking his head.

“Well that’s not gonna happen, mate. I barely finished school, and there ain’t no way anybody is gonna hire me now that I been locked up.” Merlin smirks.

“Oh, not to worry Mr. Unwin. Roxanne knows how to do her job. We will be hiring you on here as an apprentice of sorts. You will be working directly with Harry, though you will make yourself available to other agents as needed. You will be paid a weekly wage for your work, but you will be terminated if you cannot uphold the values of Kingsman. Is that clear?”

Eggsy’s head is absolutely reeling at the deluge of information. They are just going to give him a job? Him? Maybe his luck in life really is changing, though he is still not going to get too comfortable here. It will be much too easy for everything to be taken away.

“Yeah, that’s clear. What about my housing arrangement?”

This time it is Harry that speaks up.

“Well, we thought instead of you using your entire paycheck to find somewhere to stay, you can just stay with me. I have a large house that has plenty of room for you and your sister. If you wanted you could actually have the entire third floor. No strings attached,” he explains. He can see that Eggsy is hesitant so he continues. “There’s a wonderful back garden that I’m sure Daisy would love to play in. The house is in a nice area, and there are neighbor children that would be happy to play with Daisy once she gets older. You would be away from all the dangers of the estates.”

Eggsy is finally convinced when Harry mentions the garden. He has always wanted Daisy to have a place where she can play comfortably. The parks near the estate? Well, they are not always the safest places to be for a baby.

“Okay, I think that should be fine. I do want to pay some sort of rent though. I don’t want to be a leech, and you are already helping me out so much.” He frowns as Harry shakes his head. “No, I’m paying. How much per month?”
“Since you are technically just renting a room, and you are my apprentice? Two hundred pounds. That will include food, utilities, and other stuff. Though, if you want something special to eat, you are more than welcome to purchase it yourself. I also wouldn’t frown against help cleaning and other household chores. Daisy of course will be under my official care, but I am certainly not going to stop you from being her parent as well. That’s the whole point of this exercise.”

Again feeling just a bit overwhelmed Eggsy nods. “Sounds reasonable enough. I have a home, a job, and a way to get Daisy back. How long does this contract last?”

Roxy jumps in. “The contract I have drawn up will last one year. However, if it needs to be extended, there is a built in clause.” She hesitates. “I honestly think this is your best chance for winning in court Eggsy. We already have a case against your mother and step-father for neglect. It’s a simple matter of removing Daisy from their care. The issue lies in proving a fit replacement. This contract, and all it entails, will provide a solid history for you to rely on. You can also count on Merlin, Harry, and I to fight for you,” she says. She can tell that Eggsy is a bit overwhelmed so she motions for the men to stand up.

“Why don’t you take a few minutes to look over the contract again? We’ll be outside when you need us,” she says gently and then leads the men out of the office.

oooOooo

The silence in the office is immediately stifling. Eggsy shrinks further down into his seat and pulls Daisy closer. He sits. He thinks. On one hand, he has no clue who this Harry is. On the other, he doesn’t have much choice. It’s either sign the contract and have a fighting chance or do it on his own and lose Daisy for good.

“It’s a simple decision then isn’t it, flower? You are my number one priority, and I’ll do anything to keep you safe. This Harry guy doesn’t seem too bad, does he? He obviously took good care of you last night.” He takes a deep breath. “Okay, love. Let’s do this.”

Harry and Merlin are leaning against the wall when the door to Roxy’s office is pulled open. Roxy, who has been pacing, stops and directs her attention to the door. Eggsy is standing framed by the cream colored doorjamb with his arms still securely wrapped around Daisy.

“Alright. Let’s do this, then.”
Roxy can feel the tension bleed from her shoulders. *This is going to work out,* she promises herself. The group files back into the office where Roxy quickly pulls out an official copy of the contract.

“Perfect! We all need to sign the contract, and then you and Harry need to decide when you are going to move in and all that logistical stuff,” she says hurriedly as Merlin pulls a pen out of thin air and presents it to her. “Thanks. Eggsy, if you will sign here. Harry here, and Merlin if you would sign the line underneath Harry.”

The room was silent except for the quiet snuffles from Daisy and the scratching of pen sliding across paper. Once the contract was officially signed and everyone was happy, Harry clapped his hands once.

“Okay. I have taken the rest of the day off to help get you and Daisy settled in. Would you like to go back to your flat and gather the rest of your belongings?” he asks Eggsy.

“Ummm…yeah that would be great. My mum?” Eggsy replies.

“You have nothing to worry about on that front. Dean Baker was picked up on drug charges yesterday evening, and your mother was pulled in as well. They should be informed later on today that Daisy has been removed from their care semi-permanently. So, should we go?” Harry asks.

“Okay.” Eggsy follows the straight back of Harry out of the office, quickly saying goodbye to Merlin and Roxy as he goes. He hopes he has done the right thing. Though anything would be better than the life he and Daisy were living before Kingsman.
So sorry about the long wait. I've been sick, and then I was playing catch up at work. I'm going to try and get back on my schedule of posting about once a week. Enjoy!

The drive to Eggsy’s old apartment is quiet. Harry keeps throwing glances to the passenger seat, but Eggsy is always staring steadily out the window. Daisy doesn’t provide much of a distraction either. She had woken up from her short snooze as Eggsy was securing her into the child’s seat and practically burst Harry’s eardrums with her squeal of delight at seeing Eggsy again. Now the baby is softly babbling to herself as she plays with the plush giraffe Harry also picked up last night. Though Harry is used to the quiet, he is feeling a bit uneasy at the absolute silence in the car. Maybe Eggsy is having second thoughts? Again he glances to the left to check on the boy. Nothing. Deciding he was going to have to be the one to break the silence, he speaks up.

“So, I want to make sure you are okay with this arrangement.” He pauses. “I know it’s a little unorthodox, but Kingsman has always prided itself on keeping rightful families together. And I hope I’m not overstepping my bounds by saying that Daisy needs you.”

“Nah, bruv, that’s not overstepping bounds. Daisy is honestly the best part of my life at the moment. To answer your first question, I’m good with the deal. I do think it’s a bit weird, but I know my options are limited since I was in jail. I just want what’s best for Daisy. I was just thinking about my mum getting picked up.” He fiddles with the seatbelt to stall a bit. “Mum doesn’t deserve to be brought down by all the filth surrounding Dean. I’ve tried to get her help; I’ve tried rehab, intervention junk, and as a last resort pleading. It’s like after my dad died she just shut down entirely. Nothing seems to penetrate the thick skin she has developed. I honestly don’t know what to do anymore. Maybe it will be best for her to be picked up. Time away from Dean could be exactly what she needs to finally make the decision to get clean.”

He twists his body to play a bit with Daisy who has begun to fuss. Tickling her feet and making faces soon has her settled back down with the giraffe. Eggsy is startled when Harry quickly swings the car into a parking spot and turns the motor off. He wasn’t even aware they were so close to the apartment. Harry, the first to get out of the car, stands and surveys the area before deciding it’s as safe as it’s going to get and begins pulling Daisy out of the car. Eggsy is slow to follow; he truly doesn’t want to enter the apartment. It’s full of nothing but painful memories and tears. But it doesn’t matter; he has to be strong for Daisy now.

The concrete steps leading to the front door still smell like piss. Graffiti covers the walls. God, this place is depressing. He doesn’t think it can get much worse until he sees the large red sign
plastered across the door. EVICTION NOTICE. Well, Harry truly is his savior then. Eggsy is so caught up in his own mind he completely misses Harry standing patiently to the side.

“Oh! I’m sorry. Just thinking is all. Let me get my keys,” he says quickly digging through his pockets. The lock on the door has always been a trial, and today is no different. He jiggles it and wiggles it, yet the door doesn’t budge an inch. Finally he jerks the key to the right and throws his body up against the door. Success! Eggsy enters first and immediately heads towards his room to officially pack up all of his and Daisy’s belongings. He shouts out to Harry to check the freezer for any of Daisy’s teething rings.

This time it is Harry who is slow to follow. He places a soothing hand on Daisy’s back, she is clearly uncomfortable, as he follows Eggsy’s directions. Finding two of the mentioned teething toys, he hands one to Daisy and places the other in his pocket for safekeeping. Harry then just begins to randomly circulate the living area. He paces from TV to sagging couch, from broken bookcase (holding alcohol bottles) to cluttered counter. No child should have to live this way, he thinks sadly. Lee would be appalled at how his children are growing up. It doesn’t matter that Daisy is not an Unwin biologically. For Harry that is simply a technicality because he knows Lee would love her as if she were his own. She resembles Eggsy a great deal, which makes it natural to just assume Eggsy is her father. He can see a photograph frame buried under piles of old newspapers and vodka bottles. Balancing Daisy in one hand he pulls the frame out and freezes. One of his best friends is staring out at him. Lee has his arm slung around a smiling Michelle and a tiny baby Eggsy is clutching at his mother’s dress.

“Eggsy?” Harry calls softly. Eggsy’s head pokes out of the bathroom where he had been gathering their toiletries.

“Yeah?”

“I think you might want to pack this as well.” Harry walks towards the bathroom and hands the frame over. “This should be a family heirloom.”

Eggsy cradles the frame in his hands and leans against the wall.

“Things were so much better when Da was alive. We had family vacations, extra pocket money, and happiness. I try not to blame Mum for all that has happened. I don’t know what it’s like to lose your soul mate, but sometimes it’s hard not to get angry with her. She’s the one that allowed Dean in. Gave him the power he needed to control every aspect of our lives.” He pauses and then shakes his head. “Listen to me, being all maudlin. I’m about all packed. Did you find any teething toys?” Harry nods. “Perfect. Let me finish gathering the toiletries and we can leave. You can put Daisy on the bed and start loading some of this stuff. I’ve got her bathtub, the cot, and her swing contraption all ready.”
The next few minutes are filled with the shuffling of moving duffles and boxes and the slamming of car doors. Once everything is loaded Eggsy hands Daisy back over to Harry and asks for a minute alone. Harry, ever the gentlemen, just quietly nods and leaves. Eggsy stands in the center of the apartment and simply breathes. He remembers the rare good mornings when Michelle was clear headed enough to fix breakfast, the good days where she laughed, and even the good nights when they piled on the couch and watched old black and white movies. However, those good days are far eclipsed by the bad ones. Days where Michelle barely moved from the couch unless it was to get another bottle, or if she went out with Dean to get more drugs. He remembers the fists that pummeled his body until he wanted to cry. The insults that seemed to roll of Dean’s tongue like silk. Daisy’s cries as she became agitated by the tense environment and shouting. This apartment was not a happy home, yet Eggsy still feels sad to be leaving. Somehow this feels like a true break from his Mum. He loves her; he will always love her. But she is not capable of taking care of herself right now, let alone a growing baby. He hopes she can turn everything around, but until then he has to focus on being the brother Daisy needs him to be. And so, taking one last look around the pitiful apartment, he lays his key down on the counter, locks the door and walks out. This is a new beginning.

Eggsy’s jaw drops when Harry parks the car in front of his house. The house isn’t massive by any means, but it is so much more than Eggsy has ever experienced; there is an immediate sense of comfort and a feeling of home.

“Do you want to unload your belongings now? Or would you like to rest for a while? I have a playpen set up for Daisy in the lounge so she can nap while we move,” Harry says as he takes off his suit jacket.

“Ummm..why don’t we just move everything in now and then rest. I just want to get settled as quickly as possible,” Eggsy replies. Harry nods and turns to open the door.

“Go ahead and put Daisy down while I start bringing things in,” he says as he leaves.

Eggsy is left standing in the entryway with no clue where the lounge is. Ah fuck it, he thinks and moves to check the door on the left. Nope, that looks like the dining room. He moves to check the door on the right. Score! He puts Daisy on her bottom and pulls the alarming pile of plushies towards her to play with. Goodness, Harry might have gone a tad overboard.

Satisfied that she is safe Eggsy quickly heads out to the car to help Harry carry in their bags. Harry is busy pulling everything out and setting it by the door, and Eggsy can’t help but again compare
this house to the apartment they just left. If Eggsy had piled their belongings on the curb there, everything would be nicked within minutes.

“Mr. Harry!” Eggsy pauses as a little girl skips across the street to plaster herself against Harry’s side. He watches as the man quickly squats down to put himself on her level. They have a short conversation that includes lots of head nods and smiles before Harry squeezes the little girl close and then sends her back across the street to the woman standing beside a car who Eggsy assumes is her mother.

“Bye Amelia! Have a good day Suzanne,” Harry calls back with a short wave.

Eggsy continues on his way to the car and begins to pick up bags. He tosses his head in the direction of the car pulling out of the mews.

“So those are some of the neighbors?”

“Oh, yes.” Harry stoops to pick up the last of the bags. “That was Amelia and her mother Suzanne. There is also a little boy named Trevor, but he is older and in school. Amelia is very social and loves to share everything.”

“Is it just the mum and kids?”

“No, Adam is in the Royal Marines and is currently deployed. He’s been out for about four months now.”

“Ah, that must be rough.” Harry nods as he turns back to close the boot of the car.

“It is, but the kids and Suzanne are strong. Her parents live down the street and I stop in sometimes to help out if needed. Adam is a good man.”

Harry changes the subject as they both turn to head back inside.

“I thought I would give you the second largest bedroom on the second floor unless you want the top floor. There is a nice ensuite, and the room I designated as Daisy’s nursery is right across the
“Hall,” he says as he fights to balance bags with Daisy’s swing.

“That sounds good to me. Are you sure we aren’t an inconvenience? I noticed Daisy suddenly has a lot of new toys, and I don’t want us to become a burden for you,” Eggsy replies quietly. He can already tell Harry enjoys helping people, but he doesn’t want to take advantage. He loads up his arms and follows Harry back into the house and up the stairs.

“You and Daisy are no where near a burden for me. I wanted to help you out, and as you can see I truly have too much room for just one person. And please, don’t worry about the toys and other stuff I bought. Living alone for most of my life hasn’t given me many opportunities to spend money on others. Ah, here we are. This will be your room Eggsy. And Daisy is just across the hall,” Harry says as he pushes open a gleaming wooden door.

Eggsy’s new room is painted a soothing shade of blue with simple, yet elegant, walnut furniture. An oversize chaise chair is nestled into the corner under a pile of soft blankets. A plush rug warms up the pristine hardwoods. Again Eggsy can feel a sense of peace roll over his body as he takes hesitant steps inside the room. The room is by no means massive; however, two of Eggsy’s old bedroom could fit inside with room to spare. He can feel the backs of his eyes begin to burn.

“Thank you, Mr. Hart. This is truly much too generous,” he says.

Harry ignores the words and opens the closet motioning for Eggsy to place his bags down.

“Well, why don’t I leave you to get settled in here, and I’ll finish setting up Daisy’s room. Do you feel like take out for supper or would you want to head to the Tesco on the corner and pick up supplies?” he asks. He turns to head back into the hallway.

“Take out is fine by me. It’s much simpler, and it will give us all time to rest.”

“Okay, I’ll order a pizza about seven then. If you need anything just call out!” And with those final words Harry disappears across the hall leaving Eggsy alone.

Taking a quick glance at the door, Eggsy face plants straight into the middle of the amazingly comfortable bed. He can feel himself sinking down into the duvet and shivers at the sheer joy of being free of everything for just a while. He doesn’t know why the universe has finally decided to be kind to him, but he will enjoy every second he can.
Something’s banging on his door. It better not be Rottie and whatever girl he’s brought back to the flat. *Ugh, shut up! I’m coming.* Eggsy groans as he pushes up from his bed and grabs for his phone. Wait. This is definitely not his bed. *Where the fuck am I?*

“Eggsy? I was wondering what you wanted on your pizza. I’m partial to cheese.” Harry’s voice filters through the door and suddenly Eggsy’s mind snaps to attention. That’s right. He and Daisy won the freaking lottery and they are staying with Harry.

Moving across the room quickly, but silently, Eggsy yanks the door open. Harry is standing on the other side in dark slacks, a white button down, and a sea foam green cardigan. He smiles once he sees Eggsy and bounces the little girl in his arms just a bit.

“See Daisy girl? I told you big brother was just napping. There was no need for all that fussing,” he murmurs gently.

Daisy practically pitches herself from Harry’s arms trying to reach Eggsy. As Eggsy puts his hands out to catch her, Harry moves to counter balance her weight leaving Eggsy’s left hand pinned between soft baby and hard man. They both freeze at the contact. Daisy giggles at the sandwich she is now a part of, and the moment is broken. Harry steps back and Eggsy pulls Daisy closer.

“Did you have a good nap, my love? I certainly did though I wasn’t intending to fall asleep,” Eggsy says sheepishly.

“I’m sure you haven’t exactly been sleeping well this past month. Your body probably needed the rest, but now you need sustenance. So? What would you like on your pizza?”

“Cheese is fine for me; the cheesier the better honestly. Is there anything else that needs to be done?” Eggsy asks as the trio heads back downstairs.

“No, I don’t think so. I got all of Daisy’s belongings unpacked and put away, and she took a nice afternoon nap. We’ve just been playing for the past few hours to let you sleep. If you want you can set the table for dinner while I call the pizza place. It’s just right around the corner so it shouldn’t take too long.”
“Sure! I can do that. Uh..where are your dishes?” Eggsy replies.

“In the dining room there is a china cabinet. Take the white plates from the bottom shelf. Those are my everyday dishes,” Harry replies as he dials the number.

Eggsy busies himself with unloading the dishes from the cabinet and setting up the table. He pokes around a bit until he finds the glasses and pulls two of those down as well. Harry turns from where he has been staring into the back garden and rubs his hands together.

“Would you like a drink?”

Eggsy hesitates and glances down at Daisy. She is chewing on the ear of a plush donkey sitting in her playpen. He doesn’t quite feel right drinking right in front of her.

“Not tonight, bruv. I want to have a clear head while taking care of Daisy. You go ahead though!” he urges when Harry goes to put the wine bottle back on the rack.

“I’ll be fine for one night, Eggsy. It’s rude to drink when your dinner partners aren’t drinking,” Harry replies with a smile.

“Okay, but please this is your home, and I don’t want to change your schedule or anything.”

“Eggsy, I know this is weird for you, but I truly want you to consider this house yours. You’re going to be living here for at least a year, and I want you to be comfortable. If you don’t want to drink alcohol in front of your sister, we won’t drink alcohol in front of her. Simple.”

“Mr. Hart. Has anyone ever told you that you are like a fairy godfather?”

Harry bursts out into loud chuckles that tickle Daisy into laughing as well.

“No Eggsy, I don’t think I’ve ever been called a fairy godfather before. Please, call me Harry.”

“Will do, bruv.”
The rest of the evening passes quickly and simply. The pizza is good, the company even better. Eggsy is lulled into a state he has never truly experienced before. He is content. Gary “Eggsy” Unwin is content for maybe the first time in his life. His sister is safe and well cared for, he doesn’t have to dodge flying fists, and even his mum is relatively safe. He is sitting on a plush couch under a soft blanket with a softly babbling baby. Nothing could possibly be better than this moment right here. Nothing.

“Well, Eggsy, I do believe I am going to head up to bed. We need to be ready to leave no later than 7:45 in order to get to Kingsman on time. Goodnight Miss Daisy. I hope you sleep well,” Harry says as he sets aside his book. He folds the blanket that had been draped over his legs and then pauses when Eggsy speaks up.

“Harry? What exactly should I wear tomorrow? I haven’t ever really had a job like this, so I’m not sure about procedures and dress codes.”

Harry thinks a bit before responding slowly. “Do you have a pair of nice dark jeans and a button down?”

“Yeah, I think so. If I ain’t got a button down, I definitely have a polo I can wear.”

“That will be perfectly fine until we can get you some professional clothing. You’ll mostly be working with Merlin and I, but it doesn’t hurt to be prepared for anything. Is that all?”

Realizing that he is holding Harry up, he quickly nods. “Yeah, that was it. I think I’m going to carry Daisy up to bed anyway. Even with that late nap, she seems drowsy as well. Goodnight Harry!”

“Goodnight Eggsy. See you for breakfast.” With those parting words Harry disappears to double check the locked doors and then heads upstairs.

Settling back into the couch, Eggsy closes his eyes. “Daisy baby, I feel like we’ve slipped into Wonderland.” Receiving no response Eggsy glances to the side where Daisy is sprawled out on her blanket, eyes closed, clutching at her giraffe this time.

“Alright, love. Let’s get you up to bed. We’ve got a big day ahead of us.”
If Eggsy was shocked at his room, Daisy’s nursery is beyond incredible. Her walls are a creamy green with small decals of forest animals strategically placed here and there. Instead of walnut furniture, a clean white crib, changing table, and rocker are arranged in the space. A dark green carpet cushions the floor, and little baskets of toys are nestled into a cube organizer. Goodness, Eggsy thinks. Harry really made this into a nursery. How did he get all this done so quickly?

Daisy seems perfectly content to be changed into a pair of footie pajamas and settled gently into the crib.

“Oh baby girl. You’ve deserved this from the minute you was born. I promise you I’m going to create a better life for you. You are my special girl. Goodnight, love.”

He makes sure the baby monitor is turned on before quietly leaving the room with the door left ajar. Climbing into his bed is almost a religious experience. He nestles under the heavy blankets and checks his own monitor to make sure he can hear the muffled breathing of his sister and wonders if Harry has the other baby monitor in his room as well. Her soft snuffles lull Eggsy into what is possibly the best night of sleep he has ever had.

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The next morning finds Eggsy shoveling eggs and toast into his mouth while also trying to get Daisy to stop throwing her porridge onto the floor. Harry, who knew what time the man gets up, had already eaten and was currently getting dressed for work upstairs.

“Daisy, love, we do not throw our breakfast onto the floor,” Eggsy lectures sternly. “Big bruv spent time mashing up your bananas to make the porridge tasty, and here you are throwing it all away. That’s not very nice, love.”

Eggsy has to quickly dodge to miss the lump that is thrown at his head as Daisy giggles loudly. Of course this is the moment that Harry decides to show up. He stops in the doorway and just smiles at the scene before him.

“Trying to teach the little miss manners are we?” He asks chuckling. Eggsy scowls as he uses a towel to sop up the mess on the table.

“Trying and failing mate. Trying and failing.” Eggsy settles back in his chair. “Would you like a
cup of tea? There’s just enough water left in the kettle if you’re interested.”

Harry checks his watch and decides a cup of tea would be nice. Who cares if it makes them a bit late? “I would love one, thanks.”

He sits down at the table as Eggsy bustles around preparing a cup of English Breakfast. He takes up the spoon that Daisy is currently messing with and begins to feed her. Eggsy stops and stares. Daisy is being a perfect angel; accepting every single spoonful with a smile and not trying to throw anything.

“Oi. Why does she behave for you, and acts like a devil with me?” He says petulantly.

Harry laughs and he feeds Daisy the last spoonful. “Maybe it’s because I’m someone new, and she is still trying to figure me out. She knows you will never be cross with her for long, so she acts out a bit more.

Eggsy hands the steaming cup to Harry before plucking Daisy from her high chair. Cuddling her close he blows raspberries on her belly to hear her laugh.

“I suppose you’re right. Well, finish your tea while I go wash Daisy up and put some clothes on her. I’ll be right back and then we’ll be ready.”

Harry nods as Eggsy turns and disappears up the stairs. He sips the tea and cringes. Okay, well first order of business at work will be to teach Eggsy the proper way to make a cup of tea.

Soon enough Eggsy is bounding back down the stairs carrying Daisy and her bag. He has dressed her in one of the little dresses that Harry picked up at the store. A white dress with a large blue plaid pattern and big blue bow make Daisy look like a new little girl. Gone are the splotchy cheeks and tear-filled eyes. Her cheeks are rosy with laughter; eyes bright with happiness. Once again Harry is assured he, Roxy, and Merlin made the right decision. If nothing else, their actions made a little girl smile again.

“Well, are we all ready?” Harry received a nod and a gurgle. “Then let’s head to Kingsman!”

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When Eggsy looks back on his first day at Kingsman, he will always be surprised that Harry didn’t immediately fire him and send Daisy to an actual foster home. He messed up the tea by steeping it too long; he almost destroyed a priceless antique because he thought it was a trashcan, and somehow he hung up on a client instead of transferring the call. Not to mention the difficulties he had keeping Daisy occupied and happy. If someone had been standing outside their office observing, well it would have looked like a circus act. Harry would be pacing on the phone bouncing a fussy baby, and then Merlin would swoop in and snatch her up to play on the floor for a while. Then suddenly Eggsy would have her and a bottle trying to get her to take a nap.

By the time five rolled around all three men were exhausted. They could barely greet Roxy when she stopped by the office before she left for the day. Taking one look at the pathetic pile of men and one giggling baby, she cracked up.

“Okay, maybe we need to adjust our contract just a bit. I have a cousin who runs a daycare service. Let me give her a call and see if she has a slot available for Daisy. I’ll even make her give you a discount,” she says with humor coloring her voice. “I’ll call you in the morning to let you know what she says. Have a great night boys!” she calls as she turns to leave.

“Roxy!” Merlin suddenly calls. “Wait and I’ll walk out with you.” She gives a soft smile and nods in agreement.

Harry and Eggsy (and Daisy) watch as Merlin randomly shoves his belongings into his bag and quickly stands to leave.

“Have a great night,” he says quietly. The two walk out together leaving Eggsy and Harry alone with Daisy.

“Well, I suggest we clean up our own messes and head home. I really do need to stop by the store tonight. We need to pick up some more baby food supplies, and regular people food,” Harry says with a sigh.

Eggsy double-checks the office to make sure they are not leaving any toys laying around or forgetting a bottle and gathers up Daisy’s things.

“That sounds fine to me. I didn’t realize this job would be so exhausting. I’m hoping Daisy goes to sleep quickly tonight. I just want a hot shower and my bed,” he says. He precedes Harry out of the office and waits in the hallway for Harry to turn out the light and lock the office door.
“Eggsy, like Roxy said I think we should reevaluate our working contract. You’ve never had an office type job before have you?” Harry asks as they leave the building.

Eggsy tightens his grip on Daisy. “No, where I come from office jobs aren’t exactly the main form of employment. Look, I know today was rough, but I can do better. Just give me a chance.”

“I think we need to talk about this more when we get home. Let’s go get our groceries,” Harry says watching Eggsy buckle Daisy into her car seat.

Eggsy wants to argue, but he keeps his mouth shut. He helps Harry pick out the groceries they are going to need for the week. Porridge, fruits, pasta, vegetables. Honestly Eggsy has a grand time putting food into the small cart. He has never had the opportunity to just pick up whatever food he wants. It’s a novelty he doesn’t think he’ll ever get tired of. Daisy is an angel through the whole ordeal and mostly babbles through the store and check out.

Daisy may be calm, and Eggsy may be enjoying the shopping, but there is definitely tension underlying his movements. He knows he wasn’t the best “assistant” today, but surely Harry will understand. He was just released from jail two days ago; furthermore, he’s never had any office experience. Frankly Harry should have been expecting more of a disaster.

Dinner is a quiet affair with Harry doing the cooking while Eggsy sets the table. Finally he has had enough of the tension and breaks. Redirecting Daisy’s flying hand filled with mashed potatoes, he speaks out.

“Alright. Just tell me you are kicking me out, and I’ll call up one of my mates.” He says scowling.

Harry freezes in his motions. He stares at Eggsy for a long silent minute and then slowly puts the cutlery down.

“Eggsy, I’m not going to tell you to leave;” he begins slowly. “Today wasn’t great, but it wasn’t terrible either. Merlin and I knew it wasn’t going to be smooth sailing at first. We are aware of your background. You did your best, and frankly? You did much better than I did when I was first starting out in office work. I accidentally stapled my tie to the legal brief I was supposed to be preparing. It was dreadful,” he murmurs with a grin. He can see Eggsy’s body relax and frowns. “I am sorry if I made it seem like I was angry with your performance. I just think we need to adjust our expectations.” He pauses to see if Eggsy has anything to add.
“I enjoyed being in the office today. I’ve already learned so much just from watching you and Merlin. I don’t really know where I fit in though. You and Merlin are like a machine when you both work together. Every time I tried to fetch tea or pick up papers from the copy room one of you were already there. I got flustered trying to anticipate your needs which led to disaster,” he says reaching for his glass of water.

Harry, listening intently, steeples his hands and rests his chin on his fingers. He knows he is going to have to work this out with Roxy in the morning, but he decides to go ahead without her permission. He’s never needed it before after all.

“How about this? You are our assistant part time for right now. Say Monday, Wednesday, with Friday mornings if needed. You can catch up with the filing, do some background research for pending cases, etc. The other part of your time would be filled with taking care of Daisy. She needs the interaction with other children; the nursery option will stay, but she also needs to solidify and build on her bond with you. The next step is for you to take classes.”

“Classes? You mean like uni?”

“Yes, exactly like uni. If you want to provide for your sister even after our arrangement, you are going to need to have some kind of career to fall back on. Frankly it doesn’t matter what path you choose, you just need to choose one. You’ll probably want to go full-time to keep up with the studies, so we can just re-evaluate again once you choose a program. I’ll work it out with Roxy about paying for the classes and such. Does this seem like a better arrangement?”

“Are you kidding mate? Why are you being so nice? Normal people don’t do this kind of shit. Not even social workers,” Eggsy says with disbelief. “Hell. Before Ms. Morton was given Daisy’s case, our social worker barely checked in. We were the cannon fodder of society. No one cared that Dean was the devil incarnate and me mum could barely hold her head up most days. I did everything I could to get out, and yet I was pulled back in. How could I leave a baby to the hellhole I had finally escaped? How was I supposed to walk away from an innocent like that?” Eggsy jerks up and begins to pace. Daisy startles at the quick movement, but Harry is quick to pull her up from her chair and cuddle her close. He watches solemnly as Eggsy paces and rakes his fingers through his hair.

“I knew what it was like to grow up with insults hurled at every moment. Punches that were thrown if you looked at Dean the wrong way. It’s no way for a child to live. When Mum called I was determined to do better for this baby. Even if I had to give up my recent success in the military, I told myself I would only stay in the apartment for a while, find a job, and then move with mum and the baby. Only life had other plans for Eggsy Unwin. Nothing ever works out for me no matter how hard I try. Dean threatened to hurt the baby if I didn’t work for him. Though ‘work’ is
certainly a loose term for what I did. Acting as a drug runner, drug seller, and part time rent boy wasn’t exactly what I wanted to do to support my sister. Things just got worse and worse until I snapped. And of course you saw the results of that little bender I went on. The one time I actually stand up and do something to fight back and I get pulled by the police; poetic justice ain’t it? Never got picked up for standing on Smith Street night after night. Oh no. I got picked up for stealing a fucking car.” He slams himself back down in his chair and scrubs at his head. “So you can see why I am a little confused at all of this. Last month I was helpless in jail, two days ago I suddenly found my saviors.” He sighs. “That just doesn’t happen to me, Harry. It just doesn’t happen.”

Harry doesn’t say anything for a while. The silence is more soothing than oppressive, and Daisy is occupied with chewing on her hand.

“I knew your father.”

Eggsy’s head jerks up, eyes wide open with shock.

“What?”

“Merlin and I met your father when he helped us with a case years ago. I don’t have many friends, but your father was one of the best I ever had. He was selfless, caring, and always took every chance he could to help those around him. When he died,” he trails off. “When he died Merlin and I both felt like the world lost a bit of sparkle. We came to the memorial and the funeral, but you probably wouldn’t remember seeing us. You were so quiet, keeping to yourself for most of the time. I hate to say it, but we both got caught up in our careers. Merlin and I were just starting out as caseworkers, facing a world of hurting children. It certainly doesn’t excuse our forgetting to check in on you and Michelle.”

“So all of this that is being offered is meant as atonement or something?”

“No!” Harry states vehemently. “Don’t ever think that. Eggsy, you have so much potential in you. You have faced so much in your short life, and though you may think it has conquered you, I assure you the opposite is true. Your father would be so proud of the man you have become.”

“Oh yeah. I’m sure Da always wanted a rent boy for a son.”

Harry frowns. “Don’t do that. Don’t sell yourself short because of what someone else has said or done to you. Your father would be so proud that you stepped up to take care of your sister. Lee was
always doing everything he could for the disadvantaged, and that is exactly what you have done. You don’t see it as courage, no. However, someone who will give up a promising future in the marines to come back to essentially raise a child is incredibly courageous in my book.” Harry pauses and takes stock of Eggsy’s face. Shock, pain, anger, and behind it all a tiny spark of hope that is barely detectable. He slowly stands.

“Why don’t we shelve this conversation for the office? It’s getting late, and little miss here needs her beauty sleep.” Eggsy nods gratefully holding out his arms to take his sister.

“Eggsy?” Harry calls as Eggsy steps out into the hall to head up the stairs. “You are worth more than you give yourself credit for. You deserve more than life has given you.”

Eggsy stands still as the sounds of clinking china signal Harry’s efforts to clean up from dinner. Daisy grabs his shirt and begins to gnaw on a button. He gently pulls the cloth from her fist and rearranges her solid weight in his arms.


Chapter End Notes

Comments are always appreciated!
Thank you so much for all the kudos and comments! They mean more than you ever know!

The next day runs much smoother than the day before. Harry has a talk with Roxy in her office, and an hour later Roxy is putting a university brochure in front of Eggsy with a smile. He stares in disbelief at the flashy logo of King’s College.

“I don’t know why I didn’t think about this before,” she says. “Do you have an idea of what you want to study?”

Eggsy pushes aside the files he was organizing for Merlin and shakes his head.

“Not really. I never really thought I would have the opportunity. This is all so overwhelming.” Roxy squeezes his shoulder and pulls up a chair.

“Not to worry. You can have a few days to think it through. The deadline to apply for most courses has already passed, but we can pull some strings.” She stops to watch Eggsy flip through the course book, tongue barely peeking out from his lips. “Just let me or Harry know when you think of something. Also, I talked to my cousin Amelia, and she is happy to watch Daisy, and her center is just a few blocks away. You and Harry have an appointment to meet her at five thirty today. Don’t be late!” she calls as she leaves with a bounce in her step. She loves solving problems.

With Harry and Merlin both out on home wellness checks, Eggsy spends the rest of the afternoon finishing the filing, checking on Daisy, and flipping through the course book. One program in particular stands out from the rest. Nursing with Registration as a Children’s Nurse seems challenging, rewarding, and a career he can see himself being successful in. His superiors during Marine training had been pushing him to train as a medic as well, but Eggsy never had the chance to accept before he returned home. This program would give him the nursing knowledge and the opportunity to work with children; the best of both worlds in his opinion. Deciding to hold off until he talks to Harry, he puts the course packet in Daisy’s bag and turns his attention to her.

She is currently bopping herself in the head with a plushie, getting angry, and then tossing it aside for another toy. Eggsy grins as she rolls over onto her tummy and pushes herself up. He’s been working with her to get her crawling though sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t. She
tends to like scooting around on her butt more than anything. Since his work is pretty much done for the day, Eggsy spends the rest of the afternoon playing with Daisy and making her giggle. Eventually Merlin strolls in around four and throws himself on the carpet to play with Daisy for a bit.

“How was the office while we were gone?” he asks as he hoists the giggling baby over his head to make airplane noises.

“Not bad. Mr. King stopped by to talk to you, but left when he saw it was just me. I finished putting the files away for the cases that were left; also I organized the tea drawer. I don’t understand how two grown men can let tea get so disorganized?” Eggsy replies with a smile.

“It’s not me lad, promise. Harry might be a stickler for many things, but organization has never been his forte. Once it’s organized he can keep it that way, but putting it in order himself? Good luck,” Merlin chuckles. “And don’t worry about Chester; he’s just an elitist dick.”

“Oi! Watch the language around little bit,” Eggsy says. Merlin sets Daisy on her bum on his chest.

“Sorry, love. I didn’t realize your big brother suddenly stopped cursing,” he says with a smile.

Harry walks in just as Eggsy chucks a paper ball at Merlin’s head with perfect aim.

“Well, isn’t this a nice tableau. Merlin, why are you stretched on the floor?” He asks collapsing down into his chair.

“Today was kind of rough. I needed a little cuddle time,” he grumbles, slowly sitting up and placing Daisy back down on the play mat. “We are going to have to keep a closer eye on the Wayland family. Dave lost this most recent job, and I’m worried the kids are going to suffer. What about you? How were your visits?”

“Actually, they went well. Melissa Johnson was hired at a local coffee shop, Annie Dickson got rid of her abusive boyfriend, and Lenny Shields can finally prove he’s the most fit parent for his daughters. All in all it was a good, rewarding day. Eggsy?” he asks with a smile.

“I was tellin’ Merlin that Mr. King stopped by, but left when he saw me. I also organized your tea drawer, and filed the last of the cases on your desk. And…I think I have found the courses I want to
“Wonderful! Why don’t we talk about it over dinner? I don’t have anything else to work on today, so let’s head on home,” Harry replies with a smile. He frowns when Eggsy shakes his head.

“No, bruv. We’ve got an appointment with the nursery at 5:30. Roxy gave me the address and it’s close enough to walk.”

“Alright, care center and then home.”

Eggsy nods and begins to gather up Daisy’s things with help from Merlin. They fish under the desk to collect plushies, soft blocks, and even her missing dummie. Eggsy takes care to pack everything away nicely and neatly. Daisy has never had this many toys or toys of such good quality and taking care of them is key. Harry and Eggsy wave goodbye to Merlin and exit Kingsman.

The evening is glorious. That rare occurrence of London sun is shining down warmly and a nice breeze is keeping the air from becoming too sweltering. Harry motions for Eggsy to head to the car first to drop off his briefcase and some of the heavier items of Daisy’s. While Eggsy is pulling the necessary nappies, wipes, spare bottle, dummie, and toy to carry in a lighter pack, Harry is surreptitiously pulling a pram out of the trunk. Once again Eggsy is left speechless as Harry quickly assembles one of the top brands of prams and plucks Daisy from his arms to settle her gently inside.

“Ready to go?” Harry asks with a smug grin. Now, if this had happened two days ago Eggsy might have reacted with more anger. The emotional talk from yesterday, still tumbling around in his head, instead softens the residual frustration. He huffs a laugh before sliding the pack into the pocket under the pram handles.

“Of course, Harry. Lead on,” he says with a small smile.

The short walk to Amelia’s nursery, Amazing Footprints, is relaxing for all parties involved. Daisy loves looking up at the sky to point with chubby fingers at passing clouds and the odd bird or two. Harry and Eggsy stroll along quietly talking about mundane things. Harry has the stray thought that a passerby could conclude they were a family out for an evening stroll, but he swiftly locks that thought away into the recesses of his mind. No need to get his hopes up after all. Soon they find themselves staring at a simply gorgeous school. Eggsy is already in love with the bright colors, amazing play areas, and welcoming environment. Harry seems to be in agreement if the short affirming nod is anything to go by. They quickly make their way up to the red front doors and step inside. There is a nicely dressed woman standing at a desk right by the entrance singing softly to
herself as she works on a computer. She glances up when the door opens and gives a big smile before standing and coming around from behind the desk.

“Hello! You must be the Hart’s. Amelia is waiting for you in her office. Can I get you anything to drink or snack on?” she asks rapid fire leading the small entourage down a well lit hallway.

A little put off guard by the automatic assumption, Eggsy speaks up slowly. “No, thank you. We should be just fine.”

“Of course! Just let Amelia know if you need anything and she’ll let me know,” she says knocking briskly on a door with Amelia Rosenberg stenciled in gold across the smoked glass window. The woman turns the handle when there is a gentle ‘come in’ from inside the office. “Good luck!” she whispers as she lets them enter, shutting the door quickly, but softly after them.

A woman with dark hair and kind eyes stands behind a simple desk covered in drawings and paintings obviously done by tiny hands. Eggsy can immediately see that her nose and eye shape relates her to Roxy. She steps around her desk to shake hands with Harry before turning her attention to Eggsy.

“Hello, you must be Eggsy. Roxy was telling me how dedicated you are to your sister. Amazing Footprints would be delighted to offer Miss Daisy a position in our nursery. Why don’t we all take a seat and discuss how our center can benefit Daisy in her growth?” She directs both men to the chairs in front of her desk.

An hour later Eggsy is thoroughly impressed, excited, and grateful at the opportunity Daisy will be given. Harry seems to be equally impressed and voices no concerns over the center. They will provide a plethora of opportunities for Daisy to develop her speech, her creativity, and the regular basic stepping stones of childhood. Eggsy is sure that even if they were looking at other centers Amazing Footprints would be the one they chose. It is obvious Amelia loves children, and the center’s record is absolutely impeccable. Harry can feel the meeting wrapping up and therefore he broaches the question of cost.

“This is all lovely, and I think I speak for Eggsy and myself when I say we would love to have Daisy attend here. What would the cost be for full time?” he asks politely. He can sense Eggsy tense a little and gives him a reassuring smile.

“I told Roxy I would gladly give you the employee discount for the first year as a incentive so to speak,” Amelia begins. “If Daisy were to attend full time every day of the week, the monthly cost would be eight hundred and fifty pounds. This amount must be paid a month in advance; however,
if you know specific days that she will not be attending, or if you want to schedule only half days, we can adjust the price accordingly. Would you like some time to discuss your options?” she finishes.

Eggsy looks at Harry and nods.

“Not a problem. I’ll step out and get us some refreshment. I’ll knock before I enter.”

Harry waits until the door is latched again before turning fully to face Eggsy.

“So, what do you think?” he asks. Eggsy stares at his hands before turning and giving a massive smile.

“I love it, Harry. I think Daisy is going to learn so much here. I can’t believe this is even a possibility. Amelia seems like a great person; I can’t see her hiring anyone who would be a danger to Dais. The only thing is the cost,” he trails off.

Harry reaches across the space between the two of them and grasps the twisting hands. Eggsy quickly settles under the warm weight of the slightly rough fingers ghosting over his. A few seconds pass before both men seem to come back to themselves. Harry squeezes Eggsy’s hands one last time and pulls away.

“Remember this is part of your contract. You won’t be starting university right away leaving plenty of time to work at Kingsman. We can also come up with a schedule for right now that is less than full time if you want to do that. This is your decision Eggsy. Just know that whatever you choose, I will support you one hundred percent.” Harry keeps it to himself that he will gladly pay the price for Daisy to have a safe and inviting place to go every day.

“Okay, let’s just go ahead and put her in for full time, but only four days a week for right now. Once I start taking classes and stuff we can go to five days, but I like the thought of a full day just to hang out and play with her.”

Harry, smiling, relaxes back into his chair. “Then that is what we will do.”

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Dinner that night was a lively ordeal. Daisy was feeling frisky and took joy in making a terrible mess of herself, her chair, and Eggsy. Harry wasn’t much help either as he encouraged the little girl by laughing. They don’t have a chance to talk about the career choice Eggsy has made, so he waits until Harry has bathed Daisy and put her to bed before broaching the subject.

He is just putting away the last pan when Harry enters the kitchen and pours a glass of wine. He nods when Harry tosses an inquiring brow his way, and Harry pulls down a second glass. Harry has rolled up the sleeves of his dress shirt littered with damp spots where Daisy got a little too excited about the bubbles. Eggsy can feel a little tug in the bottom of his stomach at the frankly gorgeous picture the man makes leaning against the kitchen counter with a glass held loosely in his hand. He is jerked out of his reverie when said gorgeous man speaks.

“So?” he begins with a smile. “What are your plans for university?”

Eggsy closes the cabinet, picks up his glass mirroring Harry. “Well, as I was looking through the brochure Roxy brought, the courses in nursing caught my eye. I always spent so much time in hospital or in doctor’s offices when I was little I became fascinated with the medical profession. I dismissed it as a pipe dream as I got older, but today brought that longing back to the front. King’s College actually has a course that focuses on nursing for children; this is what I really want to do. I want to be the one to comfort a child who might be scared to be in such a sterile place. It will also help me be a better parent for Daisy as well, you know?”

Nodding Harry replies, “I do. That seems like an amazing career choice. How long is the program itself?”

“From what I’ve read it is supposed to be a three year program with most of the last two years in clinical and real time instruction. You are given the opportunity to work with teaching hospitals and I think there is a community element as well.”

Eggsy goes on to explain the finer details of the program, and Harry listens intently murmuring agreement every now and then. He is once again struck at just how beautiful Eggsy is, especially when he is discussing something that he is passionate about. Neither man notices that they have moved closer to each other with hips barely touching as they lean against the counter.

“I think it will be wonderful Eggsy. Pardon my forwardness, but I already checked out your grades and A-levels, and I don’t think you will have a problem being accepted into the program. We just need to get you started on your application.”
“I’ll admit I was a bit worried about that part of it. I know I don’t exactly have the best track record, but I want to do better than I have in the past,” Eggsy replies.

“And you will. You’ve got the drive, and now you’ve got people supporting you. You are going to go far my boy,” Harry says. He rinses out his now empty wine glass and reaches out to take Eggsy’s as well. “It’s only nine. Would you like to watch a movie before bed?”

Eggsy agrees eagerly. He pops a small bag of popcorn to munch on as the two settle on the sofa. The rest of the evening is filled with the newest release about England’s first ski-jumper; a perfect blend of comedy, good plot, and amazing acting. It’s a wonderful evening to a pretty much perfect day Eggsy thinks.

oooOooo

The next few weeks are a whirlwind of getting Daisy settled into her new nursery, Eggsy getting paperwork ready to apply to King’s College, and his efforts to learn the office world of Kingsman. Almost a month after he moves in with Harry, Eggsy is now comfortable in the house. At first he was afraid to speak out of turn, move something, or do something to anger Harry. After a frank discussion about a week into their living arrangement, he now has no qualms complaining about a mug left out on the counter or whatever else that is bothering him; they have even worked out a chore system that works for both of them. Eggsy honestly cannot remember the last time he was this happy or settled, and he knows Daisy is thriving in this supportive environment. She has slowly begun to talk, and the reports from her teacher are all positive. Harry has been such a blessing, but Eggsy is starting to feel a little bit more than grateful for the older man. He is just so good with Daisy. There are never any complaints when Daisy’s cries wake both men up in the early morning. The scattered toys around the house never seem to irritate or bother. If anything, they give the older man the excuse to fall down to the floor to play with the baby. Daisy has attached herself to Harry and often cries for him to hold her over her brother. Each day Eggsy can feel himself becoming more and more comfortable with Harry; he embraces those feelings with a secretive joy. No one has assumed they are a married couple since the secretary at the school, but Eggsy certainly wouldn’t mind if he got called Mr. Hart again.

All in all the past few weeks have been idyllic. The weather has been great for the end of August, and the trio has discovered a new love of taking long strolls through the park and taking picnics for lunch on the weekends. Amelia from next door has even spent a few afternoons playing with Daisy in the garden. It’s the sort of life that Eggsy had always secretly dreamed of having, but never actually expected it to happen to him. Of course, this being Eggsy, the idyllic period doesn’t last as long as he would like it to. It’s Wednesday afternoon, and Eggsy decides to take Daisy on a quick walk through the park before Harry gets home. Wednesday is the day that he spends with Daisy; it’s the best day of the week in his opinion. The afternoon passes in a blur of giggles, melting ice cream, and sun warmed skin. Eggsy and Daisy are both in high spirits as they return home (Eggsy is getting more comfortable calling it home as well) when he sees the stern looking gentleman standing in front of the house. He immediately slows down, but the man has already noticed him. The man turns fully to face Eggsy, holding out a blue colored envelope.
“Mr. Gary Unwin?” the man asks. His voice is gravelly and rough from cigarette smoke. Eggsy almost gags at the thick smell rolling off the jacket of the man.

“Yes? How can I help you?” he responds.

“You have been served papers dealing with custody of Daisy Ann Baker. Your response is required in forty eight hours,” is practically growled.

The man shoves the blue envelope into Eggsy’s numb hands, and walks away. Eggsy can feel the world narrowing into a pinpoint. Custody. They are suing for custody of his Daisy. All that runs through his mind is the fact that he was supposed to have more time. Daisy’s babbling pulls him out of the developing panic attack. He can’t fall apart just yet. He has to make sure Daisy is safe. Quickly he unlocks the front door and backs the pram inside. He practically throws the envelope down on the entry table. He doesn’t even want to think about what that little envelope might mean for the new life they have. Glancing at the clock he sees it’s just turning five. Sighing in relief he knows Harry should be home very soon. He unbuckles the squirming baby and takes her into the living room to distract himself with blocks.

Finally, after what seems like ages, Harry is home calling out, “I’m home!” in a cheerful voice. Eggsy gently places Daisy in her playpen and walks out into the hall.

“Hey Harry,” he says. Harry frowns at the depressed tone of voice. Eggsy is usually happy to see Harry get home on Wednesdays. Suddenly he thinks something is wrong with Daisy.

“What’s wrong?” he demands dropping his briefcase. “Is something wrong with Daisy?”

Eggsy certainly never meant to frighten Harry as soon as he got home. He rushes to reassure as much as he can.

“No, no Daisy’s fine!” he says. “We took a walk this afternoon, and something happened when we came home.” He hesitates. Telling Harry makes the entire thing real.

“Well, what happened Eggsy? You’re really worrying me here.”

“A man was waiting on us to get home. He handed me that blue envelope.” He points at said envelope, and Harry quickly snatches it up.
Eggsy doesn’t say anything more as Harry rips through the envelope and freezes. Eggsy can see him scanning every single line before slumping just a little. Before he knows what is happening Harry is taking the two strides necessary to reach him and wrapping him up in a tight embrace.

“I’m so sorry you were confronted like that,” he murmurs. “I’ve been expecting something like this, but Roxy should have been notified first as she is lead agent on your case. Dean must have bypassed Kingsman somehow.” He slowly rubs his large hands in gentle circles across Eggsy’s tense back. Slowly Eggsy relaxes and tangles his fingers in Harry’s suit jacket.

“So? What am I going to do Harry? I honestly thought I would have more time to get ready for this,” he murmurs quietly. He hopes Harry can’t hear the tears in his voice, but he also knows that Harry is too observant not to.

“We will talk with Roxy in the morning and figure out why she hasn’t heard about this. Remember Eggsy. Roxy is one of the finest social workers in the city. She is not going to fail you or Daisy. Now, I know you are going to worry about this all night, so I propose we go out for dinner. Maybe take a walk along the south bank?”

“Okay, Harry. That sounds good.”

At this point Eggsy would go along with anything Harry said; just as long as those warm hands never stopped supporting and comforting him.
Chapter 8

While Harry was right that he thought about the summons all night, eating at a fun diner along with the stroll certainly helped relax him. Harry also seems to step out of his comfort zone by sharing some personal stories about his own life.

“So, that’s why you never tried to have a family? Your parents brainwashed you into thinking you didn’t deserve it?” Eggsy asks incredulously. They had already talked about the fact that Harry had a rough time when he came out to his parents while Eggsy is only out to his mum, but this was terrible. Some parents are just not meant to have children.

Harry shrugs and readjusts Daisy’s tiny blue jacket as he is worried the breeze off the Thames will chill her. They had paused in their stroll along the South Bank to enjoy the sun turning the sky fiery orange.

“Well, yes. At the time I was struggling to come to terms with what it meant to be gay. It also wasn’t as if I had a lot of role models to look up to you know. Is it something I regret? Oh, absolutely. I guess that is why I jumped at the opportunity to take Daisy in. I know she is not really my family, but at least I can have the illusion, for a short time, that I do have a family of my own.” Seeming to realize exactly what he has implied, Harry swiftly takes the pram’s handles from Eggsy and heads back to their waiting car. He needs to step away from the intriguing boy before he spills all his secrets and looks like a fool.

Eggsy lets the man retreat, but for the rest of the night the image of Eggsy and Harry together as a couple dances across his mind.

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He wakes up Thursday determined to figure out the custody issue and create a plan with Roxy. Breakfast is the usual lively affair with Harry feeding a rambunctious Daisy and Eggsy fixing their lunches for the day. After the first week Harry stopped grumbling about carrying the brown paper bag (he can a bit of a snob about some things) and even seemed to appreciate the extra time spent grocery shopping. It helps that Eggsy always makes tasty and healthy lunches that keep him full all day until it’s time for dinner. Cleaning up from breakfast is Eggsy’s job as Harry makes sure that Daisy has everything she needs for nursery and then the trio is out the door to start their day.

They find Merlin standing in the kitchen heating a kettle of water when they arrive at Kingsman after dropping Daisy off at nursery. They stop in the doorway to say hi and Merlin nods at the two absently before jerking his head up.
“My god. I never thought I would see the day when Harry Hart strolled into the office before nine thirty. Do I need to take you to the hospital?”

Eggsy’s lips twitch as Merlin chuckles at his own joke. Harry though is certainly not in the mood to joke around.

“Do you know what time Roxy will be in today? We have an issue with Dean Baker,” he states firmly.

Merlin frowns and sober at the mention of Dean. “I suppose she will be in at her normal time of eight. What’s going on?”

“Yesterday a man, I’m assuming from the police, met Eggsy at the house. He handed him a summons for a custody hearing. Roxy should have been informed of this, so I want to know why she didn’t tell Eggsy or I,” Harry responds in a tense voice.

Merlin’s shoulders straighten into an impossibly straight line.

“Now hold on Harry. You know Roxy would have said something if she had known. She’s been hard at work on this case for almost a year now. You need to calm down before you say something you are going to regret,” Merlin growls. He sets his book aside and plucks tea bags into three cups before pouring steaming water over top. “Sit down.”

Eggsy prods Harry into moving. Gratefully he takes the offered cup and glares at Harry until he does the same.

“Harry doesn’t mean to come across as a knob head, Merlin. He is just upset. It was such a shock to see that man yesterday. I thought I would have more time to get everything together,” Eggsy begins. “I’m sure Roxy will be able to clear everything up.”

The trio pass the long minutes in relative silence until the clicking of heels can be heard. Merlin glances at the clock on the wall and smirks at the time. Eight exactly.

“You could take a lesson or two from Roxy on being on time Harry. You might actually learn
“Well, I thought this was a place of work, not a lounge area,” she says snarkily.

“Oi, Rox! Now that ain’t nice. The day has only just begun you know,” Eggsy grumbles playfully.

“Actually Roxy we are waiting on you,” Harry begins stiltedly. Eggsy surreptitiously bumps his foot into Harry’s leg. He doesn’t want him attacking Rox over this; he needs all the friends he can get at this point in time.

“Waiting on me?” she asks incredulously. “What’s going on? Has Eggsy heard back from King’s?”

“No, I haven’t. I was under the impression that Mr. Baker was still in jail and Mrs. Baker was enrolled in a substance abuse program.” She stops. “Why are you asking? Have you heard something?”

In response Harry pulls out the dreaded blue envelope and slides it across the table in her direction. Her puzzled expression immediately disappears. A solid mask falls across her face as she reads every single line. Once. Twice. A third time to make sure she is aware of everything. When she is finished, she lays the envelope on the table and reaches out for Eggsy’s hand. He gladly grasps her fingers and smiles at the gentle squeeze.

“I had no knowledge of this being filed. I’m not sure how they were able to file this motion without me, but I can assure you I will know by lunch time. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have some heads to bang together.” She tosses a smile in Merlin’s direction before gathering her things and quickly
leaving the kitchen. Instead of heading to her office, she turns sharply and leaves Kingsman altogether.

“Well, Harry? Satisfied?” Merlin leans back in his chair and tosses back the last of his lukewarm tea.

“I never truly thought she was going behind anyone’s backs. I may have reacted a little strongly, but I will apologize later.” He heaves a sigh. “Well, now that Roxy is on the case, I should probably go work on my own. Eggsy you can work with Merlin today since you got me all caught up with filing yesterday. Goodness, I’m ready for this day to be over and it’s not even nine.” With those parting words Harry stands and leaves, headed to the shared office.

Once he is gone, Eggsy stands as well and collects the used cups. He searches through the cabinets until he finds some dish soap at the very back. Merlin is silent, yet watchful, as Eggsy quickly and methodically cleans the cups and places them on the drying mat to the right. The silence feels a bit overwhelming, but he can’t bring himself to break it. If anything is going to break, it might just be him.

“Lad?” Merlin murmurs. Eggsy stiffens as he hears the squeak of a chair being pushed back and then soft footfalls coming closer. “Everything will work out. Roxy is amazing at her job, and she has already decided to fight tooth and nail for you and Miss Daisy. Let her do her job and try to worry less.” He squeezes Eggsy’s shoulder and then he too leaves the kitchen.

Eggsy slowly dries the teacups and places them gently back into the cabinet. He takes another moment to just breathe deeply. He has to trust that Rox, Harry, and Merlin can help fix this mess. If he doesn’t? Well, today might just be the day he finally steps off that ledge that has been taunting him for years. He knows this is his last chance to make something of himself. His last chance to create a life for Daisy that enables her to be successful and proud. This is it.

Shaking himself to refocus, he quickly follows behind Merlin and starts his day getting adoption paperwork printed and organized for the Donahue family. Roxy will come get them when she knows something.

oooOooo

The morning passes quickly. Merlin has recently trained Eggsy on phone consults for scheduling home visits, adoption appointments, etc. He is just finishing up a call to a new foster applicant scheduling their interview when Roxy storms into their office red faced. Merlin and Harry immediately stop what they are doing and direct their attention to her. She patiently waits until
Eggsy hangs up the phone and then pounces.

“I have some news, but we can’t talk here. It’s not safe.” She frowns fiercely and glares at the ceiling. “Therefore, I am treating us all to lunch out today. Follow me.” She barely hesitates before she turns and stalks out of the room. The three men share puzzled looks before grabbing their jackets and following.

They catch up to her outside. She still says nothing; she just leads the little group down a few blocks before ducking into a quaint little café. They are quiet as a waitress brings glasses of water and takes their orders. It isn’t until they are alone once more that Roxy begins.

“I went to court to pull the logs on the summons. At first I couldn’t find any record of the summons being made. I had to ask a clerk to help, and eventually we were successful. Dean Baker is the plaintiff and he is suing for full custody of Daisy Ann Baker. There is no mention of Michelle, which I find suspicious as hell, but that is for another day. I dug a bit deeper and discovered who the lawyer for Baker is. Grayson Montague.” She pauses as Merlin and Harry both freeze. Eggsy looks confused.

“Why is that important?” he asks.

“It’s important,” Harry begins, “because it tells us how the summons got past Roxy. Grayson Montague is the brother in law of one Chester King.”

“Wanker,” Merlin mutters under his breath. He reaches across the table to squeeze Roxy’s clenched hand.

“Okay, so what does that mean? I’m still not catching on here.” Eggsy crosses his arms. They all pause as their salads and sandwiches are brought to the table. Roxy smiles and says thanks while Harry transfers the olives from his greek salad to Eggsy’s plate.

“Chester is an old school bully.” Roxy shifts in her seat once the waiter has once again left. “He has the absurd belief that the only people who deserve saving are those who are either rich or have the potential of becoming rich. Under his leadership Kingsman has devolved into a social work company that deals more with the social than the working aspect. If it weren’t for Merlin and Harry, the less fortunate would be left to starve in the street or be killed by their spouse. Chester didn’t even want to hire me. Said a woman in the agency would be bad for business or some other bullshit. It took me over a year petitioning the Social Work Board before they demanded Chester hire me. That being said, it seems as if Chester has taken a disliking to you. Based on what I could find, he has ‘hired’ Montague for Baker and used those connections to bypass the proper
Harry steps in. “Merlin and I have been trying to bring attention to Chester’s outdated mentality for years. Unfortunately Kingsman is his family’s business. The only one who believes us is a barrister named Charlie. He believes us because he had to grow up hearing the drivel that pours from Chester’s mouth.” Seeing Eggsy’s confused look he clarifies. “Charlie is Chester’s nephew. He’s one of the few Kings that is actually willing to hear opinions that differ from his. Did you happen to get copies of the files Roxy? I’m sure we can put them as evidence with our other documents. At this point I don’t feel like we have a choice. We need a new director of Kingsman.”

Roxy nods around a bite of turkey and havarti. The next few minutes are spent with the three agents commiserating about their problems with Chester. Finally Eggsy has had enough.

“That’s all well and good, but what does this mean for Daisy and I? How can Dean even make a claim to custody when he is supposed to still be in jail?” he demands. The three social workers shift and look to each other for support. “I thought I had at least a year to build a case that would prove Daisy was better off with me. Now that Dean has done this, the case is going to come up sooner. Much sooner. And if he is in charge, how the bloody hell am I supposed to win?” Eggsy’s voice gets more and more panicked as he concludes his burst of speech.

“Eggsy, I want you to breathe. Yes, this is a nasty shock that I never expected. Yes, Chester and Dean have a jumpstart. However, they don’t have me. I am not going to let you lose your sister. I have plenty documentation, pictures, videos, etc. that clearly show that Dean is not a fit parent. Furthermore Michelle is still in rehab. Even if Dean wanted to go to trial now, he can’t. Michelle as co-parent has to sign or be present in order for Dean to be granted full custody. We have at least six months. I made sure I enrolled her in the longest in-house program I could find.” Roxy leans back in her chair. “Chester is a prick. No doubt about that. But I’m a bitch, and bitches get stuff done.”

Eggsy took those deep breaths and slowly relaxes back into his seat. He takes a bite out of his ham sandwich and regards the other patrons in the café. Harry and Merlin both follow his lead and finally begin to eat their lunch. They had been to this café many times before, and even in the midst of the issue on the table, the food is as delicious as always. The next few minutes are filled with quiet contemplation. Roxy breaks the silence once again trying to comfort Eggsy.

“We just need to follow our original plan, and make sure we document every movement of Dean and Chester. I take this extremely personally. Chester has overstepped his bounds as director. I didn’t fight my way through bureaucracy to be brought down by a pompous ass. Eggsy, I promise I will fight with everything I have. Chester will not win.”

Eggsy can’t bring himself to disagree with her passionate declaration, but a seed of doubt plants
itself in the back of his mind. It’s not so much doubt in her abilities, but instead doubt that Eggsy Unwin will ever come out on top of Dean Baker. He’s been conditioned to expect a fist to the face from Dean in response to any effort of Eggsy’s to better himself. Dean is surely furious that his daughter, though he cares nothing for her, was snatched right from under his nose. He will be coming for blood.

That night Eggsy cuddles Daisy a little bit closer than normal. Harry watches as Eggsy gets quieter and quieter, shutting everything out except for his sister. He doesn’t know how to assure Eggsy. He can’t imagine how difficult it was for him growing up under the thumb of Dean Baker, and knowing that Daisy might face the same fate is frightening. Finally at nine Harry has grown tired of the silence.

“Here. Give me Daisy and I’ll put her to bed. You look like you need a drink. There’s some white wine in the kitchen.” He gently scoops the sleeping baby out of Eggsy’s arms. “Go on Eggsy. I’ll be back down to join you.”

Eggsy watches as Harry leaves the room. Honestly? He doesn’t want wine. He doesn’t want anything. He shifts restlessly missing the warm weight of his sister. Okay, maybe he wants a cuddle. Cuddles usually make any issue seem manageable. He remembers when he was younger and his mom was always willing to hand out hugs whenever Eggsy needed them. Of course that was one more casualty to the appearance of Dean Baker. God, the man is a spreading black, greasy plague destroying everything in its path. Eggsy is so withdrawn into his own headspace he doesn’t even realize Harry has returned. Harry takes one look at the boy and breaks.

“Come here, love;” he murmurs, gently reaching out to Eggsy. “I know it all seems overwhelming right now. I can’t imagine what you are feeling, but please remember that you have me at your side. I promise to fight for you and Daisy. It will all work out. Promise.”

Eggsy doesn’t respond. He just curls in tighter to the solid body beside him. He grips tightly to the starched white shirt and releases.

“I can’t lose her. I can’t. She can’t be exposed to Dean, Harry. She just can’t,” Eggsy cries.

At first Harry is shocked at the shaking sobs, but he tightens his arms, relaxing back against the sofa. Murmuring reassurances. Gently rubbing Eggsy’s trembling back. Harry feels helpless in the face of such emotional pain. In all his experiences, he has always been a step or two outside the circle of pain. He’s hurting along with Eggsy now, and he’s not exactly sure what to do. The sobs eventually taper off until Eggsy is slumped against Harry. When Harry tries to gently pry Eggsy’s fingers from his shirt, the younger man grumbles and curls in tighter. With a smile Harry realizes Eggsy has fallen asleep. Knowing that sleep is a necessity for Eggsy, Harry prods at Eggsy until he can slide off the sofa, wrap his arms around the boy, and carefully lifts him. He quickly carries
Eggsy upstairs to his room, grunting just a little at the exertion. He needs to go to the gym more often, or take longer walks. Once in Eggsy’s bedroom, he gently removes Eggsy’s shoes and jacket. Debating, he decides to leave Eggsy’s jeans on. Soon Eggsy is tucked under the covers, and Harry turns to leave the room.

“Harry?”

“Yes, Eggsy?”

“Will you stay? At least until I fall asleep?”

“Eggsy, I don’t think....”

“Please?”

“Okay,” Harry murmurs. He quickly steps out of his own shoes and takes off his dress shirt to leave him in his trousers and soft tshirt. Eggsy holds open the covers while Harry slides into the cool softness. Warmth from Eggsy’s body is soon enveloping Harry, and he cuddles close to the boy.

“Thank you. For everything. I know Daisy and I are safe here with you. You and Daisy are the best parts of my life right now.”

“Sleep well, Eggsy.”

“Night, Harry.”

Eggsy falls back asleep before Harry can pull the duvet further up his chest. Harry twists to make sure the bright green light is shining on the baby monitor. Listening to the soft baby sighs and the deep breaths beside him, he realizes that he now has a family. It’s not perfect, but he now has people that depend on him. Amazingly that thought doesn’t scare him; it energizes him.
The next few weeks are difficult for Eggsy at Kingsman. He can barely stand to work in the same building as Chester, and he knows he is not alone in the feeling. Harry, usually snarky to the older gentleman, steps up his game to levels that even Merlin is shocked at. Merlin and Roxy are still their polite selves, but there is a solid layer of ice in the air when Chester stops by their offices for something. Chester doesn’t seem to notice, or care, and he never mentions his assistance to Dean. Eggsy knew this was going to be a tough environment to work in until January, but he doesn’t know how much more he can take. The only thing that saves Eggsy is his application to King’s College. It’s already well into September when he sends the app in, but Harry had pulled some strings to at least have the college consider him.

He receives his acceptance letter during the first week of October. The trio had just returned home after a quick stroll through the park when Harry realizes he had forgotten to check the mail. While Eggsy unbolts Daisy and settles her into her playpen, Harry steps back out the door to check the mail box.

“Eggsy!” comes Harry’s excited shout. Before Eggsy has a chance to reply, Harry comes barreling into the living room. His hair is all askew, and he is breathing rapidly from the run into the house. He doesn’t speak but thrusts a thick envelope in Eggsy’s hands.

“What in the-” Eggsy stops. Staring up at him from the envelope is the crest of King’s College. Suddenly gripped by deep panic, Eggsy shoves the envelope back at Harry. “You open it.” He can’t bear to open it and see a rejection letter. It might just break him for good.

Harry frowns and tries to hand the envelope back, but Eggsy quickly side steps. Harry tries one more time, but Eggsy continues to evade the envelope. Sighing, Harry slides his finger under the seal and opens the envelope. He pulls out the top sheet of paper and skims the short paragraphs.

“Well?” Eggsy demands. “How bad is it?” He can’t tell from Harry’s blank face if the letter is positive or negative. Just when Eggsy’s nerves begin to fray, Harry begins to read after clearing his throat.
“Dear Gary Unwin. Upon review of your application to the nursing program with a focus in child health, King’s College has decided to accept you into the program. Congratulations! Due to the tardiness of your application, please come by the registrar’s office no later than October 17th.”

The room is silent except for the soft sounds of Daisy playing. Eggsy stands still, just staring at Harry.

“I got in?” he asks in disbelief. Harry can barely contain his joy as he hands the acceptance to Eggsy.

“You definitely got in,” he says with a grin. “You are now a college student!”

Without looking behind him, Eggsy sits down. Of course he lands on his bum, but he doesn’t care as he reads the letter for himself. He can’t believe it. They actually want him in their program! Nothing like this has ever happened to Eggsy, and even with the evidence in front of him, it is a little surreal.

“I got in,” he murmurs to himself. He finally tears his gaze from the letter to stare up at Harry. “I got in!” he yells.

Suddenly Harry has an armful of excited Eggsy. The happiness is catching; both men are laughing and smiling a mile wide. Harry swings Eggsy in a quick circle before pulling him in close for a tight hug.

“I knew you could do it! I’m so bloody proud of you!” Harry cheers. The two men’s faces are close as Harry continues to squeeze Eggsy. Eggsy’s breath hitches as he savor the feeling of strong arms wrapped around him; he feels like the safest person in the world when Harry hugs him. Before he can stop himself he brushes his lips quickly across Harry’s cheek. Before Eggsy can pull away in mortification, the hug changes tenor and Harry pulls Eggsy’s body a bit closer.

“I’m so proud of you Eggsy,” Harry murmurs. He pulls his face back for a split second before leaning back in to brush his own lips against Eggsy’s face. But instead of touching cheek, Harry kisses him full on the lips. Once, twice he brushes his lips gently across Eggsy’s. “So very proud my dear.”

They stand, quietly holding on to one another, for a few more moments savoring the closeness. Ever since the night Harry stayed with Eggsy for comfort, both men have felt the bond strengthen
between them. Eventually the spell has to be broken and Harry takes a step back.

“We need to go out to celebrate,” Harry heads to the phone mounted on the wall, “I’m going to ring Merlin and Roxy. This calls for a nice dinner.”

Eggsy can do nothing but smile and stare at the acceptance letter in his hand. He prays that just this once life will give him a break and let him be successful at something. He glances up to stare at Harry’s trim back and beautiful bottom. And maybe life will be kind enough to give him a chance at love. Maybe.

oooOooo

The days spent with Daisy and Harry seem to fly by and soon enough it is almost Halloween. The leaves begin to change and become burnished golds and reds with orange spread here and there. The weather turns a bit colder, and Eggsy gets more comfortable and settled with Harry. Daisy continues to grow and develop, unleashing the beautiful soul that Eggsy knew was hiding behind the pain. They don’t talk about the custody case as they know it does nothing but stress them both out. Instead they spend their days working at Kingsman (Eggsy avoiding Chester at all costs), and their evenings playing with Daisy. One morning as he is making breakfast Eggsy pauses. He and Daisy have now been living with Harry for over two months. Months of laughter and smiles. He honestly can’t believe how much his life has turned around since Kingsman stepped in. He knows his getting arrested should never be seen as a positive thing, but it was the impetus needed to get him started on this path.

While his living situation and Daisy’s welfare are well under control, Eggsy seriously needed to straighten out his emotions. He’s not sure if it is because he has come to depend so much on Harry in recent weeks, or if the man secretes addictive pheromones. It doesn’t really matter either way, because Eggsy is still attracted to the man no matter the reason. Sometimes he can go days without the attraction bothering him. The constantly disorganized kitchen is usually the cause of those days when Eggsy would prefer to strangle Harry than kiss him. Other days? Well those are the days when Harry rolls up his sleeves to really get to work, or his hair slips out of its usual perfect coif to slip across his forehead. The man is practically irresistible when he has that look of concentration and care. Eggsy’s favorite days? Those are the days where Harry has Daisy out in the garden pointing out the different varieties of bugs and birds; the days where he joyously sprawls out on a blanket to draw shapes in the clouds. On those days Eggsy wants nothing more than to cuddle up to the man and never, ever let go.

Eggsy is so engrossed in thinking about cuddling with Harry, he doesn’t notice when the man enters the kitchen. He just about cuts his thumb off when he jumps at the cheerful “good morning!” Harry calls out. Without turning around he knows Harry will brush a kiss against Daisy’s head before pulling a mug down from the cabinet. He’ll continue on from the cabinet, grab an Earl Grey tea bag, and pour the last bit of hot water from the kettle into the cup. Just as Harry
finishes his tea making, he leans against Eggsy and absently skims a kiss across his cheekbone. Once again Eggsy has to put the knife down and stop cutting up Daisy’s banana. Harry seems to realize what he has done and freezes.

“Um... I... I don’t know why I did that. Uh... yeah. I’m just going to go sit down now,” he stammers before plopping down beside Daisy.

Eggsy doesn’t say anything. What can he say? *Please, please do it again. Except this time give me a proper kiss?* No he bloody well can’t say that, so he just decides to ignore the snafu and go about his business as usual. It’s been two weeks since their first kiss, and nothing has happened since. It’s enough to drive Eggsy batty.

“Good morning. What is on the schedule for today,” he asks with a smile. Out of the corner of his eye he can see Harry’s shoulders slump in relief. He ignores the small twitch his heart gives.

“Well, I was actually going to suggest we take the day off from Kingsman and go gather the supplies you’ll need for school. I know you’re doing the late start option due to your application, but you do start next week. Chester has taken a week for holiday, and we are all caught up on our cases, so it seems like a good idea to take a small breather. What do you think?”

Daisy, with impeccable timing, shouts yea! and tosses the remains of her bowl of oatmeal to the floor. Eggsy laughs as he rushes over to clean up the mess.

“Well, I guess I have my answer, don’t I?” Harry replies with a chuckle.

The rest of the day is pleasantly spent wandering around London picking up clothes and other supplies here and there. They stop for a quick lunch at a small cafe, and soon enough it is time to head back home to put Daisy down for her nap.

As they are walking back, Eggsy blurts “Harry? Have you ever thought of starting a family now that you are older?

The silence stretches for a time as they pass a couple walking a dog, a young boy on a skateboard, and an older couple walking hand in hand. Just when Eggsy begins to feel his nerves fray, Harry speaks.
“Building a family was honestly my life goal at one time as I told you. I always pictured myself with a partner and at least one child, preferably more. After university, and years of my parents’ comments, I started working at Kingsman, and I guess I threw myself into my work as a way to defeat the loneliness. It’s not something I would recommend. If I felt like someone would want to build a family with someone as old as I am, I would jump at the opportunity. Why do you ask?” Harry finishes with a smile tinged with hints of sadness and bitterness.

“I was just wondering. We’ve been with you for two months now, and sometimes I feel like we are our own little family. It was just a passing thought I had, but I didn’t mean to bring up any sad memories.”

“Nothing to be sorry for, Eggsy. Sometimes I feel the same as well. Let’s talk about something more exciting, shall we?” Harry asks. “When does Miss Daisy have a birthday?”

Eggsy grins as he helps Harry navigate the pram up the stairs to the welcoming house. He couldn’t wait for his baby to turn one. He’s hoping Harry will want to host a party, but nothing too huge.

“She was 10 months on the 15th. Her birthday is December 15th,” he says. He hesitates as Harry begins to unbuckle the baby and take off her light jacket. “I was wondering if we could have a small party for her. I just have a few friends I would like to invite, and of course I would love to have your friends from Kingsman come as well.” He folds the pram into its more compact form and shoves it into the hall closet. Harry has moved into the lounge and settled onto the floor with Daisy and some soft building blocks.

“Of course we can host a small party. That was going to be my next question. I was thinking for decorations something in pale yellow,” Harry continued as he helped Daisy build tower after tower. Eggsy settles onto the sofa with one of his new textbooks and smiles as he watches his two favorite people in the world. Life was sweet at the moment, very sweet.

Unbeknownst to Harry and Eggsy, Chester King was just sitting down to meet with Grayson Montague, his brother in law at a high end tea shop. Though he told his colleagues at Kingsman that he was taking a week long holiday, he actually was meeting with Montague and spending some time at home. The two men truly were not fond of each other, but they enjoyed each other’s position in life. Chester liked having a top lawyer on call, and Grayson enjoyed having someone who could pull political strings in his favor. They were uniting together this time in a way that was beneficial to them both. Chester wanted the riffraff out of his agency, this included that damnable Harry Hart, and Grayson wanted another notch on his belt “helping the less fortunate.” All a political ploy of course.
“Hello Grayson,” Chester practically sneered. “I see we are not watching our weight lately.”

Grayson pulled his plate with buttered scones closer to the edge of the table. He refuses to shake the hand that is held out in greeting and instead glares daggers at Chester’s smug face.

“Hello Chester. No, I am not watching my weight because there is no need to do so. That only becomes a necessity when one reaches the far side of sixty. You might know something about that, wouldn’t you?” He silently preens as Chester’s face registers the insult. Long silent moments pass before Chester heaves a sigh and pulls out a sheaf of paperwork.

“I’m here for one thing and one thing only. I have the necessary documents proving that this Eggsy boy is an unfit guardian for the child. I have also been able to procure some fabricated documents hinting at Hart’s participation in shady adoption deals. Incredibly similar to a black market for babies situation. This is enough to ensure Baker gets custody, correct?”

Grayson slowly cleans off his buttered fingers and flips through the pages handed over. Chester flags down a waitress to order a separate pot of tea before Grayson is prepared to speak.

“I think this will do wonderfully. The only problems I foresee are the lengthy arrest records of Baker. Those aren’t something either side can ignore, but I think if I downplay his actions, struggling father trying to make ends meet type thing, the focus can be shifted onto the boy. As for getting Hart stripped of his credentials….” he trails off as he revisits those particular documents. “I think you might have more difficulty there. The man has a spotless public service record almost thirty years in length. Since these “papers” are only seeing the light of day now, when his charge is being sued for custody? I think any sane judge would be incredibly vigilant in investigating these claims. You would need an extensive backup plan to cover that type of investigation.”

Chester frowned. He could get those types of documents, but he didn’t want to incriminate himself in the process.

“Let me see what I can do. When is the court date again?”

“I don’t have a set date as of yet, but it will be sometime in January. You will also be happy to know that I have secured a signature from Mrs. Baker acquiescing to full custody of the child for Mr. Baker. It is completely ironclad as there were three witnesses to swear her state of mind was sound.” Grayson finished. He bit into the last half of the remaining scone and silently moaned at the rich taste of butter and jam.
“Perfect. I want that boy gone from my agency as soon as possible. The little rat has already caused problems around the office. I have reason to believe that the others know of my involvement. Suddenly the temperature in the office has dropped significantly and Hart has been completely insufferable.” He sighs deeply cradling the teacup in his hands. “I just want this entire mess to be over and done. I would like to take my vacation to Italy without any worries hindering my relaxation.”

“I will do my best. Don’t want Carla to be too upset to miss that vacation.” Grayson winces at the thought of his sister’s displeasure, and Chester easily commiserates with him. He is the one that has to live with her after all.

“Certainly not.”

The rest of the stiff but pleasant meeting is spent discussing the newest men’s fashion and predictions for the first snowfall. Soon enough it is time for Chester to head back home, so he settles his bill and leaves with a short nod of farewell to a departing Grayson. Neither man notice the woman sitting in the corner of the room just two tables over who has heard, and recorded, every single word said.

Roxy smiles as she quickly leaves the shop and pulls off the black wig and glasses.

“Gotcha you bastard,” she murmurs to herself with a grim smile. She is going to nail Chester King’s ass to the wall in January. No one messes with someone Roxanne Morton cares about.

oooOooo

The months before Daisy’s birthday were a whirlwind of Eggsy settling into his classes at King's College, Harry keeping up with his cases, and Daisy growing smarter everyday. Amelia at the nursery mentioned one day when Harry was picking her up that they should consider having playdates on the weekends with some of the other students. Daisy was apparently showing signs of being a very active social butterfly.

Harry did his best to keep Eggsy from dwelling on the upcoming custody case. There had been a few more pieces of mail from the court, but nothing directly from Dean or his lawyer. It unsettled him greatly to see his darling Eggsy stressed about something that never should have happened in the first place. He made sure to take his little makeshift family on weekend outings to the country,
the shore, any place really that would bring a smile to their faces. He could feel himself falling more and more in love each day, but still he hesitated to say anything. Eggsy seemed hesitant himself and Harry didn’t want him to feel uncomfortable. He contented himself with the small smiles, fleeting touches, and lingering hugs that Eggsy handed out like pieces of candy. Before he realized it, it was time to really begin planning for Daisy’s birthday. He was going to ask Eggsy for his opinion on decorations etc., but after seeing the clothes that Eggsy wanted to try on? He decided to keep the decorations as strictly his job.

Eggsy had to admit that Daisy’s birthday was a complete success. Harry had decided to hire a decorator, against Eggsy’s wishes, as he deemed it a nightmare trying to DIY everything. That decision had resulted in the absolutely stunning backyard that has yellow paper daisy’s covering almost every surface, and pale blue party balloons covering every inch left. It was a nice laidback affair that lasted a couple hours culminating in Daisy slamming her grinning face down into a chocolate iced cake. Eggsy has never laughed so hard in his life, and he thinks Harry is going to have a coronary when Daisy makes her dive. Harry rushes over to make sure she hasn’t accidentally suffocated herself with cake when she raises up giggling and covered in chocolate. The resulting grin on the man’s face makes Eggsy’s heart skip a beat. It’s been difficult the past few months to balance his new life as a college student, surrogate father, and office assistant, but once again Harry has been his rock and support system through it all. He truly doesn’t know how Harry can be so perfect for him and Daisy. They still haven’t talked much about the looming custody battle, but Eggsy does know that Roxy is keeping something close to her chest. She isn’t even telling Merlin anything, and that is clearly out of the ordinary.

It isn’t until almost Christmas that she is finally able to share her secrets with the other three. It’s late on the last Friday afternoon before Christmas, and Eggsy is just finishing up the last of the filing of the week. He’s exhausted from a half day of class and then a half day at the office, and all he really wants to do is pick up Daisy from the nursery, head home, and crash. He looks up and startles to see Roxy standing in the doorway of the office looking frustrated.

“‘Ey Rox. Who are you looking for? Harry should be back in a few from a home visit, but I’m not sure where Merlin is at the moment. Maybe he went to grab tea?” He motions for her to come further in the room. “Sit down and relax; you look shattered.”

“Thanks, Eggs. I have some new information on your case, but I want to wait until the other two are here.” She watches as Eggsy tenses and drops the folder he has in his hands. “It’s going to be okay. Even though my news isn’t the best, I do believe it is going to work out in our favor,” she reaches over to grasp his hand, “just have faith. Daisy will not be taken from you. I promise.”

They sit in silence for just under fifteen minutes when Harry and Merlin both suddenly appear. Merlin has wind reddened cheeks and a cup carrier with red festive cups from Starbucks. Harry, coming from a successful home visit, is beaming and joking around with Merlin. However, as soon as the two clue into the strained silence and serious expressions, the smiles slide off their faces.
“What’s happened?” Merlin demands quickly setting the cup carrier down on his desk. He rounds the table and pulls his chair up to Roxy’s side. Harry does the same, though he reaches out to grasp Eggsy’s unoccupied hand. His heart misses a beat at the tight squeeze and desperate look thrown his way. He would do anything in his power to take that look off of Eggsy’s face.

“Roxy?” Harry asks as they all continue to sit in silence for a few seconds more.

She takes a deep breath before deciding just to dive right in. “I’ve been following Chester for weeks.”

She tells them about the many meetings between Chester and Dean, Dean and Grayson, and finally Chester and Grayson. Though she wishes she could leave the most painful pieces out, she even mentions the fact that Michelle has already signed a document granting Dean custody. She can hardly bear to see the devastation clearly evident on Eggsy’s face, but she knows it is necessary for them to have all the facts. Once everything has been laid on the table, and they have even listened to the tapes Roxy has been able to record of the meetings, the room is silent once more. No one really knows what to say. They all knew Chester was twisted and would do anything to stay on top, but to intentionally jeopardize the life of an innocent child? Well, even for Chester that is incredibly low. Suddenly the sound of sobs cut through the tense air, and Eggsy seems to collapse into himself. Harry drops the hand he is holding and instead pulls Eggsy out of the chair and into his lap. Eggsy doesn’t bother to stop the tears, choosing instead to bury his head in Harry’s shoulder. He knows he’s acting like a child, but with everything that Roxy has just revealed he feels incredibly overwhelmed.

Merlin and Roxy sit quietly waiting for the storm of emotions to blow through leaving a sad boy with red eyes in their wake. Harry in contrast simply looks angry, almost as if he was ready to take on the entire world with his bare hands.

“What do we do now?” Eggsy asks hoarsely. “That’s it then, isn’t it? If she has signed a form with witnesses and everything, then I have lost. Dean will take Daisy, and she’ll be dead in a month.” The tears threaten to spill over once again, but Eggsy refuses to give in a second time. He has to be strong for his baby.

“No. We have not lost just yet. I was able to pull a copy of that supposed document that your mother signed. Sure they had witnesses, but those witnesses are incredibly fragile as a foundation. Two of them are associates of Dean’s and the other was a random nurse from the rehab facility who just happened to be on lunch when Grayson stopped by to meet with Michelle. While she could have signed those papers of her own free will, I highly doubt having the man who beats you plus two of his friends standing over you makes you feel safe denying their demands. I don’t think I’ll have any problem getting it thrown out of court. The only problem with announcing that I know about it now is that I think it might push the court.”
“What does that mean?” Harry asks, slowly sliding a comforting hand up and down Eggsy’s back. The boy still hasn’t moved from his perch in his lap, and neither of them are complaining.

“It means instead of a late January/early February court date, it will most likely be the first couple weeks of January. Now, before you panic, no your mother will still technically be in rehab. However, she will have been in treatment for over half of her six month stay so the court system will recognize her as fully competent to be a witness and give a statement. I think with the evidence I have collected, her testimony, and the clear changes you have made in your life since the arrest we should have a strong case in your favor. So, I have a question for you. Do you want to push for an earlier court date?”

Merlin and Roxy remain quiet as Eggsy turns to stare at Harry. The two are obviously communicating silently because Harry dips his head in a barely there nod and Eggsy slowly closes his eyes. A few more moments pass before Eggsy directs his red rimmed gaze in Roxy’s direction.

“I just want this to be over. I want Daisy to be safe from the claws of Dean and my mother to be honest. I want to finally start living this better life that Harry has helped me build for her. Push the court date up.” He turns his head back into Harry’s neck and curls in tighter.

Roxy smiles grimly while Merlin cups his hand around the back of her neck for support. The atmosphere in the room shifts from a tense silence into a silence filled with determination. Chester King and Grayson Montague have no idea about the storm that is headed their way.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this update. I felt like it was a bit rushed in some parts, but hopefully things will get better with the next chapter.

I most likely will not update until June as I am preparing my students for their final exams in the next 2 weeks.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for sticking with me! I should be back on a regular weekly posting schedule now.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Christmas is something that Eggsy has always secretly loved though it makes his heart hurt. He can still remember the Christmases with his da. They are warm memories filled with laughter, his parents dancing in front of the glowing Christmas tree, and amazing toys from Santa. Even after his da’s death he still believed in Santa Claus. At least until the very first Christmas after his death. That Christmas he woke up excited for what Santa had left, but when he walked out of his room all he saw was his mum passed out on the couch. That was the moment Eggsy stopped believing in most things. Including his mum.

But this year Eggsy loves watching Daisy come to life. Even though this is her second Christmas, it’s the first where she can actually play and somewhat understand what is going on. He and Harry spend hours decorating the house while also making sure it is safe for a one-year old that is now walking and getting into everything. Once they are finished Eggsy just stands in awe at the warm home he has become a part of. He never expected to be here, but he is doing everything he can to stay.

One evening before Christmas the trio take a nice walk through the local park. They’ve brought the stroller with them, but Daisy is being independent and refuses to ride along. Instead she toddles between the two men grasping Harry’s extended hand. It reminds Eggsy of the day she finally began to walk. He was standing in the kitchen when he suddenly heard Daisy shouting for him. Before he had a chance to find her, he felt a strong tug on his trousers. The little imp had grown impatient and apparently forced herself to walk from the hall into the kitchen. Harry swears she gets her stubbornness and independence from Eggsy, but he refuses to believe it. Eggsy slows his pace and pulls out his phone to snap a photo of the two continuing on their walk. Daisy turns back, cheeks reddened by the cold, and calls back “E’sy, come!” Harry turns as well and Eggsy simply has to snap another photo.

“I’m coming!” he calls back and starts forward once more. Walking to the two people who mean the most to him. Yes, Christmas this year might be the best ever.

oooOooo
Christmas morning arrives bright and early in the Hart household. Harry has been up since five waiting impatiently for the others to wake up. Christmas has always been his favorite time of year. Everything is bright and joyful. People are usually kinder, and who doesn’t like to receive gifts? This year is even more special for Harry. For the first time in almost two decades he has a family to celebrate with. He doesn’t like to dwell on the fact that he hasn’t really been invited to his own family’s festivities in years due to some of the decisions he has made, and he refuses to let those dark thoughts ruin his first Christmas with his loves. He’s fluffing up the scrambled eggs when he begins to hear the sounds of Daisy waking. Quickly turning off the hob, he rushes upstairs to grab her before she wakes Eggsy. He had been up late the night before studying and deserves even a small lie in.

He can’t stop the wide grin that splits across his face as he enters the little girl’s bedroom. She is standing along the edge of the crib slightly bouncing as she gnaws on a stuffed badger.

“Good morning my love,” he murmurs. Her blue eyes snap to his face and suddenly the badger goes flying.

“Ri! Ri!” she practically shrieks. He chuckles as he quickly shushes her while picking her up.

“Shhh! We don’t want to wake up big brother do we?” His heart melts when she cuddles her curl covered head underneath his chin and sighs.

The next few minutes are spent quietly changing Daisy’s diaper, dressing her in a cute little outfit, and choosing her toys to carry downstairs. She again refuses to let Harry carry her down the stairs and tries to walk out of the nursery on her own.

“Excuse me, little miss, but you are not going down those stairs without some help. If you want to walk you have to hold onto my hand,” Harry states firmly.

Her little face scrunches up in anger before she suddenly turns and heads in the opposite direction of the stairs. Before he can catch the little stinker she has made her way to Eggsy’s bedroom door. He watches as she easily pushes the door open (it must not have been closed all the way) and disappears inside.

“Damn it.”
He was really hoping to bring Eggsy breakfast in bed for his first Christmas with Harry. Well, not with Harry, but in his house. Near him. Whatever. Remembering the toddler now probably assaulting Eggsy, Harry rushes to enter the room.

Eggsy is nothing more than a giant lump under the bed. Harry can’t even see the top of his hair, but he does see the gentle motion indicating that someone is indeed breathing under all those feathers. At first he is confused. Daisy should be in the room, but he can’t seem to see her. Hesitant to step further into Eggsy’s space he hisses “Dais” as quietly as possible.

“Ri?” a small voice pipes in reply.

“Dais, come here,” he replies to her question. “We can’t wake Eggsy.”

“E’ssy, up!” she cries instead. Harry still can’t figure out where her voice is coming from until her little head pops up on the other side of the bed. She is grinning in triumph as she pulls herself up the duvet to finally rest beside her brother.

Making a snap decision Harry rushes across the softly creaking floors to snatch her up before she can tumble onto Eggsy’s miraculously still sleeping form. Unfortunately, just as he pulls her across the bed to cuddle against his chest, Eggsy’s eyes crack open.

At first Eggsy isn’t sure what wakes him up. He feels the bed shake minutely and he swears he can hear Harry’s voice. Since those two things haven’t ever been together in a sentence before (even though he would love for that to occur in the near future) he decides he better open his eyes.

It takes a minute for his sleep crusted eyes to focus, but soon enough Eggsy can see a grinning Daisy cuddled into Harry’s chest. Harry is practically sprawled on top of Eggsy (again, unexpected but welcome) with only his right arm and left knee propped on the bed providing support. While Daisy is grinning in obvious delight, Harry’s face carries a more rueful smile. Eggsy reaches up to take the squirming toddler.

“Good morning, love” he murmurs into Daisy’s lavender smelling curls. Though he is directing the words towards Daisy, he doesn’t take his eyes away from Harry’s face. The rueful smile softens into something a little more welcoming and he eases the rest of his body down onto the bed beside Eggsy.
“Good morning,” Harry replies just as softly. He watches as Daisy scrunches around until she is wedged in between his and Eggsy’s bodies. “I was hoping to surprise you with Christmas breakfast in bed, but little miss here got away from me.” He reaches over to tickle Daisy’s belly and is granted a string of giggles in return.

“Well, now I can help you get everything ready,” Eggsy says. He turns onto his side so he is facing Harry. “But before we go down can we just rest for a little bit more?”

Harry smiles gently and reaches over to brush Eggsy’s hair from his eyes.

“Of course we can rest a little longer. I don’t have anything on the stove at the moment, so we are fine.”

“Good.”

Eggsy scoots closer to Daisy and wraps his arm around her body. He rests his hand on Harry’s stomach and closes his eyes. While Harry had wanted to surprise Eggsy with breakfast in bed, he decides cuddling in bed with his loves is a much better way to start Christmas morning.

oooOooo

It’s almost eleven when the little trio wraps up their late breakfast of oatmeal and bacon since the scrambled eggs were a congealed mess when Harry returned to the stove. Eggsy is putting away the last bowl when Daisy begins squealing and trying to pull Harry into the lounge.

“Alright Daisy, okay. We will go open presents in just a minute,” Harry says. “Here, love, take your cup over to Eggsy so it can be washed later.”

Eggsy watches as Daisy carefully takes her cup from Harry’s outstretched hand and toddles her way over to where he is standing by the sink. Her mouth is pursed and her eyes barely stray from the cup as she tries to not spill the remaining milk.

“Thank you Daisy,” Eggsy says and takes the dangerously tipping cup from her hands. He quickly dumps it into the sink of warm water to soak and then swoops down to pick her up.
“Let’s go open presents!” he crows.

The rest of the morning is spent with Daisy tearing open present after present while Harry tries to keep the process as neat and orderly as possible. Obviously Daisy wins and eventually Harry gives up and just watches with a smile as the little girl tears into her presents leaving wrapping paper everywhere. Eggsy was surprised at the sheer number under their little tree, but he refrained from saying anything as he could see Harry was enjoying watching Daisy open so many presents. Currently he is sitting on the floor trying to put together some tricycle contraption thing that Harry insisted Daisy needed for trips to the park. It’s made exclusively of plastic in bright garish colors and was the first present that Daisy fell in love with. Eggsy hates it. It has tiny parts that have to be screwed into other tiny parts and he is going cross eyed from trying to match up the little numbers.

He is so engrossed in trying to get the damn wheels, also plastic, onto the neon green frame that he misses the moment that Daisy konks out in the middle of a sea of wrapping paper. He only clues in when he can hear Harry laughing and sees him snapping pictures. Poor Daisy is stretched out on her back in the middle of the floor with paper everywhere and she is clutching a half-opened present.

“Harry,” Eggsy chides. “Stop being so mean and take her up to her bedroom.”

Harry laughs some more but does as Eggsy bids. When he returns to the lounge Eggsy is now standing up pushing the assembled tricycle around the room. He smiles in triumph when nothing falls off or breaks as he makes his way around the room.

“Congratulations, dear. You have now assembled a children’s toy,” Harry says with a smile.

“Fuck me, that was difficult,” Eggsy groans as he collapses back onto the sofa. “There were a million tiny pieces that I had no idea where to put. And then my bloody fingers were apparently too big for some of the small holes!”

Harry laughed but refrained from making a joke about fingers and holes.

“Take a minute to rest while I clean up the paper, and then we can exchange our gifts,” he says as he begins to stuff paper into a black trash bag.

Eggsy is perfectly content to remain sprawled out on the couch while calling out directions.
“There’s another piece behind the tree. Oh! I see something shiny under the tree as well.”

Finally Harry has gathered all the paper and disposed of it in the appropriate place. Now they can turn their attention to their gifts. Eggsy is cuddling a circular box close to his chest while he waits for Harry to return from putting the trash in the bins out back. He watches as Harry pulls out a large rectangle shaped box wrapped in bright emerald paper with a shiny red bow on his way back into the lounge.

Eggsy is practically bouncing with excitement at this point in time which makes Harry gently smile. He crosses the room and settles onto the sofa beside Eggsy.

“Alright my dear,” he begins. “Would you like to open your present first?”

He can see indecision flash across Eggsy’s flushed face, but finally the boy nods and reaches out to take the box from his hands. Eggsy is as careful as a surgeon as he unwraps the first actual Christmas present he has had in years. Once the wrapping paper has been disposed of Eggsy is holding a white box with Aspinal London stamped across the front in gorgeous lettering. He’s not sure what kind of store this is, but it looks expensive. Harry nudges his arm when he senses Eggsy’s hesitance, so Eggsy pulls the top section of the box away.

“Oh, Harry,” he says with a rush of breath. “This is gorgeous!”

He reverently pulls out the chocolate colored leather messenger bag and Harry moves the now empty box from his lap.

“I figured since you are an actual university student now that you needed something better than that canvas bag you have. You have to make sure your belongings are secured on those tube rides.”

“Yeah,” Eggsy replies still blown away at the thoughtfulness and beauty of his gift.

Harry spends the next few minutes showing Eggsy the different pockets, buckles, and other elements that the bag has. Suddenly, as Harry is in the middle of a story about the usefulness of the pencil holder, Eggsy lunges across the sofa and wraps his arms tightly around Harry.
The messenger bag falls to the floor with a heavy thump, but Eggsy simply moves closer. He can feel tears welling up in his eyes; his breath becomes short. He buries his head in Harry’s neck and simply holds on to the other man. Sensing Eggsy’s emotional state Harry simply sits back and cuddles him closer. He runs a soothing hand up and down Eggsy’s back until the tempo of his breathing has come back down to normal.

“Thank you, Harry,” Eggsy mumbles. “Thank you for this amazing gift. It’s wonderful and exactly what I needed.”

“You are certainly welcome my dear. I’m glad you love it so much.”

Neither man make any motion to sever the connection and so the two sit on the sofa just breathing each other in. Eggsy isn’t sure how long it has been, but he suddenly realizes that he never gave Harry his gift.

“Harry!” he cries as he shoots straight up. “You need to open your gift!”

He hurriedly pats around on the couch until he finds the large circular package and thrusts it into Harry’s hands. He backs up on the couch to give Harry the necessary space to open the gift and then watches. Harry takes just as much care with opening his gift. He smiles at the yellow wrapping paper with black bow. Underneath the paper is a plain black box. He carefully pulls the top of the box off and then is left stunned at the amazing gift nestled inside yellow tissue paper.

“I..I wasn’t really sure what to get you,” Eggsy begins nervously, “but I thought you would appreciate something more personal.”

Harry is still left speechless as he stares down at his gift. Inside the box there is a picture frame filled with photos of Harry with Daisy and Eggsy. Front and center is a photo of Daisy toddling along beside Harry. Their backs are to the camera, and she is holding onto his hand. It’s a sweet snapshot of one of the many walks Harry takes with Daisy everyday. He brushes his fingers gently across the photo and turns his attention to the others. All around that one moment in time are some of the best memories of the past six months: the time that Daisy, in a fit of anger, had thrown her entire bowl of oatmeal and hit Harry right in the chest; the time that she had wrapped herself in his coat and crawled around the floor like a caterpillar. His favorite photo is definitely the one in the bottom left hand corner. It must have been taken by Roxy because all three of them are present. Eggsy and Harry are both sprawled out on the grass with huge tired smiles on their faces. Daisy, the little imp, is standing between them with her arms thrown up into the air. She is obviously laughing, and it makes it look like she defeated Eggsy and Harry. Harry can barely breathe at the feelings rushing through his body. This is his family. These pictures chronicle the best six months of his life, and he is simply overwhelmed.
“There’s a couple more things under the photos,” Eggsy murmurs into the soft silence.

Harry carefully sets aside the frame and reaches further into the box. He pulls out a framed drawing obviously made by Daisy with Eggsy’s handwriting across the top. “We love you, Harry” is prominently displayed over what seems to be at least two, maybe three, butterflies. Underneath that frame is a small little booklet titled ‘Harry’s Coupons.’ Flipping through quickly Harry can see it’s a coupon book for one massage, one day off from dishes, etc.

He carefully puts everything back into the box and sets it aside. Eggsy watches nervously as he takes a deep breath and then opens his arms wide. Taking the hint, Eggsy quickly snuggles back into Harry’s arms. The tables are turned as he becomes the comforter instead of the comforted. He just holds Harry close and slowly begins to sway back and forth. It isn’t too long before Harry breaks the silence.

“Thank you for that amazing gift,” he says quietly. “That is exactly what I needed. . .”

He trails off before he begins to speak again.

“Those pictures show just how amazing the last six months have been. Even though I know it’s not something good that brought you to me, I can’t help but be grateful when I see those photos. You and Daisy have truly become my family. This has been the best Christmas I have had in years,” he finishes with a smile.

Eggsy returns his smile and shifts just enough to where both of them are laid out on the sofa.

“This has been the best Christmas, Harry. I can’t wait until next year,” he says.

They both fall asleep cuddled together dreaming of the possibilities facing their small family.

Chapter End Notes

Comments and kudos are always appreciated!
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

This chapter is the set up for the trial. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The phone rings at five am on a Friday morning. Chester groans as he rolls over to grab the ringing menace. Clara ducks her head under the covers and mutters in annoyance. Rolling his eyes, Chester turns to face the wall.

“What is it?” he greets in a growl.

“Your colleague has pulled out the big guns Chester. Ms. Morton has pushed a motion through to have an earlier court date. The holidays screwed up the notification schedule, so we are already behind.”

Chester has trouble wrapping his mind around the words before everything clicks into focus.

“What? How could she do that?” He can hear Grayson sigh irritably before he starts answering.

“She can do that because the woman is smart. She has apparently been doing some research into the case and stumbled across the documents with Ms. Baker’s signature. She did some more research and discovered our witnesses aren’t actually the most solid of witnesses in the world. I told you we should have bribed other people not so close to Baker. She has submitted what amounts to a child endangerment suit that allowed the judge to push the case up. Instead of being able to wait until February our case is on January 13th. We have less than a month to get our act together. I wish you had told me we were up against Ms. Morton.”

Chester was at a loss for words. He never expected the girl to amount to anything really, and hearing about her efforts has rattled him.

“I didn’t realize she was someone to be wary of to be honest. You know I never wanted to hire her in the first place. Women have no place in the work force.”
“You obviously have been disconnected from the world around you Chester. Ms. Morton has made quite a name for herself over the past year or so. Some of the judges have started calling her the bulldog because she doesn’t let anything go and keeps fighting until the bitter end. I hope you know what you’ve gotten yourself into.”

“Stop being so negative, Grayson. It is all going to be fine. Roxanne is obviously good, but we are going to be better. Just get everything ready on your side, and I’ll make sure my side is ready come January 13th”

“I hope you’re right Chester. I sincerely hope you are right.” Grayson abruptly hangs up cutting off any reply Chester could have made.

Grumbling at his brother-in-law’s rudeness Chester slams the phone down onto its holder before burying his face back into his pillow. *Fuck.* He suddenly feels as if he has made a grave mistake in deciding to help Mr. Baker. Oh well, nothing to do now but to ride it out. Surely Roxanne isn’t as good as Grayson implied. Surely.

oooOooo

Once Chester was aware that the others knew, the office descended into an atmosphere full of ice and rigid politeness. Harry shed any semblance of manners and took any and every opportunity to belittle and shame Chester for a variety of transgressions. Roxy made a point of avoiding the man and sitting as far away as possible during their daily staff meetings. Merlin was gentler in his disapproval, but only barely. He stopped taking on extra cases to force Chester to take a somewhat more active role in the office. Of course this ended poorly as Chester hadn’t truly worked in years and as a result of his ineptitude Harry had to quickly arrange a temporary home for a small family that Chester overlooked. Roxy just smiled grimly when this happened and added it to her folder of notes.

Eggsy had also made a point of avoiding the older man. He shortened his work days after attending classes, and usually stayed in Harry’s office as much as possible. He did his best to distract himself with taking care of Daisy, keeping up with his studies, and fretting over his psuedo-relationship with Harry. The third distraction honestly takes up most of his time. Christmas had broken down whatever barrier was once there between the two men. Now there were more morning cuddles standing in the kitchen, little encouraging notes left around the house for Eggsy to discover just when he needed them, and evenings filled with warmth and laughter. Harry had also taken a more active role in helping out with Daisy. He loved giving her her bath in the evening and took utmost pleasure in settling her down in her crib every other night. Eggsy loved this new feeling of the three of them as an actual family. It gave him hope for the future, gave him something to focus on other than the cloying anxiety of facing his stepfather in court.
The day was creeping ever closer, and Eggsy was beginning to feel a bit panicky. Logically he knew that Roxy was working practically around the clock to prevent Dean from winning. She had taken three more statements from Eggsy as well as interviewed a host of people from the estates that could corroborate most of what Eggsy has talked about. Watching her work is like watching a symphony in motion. All intense movement with each motion perfectly timed and executed. He would almost feel sorry for Dean and Chester if they weren’t trying to steal Daisy away.

He is jolted out of his musings by the very man he was just thinking about.

“Excuse me, boy,” Chester practically sneers, “is Harry in at the moment?” He refuses to step into the room any farther than the doorway which suits Eggsy just fine.

“No, sir. He is out for a last home visit on the Singh adoption case. He should be back within the hour.”

Eggsy hopes his response will satisfy Chester’s curiosity, but the man is still lingering in the doorway. He wills the man to turn and leave, yet he makes no effort to move.

“It’s nothing personal you know,” Chester begins. Eggsy can feel his chest tighten and his breathing become shallow. “I just don’t think people of your caliber are suitable to raise children. Your sister would be better off with an actual adult who has an income. Surely you realize that? And when your mother is released from rehab, Mr. Baker will have even more support for his daughter. You are a nobody Mr. Unwin, and nothing you do is going to help your sister in the long run. You are only prolonging the inevitable. You will lose and your sister will be returned to her rightful parents.”

Eggsy clenches his fist in his lap and tries to tell himself Chester is just trying to rile him up. He knows Harry would be disappointed if he were to retaliate against the old jerk, but something twisted inside wants to make Chester hurt as much as he is hurting.

“I may lose, but I will always be a better man than you. I see beyond a person’s past and recognize what they can be in the future. That is what makes us different, you and me. I care about people. You use them.”

He doesn’t wait for any response from Chester before turning around in his chair and going back to his filing. Harry might be disappointed, but he feels much better for saying something, anything in retaliation. The next few minutes in the office are quiet as Eggsy tries to calm himself down and put up a front for when Harry returns. Of course the man is too observant for his own good, so Eggsy has to take extra care to prevent him from clueing in to the turmoil inside him.
He finishes the filing and glances at the clock. Four fifteen. The day has flown by, though it also seems as if has taken forever as well. He hopes Harry gets back before five. If he doesn’t, Eggsy is going to have to leave without him to pick up Daisy from nursery. He doesn’t like leaving her longer than necessary because he is still irrationally afraid that she will forget him while he is gone. He knows it’s insane. He knows she isn’t going to forget him if he leaves her at the nursery an extra half hour. Somehow though that just doesn’t always compute. While he talks himself down and waits for Harry, he starts on his coursework. It is another thirty minutes before Harry finally appears in the doorway with a smile.

“Hello, Eggsy,” he begins. “Are you about ready to go pick up Daisy? I thought we could leave a few minutes earlier than usual.” He holds out a hand which is quickly grabbed, and then he helps gather up Eggsy’s belongings. Soon enough they are exiting the austere Kingsman building and strolling down the pavement. The January afternoon is nice, if a bit chilly. Eggsy feels his chest expand with the refreshing air, and his spirits are lifted even if just slightly. Those spirits rise even further when a warm, firm hand slides into his and squeezes.

“Are you going to tell me what’s bothering you?” Harry asks as he directs the couple around a woman walking her poodle.

“How do you know something is bothering me?” Eggsy replies. He would prefer to simply cover up the previous conversation and let the pain be buried, but he knows Harry will pick and prod until he has it all. The hand around his squeezes a bit tighter and Harry steps closer.

“You have the small lines around your mouth that always appear when your mother comes up in conversation, or when we have to talk about the custody case. You were also incredibly tense when I walked through the door so obviously something is wrong. You don’t have to share with me if you prefer not to say anything. However, I’ve always said a burden shared is a burden halved.”

Eggsy grins just a bit as he leans further into Harry’s side.

“You’ve said no such thing Harry Hart. Now you are just making shit up to make me feel better.” The smile widens as Harry chuckles and wraps an arm around Eggsy’s waist. To any passersby the two look very much like two men in love. “I know you will continue to prod until you have it all, so I’ll tell you. Can we wait until we pick up Daisy and head home though? I would like to enjoy the rest of our walk as much as possible.”

“Of course, darling.” They both would be lying if the small endearment didn’t make both their hearts skip a beat.
As he watches his sister toddle across the room as fast as her little legs can carry her, Eggsy knows he should feel offended as she speeds right past him to crash into Harry’s legs with a bright smile. He can’t seem to muster the feeling though as Harry makes a huge fuss over the little girl and scoops her up just as she begins to fall back onto her bottom.

“Hello, my lovely girl. Have you had a good day at school?” Harry asks as Daisy begins to babble excitedly. She has mastered a few words, but usually what comes out of her mouth is prattle. Eggsy walks over to the counter and makes sure to sign the sheet saying that Daisy has been picked up. Katie, the teacher on duty, smiles at him and then gives her attention back to the spectacle happening behind Eggsy. Eggsy watches as her eyes go dreamy when Harry laughs delightedly at something that Daisy has done. He hopes he doesn’t look as hopeless as she does when he stares at Harry. It’s a miracle Harry hasn’t noticed if he does. He nods in farewell then turns to grab Daisy’s bag and stroller that is folded up behind the counter.

“Alright, my lovelies, are we ready to head home?” Both men grin at the energetic head shakes Daisy gives in reply.

It isn’t until after dinner, cuddle time, and an energetic bath that Harry broaches the dreaded subject of the day. Eggsy has just returned from getting Daisy settled in her nursery, and Harry is finishing putting the dishes away. He looks up as Eggsy enters the kitchen and begins putting on the kettle for tea.

“Are you ready to tell me what had you so upset earlier today?” he asks quietly giving Eggsy a way out if needed.

“Yeah, I guess so. Why don’t you sit down while I get the tea ready? The movement will help me get everything out.”

Harry obligingly sits at the table while Eggsy continues to bustle around.

“Chester stopped by your office this afternoon while I was the only one in.” He pauses as he feels the air change. Harry has shifted in his chair as if to get up and come to Eggsy. “He was originally looking for you or Merlin, but once he realized that I was the only one in the office he didn’t waste any time bringing up the case. He started saying all the things I have been telling myself for months. I’m going to lose her; I’m not a good influence because of my past. The usual self-
deprecating thoughts that I’ve fought against so long. I guess he just got under my skin, and I let that affect the rest of my day.” He startles a little as the kettle whistles. “I want this to be all over, Harry. I want my mum to get the help she needs, but a selfish part of me doesn’t want her around Daisy. What kind of son does that make me?”

Silence descends on the room. The only sound is the softly bubbling water in the kettle. Eggsy can’t bring himself to turn around and face Harry. He can’t bear to see a disappointed frown on that beloved face. He barely stops himself from flinching as Harry begins to reply.

“It makes you human Eggsy. Your formative years might have been relatively stable when Lee was around, but after that it all fell apart. I’m sure a part of you blamed, and still does, your mother for that chaos. It might not be perfectly fair to her, but she did allow Dean into your life. I think it is perfectly normal not to want her around Daisy. You are simply trying to do your best by a sister who is practically a daughter for you. Come sit down.” Harry waits until Eggsy is seated beside him. “This will soon be all over, I promise. Then you and Daisy will be free of Dean to do whatever you will. You will continue your studies and become a fabulous children’s nurse. Daisy will continue to develop and become the smartest little girl in her class. The future is bright, my dear. I promise you.” Eggsy slips his hand into Harry’s and rests his head against the strong shoulder.

“I hope you’re right Harry. I truly hope you are right.”

The next few days pass by in a blur that leaves Eggsy breathless the morning of the trial. He is so distracted he barely catches himself before he hands Daisy his mug of hot coffee instead of her sippy cup full of milk. Harry chuckles as he watches the almost mishap unfold, and Eggsy glares daggers at the happy sound. Today is not a day for laughter or fun. It is a day for tears and fears. He startles as the doorbell sounds announcing the sitter’s arrival. He debated bringing Daisy along with them to court today, but eventually decided it would be better for everyone if she remained safe at home.

“Hi Carla,” he says with a small smile as one of his friends from university walks into the kitchen with Harry trailing behind.

“Morning Eggsy! How’s my little bit today?” Daisy wiggles excitedly as she hears Carla’s voice and leans around Eggsy’s body to see her. “We are going to have so much fun today; I’ve got it all planned out perfectly.” She directs her attention back to Eggsy and Harry. “When do you all need to leave?”
“In about five minutes,” Harry replies. “Eggsy, go make sure we have all of the paperwork, and I’ll gather my things together.”

Harry waits until Eggsy is down the hall before softly saying, “please make sure you are careful wherever you go today. I want you and Daisy both to be safe.”

Carla nods solemnly. “I know, Harry. I’m going to stick to the plan I emailed you yesterday. Quick stroll, then we shall be spending most of the day with my mum and dad. They’ll help keep watch.”

With a nod and a squeeze of the shoulder Harry thanks Carla for her care and finishes gathering the few belongings he has to take with him. Soon enough both men standing at the door ready to leave for court. Eggsy leans his head against the wooden door and breathes deeply. He’s been waiting for this day for months, but now that it is here? He can’t seem to be able to breathe.

“Eggsy? Are you ready to leave?” Harry asks softly from behind him. Once again Eggsy is brought up short by how much he has come to care for this man. He truly doesn’t know what he would do without the unwavering support of Harry Hart. He straightens his shoulders and reaches back to brush his hand against Harry’s outstretched arm.

“I’m ready.”

oooo

“Wait!”

Merlin stands on the steps of the courthouse and watches as Roxy quickly exits the cab and climbs up to reach him. He can’t tell from the look on her face if she is scared, nervous, or even happy. There is just a fierce look of concentration and stiff shoulders. He knows she has been working hard on this case, even going so far as spending time being a wannabe investigator. Worried for her safety, he insisted she allow him to tag along as she tailed Chester and Grayson for the last few weeks. And suffice it to say that whatever respect he had for Chester is long gone. When you watch the head of a social work firm leave the home of his second mistress, it kind of destroys all respect. He is confident in Roxy’s ability to tear down Chester, but he is worried what will happen if she doesn’t succeed in the way she wants: to tear Chester down until there is nothing left.

“Hello, darling,” he murmurs as he brushes a kiss across her chilled cheek. “Are you ready to go kill a dragon?”
He smirks as a sharp smile slices across her face. She reaches out to thread her arm through his and turn his body to face the building.

“Damn right I am. Let’s do this.” The two continue their trek up the final few steps and meet up with Eggsy and Harry currently waiting at the door.

Roxy had met with Eggsy the night before to walk him through the process of the family court system. It was nothing like what you would see on tv with lawyers shouting and witnesses bursting into tears. Family court, especially the public trials, were less formal. The idea is to ensure everyone feels comfortable so the best possible outcome occurs. Eggsy chose to dress his best even with the more relaxed atmosphere as he intends to leave this courtroom with full and permanent custody of Daisy. Everything has to be perfect and above board.

Even knowing what Roxy said, Eggsy is still a tad shocked at the comfortable seating and bright colors the courtroom is painted in. He expected dark wood with wood paneled or dark beige walls. Instead the seating is soft gray cushioned benches, light wood tables, and soft blue colored walls. The judge hasn’t arrived, but Grayson Montague is arranging file folders out onto his table. Eggsy looks around for their other lawyer until Roxy steps up to the only remaining table and begins to set up her area.

“Wait. Rox is our only lawyer?” Eggsy whispers to Harry. “I thought she was only certified as a social work agent?”

“That is one of the reasons Merlin and I wanted to hire her. She was a top civil lawyer for about five years before she switched over to get her social work license. We honestly could not have a better lawyer; I promise,” Harry responds with a smile.

Eggsy doesn’t doubt Roxy’s ability. If anything he should have clued in sooner. She has certainly fought hard to help him, and has always been the one talking about the case. Sometimes he can be an idiot. He follows her lead and sits where she points. Merlin and Harry are forced into a little side area that Roxy says is where witnesses are supposed to sit. Tense and picking at his already ragged nails, Eggsy watches as the judge settles behind his desk, witnesses for both sides fill the side box, and then finally Dean enters followed closely by Chester King. It takes everything within Eggsy not to fly across the table and slap Dean right across his smirking and evil face. Chester isn’t much better as he surprisingly sits in the witness box along with the others. Roxy just smiles serenely when Eggsy looks over nervously.

Michelle is the last person to enter the room, and she is followed by her doctor as well as a nurse. She refuses to look up as she is escorted to the witness box, and her slight figure makes Eggsy’s
heart ache. Her face is gaunt, but her color is much better than the last time he saw her. She looks completely cognizant of what is going on around her; something else that Eggsy hasn’t seen in awhile. Once she is seated, the judge clears his throat and calls the room to attention. The fight for Daisy Baker has begun.

Chapter End Notes

I'm hoping to stick to an every Saturday posting schedule until this finally gets wrapped up.

Thank you everyone for your kudos and comments. Even if I haven't had a chance to respond they are greatly appreciated. You always make me smile!

Much love to you all!
Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

Thanks again for sticking with me when I can't seem to stick to a posting schedule. I'm thinking there are probably 3-4 more chapters after this one.

**So I did some research into the custody format of cases in the UK. I borrowed some things and then completely made up others. This probably (most certainly) is not how an actual trial would proceed, but I took creative license with it**

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Welcome everyone. We are here today to settle the dispute over custody for one child named Daisy Ann Baker. We have here today her biological father, Dean Anthony Baker, seeking custody against her biological half-brother, Gary David Unwin. As Mr. Baker was the original filer of complaint, he and his lawyer will have the floor first. Then we will transition to Mr. Unwin. I run my courtroom with a tight fist. There will be no interruptions from either side during this time. If you have a complaint, make note of it and we will cycle back around. I want these beginning statements to be made calmly and efficiently.” The judge looks around the room before nodding. “Gentlemen, you may begin.”

Montague stands up and begins pacing back and forth in front of the two tables. It’s clear he is trying to show himself off though Eggsy isn’t sure of the motive. He looks like any other posh slime ball that has gotten too used to things going his way. Eggsy can’t wait until Roxy brings him down a peg or two.

“We are here today to prove Mr. Baker the rightful caregiver of his daughter Daisy. Mr. Baker is certainly not a perfect person. He has had troubles in his life the way we all have. However, Mr. Baker has proven his desire to step up and care for his daughter in her time of need. At the time of Daisy’s removal from the home Mr. Baker was the sole support for the family. Mrs. Baker did not have a steady income and Mr. Unwin has no job record that I could find. It is obvious when you look at the facts that Mr. Baker is the rightful caregiver for Daisy.”

He pauses here to shuffle some papers on the table behind him. He glances over at Roxy with a slimy smile and then turns back to the judge.

“In support of his custody I have a statement made by the child’s mother, Michelle Baker, explaining her desires for Mr. Baker to have full custody of their daughter. Your honor?” Montague hands the letter over when the judge nods in acquiescence. He waits a minute or so while the judge carefully reads the statement and then proceeds to set it aside on his desk. “In addition to the mother’s support I have gathered a number of witnesses that can speak to the
diligent care that Mr. Baker has given his daughter in the few short months of her life. May I call my first witness?" He waits as the judge makes nods. “Mr. Ronald Dougherty will you please come up front?"

Rottie slinks his way up to the witness chair and sits down. He looks nervous, but perks up when Montague asks his first question.

“Mr. Dougherty, how would you describe Mr. Baker as a father?”

“He is a real good father. Makes sure she had ever’ thing she could ever need, he did,” he responds. It honestly sounds scripted, but it seems to do the job as the judge continues to take notes on his pad.

“And how would you describe Mr. Unwin as a caretaker?” Montague continues.

This time Rottie gets a cruel look on his face before he responds.

“Unwin is trash to be honest. I ain’t ever seen him hold Daisy or take care of her in any way. He’s not often at home, or at least he isn’t there when I stop by to see Dean.”

Montague stops his pacing and prods Rottie a little bit more.

“So, just to be clear Mr. Dougherty, you have never really seen Mr. Unwin act as caretaker for Daisy. In fact the person who takes care of her is in fact Mr. Baker, correct?”

“Yes, sir. That is correct.”

Eggsy has to sit and watch as Montague calls lackey after lackey of Dean’s and then listen to the absolute bullshit they spew out into the room. They tell stories about Dean working his hands to the bone to care for Daisy, spending hours building her a playpen, taking her to the park, the list goes on and on. It makes Eggsy sick to listen to the absolute lies they are all telling. Roxy keeps reaching over to rub her hand over his knee in support, but Eggsy’s whole body just feels numb. Surely the judge won’t believe all this drivel? He seems to be pretty smart, so he should be able to see through the bs to the truth beneath. Dean’s never even held Daisy. He avoided her at all costs, and he certainly did nothing to help buy her nappies or food. Dean was nothing more than a sperm donor in Daisy’s life.
The testimony from their side has gone on for almost an hour when Montague turns back to the witness box and calls on Chester King. Eggsy can feel the breath leave Roxy as the man walks calmly past their table and seats himself into the witness chair. The trial is about to get interesting.

“Mr. King, what can you tell me about Dean Baker?” Montague asks.

“Well, I honestly do not know much about Mr. Baker, but I can say he seems to be a very determined father. I can tell he truly wants the best for his daughter, and Mr. Unwin is certainly far from being the best.”

Eggsy almost nods his head at the perfect shot Chester has just launched. Eggsy knows he’s never been the best at or for anything. Montague is sure to jump on it, and he proves Eggsy right with his next statement.

“And what exactly do you know about Gary Unwin?”

Eggsy should have realized this was how they would play it. Build Dean up with all that praise and then pull someone in a little more stately, a little more believable to cast doubt on Eggsy.

“Gary Unwin came to work for my agency a few months ago and naturally I wanted to know who I hired. I did a little digging and came across some very interesting facts.”

“And these facts are?”

“Well, Mr. Unwin has been arrested for drug possession, auto theft, and a litany of other offenses. He has served a month’s time in jail, and he has also been asked to pay reparations for his crimes.” Chester explains smugly as Eggsy can feel hope slipping little by little.

“That does seem serious, especially when being asked to take care of a child.” He pauses to give a significant glance to the judge. “Your honor, you will find an entire print out of Mr. Unwin’s arrest records in the evidence submitted. What else did you discover Mr. King?” Montague leads.

“Mr. Unwin at one point did try to do something with his life. He joined the Royal Marines, but unfortunately he dropped out of basic training before he could finish. To me that just shows he has no drive, no will power. His age is also a concern. How can a 25 year old boy properly take care of a child when he can’t seem to make up his mind? He flits from being a drug dealer and part time
prostitute to trying out the Marines. I just don’t see how he can be a stable parent for a young girl.”

Montague and Chester both smile, and Montague motions for Chester to return to the witness box.

“Thank you sir for your honest assessment of Mr. Unwin.”

He turns back to the judge.

“Your honor, I am not in any way trying to disparage the character of this young man. I am simply trying to ensure that this little girl grows up to be a healthy, happy human. We have heard evidence here today that casts serious doubts upon the credibility of Mr. Unwin as a support system. Based on the testimony of his colleagues, and the testimony from an outside unbiased source, I would implore you to give Dean Baker full permanent custody of his daughter. He is the best option the little girl has.” At his closing remarks the judge cocks his head just a bit to the side and frowns. Montague quickly sits down behind his table and leans over to converse with Dean.

The judge, after writing down a few notes, turns his attention to Roxy.

“Ms. Morton, it is now your turn. I commend you on your patience.” Roxy takes a deep breath before rising and walking into the space between the two tables.

“Your honor, we are here today to bring justice to a family that has been terrorized by the man seated beside Mr. Montague.” Eggsy can feel the room drop in temperature as Roxy comes out guns blazing. “Every word that fell from the lips of these ‘colleagues’ was false. Every action they say Baker took to provide for his daughter is fraudulent. Dean Baker is the reason Mr. Unwin has an arrest for drug possession. I have here a copy of both Mr. Unwin and Mr. Baker’s arrest records.” She hands the copies over to the judge who peruses the material carefully. “As you can see, Gary Unwin was arrested on the same day as Mr. Baker for drug possession. Baker was charged with distribution as well as possession. Mr. Unwin was only arrested for drug possession after Mr. Baker married Michelle Unwin. In fact, Mr. Unwin’s record was squeaky clean until Baker came into the picture. That is when visits to A&E began, petty fights, and eventually the recorded arrests. Mr. Baker’s arrest record is quite an interesting read. We have drug possession and distribution, car theft, petty theft, and domestic violence; the list goes on and on. I would like to focus on the domestic violence charges. Mr. Baker has been jailed on these charges before in connection with at least three other women. I have one of those women here today who is willing to testify to the homelife she experienced while involved with Mr. Baker. In addition to this witness, I have called on Michelle Unwin herself to speak about her life with Mr. Baker and her son. You honor?”
The judge finishes looking through the arrest records and motions for Michelle to step up to the witness stand. She slowly rises from her seat and carefully makes her way to the front. She refuses to look over at her son or her husband, choosing instead to keep her head down. Once seated she looks up at Roxy and waits.

“Thank you Mrs. Baker for coming today; I know this was not an easy decision for you to make.” Roxy pauses. “Mrs. Baker, I would like to start by asking you exactly how Mr. Montague and Mr. Baker were able to provide a statement from you?”

A long silence passed before Michelle started to reply hesitantly.

“I...I was finishing up one of my therapy sessions when I was told that I had visitors. It was Mr. Montague and a man named Mr. King. I was confused at first since I had never seen them before in my life. Mr. Montague immediately started telling me how sorry Dean was that I was “locked up” and all this other stuff. He told me that Dean was trying to protect our daughter and needed my help. He handed me a piece of paper that he said just explained that I wanted Dean to still have custody of Daisy. I didn’t read the whole thing, and when he urged me to sign it, I did. He made me think that Daisy was in danger of being taken by the government or something. He never said anything about Daisy being with Eggsy.”

“What did Mr. King say while he was with you?”

“Nothing, really. I was asking about Eggsy, sorry Gary, because I haven’t seen him in months, and he was always the one to respond. He kept saying that Eggsy was a nobody. He was just some worthless kid. I became upset listening to him. My Eggsy is a good boy.” She stops and turns to look directly at the judge. “I promise he is. He always makes sure Daisy has food and clean nappies. He dropped out of the marines to come help me. Not because he is flighty or whatever Mr. King tried to imply. I wrote and called him as soon as I found out and was practically hysterical with fear. Our life isn’t exactly welcoming for a baby. He immediately offered to come home. What other boy would do that? Not many.” Michelle pauses and breathes deep. “Look. I know I’m not the best mum. I’ve allowed my children to live in an abusive home for years. I drink to deal with the pain and separate myself from the misery. But Eggsy would do anything to make sure his little sister is cared for. He was always the one to take her to the doctor as I was always too drunk or high. I never would have signed that paper giving Dean full custody. I just wish I had read it.”

“Thank you Michelle. I just have one question left for you. Has Dean Baker ever laid a hand on you, Daisy, or Gary in anger?”

Eggsy watches as Michelle begins to tremble before sitting up straight and bares her soul. He aches to go comfort her, but stays where he is.
“Yes. Almost every single day. When Eggsy was ten I had to drive him to A&E because Dean smashed his arm in the door. Eggsy had told Dean to stop yelling because he was trying to study for school. Broke his arm in two places. He’s bruised me up something awful as well. Sometimes it isn’t physical abuse. After almost fifteen years he has gotten really good at getting in your head and making you feel worthless. Eggsy has tried to get me to leave time and again, but I’ve never been able to. Now that I’m sober I want it known that I never want my daughter or son near Dean Baker again. He is too dangerous.”

“Thank you Michelle, you may return to your seat.” She waits as Michelle walks back to her seat. “I would like to call up my other witness your honor.” He nods. A woman with a bob of black hair makes her way up to the front and takes a seat.

The next few minutes Roxy asks a series of targeted questions about Baker’s temper, behaviour, and business practices. Eggsy doesn’t know where she found this Tanya woman, but Eggsy can feel his heart break as the woman visibly flinches when Dean clears his throat. The judge notices the flinch and makes a note. Maybe he can see that it says a lot for a woman to flinch that strongly when she hasn’t been with the man in question for almost two decades. Once Roxy has fully established that Dean is not the person Montague is trying to portray, she asks a final question.

“Ms. Ray, what can you tell the court about Mr. Baker’s drinking habits?”

“The man was never fully sober in the two years I was involved with him. He would drink in the morning, the afternoon, and at night. The beatings were sometimes worse when he had not had a drink in a few hours. I could never predict his behaviour.”

“Thank you, ma’am. You may step down,” Roxy says gently. Eggsy watches as the woman quickly walks back to her seat and tries to hide herself as best as possible.

Roxy continues through her list of witnesses: Jamal, Ryan, the registrar from his university confirming his enrollment as well as his attendance and grades. He can feel himself relax as those on his side have a chance to tell their story. Accounts describing the care Eggsy takes with Daisy, how often he places her welfare before his own make him want to blush, but he maintains his steady, blank face up until Harry is called up to the stand. Forgetting that Harry already told him he would be testifying, Eggsy was shocked. He finds himself even more shocked as he listens to what Harry has to say.

“Mr. Hart, can you please state how you came to know Mr. Unwin?”
“I actually knew Mr. Unwin’s father, Lee Unwin, almost twenty years ago when Mr. Unwin was just a child. Lee Unwin was a fireman that worked on a child endangerment case when I was first starting out in social work.”

“And how were you introduced to Mr. Unwin?”

“I first met Mr. Unwin when I, Merlin Graves, and yourself visited him while he was serving time for stealing a car.”

“What was your impression of the man?”

“At first I thought he was your run of the mill petty criminal. However, once we spoke with him, his love and devotion to his sister was quite evident. This become even more solidified in my mind when our agency, Kingsman, arrived to pick up Daisy. He had just been released that morning and was desperate to see her before we took her away. We found the baby in deplorable condition. She had a dirty nappy, dirty clothes, and was screaming for food. Mr. Baker, the only one awake when we arrived as Michelle was passed out drugged on the couch, had simply left the little girl in the middle of Mr. Unwin’s bed. There was no bumper to keep her from rolling off or any other safety measures. I was trying to get her settled down a bit when Mr. Unwin stumbled through the door. He appeared to have been running to try and see her before we took her away. As soon as I handed the baby over, she quieted completely and curled in tighter to her brother. It was obvious to me that she had come to expect his presence and associated his touch with care and love.” Harry stops and clears his throat before directing his gaze directly at the judge. “I have twenty years experience in this field, and I can say with zero hesitation that Daisy Baker belongs with her brother. It was clear from that first interaction that he was more of a parent than a brother. Mr. Unwin was gone a little bit over three weeks and the deplorable condition we found the child in was clearly something that had occurred during that time. Mr. Unwin has been the only consistent caregiver in her life, and has proven over and over that she is his first priority.”

“Thank you Mr. Hart. I would like to clarify a few points before I conclude. Where are Mr. Unwin and Daisy staying currently?”

“They are currently residing with me while Mr. Unwin works as an assistant to Merlin and myself and also attends university. This close proximity has provided an even closer look at the care and attention he showers on his sister. I have truly never known a man more caring, capable, and determined to provide for his sister. He amazes me every day with his drive and his ability to deal with whatever life throws his way. To put it simply, Gary Unwin is more Daisy’s father than Dean Baker will ever be.”

Roxy steps back slowly and nods decisively before motioning Harry back to his seat. Eggsy has to breathe deeply and slowly blink the tears out of his eyes before he can focus on the judge in front
“As we have heard from numerous witnesses Dean Baker is simply not capable of taking sufficient care of a child. He has falsified documents, bullied those around him, beaten his wife and stepson, sold drugs as a business, and a host of other atrocities we haven’t discovered yet. If Mr. Baker was the great caring father that he passes himself off to be, then Kingsman never would have had reason to remove Daisy from the home. The family was on our radar as they are lower income, but I never had any concerns about Daisy’s welfare until they skipped a doctor’s appointment as well as a wellness check with myself. Why were those appointments skipped if Baker was the true caretaker in the home? It’s curious that those missed appointments coincide perfectly with the dates that Mr. Unwin was incarcerated. In stark contrast to this ineptitude we have Gary, Eggsy, Unwin. This man has sacrificed himself to provide for and protect his sister from the violence that Dean Baker carries with him like an accessory. No, Mr. Unwin is not the most perfect of people. He has a few blights on his record, but at the end of the day, he is the one who always took care of the baby. To my mind, and I hope to yours your honor, Mr. Unwin is the right person to have full, permanent custody of Daisy Baker.”

Roxy turns to sit down when the judge clears his throat and asks a question that ripples through the courtroom like wildfire.

“Ms. Morton? Were you planning on pressing charges against Chester King and Grayson Montague?”

Chapter End Notes

Comments and kudos are always appreciated! Much love to you all!
Chapter 13

Eggsy feels his heart stop as Chester shoots to his feet with a deep growl.

“What do you bloody mean pressing charges?” he demands. The judge gives him a baleful look before pulling out a green colored folder.

“Ms. Morton delivered this to my office this morning. Imagine my surprise when I opened it to find pages after pages of surveillance and evidence against you, Mr. King. You have been accused of embezzling from your father’s firm, criminal negligence in regards to past social work cases, as well as falsifying court documents. From the evidence Ms. Morton has provided, and the evidence is quite powerful, I have already called a detective inspector and urged him to open an investigation.”

“You can’t do that you bitch!” Chester rages at Roxy. The judge quickly stands.

“You will find Mr. King that I do not take kindly to name calling in my courtroom. It would be in your best interest for you to sit down and remain silent.” His voice rolls through the courtroom like velvet thunder. He turns to the witnesses. “I thank you for your testimony here today. Usually custody cases do not require many witnesses, though this case is certainly out of the norm. So again, I thank you for your time and your honesty. You are released at this time.”

He waits as all witnesses file out, Michelle pausing beside Eggsy before quickly moving on without saying anything. Soon the only ones remaining in the room are Dean, Montague, Roxy, and Eggsy.

“I would like to speak with each of you in my chambers before I finalize my decision. Mr. Baker? If you will please follow my officer.”

Eggsy watches as the judge gathers his materials and disappears through a side door. Dean grumbles but does follow the young female officer through a separate door.

The room is absolutely silent before Montague breaks the atmosphere.
“So you became a detective as well as a lawyer?” he asks. “I knew I should have told Chester to fuck off when he called me about this case.”

Roxy glances over at the man now slumped over the table.

“You could always turn on him. I’m sure you have more documentation than I do about his dealings. Every man for himself, right?” she replies stiffly.

Montague only chuckles darkly in reply and the room goes back to being silent. Roxy is holding tight to Eggsy’s hand, but he can still feel the waves of anxiety crashing against his brain. He wishes he could have Harry in here with him, but he also wants to face this fear alone. He needs to be strong right now. For himself, yes, but more importantly for Daisy. It’s only about fifteen minutes later when Dean storms back into the room followed by the officer.

“Mr. Unwin? If you will follow me please,” she says before turning to go back through the door. Roxy brushes a kiss across his cheek and gives one last squeeze to his hand in support.

He follows the officer down a long brightly lit hall. They pass a multitude of doors before they finally stop in front of a door with the name Judge Eric Lance. The officer knocks sharply twice and proceeds to push the door open at the muffled “Enter.”

Eggsy follows the motions of the officer’s hand and makes his way into the office. Sitting behind a simple desk is the judge. He is making notes on a pad of paper while simultaneously watching something on his computer screen. Eggsy hesitates in the doorway.

“Mr. Unwin, please take a seat,” Judge Lance says absentmindedly. “Give me one more second to finish these notes and then we will talk.”

Eggsy chooses the leather seat on the left side of the room and waits. It isn’t long before the judge turns his computer screen in order for Eggsy to see what is displayed. At first Eggsy doesn’t realize what he sees. Soon the colors and shapes morph into a video of Daisy’s 1st birthday party. Eggsy’s eyes soften as the judge pauses the video right as Daisy lifts her chocolate covered face from the cake.

“Mr. Unwin, I wanted to speak with you one on one really just as a formality.” The judge adjusts his posture before continuing. “I have seen many custody battles in my time. It is difficult to see the pain that children in this world are facing on a daily basis. It makes you feel helpless and
disillusioned. But with this case I feel hope for the first time in years. Ms. Morton has provided many statements from those around you and Daisy that I have taken utmost care in reading. From the very first it was clear that your love for your sister was your guiding light out of the darkness of your living situation. The video, provided by Mr. Hart, really sealed the deal.”

Eggsy is sitting in stunned silence. He can’t believe the judge seems to be leaning in his favor. This never happens to Eggsy.

“Mr. Unwin, I know what you’ve been through. Maybe not the exact situation, but I grew up in a situation very similar to yours. I found my way out through my husband. He continually pushed me to be a better person, to find different ways of expressing my emotions, and to help those who were in the same boat. I will be forever grateful for him and his support over the years.”

The judge leaned forward and steepled his fingers.

“Tell me what your daughter and boyfriend mean to you.”

Eggsy doesn’t even notice the change in term from sister to daughter or the boyfriend label; he just starts talking.

“At first I was upset that I had to leave the marines for Daisy. I saw her as one more burden that was being forced on me. But as soon as I held her in my arms it was as if a switch had been flipped. She became my reason for breathing. Even as I was forced to my knees to help pay rent or buy formula, she kept me going. Mum wasn’t able to walk away from an abusive situation, so I did everything I could to alleviate it. Taking punches meant for her, hiding Daisy away in my room when he would go on drunken binges; anything I needed to do, I would do it. I love her so much it makes me hurt to think I might not ever get to hold her again.”

“And what of Mr. Hart?” the judge prods. He watches as Eggsy smile brightens.

“If Daisy keeps me going, then Harry saves me from myself. From the moment I met him he has done everything possible to help me. When I start beating myself up or allowing the anxiety to take over, he is there bringing me back down. I honestly don’t know where I would be right now without his support. At first I assumed I would be back on knees for “repayment,” but it wasn’t anything like that. Harry gave me resources, but he also gave me space. I love our evening walks around the block with Daisy, our mornings spent mopping up the food she throws around. Harry has given me something that I never thought was an option for me. People from my neighborhood don’t fall in love, don’t go to university, and certainly don’t have dreams for the future. He’s my everything.”
Throughout Eggsy’s little speech the judge has been nodding along and smiling. He relaxes further into his chair and asks one final question.

“When did you fall in love with him?”

Eggsy startles. He’s never been able to pinpoint the one moment against all the other moments that makes him love Harry. He just knows that he loves Harry for now and always.

“I honestly don’t know. Maybe it was the first time I saw him interact with Daisy. It could be the moment when I knew I could trust him with our lives. Maybe the better question is why I know I love him, and the answer to that is easy. He makes me feel safe and loved. I know that if this custody battle goes south that he will still be in my corner. We’ve talked about fighting as long as it takes to ensure Daisy is safe. He’s the one person, the one person, who has always supported me. It’s easy to love Harry, sir. It’s as easy as breathing.”

The judge rubs gently below his right eye and Eggsy is shocked to see a dampness there.

“I want to thank you again Mr. Unwin for giving me hope. Like I said, this job brings the lowest of the low to my courtroom. Today you have shown me that love is still present in this world.”

He stands and motions for Eggsy to do the same. He walks Eggsy to the door, shakes his hand, and then opens the door.

“The officer will lead you back to the courtroom. I will be following you shortly.”

Eggsy nods and follows the officer back to the room. He makes his way back to the table where Roxy is sitting going over another case that she has. Dean is sulking at his own table while Montague looks nauseous. Maybe the implications of his working with King are finally hitting home, but Eggsy is sure he is only concerned about himself.

“How did it go?” Roxy asks with a smile. Eggsy simply shrugs and gives a small smile back.

“I think it went okay, but I’m not positive. He said he would be right out.”
She nods and goes back to looking over a doctor’s assessment for the Graves family. Eggsy is forced to stare at a wall and ruminate over the last two hours. He feels as if Roxy has done a bang up job of discrediting Dean, but Eggsy doesn’t think he should be too optimistic.

Soon enough the judge is striding back into the room and taking his place behind the bench. The room becomes tense with anticipation and everyone sits up a little straighter. The judge rustles some papers around before becoming still and silent. He takes a long look at Dean and then shifts his gaze over to Eggsy. Just as Eggsy is getting ready to scream in frustration, he begins to speak quietly.

“I feel it is my duty as a judge to do the best to ensure the welfare of the children involved in the cases I preside over. I usually prefer to take at least an hour to go back over the evidence, the testimonies, etc. in custody cases. I make sure to uncover every single possible stone I can to make absolutely certain that the child will be safe. However, I do not need that time here today.”

He pauses here and turns his attention back to Dean and Montague.

“Mr. Montague, I have never been more disgusted in my life. To think of a child being placed back into that type of environment is immoral and in my mind criminal. Dean Baker is certainly unfit to hold a child, let alone raise a daughter in the environment provided. I have never seen a more incompetent case with the aspiration of a ruling in their favor. You may have wished to fool me, sir, but I am no fool. I can clearly see through the bullshit you paraded around my court to the greed and corruption beneath. I am appalled at your audacity. To that end, Dean Anthony Baker, you are hereby prohibited from having any contact with Daisy Baker in any sort of capacity. Your parental rights have been severed from this point on, and if you should have any contact, you will be immediately outside of the law. It is in your best interest if you act as if you have no child. Mr. Montague, I would be prepared to speak to the authorities when you walk out of this room if I were you. I do believe they are waiting for you along with your esteemed brother-in-law. You are both dismissed from this court.”

Eggsy is shaking as he watches Dean stomp out of the room followed closely, yet reluctantly, by his lawyer. He can barely breathe as Roxy digs her nails into his leg. The judge leaves his stand and walks across to take a seat across from Eggsy.

“You have impressed me with your devotion to a child that is not even yours. You have faced trial after trial and yet you have kept on going. It is my utmost pleasure to grant you full, permanent guardianship of your sister. Mr. Unwin, if I may, I would suggest having an honest discussion with your mother. From what I observed, as well as what her doctor and therapist provided, I don’t think she will be capable of caring for a child in the near future, if at all. It would give Daisy more protection if Michelle signed over custody to you and if you adopted her. Of course, this can all be
done in the future; I just want you to know your options. Congratulations, my boy. The clerk out
front has all the paperwork you will need, so take your baby and head on home.” He reaches across
the table and shakes Eggsy’s offered hand. Nodding politely at Roxy, the man quickly leaves the
room as well.

As soon as the door closes, Eggsy breaks down into sobs. He can’t believe he has won. He has his
baby. Daisy will be forever safe from the vile influence of Baker, and maybe his mum could finally
have the chance she needs to recover from the anguish of losing Lee and the living hell she
experienced with Dean. Roxy seems flustered when he can’t seem to stop the tears, and she rushes
out to snag Harry who has been waiting out in the hall.

Suddenly Eggsy feels warm arms wrap around his shoulders and pull him into a tight embrace. He
doesn’t think about his actions, instead he burrows into the space between Harry’s neck and
shoulder.

“Shhh….darling,” Harry murmurs. “It’s all going to be fine now. You’ve won. Our Daisy is going
to grow up loved, cherished, and with the knowledge that her brother would go to the ends of the
earth for her. Shhh…."

Harry begins to softly rock back and forth lulling Eggsy into a sense of calm. He almost feels like
Daisy when Harry takes the bedtime shift. He rocks her just as gently while softly telling her
stories of princesses saving the world. Everything settles inside him as the warmth creeps into his
bones. His fingers loosen from where they are clenched in the smooth fabric of Harry’s suit. He
isn’t sure how long he stays snuggled in Harry’s arms, but eventually he pulls himself together and
shifts back.

“Thank you, Harry,” he says. “I was overwhelmed at the ruling. I let myself think we were fighting
a losing battle, and when he ruled in our favor? I am still in disbelief.”

“It isn’t a surprise at all. From the very beginning I knew Daisy belonged with you. It was only a
matter of time before everyone else saw the truth. Now, are you ready to head home?”

“Yeah….yeah, let’s go home.”

Chapter End Notes

As always much love to you all!
PS: I haven't forgotten about punishing Chester. That's coming.
Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

This is really a chapter of fluff and then a special something occurring at the end. :-)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Eggsy steps through the entryway of the house he shares with Harry a weight tumbles from his shoulders. He quickly dumps his jacket and goes in search of his baby. Harry, standing in the doorway, simply smiles indulgently and picks the jacket up from the floor. He understands that Eggsy needs some time to cuddle Daisy so he heads to the kitchen to scrounge up something resembling a late lunch.

Eggsy finds them in the lounge. Carla is stretched out on her stomach with a nursing textbook in front of her while Daisy happily bashes her in the back of the head with a stuffed otter. The little girl is balanced on Carla’s back and cackling happily as Carla tries to reach around and tickle her. Eggsy must have made some sound because Daisy’s eyes shoot to the doorway to pin him in place. A bright smile spreads across her face and she almost face plants trying to get off Carla.

“E’ggy!” she cries finally untangling herself and toddling across the carpet as fast as her little legs would go. “E’ggy here!”

“Hello, my darling,” Eggsy murmurs as he scoops her up into his arms. “Have you been good for Miss Carla?”

“Mnhm.”

Eggsy smiles and glances over at Carla for corroboration.

“Of course she was good Eggsy. When is she ever not a little angel?” Carla laughs as she begins to gather her things. “How did it go?”

She pauses in placing her phone in her pocket when Eggsy doesn’t immediately reply.

“Eggsy?” she asks again.
“We get to keep her,” Eggsy chokes out. “Daisy gets to stay with us, and Dean can never come near her again.”

Carla drops her bag and rushes over to embrace both Eggsy and Daisy. She tries to hide the tears beginning to trail down her cheeks, but Eggsy spots them easily enough.

“Oh, come on love, no tears,” he implores.

“Eggsy, you numpty! I’m crying because I am so happy! This is exactly what I was hoping would happen,” she says. “You guys are now officially a family! And I feel like I keep ending my sentences with exclamation points, but I am so freaking happy!”

Eggsy laughs as Carla does a little dance around the room. He is so grateful he has been able to build lasting friendships with those in his nursing program. For the longest time all he had was his friendship with Jamal and Ryan. He finally feels like he is building a life he can be proud of.

“Well, we really appreciate all you have done for us. I don’t know where we would be without your help with Daisy,” he says. He sets Daisy back down on her feet and she rushes out of the room shouting for Harry.

“You know I’ll always be here if you need me.” She gives Eggsy a final hug. “Don’t forget to study for our final for Hudgins’ class. You know she can be a stickler.”

Eggsy helps her gather her bags and walks her to the door. She waves at Harry, who is standing in the kitchen, and smiles at the sight of Daisy “helping” to make sandwiches.

“By the way, thanks for setting me up with Jamal. We had our third date last week, and it ended on a happy note,” she says laughing at the blush that stains Eggsy’s cheeks.

“Yeah, yeah, that’s too much info. Way too much info about my mate.”

Carla smiles and steps through the open doorway.
“Love you too, Eggsy. Have a nice afternoon!”

Eggsy stands for a few minutes and makes sure she reaches the end of the row of houses without incident before shutting the door and returning to the kitchen.

He finds Daisy in her new high chair happily munching away on her lunch. Harry has arranged her cut up strawberries, toast, melon, and steamed carrots into a little smiley face that she, amazingly enough, hasn’t quite destroyed just yet.

“Are you having a good lunch, Daisy?” he asks. She nods her head and then turns her attention back to the food in front of her. No one, not even her beloved brother, gets between Daisy and her food. He brushes his hands through her curls and turns to see if Harry needs any help.

“Need help, love,” he asks. Harry shakes his head and hands Eggsy his own plate.

“No, I think I’ve got everything ready. If you would get drinks though,” Harry says.

Soon the trio is sitting down at the table eating together. They both laugh as Daisy tries to figure out how to shove a whole handful of berries into her mouth and ends up looking like a bad makeup ad. The lunch is easy, quiet, and comforting; a nice reprieve from the high tension of the morning.

“I was thinking we could take an afternoon walk and play in the park for a while,” Harry says.

“I don’t know,” Eggsy begins. “Dais, do you want to go to the park?”

Both men have no problem interpreting the squeal and waving arms as agreement. So, once Harry has taken care of the dishes and Eggsy has cleaned up the bits of strawberry and melon that decorate the floor and her highchair, they head out the door to the park.

And that is how they spend their first day as an official family. Walking along the sidewalks of London with a smiling and happy baby girl. Playing hide and seek in the park. Feeding the ducks and laughing at Daisy’s attempts at a cartwheel. They are happy.
The next few days are an absolute whirlwind at school. There isn’t much time to celebrate his win before his late exams bury him under school work. In the midst of preparing for the trial, the fact that the exams were coming up completely slipped his mind. As a result he is definitely not as prepared as he would like to be. He barely gets to see the others as he races from one library to the next sliding into each study group breathless and grinning. He’s shocked Harry hasn’t made a comment about the extra work he’s taken on with Daisy, but the man has been nothing but supportive. There is always dinner on the table when he takes a break to eat, and Daisy always smells fresh and is laughing. Once again Eggsy is struck by the sheer domesticity that seems to cover their relationship in a warm blanket. He doesn’t ever want to leave that comforting feeling.

Finally, two weeks after the trial, exams are over and he can breathe again. He passes them all with flying colors, and even receives a handshake from many of his professors. They were only superficially aware of his circumstances, but they all make sure to tell him how proud they are. Eggsy isn’t used to people being proud of him, and he finds it difficult to reply. What do you say when people compliment you? Thanks, I know I’m awesome? He usually just says thanks and ducks his head with a fiery blush raging across his face.

Harry orders him to take a week off from Kingsman, so Monday morning finds him in the kitchen with a giggling baby on his hip.

“Are you sure I shouldn’t come in and help? I guarantee filing has piled up, Harry,” he implores as he hands Harry his lunch. Harry takes it with a nod of thanks as he snuggles into Daisy’s neck to give her raspberry kisses. Once he has her cackling with laughter he responds.

“I told you Eggsy. We will be fine for the next week without your assistance. I promise. You need to spend some time with Daisy anyway; she’s been missing her daddy.”

Eggsy sighs as he hands off the baby to Harry.

“I wish you wouldn’t say things like that Harry. She’s not really my daughter, ya know? I don’t want her to be confused later on.”

Harry pauses in his attempt to give Daisy her sippy cup and stares directly at Eggsy.

“I understand where you are coming from Eggsy, but you are now Daisy’s father. Legally you are listed as her primary guardian. Do you think Dean Baker is ever going to try to get her back? No.
That man is concerned only about himself; I would almost guarantee that he is relieved to be rid of his daughter.”

“Yeah, but what about Mum? That’s not exactly fair to her, now is it?”

“No, it is not fair. However, life sometimes throws us curveballs. Judging by Michelle’s appearance at court and her unwillingness to talk to you at the time, I don’t think she is capable of raising her daughter just yet. And you need to come to terms with the fact that she might never be ready.” He watches as Eggsy paces back and forth from the sink to the fridge and back again.

“I know. I know. I guess I’m just not quite ready to let go of the hope.” He walks over to where Harry is cuddling Daisy in one arm. She has her head tucked under Harry’s chin and is watching him with big bright eyes. “I know she is mine from now on. I just….I don’t want her to forget Mum. She tried so hard, Harry. I know you only experienced the awful end, but at the beginning she tried. She was laying off the booze, refusing the drugs a little more than usual. I don’t know what happened when I was gone, but I know she was tryin’.” He brushes the fine baby hairs from around Daisy’s face. “Daisy was certainly never expected, but she was a true blessing. Mum lit up when she found out she was pregnant. It wasn’t until Dean found out that some of the joy was sucked out of it; he always had to ruin everything.”

“She isn’t going to forget her Mum, Eggsy, especially if you talk about her and show pictures. You also have the option of taking her to see Michelle. There is always another way of doing something. Never fear.” Harry longs to lean down and brush a kiss across the sweet face beside him, but they aren’t quite to that level just yet. “Now, I need to head to work while you two get to spend the day together.”

“Of course, give the baby to me and make sure you grab your umbrella before you leave. I think they are calling for rain.”

The two complete a smooth transition with the barest hint of trouble from Daisy. She never likes being parted from her favorite person and early morning is usually always a problem. Eggsy follows Harry out to the front door and stands there slightly bouncing the little girl. He watches with a fond smile as Harry bundles himself up against the frigid temperatures all while making funny faces at a softly giggling Daisy. Eventually Harry has his briefcase, his umbrella, and his lunch and is ready to go.

“Have a good day my dears. I shall see you tonight,” he says with great fanfare while opening the door. Eggsy’s smile widens and a small chuckle tumbles out of his mouth. He takes Daisy’s chubby hand and waves at Harry’s departing back.
“Say bye-bye Dais. Say bye!” he calls out happily.

oooOooo

After the tense discussion that morning Eggsy was worried that the rest of the day would have a pall hanging over it, but his fears are completely unfounded. He makes sure Daisy is settled into her play pen before going back to the kitchen to clean up from breakfast and lunch prep. He places all the pans back into their rightful spot, straightens the tea towels on the drying rack, and puts away the leftovers in their labeled glass containers.

Soon the kitchen is back to its pristine state with counters gleaming and the table spotless. Ever since moving in with Harry, Eggsy has come to appreciate the simple actions of organizing and keeping living areas clean. Of course Harry leaves his sheets a complete tangle every morning and eats like a pig sometimes, but overall he definitely has that gentlemanly cleanliness vibe down. The organization has settled some deep longing for home inside of Eggsy that has been festering for an apparently long time. While yes it can be inconvenient to always make the bed in the morning and wash the dishes before leaving for the day, the feeling of ownership is simply too comforting to give up.

Taking one last swift glance around Eggsy turns to catch Daisy trying to climb up the netting sides of the playpen.

“Oi, you nutter! Get down from there before you fall and get hurt love,” he cries as he rushes over to snatch her up. “I guess we will be transitioning to another play pen. Miss Daisy you are going to have to stop growing so fast. Soon enough you’ll be starting school, and I just don’t think my poor heart could take that.” He kisses the little nub of her nose as she giggles with innocent joy. She doesn’t care about growing up too fast. All she cares about is the fact she gets to spend the day with her (second) favorite person.

Eggsy and Daisy build a castle fit for a princess and even build a blanket fort under which they watch a movie, but then he decides that they could both handle a nice outing to the nearby park. Taking a baby anywhere is not a quick trip at all. He makes sure he has her stroller loaded with extra diapers, formula, snacks, and some toys. Then he has to wrangle her into her winter coat and mittens, the ensemble not complete until he perches a tiny baby beanie on her blonde curls. Daisy huffs at the hat but fortunately doesn’t try to pull it off.

“Ah! Ah!” she shouts while throwing herself forward in the stroller making it rock forward just slightly. Shaking his head at her stubborn enthusiasm Eggsy quickly snaps a photo to send to Harry and then they are out the door into the crisp London air.
They spend a few hours wandering around their little neighborhood window shopping, stopping to pet all the pretty doggies that come close enough, and taking a short break on the swingset in the park. It’s beginning to get much chillier so Eggsy swings into a tea shop to get some warm milk for Daisy and a mug of hot tea for himself.

“You’re daughter is precious,” the lady behind the counter crows when she glimpses Daisy’s rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes.

Hearing a stranger referring to Daisy as his daughter is a jolt to the system, but Eggsy can’t deny that it is one of the best feelings of his life. He thanks the woman and has Daisy wave as they leave the store headed home.

They make it a block home before Eggsy’s neck tightens in suspicion. He turns to see if anyone is following him, but there isn’t anyone behind them except an older woman who is sweeping off her balcony onto the street below. He shrugs and continues on his way for about another block or so before quickly spinning around to try and catch the person following them in the act. Instead of seeing a man from the estates or even a random stranger, a tiny dog with liquid black eyes is peeking around the bush a few steps behind. Eggsy can feel his heart melting as the tiny thing creeps slowly from his safe spot and crouches down near the left wheel of the stroller.

“Well hello, sweetheart,” Eggsy murmurs. “Where did you come from little guy?”

The puppy is trembling all over as Eggsy slowly reaches down to wrap his hands around the thin body and pull it closer to his body warmth. There doesn’t seem to be any collar or any other form of identification on the pup. After a few minutes of internal debate, Daisy settles the issue when she again begins shouting “Ah!” and pointing towards their house just visible down the street. Surely Harry won’t be too mad that he brought home a puppy, right?

Okay, so Harry isn’t exactly angry when he walks in the door and is confronted with a bouncing and wiggling bundle of fur. More like frozen in disbelief is Eggsy’s final decision. Holding Daisy in his arms he just watches as Harry slowly places his briefcase on the hall table and toes off his shoes. He doesn’t seem to be doing anything other than staring at the puppy that is currently investigating his now empty shoes. Harry hums and then suddenly drops down to the floor to get on the pup’s level. Startled at the abrupt motion, the puppy growls and scurries behind the leg of the table. Harry hums again and reaches out carefully to pick up the scrap of silk fluff.
“Hello there little one. How did you appear in my house?” Harry smiles as the dog licks gently at his face. “Thank you for the kisses. Do you have a name?”

At this he looks up directly at Eggsy with a lifted eyebrow and crooked grin.

“Does this little pug have a name?”

“What do you mean a pug? Ain’t it a bulldog?” Eggsy was sure the puppy was a bulldog based on the snout and rolls of flesh. He frowns as Harry chuckles. “Are you laughing at me, bruv?”

“Of course not! But, Eggsy, this is not a bulldog. By my guess it’s only a few months old and it is definitely a pug. See his curly little tail? Where did you pick this little guy up?”

Eggsy sets the squirming Daisy on her feet and penguin walks her over to Harry’s lap where she immediately plops her bottom.

“Actually he kind of followed us home. We had a nice afternoon out and as we were headed back home I got the feeling that someone was following us. Turns out it wasn’t a person but a dog. I wasn’t sure what to do with him, but he was shivering and clearly hungry. I stopped by the Tesco down the street and picked up a small bit of dog food for him. He’s really gentle with Daisy as you can see, and he even whines when he needs to go wee.”

Harry, arms wrapped around Daisy, watches as the puppy playfully bats at the shoelaces on her baby slippers. Eggsy can feel his heart rate increase as Harry laughs softly when Daisy giggles and reaches out to pet the dog.

“And his name?”

“Oh! Well, I wanted to wait until you got home. I wasn’t sure if you wanted a dog in the house or not.”

“I don’t mind in the least. I had a dog once before; they provide great companionship. And Eggsy? I know you’ve already named him.”
Feeling the heat rise in his cheeks, Eggsy slides down the wall to sit perpendicular to Harry and Daisy.

“Okay, yeah. I was thinking about JB.”

“What does it stand for? James Bond?”

“Hardly. More Jack Bauer, yeah? Little bugger was stalking us for a good four blocks before I was finally able to catch him. Definitely spy material.”

Harry laughs at the absurd name before pulling the puppy up to his face and staring into the deep eyes.

“Well, JB, I guess I should welcome you to the family.” The puppy, seemingly understanding Harry, squirmed in happiness and yipped quietly. And that’s it. That is the moment that everything solidifies in Eggsy’s mind and in his heart. This is his family.

For months love and care have been readily available to Eggsy, and at first he thought he was just reacting to Harry in gratitude. However, the longer he spends time with man, the more support that Harry offers, the easy way he adapts to whatever follows Eggsy makes it clear that these feelings that seem to crush Eggsy’s heart are much more than gratitude. Love. Fuck, he’s in love with the man and he hasn’t told him yet.

He continues to sit in the hallway and watch as Harry plays gently with Daisy and JB. He seems completely enthralled with watching Daisy giggle and cuddle with the puppy while Eggsy has an internal freakout about his need to share his feelings. Not wanting to disturb his loves, Eggsy quietly stands up and heads to the kitchen to begin making dinner.

He begins preparing a simple dinner of bolognese, a favorite of theirs, to the soothing sounds of soft murmurs and giggles. He takes the time alone to think about his position and the full realization of his feelings towards Harry. He doesn’t know how Harry feels about him, so he doesn’t want to say anything just in case Harry doesn’t return his feelings. But, he has hope. Harry frequently slips and calls him darling, and he never refuses Eggsy when he wants to cuddle. The thoughts keep spinning through his mind as he stirs the softly bubbling sauce.

“Eggsy?”
Startled, Eggsy drops the wooden spoon into the pot as he spins around.

“Harry!” he cries. “Don’t sneak up on me like that!”

“Sorry, dear, I called your name from the hall, but you didn’t respond,” Harry explains patiently. “I was wondering if I needed to take JB on a short walk?”

“Nah,” Eggsy replies sheepishly. “I took him out right before you arrived, so he should be good for right now. How does spag bol sound for dinner?”

A slow smile spreads across Harry’s face as he steps up to sniff the pot on the stove. Eggsy restrains himself from leaning back against the warm strong chest that is just inches away from his own body. His restraint is tested further as Harry reaches both arms around to pull out the wooden spoon and taste the sauce.

“Mmmm...I think that is the best one you’ve made so far, Eggsy. Bolognese sounds perfect for dinner.”

“Thanks Harry,” Eggsy replies shakily.

“I actually wanted to talk about something.”

“What is it?” Eggsy turns to fully face Harry. “Something about work?”

Harry suddenly looks scared and he shifts his weight from one foot to the other. Eggsy waits, but Harry seems to be more enthralled with staring at the wall than at Eggsy.

“Harry? Come on, you’re beginning to scare me.” He reaches out to squeeze Harry’s bicep. “You know you can tell me anything.”

Harry shoots a quick glance at Eggsy’s face and then takes a deep breath.
“I was wondering if you would be amenable to dating,” he says in a rush of sound.

“I guess if the opportunity arose,” Eggsy replies slowly. He isn’t quite sure what Harry means. Suddenly Harry’s shoulders slump.

“So you aren’t really looking for anyone right now?”

Eggsy stares at Harry before he suddenly clues in.

“Wait. Are you asking me if I would like to date you?”

If anything Harry seems to fold into himself a little more. It is completely unusual to see the man so hesitant about anything since Harry is usually the one taking charge of the situation. Eggsy’s heart lurches at the sight. Seeking to reassure, he reaches out and slowly drags his hands up Harry’s arms in a warm caress. He steps closer.

“Harry, would you like to go on a date?”

Eggsy can feel the muscles under his hands tense, and he watches as Harry’s eyes go wide. Time stands still as Harry steps closer and leans into Eggsy’s space.

“Are you sure?,” Harry murmurs softly. Disbelief colors the tone of his shaky voice. He still doesn’t look Eggsy in the eye as he is too afraid of seeing disgust or disapproval.

Eggsy laughs and using the barest touch of his fingers tilts Harry’s head up so he can stare into the chocolate depths.

“Oh, Harry. You have no idea how sure I am. I would love, absolutely love, to go on a date with you.”

Before Harry can say anything Eggsy takes matters into his own hands and brings his lips to graze lightly across Harry’s. Once, twice, and then finally he properly kisses the man he has fallen in love with over the course of almost six months.

Chapter End Notes
Chester is going to get his just desserts, so just stick with me for a couple more chapters. You guys are seriously the best!
Harry doesn’t know what alternate universe he has stepped into, but he doesn’t really care either. He’s standing in his kitchen with his arms around the one he loves, and he’s being kissed within an inch of his life. Everything is good at the moment.

Eventually Eggsy does drop back down onto his feet, he’s on tiptoes to reach Harry’s height, and step back to stare at Harry. Harry stares back. Suddenly the kitchen is filled with laughter as both men move back in to cuddle some more.

“Why were you so hesitant to ask?” Eggsy asks from where his head is burrowed in Harry’s sweater. He waits as Harry gently rubs his hands in circles along Eggsy’s back.

“I’m not sure. Maybe it’s the fact that you are so much younger than I am? Or the fact that I am technically your employer as well as a pseudo-guardian?” He waits a moment more. “More realistically it’s because I haven’t dated in such a long time, I’m an old man, and you have become so important to me. I was scared I would lose you if I asked.”

Eggsy pulls his head up and glares at Harry.

“Harry, you are not old. And you aren’t going to lose me. I don’t know about you, but ever since we moved in I’ve felt a connection with you that I haven’t had with anyone else. Ever. Every time I see you playing with Daisy or when you try to help me with my coursework I fall a little bit deeper. I have the feeling that you are it for me Harry Hart, and no amount of arguing or self doubt from you is going to change that.” He leans up to brush another kiss against Harry’s lips. “Our little family might not be traditional in any sense of the word, but it’s ours.”

Before Harry can respond a squealing Daisy comes barreling into the kitchen closely followed by a slobbering JB. Taking cover behind Harry’s legs, the little girl tries to climb up to get away from
the playful puppy.

“‘Awwy, ‘Awwy,‘” she calls out with a gleeful shout.

Harry quickly scoops her up and tickles her tummy. She wraps her arms around his neck and quickly settles down. Eggsy smiles gently and rubs her back.

“You two loves should go relax in the lounge while I finish up dinner. Harry, you can put on a movie for her if you want. Just not F-R-O-Z-E-N.” He stares meaningfully as he spells out the dreaded movie title. Harry laughs but nods as he takes his little one back into the lounge.

Yes, Eggsy thinks. There is absolutely nothing traditional about their family except for the love that they have for each other.

Eggsy spends his week off getting JB settled into his new home and playing with Daisy. They spend their days quietly going about their new normal, and Eggsy couldn’t be happier about his life. His developing relationship with Harry is also keeping a smile on his face. There have been lots more kisses and even some touching after the little one has gone to bed. They are currently still in separate rooms, but Eggsy is angling to change that pretty soon.

Eggsy asks Carla to babysit one night so they can take their first “official” date as a couple. Of course she’s ecstatic and is practically bouncing when she shows up Wednesday night. He tries to make sure that she has their numbers and knows where they are going, but she just keeps trying to push them out the door.

“Yes, yes, Eggsy I know she gets a bottle before bed. I need to take JB out before 9 and give him his evening meal. I have your numbers, now go,” she cries. “You two are going to be late if you do not hurry up!”

“Oh, okay, I just wanted to make sure you had everything you need. Harry!” Eggsy calls. “We need to leave now if we are going to make the show.”

He rolls his eyes as he hears a muffled “coming” from upstairs. Carla snickers as Eggsy deliberately checks his watch when Harry finally steps into the lounge. Then she snickers again at
Eggsy’s reaction to Harry.

They are going to see a play at the National Theatre and then having a late dinner at one of the restaurants on the South Bank. As such, Harry has dressed to fit the part of a gentleman out on the town. While Eggsy is in the tailored blue suit that they had gotten before the trial, Harry has decided to go with a deep gray. It’s a little more snug than the ones that he usually wears to work, but Eggsy doesn’t mind a bit as it shows off Harry’s rather spectacular ass and long legs.

“Down boy,” Carla murmurs. Eggsy slaps a hand at her before going to straighten Harry’s tie. Harry smiles at Carla and looks around for Daisy.

“Let me just say bye to the little one and we can go,” he says.

Finally they are out the door and strolling along the street in the frosty air. January is coming to an end, but winter still has a stranglehold on the city. Not that Eggsy is complaining; it makes cuddling even more of a possibility. The evening is perfect in every single way. The show they see is a comedy that leaves both of them with sore stomachs by the time the lights come back up. Harry is in such a buoyant mood he doesn’t even mind the crushing crowds of people exiting the theatre as he normally would. He instead chooses to keep a firm grip on Eggsy’s hand and lets the crowd flow around them instead of fighting.

They debate where they want to eat after the show before settling on a Thai place. Eggsy looks up the reviews and finds a place named Sticky Mango that seems to be popular. It doesn’t close for another forty-five minutes, so they make their way down the river to where the restaurant is located. The city is still bright with life as couples meander their way up and down the side of the river. London looks fresh and welcoming with the gorgeous lights and the illumination of the Millennium Bridge and St. Paul’s Cathedral in the distance. At the restaurant, they are seated quickly, and both decide to order the spiced duck. Once their waiter has taken their order and left a carafe of water, they are left alone.

Harry reaches across the table and latches on to Eggsy’s extended hand. He can’t seem to stop himself from touching Eggsy every chance he gets. He rubs his thumb across the back of the smooth skin and then laces their fingers together.

“Thank you,” he says softly.

“For what,” Eggsy replies. His stomach had tumbled when Harry laced their fingers.
“For giving this a chance. I can’t tell you how much you and Daisy have come to mean to me. You’ve breathed new life into me. In danger of seeming too eager, I want this to be a forever type of relationship,” Harry continues.

Eggsy can see the nervousness hanging over Harry like a cloud. He doesn’t like seeing Harry doubt himself, not after all he has done to help Eggsy get to where he is now.

“Harry, in case you haven’t noticed yet, this is a done deal.” Eggsy reaches his other hand across the table to place it over Harry’s. “Look, I know the age thing is still bothering you, and there are probably a bunch of other issues that we are going to have. But honestly? I don’t consider this to be our first date. More of the first official one. You are already my partner in everything but name only. You help take care of my daughter and myself. We do the same with you. We are a family, Harry, and I have no intention of leaving that behind. I love you.”

“Excuse me?” Harry replies. Surely he didn’t hear Eggsy correctly.

“I should have told you when I first realized, but I was scared. I mean, come on Harry. I’m the one from the wrong side of the tracks. At first I was scared of being a burden to you. Then as we worked and lived together, I realized that you are the real deal. You take care of those you love, and sometimes do it at your own expense. Every time you smiled at me, helped Daisy, or made me feel like I am actually worth something I fell deeper and deeper in love. I wasn’t joking when I said you were it for me.”

Eggsy squeezes Harry’s hand and watches as he processes what has been said.

“I love you,” he finally says.

Eggsy smiles and gives Harry’s leg a nudge under the table.

“I know.”

Harry knows that he is still going to have periods of self doubt moving forward in the relationship. It is ingrained in him after years of hearing that he will never amount to anything from his father and the cautions of his mother about his poor choices in love. He knows Eggsy will no doubt have problems later on with his own insecurities. But for right now he is content to eat spiced duck with his love and finish off their night with the dessert that gives the restaurant it’s name.
When they get home Carla is passed out on the sofa with her tablet barely balanced on her stomach while JB is snuffling and snoring in his bed under one of the side tables. Eggsy motions for Harry to go to Carla while he heads upstairs to check on Daisy. He quietly pushes open her door to see her sleeping soundly, curled up with her otter. He smiles and brushes a soft kiss across her forehead and leaves the room as quietly and he entered.

Back downstairs he watches as Harry gently steers Carla to the door where her own boyfriend is now waiting to take her home. She had apparently texted him when Eggsy called to say they would be home in about an hour. He had heard a car pull up when he was with Daisy and had assumed that it was Tom.

“Thank you Carla for staying with our girl,” Harry says.

“Anything for true love,” she murmurs sleepily. Harry chuckles in reply and hands her bag to Tom.

“Have a good night,” Tom says and directs Carla out into the night to get into their car.

Harry shuts the door and makes sure all the locks are set and types in the code for the alarm. He doesn’t see Eggsy standing at the base of the stairs as he makes his final rounds making sure the doors and windows are all shut and locked. When he does turn to head upstairs he is shocked at the vision in front of him.

“Harry?” Eggsy asks as he slowly begins to pull his tie off and unbutton his shirt. He smiles as Harry’s eyes track the movement. “Can we go to bed now?”

Harry stumbles a little as he walks toward Eggsy. He can barely breathe as Eggsy uncovers a gorgeous chest with just the right amount of softness. He wants so very badly to just grab what is being offered and run with it. Unfortunately, those gentleman lessons are really drilled into his brain.

“Are you sure?” he asks in a strangled whisper.

“If you don’t help take the rest of my clothes off right now, Harry Hart, I am going to hurt you.” He pauses for emphasis. “Does that sound sure enough to you?”
Eggsy will forever deny it, but he definitely squeaks a little when Harry shrugs his own suit coat off and begins stalking towards him. He starts backing up the staircase and Harry settles his hands on his hips to help Eggsy navigate backwards. They take no notice of Harry’s dropped jacket or Eggsy’s shirt and tie. They will still be there in the morning.

There are warm sighs and soft kisses brushed across every available inch of skin as they make their slow trek up the stairs. Harry hesitates at the doorway to Eggsy’s bedroom, but Eggsy grabs onto his tie and pulls him further down the hallway.

“Uh-uh, we are doing this where we both belong: in your room, on your sheets.”

“Our bedroom,” Harry responds. “Our bedroom now.”

Once again Eggsy feels that tug in the bottom of his stomach that aches so sweetly. Damn, the things this man says sometimes. Finally they stumble into the open bedroom. The door shuts with a soft click behind him as he watches as Harry checks the baby monitor. Three long strides later Eggsy is back in Harry’s arms and they are making their way to the bed.

Eggsy quickly begins pulling off Harry’s shirt and tie and just throws them haphazardly around the room. He feels fingers near his dick and groans softly as Harry tries to unbuckle his belt. There’s a frenetic energy flowing through Harry as if he feels like he has to touch every piece of skin revealed. He can’t seem to get enough of Eggsy’s sweet kisses or the sensuous sighs that flow like water from his lips.

It’s on the third fumble of Eggsy’s belt that Eggsy places his hands on top of Harry’s.

“Shhh, love.” Eggsy pushes Harry back down on the bed. He pushes again at Harry’s shoulders to have him flat on his back. “Why don’t we slow this down just a bit, yeah?”

He smiles as Harry nods dumbly. Harry’s pupils are blown wide with desire, and his chest is heaving. Eggsy savors the subconscious actions of his body that let Eggsy know he is making Harry unravel. He slowly unbuckles Harry’s trousers and pulls them down the long legs that are currently splayed open. When Harry makes a motion to cover himself Eggsy grabs onto his hands and pins them above Harry’s head.

“Nope. No hiding from me, Harry. I love you and I want you comfortable, but you are not going to
deprive me of soaking in your glorious body.”

Eggsy straddles Harry’s hips after taking off his own trousers and both men groan as their groins grind together. Even through cotton and silk (Harry’s boxers) they both almost lose it at the feel of each other. Harry gets a tiny bit scared at the smile that spreads across Eggsy’s face, but his stomach clenches in anticipation at his words.

“Just lie back, love. Let me take care of the rest.”

For the next little while there is no talking, only soft sighs, deep groans, and the occasionally hissed “yes, Eggsy, yes.” Harry doesn’t know how long Eggsy keeps him wound up but he can’t say he isn’t enjoying what is happening. He doesn’t even remember the last time he had sex with someone he even remotely liked, so making love with the person he wants to spend the rest of his life with is something that is completely scrambling his mind. He is floating in a haze of arousal and doesn’t realize Eggsy is trying to get his attention until the second time he says his name.

“Harry?”

“Hmm?” he replies and runs his hands up Eggsy’s silken sides.

“How do you want this?”

It takes a minute for it to compute that Eggsy is asking if he wants to top or bottom. Usually Harry would choose to be the top, but there is something about Eggsy that brings out the vulnerability that he tries to hide. He needs reassurance tonight because he still can’t quite believe that someone as good as Eggsy would choose him.

“I want you, Eggsy. I just want you.”

Eggsy can feel the breath catch in his chest before releasing in a rush. He can see the hesitation in Harry, and can feel that he is holding something back. He trails kisses down Harry’s neck to his toned stomach and scrapes his blunt nails down his sides.

“Okay, Harry. Just breathe for me and let me love you.”
And that is exactly what Harry does. For perhaps the first time he lets go of the control that he has always felt he needed. Instead of over thinking or worrying about how his body compares to Eggsy’s, he simply soaks in the love that is being given freely.

When it is over, Harry can feel Eggsy plastered to his back and nuzzling along his hairline. There is a buzzing in his ears, and he can’t seem to get up enough energy to roll out of the way of the wet spot on the bed. He doesn’t realize that the buzzing sound is coming from him. It’s not buzzing at all but a constant stream of “love you, love you, love you.” He does hear Eggsy’s reply though.

“I love you so much, Harry Hart. Don’t you ever leave me.”

He doesn’t reply but does squeeze the fingers that are interwoven with his own.

oooOooo

Eventually the two of them get their strength back and clean themselves up in the shower. Harry dresses in a pair of pajama bottoms while Eggsy sticks to a pair of Harry’s boxers and a t-shirt. (He pointedly ignores Harry’s jokes about his own closet being 20 feet down the hallway.) Just as Harry is replacing the sheets on the bed, Daisy begins to cry.

“I’ve got it, love,” Eggsy says quietly. He brushes a kiss across Harry’s bare shoulder and leaves the room to go get the little girl.

Harry settles back into bed to wait and watches through the baby monitor as Eggsy gets Daisy back to sleep. After a song, diaper change, and a cuddle Eggsy is on his way back to Harry’s bed. Eggsy pauses in the doorway and just stares at Harry for the longest time. Feeling a blush stain his cheeks, he pulls the duvet further up his chest.

“And what exactly are you staring at,” he asks a tad crossly. He’s not used to people staring at him so intently.

“Just the most beautiful man in the world,” Eggsy replies with a smirk.

Harry humphs as Eggsy bundles himself into bed beside him. The lights are switched off and their bodies seek each others warmth in the darkness.
“Good night my love,” Harry murmurs softly into Eggsy’s hair. “Thank you for the best night of my life.”

“Night, Harry. And get used to it, there are going to be many more nights just like this one.”

The room settles into silence as Harry falls asleep for the first time in a long while with someone beside him. His love is here, his little girl is down the hall; life can’t get any sweeter than it is right now.

oooOooo

The next morning breaks bright and early when Eggsy gets a tiny foot to the dick and a small hand slapped on his face.

“’ggsy!!” Daisy happily shouts in response to his deep pain filled groan. “Up! Up!”

“Alright, Dais, alright.”

He sits up slowly and cuddles the little girl close. She giggles as he nuzzles against her cheek and curls her hands into his shirt. He smiles as Harry comes out of the bathroom dressed once again in a pristine suit. He doesn’t think he will ever get tired of seeing Harry saunter around looking like sex on legs leaving broken hearts in his wake. His smile widens as Harry winces just a tad when he sits down on the side of the bed.

“Mornin’ love,” he says gently as he rubs his hands up the back of Harry’s suit jacket trying to get to the warm skin hidden away.

Harry smiles and leans over to touch his lips against Eggsy’s.

“Good morning.”

The two sit on the bed grinning at each other stupidly before Daisy once again makes herself
“Eat! Eat!” she cries.

Harry scoops her up and tickles her tummy as he stands. Eggsy throws back the duvet and swings his legs to the side of the bed. He regrets it immediately as the chilled air brushes against his body.

“Okay, little miss terror.” Harry says playfully. He gives a significant look in Eggsy’s direction. “I do believe you have created a demanding monster.”

Eggsy splutters as he tries to deny his spoiling of Daisy.

“No! She isn’t demanding, Harry. She just knows what she wants and lets everybody around her know it as well. She’s got to stand up for herself!” he cries.

Harry laughs as he disappears out of the bedroom taking the little monster with him.

“Whatever you say, dear!” he calls in return.

oooOooo

When Eggsy makes it downstairs he finds Harry finishing a simple fry up and Daisy happily demolishing the porridge and fruit in her own bowl. Once again not being able to resist touching Harry, Eggsy sneaks up behind him and wraps his arms about Harry’s waist. He meant to keep it a simple hug, but when Harry pushes his ass back against his front he can’t withhold the soft groan.

“Hmmm...Harry, don’t make me embarrass myself in front of Daisy.”

Harry laughs in reply and hands him a plate with eggs, sausage, beans, and toast.

“Then go sit and eat.”
The rest of the morning is spent in quiet conversation over breakfast and cleaning up the kitchen together. Harry, as always, is running late so Eggsy runs around gathering his briefcase and winter coat while he grabs his lunch from the fridge. Harry brushes a kiss across Daisy’s head and then pulls Eggsy in for a more in depth kiss goodbye.

“Have a good day at work,” Eggsy murmurs against Harry’s lips. “I love you.”

“Love you,” Harry responds.

After Harry leaves, Eggsy and Daisy have a pretty normal Thursday morning. They play in the back garden, take JB for a walk, and then settle in for storytime at the local library. Everything is going smoothly until Eggsy’s phone buzzes with an alert from his Guardian news app.

BREAKING: HIGH PROFILE LONDON SOCIAL WORKER ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF FRAUD AND ENDANGERING A CHILD

The banner flashes across his screen in all its red boldfaced glory. When Eggsy clicks on the provided link a picture of Chester pops up. The man looks defeated in a way that honestly makes Eggsy gleeful. He skims the article and frowns as it describes the arrest that happened the afternoon before. Apparently he was arrested at Kingsman with all the other employees looking on. The article goes on to say that the charges had been brought against Chester as a result of his interference in a child endangerment case and that this interference led to the discovery of his other nefarious actions. At the bottom of the article there is an advert for BBC One. They will be interviewing some associates of Kingsman beginning at 1pm.

Looking at the time, Eggsy figures they can make it back home just in time if they hustle. Making sure that Daisy is properly buckled into the stroller, he begins jogging up the street headed home. He hopes they have video footage of Chester being taken away. That would be bloody perfect.

oooOooo

“Good Afternoon, everyone. This is Michelle Ackerly here with some breaking news out of London. Our reporters were made aware of an arrest yesterday afternoon at the prestigious Kingsman Social Work Agency. This is a firm that has been in business almost fifty years without any sort of negative news coverage, but that is all about to change due to the actions of the current director, and owner, Chester King. Our own Anita Rani has more. Anita?”
The screen changes and Eggsy can see Anita standing on the steps outside the front doors of Kingsman. He doesn’t see anyone else around, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t standing to the side or even still inside the building.

“Thank you Michelle. I am here at Kingsman located in what all would describe as one of the wealthiest communities in London. While we are not directly on Savile Row, we certainly aren’t too far away from it. This might seem an odd choice for a Social Work Agency, but when I dug deep into the records behind the facade, it all began to make sense. I will have a more detailed investigative report later tonight on BBC One, but we wanted to make the public aware of what has transpired here in the last twenty-four hours.”

Eggsy gasps as the camera pans backwards and he can see Roxy, Merlin, Harry, and even Charlie (Chester’s nephew) arranged on the steps beside Anita.

“I have here with me the main staff of social workers associated with Kingsman as well as King’s nephew. They have been integral to this case. Miss Morton?”

Roxy steps up to take the microphone from Anita. Her face is resolute and firm as she stares directly into the camera.

“We at Kingsman take pride in our work to extend a helping hand to those who are in need. My colleagues and I spend hours trying to keep the children of this city safe and cared for on a daily basis. When we realized that this was being threatened by the actions of Chester King, we took swift and decisive action. I cannot comment too much as there is a formal investigation still being conducted, but I will say this: Chester King will no longer be affiliated with Kingsman, and he will no longer be in a position to place children in harm’s way. Thank you,” she concludes and steps back.

Anita looks confused and prompts further.

“Mr. King, can you explain that statement?”

This time Charlie steps up. Eggsy hasn’t seen a whole lot of Charlie as he is also away at school, but he does know that Charlie is nothing like Chester. He’s actually closer to Harry in temperament and beliefs. He also enjoys slipping Daisy biscuits when he thinks no one is looking.

“Happily, Ms. Rani. While Kingsman has been an extension of the government, it was founded by
my grandfather Carlyle King in 1973. He was a warm and generous man who wanted to use his considerable wealth to help others. For almost thirty years he ran the agency with decency and love. When he passed away in 2002 my uncle, Chester King, was left as director. Unfortunately Chester has not continued on in my grandfather’s legacy. It wasn’t until one of Miss Morton’s clients needed additional help that we realized he was actually committing crimes in the guise of acting as a social worker. Once Chester was arrested yesterday afternoon the King family voted in a new director. Actually I should say co-directors. I am pleased to announce that Merlin Graves and Harry Hart will be the new leaders of the agency. They each were hired by my grandfather before he passed and exhibit the care and love that Carlyle prized. Kingsman has also taken legal steps of our own to sever the relationship between Chester King and Kingsman.”

“How is the family reacting to this news Charlie?” Anita asks solemnly.

“We are incredibly disappointed, as you can imagine. Furthermore, we are all deeply ashamed that we allowed this to occur. We assumed we had protections in place to prevent this from happening, but obviously they did not help. To put it simply, we are devastated that our grandfather’s legacy has been damaged in such a way and that children’s lives have potentially been placed in danger.”

“Well, I thank you all for being here with me today. As I mentioned earlier, there will be a more in depth look at Chester King, his business deals, and the hard work of Miss Morton that got a judge interested enough to start his own investigation. Back to you Michelle.”

Eggsy turns the telly off once the presenter moves the conversation along to the latest disaster regarding Brexit. His head is absolutely swimming at the information just presented. He’s also a little miffed that Harry didn’t say anything about Chester getting arrested at all last night. He knows it was their first date, but come on! That is something incredibly important. He pulls out his phone to see if Harry has texted or called, but nothing. Ugh. Fine, he will wait until Harry gets home, but they are definitely talking about this.

Harry doesn’t get home until almost six. Eggsy is camped out on the sofa with a plate of stir fry and a bottle of water. Harry doesn’t even have a chance to say hello before Eggsy is pointing into the kitchen.

“Your plate is in the oven keeping warm. Go grab it and then come sit down; the Chester special is about to come on,” he says around a mouthful of chicken and rice.

Instead of arguing Harry does exactly as he is told though he does bring Daisy an extra juice box
out with him. She is sitting on the floor in front of the sofa eating her own dinner of a cheese sandwich with steamed veggies. Just as he sits down beside Eggsy, Anita Rani pops onto the screen and introduces herself.

“Shhhhh!” Eggsy hisses even though Harry had no intention of saying anything. He’s just as interested in what Anita is going to say since he was only privy to the arrest and then the changing of directors. Roxy was apparently warned not to say anything about the embezzlement and child endangerment as it could undermine the investigation.

Both men watch enthralled as Anita goes through every bit of public evidence filed about Chester King and his business deals using Kingsman funds. Harry can feel his blood boil as it is exposed that Chester used thousands of Kingsman pounds to fund exotic trips for himself and his mistress, his wife, and Montague. There are receipts of transactions for cars, jewels, even homes that can be traced back to the dwindling Kingsman coffers. No wonder Chester always refused to update the computer systems and to beef up the agents spending limit. He was taking all the money for himself.

The truly shocking thing is when Anita reveals that Chester was taking cases but not investigating them. He would cash in the government assistance in Kingsman’s name and then pocket that money without ever really investigating the allegations. At this point, Anita reports, they haven’t been able to identify a complete list, but there are at least twenty that fall into this category. None of those ignored cases has resulted in the death of a child, but there is evidence that the abuse in the homes continued without abatement. Harry feels his stomach flip at the thought of helpless children being continually abused because Chester wanted to travel to Bora Bora.

At the end of the almost twenty minute segment Anita makes a stunning conclusion.

“After completing this research it would not surprise me if King was placed in prison for the foreseeable future. If he is ever released the government will surely be seeking repayment on these cases of embezzlement. I was also made aware that his brother-in-law, Grayson Montague, has just been taken into custody on multiple counts of coercion and extortion for his actions in helping King. This is a story that just keeps exposing more twists and turns the deeper you go. If you would like to keep up with this story follow me at anrabbc1 on Twitter. Hold your little ones close and have a good night.”

Harry reaches over and takes the remote from Eggsy’s lifeless hands. He turns off the telly and then pulls a dozing Daisy up to rest between the two men. Silence fills the room. It’s not necessarily oppressive; it’s more contemplative. Eggsy knows his family is safe and out of Dean’s (and Chester’s) clutches. He just wishes it never had to get to this point for Chester to be placed where he needs to be: behind bars. Finally Harry breaks the silence.
“I apologize for not telling you sooner about Chester’s arrest. I just didn’t want him to mess up something else in your life,” he begins. Eggsy turns his body to face Harry and leans across, being mindful of Daisy, and gives a sweet kiss.

“I’ll admit that I was upset when I saw the news earlier. Especially when you appeared with Merlin and Rox. But then I realized that you were just protecting me the way you always do. Now I’m just upset you didn’t tell me you got a promotion!”

Harry blushes and ducks his head. He never expected for the King family to place that much faith in him, but he feels so very grateful for the opportunity. He wants to build Kingsman back up to be what it was when Carlyle was alive: a safety net for those in need.

“I’m still honestly a little shocked at that part. I thought they would place Charlie in charge, but he wants to focus on his business law degree. So the family decided they wanted people who knew Carlyle to be in charge again. Roxy was actually promoted as well. While she will still be taking on occasional social cases, she is now the head lawyer for the firm. Her performance and dedication to you and Daisy showed where her strengths really lie: fighting for the underdogs.”

“Well, I’m glad this all worked out for everyone. Do you think Montague will turn on Chester?” Eggsy asks around a yawn.

“Montague is probably handing over everything he has on Chester as we speak. He’s actually not a bad guy. He is a great lawyer in his own right, but he lets others influence him. That influence is what led him to taking Dean on as a client,” Harry responds. “Here, give me your plate and I’ll go wash the dishes. You go on up with Daisy. I’ll be up to help in a bit.”

Eggsy nods and takes Daisy upstairs to begin her nightly routine. She gets a little rambunctious in the bath and Eggsy ends up with more bubbles on him than on her, but the lavender scented shampoo soon has her back into a state of drowsiness. Harry arrives just as Eggsy secures her fresh diaper and pulls her pajamas over her head. She reaches out for Harry, so he passes her over after he drops a kiss on her head.

“Go and take your shower,” Harry murmurs as he settles into the rocker in the corner. “I’ll get her settled down for the night.”

Eggsy isn’t going to argue with that offer, so he gives her another kiss, says goodnight, and leaves the room quietly. He takes the baby monitor into the bathroom with him and listens as Harry sings Daisy to sleep. It’s practically putting him to sleep as well, so he quickly finishes scrubbing and then climbs out of the shower.
Soon enough he is towed off and bundled under the duvet cover. He tries to wait until Harry arrives before falling asleep, but the draw of slumber is too hard to resist and he gives in. When Harry steps into the quiet bedroom he smiles at the sight before him. The only part of Eggsy visible is the tuft of hair peeking out from the top of the covers. Chuckling softly he completes his own nightly routine and then climbs into bed beside Eggsy.

“Mmgdnt,” the lump beside him mumbles.

“Goodnight, Eggsy,” he replies.

The house settles into that silence that blankets a home when everyone is sleeping contentedly. Harry feels the draw as well, but resists to pull Eggsy closer. Once he has that physical contact he is finally content as well.

oooOooo

Over the next few weeks Harry and Eggsy keep a close eye on the developments with Chester’s case. Harry’s prediction that Montague would turn on Chester turns out to be true as Montague holds an entire press conference and volunteers his services and knowledge to the prosecuting attorneys. Roxy is called to testify along with all the other Kingsman employees once the trial gets underway. At first Eggsy is worried that he will be called on as well, but the judge from the custody case steps in and provides the information Eggsy already presented.

At the beginning of March, after the five week trial, Montague is sentenced to five years probation for his involvement, and he also has his law license suspended for two years. Chester does not come away from the trial as lucky. He is sentenced to twenty years in prison and is ordered to pay back the 150,000 pounds total he embezzled from the government. The actual total is upwards of 500,000 pounds, but most of that was family money invested into Kingsman.

Chester King will forever be known as a liar, a coward, and a person who doesn’t give a damn about those in need. Harry’s heart weeps for Carlyle’s memory, but he is certainly happy that Chester is finally receiving his just desserts.

Chester King has been defeated. They are all safe.

oooOooo
The night of the sentencing Harry is putting the dishes away when Eggsy speaks from behind him.

“Harry?”

“Hmmm?”

“Have you heard that song on the radio?”

“You’re going to have to be more specific darling. There are lots of songs on the radio.”

“Just listen,” he sighs. He clicks the play button on the bluetooth speaker and the beginning notes of a guitar and piano flow out. The tune sounds familiar, but Harry can’t place it. He turns at a tap on his shoulder to find Eggsy standing close with his hand outstretched.

“Will you dance with me?” he asks with a nervous smile.

Harry can feel his heart rate increase as he grasps the offered hand and pulls Eggsy close. The couple slowly revolve around the kitchen as the smooth voice begins to sing. Harry isn’t really paying attention to the lyrics until Eggsy begins to follow along.

“When I need to get home, you’re my guiding light. You’re my guiding light,” he sings softly. He goes quiet for a bit before continuing. “And I have not yet lost my will, Oh and I will keep on moving till, till I find my way home.”

Harry feels the breath stop in his lungs as the meaning behind the song becomes clear. He clutches Eggsy closer to him as his eyes begin to burn. They both are silent as they let the song play all the way through two more times. Slowly moving around the kitchen holding each other close they are in their own little world separate from all outside influence.

All of their experiences, individual challenges and the ones faced together, have brought them to this point. They both followed their guiding lights to find each other in the chaotic world around them. How else would a twenty-five year old almost marine find a forty-five year old social worker? They aren’t sure what they have done to deserve each other, but they are certainly not going to complain. They are grabbing onto each other with both hands and never letting go.
They are each other’s guiding light. They are home.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you again for following along and giving kudos and comments.

And check out the song. "Guiding Light" by Foy Vance. I'm not joking or exaggerating when I say I cried the first time I heard it. From that moment it has been my inspiration for this story. Let me know what you think!

Youtube Link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nnw4STQMSc
Chapter 16

Thank you so very much for coming on this journey with me. I honestly never thought I would finish this fic, but here we are. Over a year of writing and then four months of editing/posting struggles. Your comments have kept me motivated and for that I can’t thank you enough.

Love you guys.

(And I actually posted this BEFORE I said I would.)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

July 2018

“Harry!” Eggsy calls into the house. “Hurry up and bring the lunch basket! We’ve got to leave soon.” He checks Daisy to make sure she is buckled in safely, and he also checks JB’s safety harness as well. He doesn’t want the straps too tight around the dog’s tummy or chest.

“Are you ready for the park love?” he asks.

“Mmmm-hmmm,” she murmurs as she tries to reach her shoes to untie the laces. Eggsy gently removes her hands and gives her a toy she can play with instead. Suddenly she looks up and cries “Papa!”

“I’m coming Daisy baby,” a smooth voice calls out.

Eggsy turns to watch Harry make one final check of their picnic basket before closing and locking the door behind him. Harry has been feeling some stress lately as Kingsman is becoming increasingly in demand. Merlin and Roxy have actually had to delay their wedding in response to the influx of cases the government is sending their way. Even in the face of the onslaught he and Merlin are doing a bang up job of upholding the integrity of Carlyle King, and Eggsy couldn’t be prouder.

Harry’s increasing need for distractions have resulted in many more opportunities for family outings which Eggsy certainly isn’t complaining about. Eggsy takes a second, or two, to appreciate the sight of Harry Hart in jeans and a button down. He doesn’t dress down often, but ever since
they married in January he has made more of an effort to unwind a little. It helps that he spends most of his time with a two and a half year old as well. Pristine suits aren’t usually pristine after thirty minutes spent playing superheroes in the garden.

“You called your mother?” Harry asks after placing the food in the basket under the stroller. Eggsy hands the stroller off to him and then resettles JB’s leash in his own hand.

“Yeah, she said she would meet us at the park. She sounded good and was eager to see Daisy.”

Harry nods and begins pushing the stroller down the street to the main road. Eggsy follows along and threads his arm through Harry’s. Harry keeps up a steady stream of conversation with Daisy about things they see as they make their way to their local park. Daisy, a precocious and intelligent child, asks Harry about the signs they pass, why the sun shines, and even why JB can’t talk. Eggsy simply listens as they walk along the road side smiling at the passersby. There are days that he still can’t believe how much his life has changed in two years. Never would he have thought that two years after being arrested he would be married, raising his sister as their daughter, and working as a children’s nurse while he finishes up his studies. Fate finally decided to give Eggsy Hart a break, and he will be forever grateful for what he has.

When they arrive at the park, Michelle is spreading a blanket under a huge oak tree and setting out some toys for Daisy. When Daisy spots her she begins bouncing in her seat shouting “Mummy!” Harry stops the stroller and Eggsy bends down to unbuckle the squirming little girl. Once she is released she shoots across the grass like an arrow to fall into Michelle’s waiting lap. Harry and Eggsy are much more dignified as they cross the park, but even Eggsy cannot resist scooping his mother up into a firm hug.

If two years has changed Eggsy’s life drastically, the same can be said for Michelle. After the trial she officially divorced Dean and returned to rehab for another six months. Today marks her one year anniversary of being clean and sober on her own, so they decided to celebrate by having a mini party in the park. The day is perfect; they all eat and laugh way too much, but laughter is something that Michelle and Eggsy cherish deeply.

Eggsy can feel the anxieties over work fade away as he watches his little girl play with their mum in the warm summer sun. That view is just a touch sweeter at the sight of his husband (and he still gets butterflies at that word) playing right alongside. Soon it is time for everyone to head home and Michelle says goodbye to Daisy before motioning Eggsy closer to her. Her eyes are darting back and forth between her daughter and son, and her hands are twisted together at her waist. Taking the hint Harry ropes Daisy into helping him pack up the rest of the food to give them some privacy. When they are finally alone Michelle takes a deep breath before speaking.
“Thanks for arranging this Eggsy. I’ve enjoyed today so very much. I know this hasn’t been easy on you either, so I just wanted to thank you for everything. Letting me still be a part of Daisy’s life, and yours, is a gift that I cherish,” Michelle says with watery eyes and a small smile.

Eggsy pulls her into a tight hug. He buries his head in her neck when her arms wrap around him and hold on firmly.

“Mum, you will always be Daisy’s mum. I never intended to keep you away from her. I just wanted her to be safe from Dean and the drugs. I’m so glad things are working out for you as well. Who knew we would be where we are today, yeah?”

Michelle chuckles.

“I definitely never thought you would be married to a rich bloke, that’s for sure.” She sobers after a minute of shared laughter. “Eggsy, I was thinking it’s about time that you both formally adopt Daisy.”

“But, mum,” Eggsy begins shocked. He thought they had just established he wasn’t trying to take Daisy away.

“No, listen. Daisy already calls him papa and you daddy. It works for her, and to be honest it works for me. I know I’ve been sober for a year, and that is a major accomplishment. I hate to say it, but if you allowed me to take back custody, I think I would end up drinking again. I still remember the feeling of helplessness I had when she was a baby. Sometimes I still wake in a panic thinking I hear her screaming. I didn’t know what to do, what to say, and I couldn’t handle it. I was exactly the same way when you were a baby. The only difference then was I had Lee to lean on and help out. It’s difficult for me to say this, but I’m not the type of person that handles difficulty well. You and Daisy were never mistakes, but I’m not convinced I was the right person to be your mother. At least not to be the one totally responsible for you. It scares me. I love Daisy, but I don’t see how I could ever be completely responsible for her again.”

She takes a breath as her eyes widen just a bit. She once again pulls her arms up to her waist and twists her fingers together staring at him in silence. He stares back.

“Mum, you are the strongest woman I know.”
She’s shaking her head before he can even finish his sentence.

“No, Eggsy I’m not strong. That was always the problem. If I had been strong Dean never would have entered our lives, and I could have held it together after Lee died.”

Her eyes turn down to the ground. Those fingers are still twisting right then left.

“That’s not fair. I don’t know what I would do if I lost Harry the way you lost Da. You did the best you could, and even if that wasn’t perfect, I know you did it for us. If you want us to formally adopt her, I’m sure Harry would be happy to do so. He loves her so much, and she adores him in return. And you know how I feel about her. I just don’t want you to feel like we are pushing you away or anything like that. She still needs her mum, and so do I.”

“It’s not like I’m planning on leaving Eggsy,” Michelle chides now staring right at him. “I still want to see you both and go on outings like this one. I just wanted to let you know how I am feeling.”

“Daddy! Come on!” Daisy calls from behind Eggsy. He chuckles quietly before murmuring, “and the little terror calls.”

Michelle gathers her remaining belongings and they all walk her to the tube station. Michelle scoops Daisy up for hugs and kisses once they come to a stop at the entrance.

“Bye Mummy!” the little girl calls as she runs back over to demand Harry pick her up. He sighs grudgingly, but still complies with the demands. Michelle’s smile broadens at the obvious adoration between both of them.

“Bye Mum,” Eggsy says quietly. He brushes one last kiss across her cheek. “I love you.”

“I love you too, Eggsy. I’ll call you soon,” she replies.

The Hart family stands and watches her head into the station and pass through the turnstile. Sighing a little sadly, Eggsy turns to take JB’s leash from Harry. The walk back to their home is much quieter than earlier as Daisy falls asleep less than five minutes into their walk. Soon they reach their little corner of London, and Eggsy takes care of the picnic supplies as Harry carries Daisy up to her room and puts her down for her nap.
Eggsy is standing in the hall staring at the picture from their wedding day that hangs on the wall when he hears Harry come back down the stairs. He never goes a day without stopping and just barely touching his fingers to the cool glass. Inside the plain black frame he and Harry stand in all their wedding finery. One doesn’t even need to see the “I do” balloons in the background to know it is a wedding photo. The sappy smiles and flashing rings would be enough clues. Not to mention the open looks of love. Standing between them is little two year old Daisy. She’s holding on to both of their hands and is kicking her feet up into the air with her flouncy yellow dress flying in all directions. Not a care in the world except to have fun and be happy. He loves this photo.

Harry wraps his arms around Eggsy’s waist and rests his head on the crown of Eggsy’s.

“What has you so quiet love,” he asks. Eggsy turns to face Harry and buries his head in his chest.

“Mum of toad pdasy,” Eggsy mumbles.

“I’m sorry Eggsy, you are going to have to form actual words if you want me to understand you,” Harry replies with a chuckle.

“Mum said she wanted us to formally adopt Daisy.”

Everything within Harry stops. His fingers freeze in their movement along Eggsy’s back. He feet put down roots. He’s not even sure if he is breathing.

“Oh.” Okay, he must be breathing if he is able to talk.

“Harry?”

“Ummm...well, how do you feel about it?” Harry refuses to show the joy he feels if Eggsy isn’t behind this as well.

“To be perfectly honest I was nervous at first. I don’t want Mum to feel like she is being pushed out of her daughter’s life or anything. She shot that down immediately though. In her eyes she
doesn’t think that she is strong enough to be fully responsible for Daisy. Is it bad that a part of me kind of agrees with her? Everything would be much easier if we adopted her.” Harry pulls Eggsy closer at the question.

“Eggsy. How many times do I have to tell you that your feelings about Michelle are valid. You are a good son doing the best you can,” he huffs. Pausing, he focuses back to the original question. “Adopting Daisy would be one of the best things I’ve ever done in my life. It would be a joy to officially be one of her guardians. While I am definitely in support of this, I’m going to leave it up to you. Michelle doesn’t have parental rights now, but she could eventually earn them back if she so chooses. You are Daisy’s parent. You are the one that has final say so,” he says.

The hall is filled with silence as Harry watches as Eggsy’s nose scrunches up and the fine little wrinkles in his forehead appear. After a while the frown lines disappear and the dimples begin to make an appearance.

“Then I think we should do it. She already considers us to be her parents, and she will always have Mum as well. This is just one more way our family is special,” Eggsy finally replies.

His breath catches as Harry shoves him away to quickly pull out his phone and dial a number. Eggsy’s nose once again scrunches up in confusion.

“Who are you calling right now?” he asks.

“Hey Merlin, can I talk to Rox?” Harry asks. There’s a half beat of silence. “Roxy, I have a question. Can you start the paperwork for Eggsy and I to adopt Daisy?”

Harry quickly pulls the phone away from his ear and even Eggsy can hear the squeals coming from the phone. He can practically see Roxy dancing around Merlin’s house holding the phone to her ear. She’s been nominated as honorary aunt and takes her role of Daisy protector seriously.

“YES! I will get started on that first thing Monday! I’m so happy for you guys!” Roxy shouts. “Even if it pulls me away from choosing my wedding colors!”

They hear her calling for Merlin before the line abruptly goes dead.

“She bloody hung up on me,” Harry grumbles.
Eggsy simply laughs and heads into the kitchen to put away the remaining food from the picnic.

“Hey, Harry?” he calls.

“Yes, love?”

“Does this mean we can finally get another dog?”

“No, Eggsy.”

*That's okay, he thinks, I can always bribe Daisy to ask.*

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed!

End Notes

Comments are always welcomed!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!