Ammonia Removes Blood Stains But Ink is Forever

Saved the world—twice? Check.
Completely awesome princess wife? Check.
Mentor he may or may not have a small crush on back from the dead? Check.
Aside from absolutely everything else being a disaster, Eggys's life is looking pretty good, but good things just never seem to stay checked for long now, do they?
Obligatory post-Golden Circle fic, where certain characters continue the popular trend of not actually being dead and Eggys has to confront the fact he fell in love with a lepidopterist and then married royalty.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes
Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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The grand story of Eggsy Unwin—two-time saver of the world and general kickass super spy—is actually quite easily divided into neat little chapters, which he gets to revisit each time his life flashes before his eyes. Which is often, considering his line of work.

Chapter One: Before Dad died.

Chapter Two: When he did.

He doesn’t really enjoy the next few chapters after that. And they can be pretty much lumped together anyway so the story mostly goes like this:

Chapter Three: Before Harry Hart came into his life.

Chapter Four: When he did.

And of course from there on out the chapters include a lot more evil plots and saving of the world and, as of two weeks ago, even getting married to a princess of all people, which is chapter twelve. But exciting as they are, when Eggsy is staring down the barrel of a gun, it isn’t any of those events that jump to the forefront of his mind. It’s the moment of agreeing to a drink with the pompous asshole who just bailed him out of jail.

The problem, Eggsy decides, is that he probably fucking imprinted on Harry while he was a maggot or larvae or whatever being transformed into a caterpillar, which is why he can’t get the man’s face out of his mind when he really should be trying not to die.

There’s eight of them, all with guns or knives in hand, and he’s surrounded. Normally this would present no problem, but he was an idiot who decided to leave his umbrella behind in the cab along with the pocket grenades and then took a jump he really shouldn’t have and dislocated his shoulder while catching onto a windowsill and losing his gun in the process. His first response is to ask Merlin to find him a bloody way out of this, but of course there is no Merlin. Or at least, he’s not the right Merlin. Acknowledging this new tech assistant, even if it would be the intelligent thing to do, feels like outright betrayal. The only voice Eggsy wants in his ear has a rough Scottish accent. This new guy has a tendency to babble anyway.

Also, he might have lost his glasses in the fall.

Well, if he’s going to die while his brain plays those first few hours with Harry on endless repeat, he might as well get it over with. He tries to shift his dislocated shoulder and is only rewarded by pain. Okay, he’s doing this one handed.

It really sucks this was a solo mission in safe hometown London. He hadn’t said a proper goodbye to anyone.

Eggsy straightens up the best he can, puts on his cockiest grin, and gestures for the men to come at him.

Two shots ring out. Eggsy winces, but there’s no pain. Or at least, no extra pain to tack on. He opens his eyes and sees the two men dead on the pavement. That definitely was not him.
Not that he’ll say no to a little aid here. Another few shots go off, but Eggsy is preoccupied with rushing the man who had been pointing the gun in his face, now a shouting and confused wreck, searching for where the sniper is hiding. He gets his wits about him and sights Eggsy when Eggsy makes his move, but panicked bullets are easy to dodge. Eggsy reaches for his wrist, and then twists the man’s arm up and around until he can snatch the gun for himself. Three more go down with cries of surprise before they can turn on him. Eggsy shoots the last two himself, thanks whatever guardian deity of spies there is, and then looks up to the crumbling brick wall where his unexpected helper sits balanced with their rifle in their lap, watching him from beneath the brim of a baseball cap.

“Um...thanks,” Eggsy calls up. “You really saved my ass.”

“Buy me a drink and we’ll call it even,” the mystery shooter calls back, and then jumps neatly from the wall so he can see her smile, even under a cloud-laden night sky. Eggsy’s chest seizes up.

Because the story goes like this:

Chapter Nine: Kingsman is destroyed. Nothing left. All gone.

Chapter Thirteen: Except for Roxy.

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“How the hell did you get out? I thought you were dead. I thought you were fucking dead!” After they had blown up the chemical lab on the Thames that was the mission, Roxy had taken the wheel of Eggsy’s cab without question, so now all Eggsy’s remaining energy can be spent on freaking out. “Have you been stalking me?”

Roxy sighs. She’s dressed more casually than he’s ever seen from her, the cap and a sweatshirt with worn-out jeans. She could have passed as his neighbor growing up, no trace of her posh upbringing. “Bomb shelter in the floor beneath the bed. Twelve inches solid steel on all sides. Crude, and resulted in a few broken bones and a severe concussion when the whole building caved in, but obviously it worked.”

“So you’ve been alive the whole time?” Eggsy has gotten over Harry’s not-really-death with the fact Harry wasn’t even aware of the emotional distress he caused Eggsy pretty much daily, but it’s been nine months since Poppy Adams’ attack. “You could have given me a ring, said hello.”

She takes a particularly sharp turn down a side street and glares at him. “I was in hiding. Well, intensive hospital care, and then hiding. Totally cut off until I decided to risk it two months back. But the shop is gone...so was your house...I didn’t even know for sure you were alive until I saw it in the newspaper. Your marriage, I mean.” She turns her attention back to driving. “I’ve been tailing you since you got back from your honeymoon. Had to make sure, you know?”

Yes, he knows. His first instinct after Poppy’s attack had been to pull a gun on Merlin, after all. “Well, thanks for the help back there.”

“Don’t mention it.”

“So do you trust I didn’t set a missile on you now?”

She eases into a stop and grins at him. “We’re good.” The stop turns into a quick and precise parallel park. “This is my place. Let me set your shoulder.”
It’s a crummy little apartment complex, but Eggsy grew up in places like this so he keeps his mouth shut. There’s no security heading into the building, aside from the lady smoking pot out on the steps who doesn’t even blink at Eggsy’s disheveled appearance. Roxy leads him up three flights of stairs, and then to a door located conveniently right beside the fire escape. She knocks twice on the brick beside the door, which flips around to reveal a retinal scanner, an electronic passcode, and a little light that turns from red to green when Roxy leans in and mutters her dead poodle’s name.

“That probably wasn’t part of the lease agreement,” Eggsy tries to joke as Roxy finally grabs a key from her pocket and lets them into the apartment, but mostly he just feels like shit. Roxy has been living like this because Eggsy never even bothered to think she could be alive, but Roxy is Lancelot, the one tried and true Kingman between them who actually passed the tests with flying colors. If Eggsy was able to cheat death, then of course she could as well.

“So...now you found me, you sort of know about what happened with Kingsman then?” he ventures as he goes to sit on the bed Roxy points him to. She nods as she moves across the one-room apartment to the kitchen area. A bottle of Scotch is unearthed from a cupboard, and then some bandages and wrapping from another.

“Yeah. Well, I knew it had to be a Kingsman agent who took care of the Poppy Adams business, but I didn’t know how bad it was…” She trails off, standing in the middle of the room with a single lightbulb on a string hanging above her head, and then she opens the bottle of Scotch with her teeth, spits the lid out at her feet, and takes a deep swig. She breathes out heavily as she lowers the bottle from her lips. “Didn’t know about Merlin. Thought Merlin would make it out, at least. Happy for you that Harry’s alive though.”

“Oh, yeah. Thanks.” The by-the-way approach to Harry’s resurrection startles him a little. He tends to assume that Harry has the same wrecking ball effect on the lives of everyone he meets, but Roxy just continues to the bed and hands Eggsy the bottle.

“Drink.” The bandages get dumped on the bed and Roxy sits on the side with the bad shoulder. “You drinking?” she asks as she gets both hands right where the bone is grinding wrong. Eggsy takes a quick sip and nearly spits it out when she pops the shoulder back into place with one precise and painful motion. A trickle of liquid escapes through his lips and travels down his chin. “Okay, better wrap that wrist.”

Eggsy stares down at his wrist, where the fabric of his suit had pulled away to expose his skin to the raking brick as he fell down the side of a building. The scrape is bright red and oozing little drops of blood, but he hadn’t really noticed it over the pain of his shoulder. Roxy gets back up off the bed as Eggsy works to bandage himself up. She leans against the wall and watches him with arms crossed. It hurts to see her so closed off to him. Best friend. Best agent. Jesus, that was so long ago.

“We got some Americans now,” Eggsy tells her as he covers some shallow cuts on his other arm. “Statesmen, they’re called.”

“I’ve noticed. They tend to walk funny in a suit.”

“Yeah, they do, don’t they?” He’s not sure how to continue the conversation beyond that, so they lapse once more into silence. Eggsy patches himself up and takes another drink from the bottle. “I should check in before they think I’m dead.”

Roxy nods, but doesn’t move. She just watches as Eggsy stands and crosses the room to transfer the Scotch into her hand. “Don’t make me come saving your life again,” she tells him with a faint smile.

“You’re not coming with?” Eggsy’s stomach twists in and around itself. “Rox, come on. Kingsman
needs you.”

She grips the bottle of Scotch tight as her brow furrows. “I’m not sure I’m ready to be an agent again.”

“Is this about the missile, because—”

“No, Eggsy, it’s not about the missile.” She rubs a hand across her face and sidesteps him so she can escape to the other side of the room. “Risking my life I don’t care about. But if I come back to Kingsman, who do I lose next? Arthur, Percival...all the other agents, and then Merlin...Christ, Eggsy, when do I show up for your funeral? Next week? Next year?” She shuts her eyes and sneers derisively. “I know that’s me being selfish. Kingsman saves the world and protects everyone who lives on it. I should be proud to be a part of it all. But nothing in our training...nothing...” She takes a long drink from the Scotch. “We never trained how to deal with it when everything gets taken away. If I don’t come back, I don’t have to drink to your memory when you inevitably die some gruesome and glorious death, do you understand that?”

Sort of. He had a while when the option of dropping it all seemed like it would be much less painful than continuing on. Chapter Six: Harry dies. But maybe it’s just the rough-and-tumble manner of his life that Eggsy has never been one to lie down and take a beating. Or at least, if he takes a beating he gets up again afterwards and brings a baseball bat with him for next time. Becoming Galahad became his way of coping that he was just as reliant on as Roxy is now on staying hidden. Without that option, he’s not sure where he’d be now.

“Rox, I’m not planning on dying anytime soon,” he says instead of trying to put everything to words, and Roxy just takes another drink. “No, I mean it. I’m tough to kill, you know that. Same as you. Because we’re partners, right?” He steps slowly across the apartment so she has time to move away before he puts a hand on her shoulder. “You’re my best girl, Rox. I still can’t fucking believe you’re alive. Can’t believe I’m that fucking lucky.” His hand moves to pat her cheek fondly. “Jesus, Roxy, how’d I get so fucking lucky?”

She eyes him up from beneath the brim of her hat, and then sighs and turns into his hand. “Really fucking lucky, Eggsy Unwin. I’ll come with. That doesn’t mean I’m returning for good. But I’d feel bad if I didn’t make sure the damaged goods got home safe.”

It’s close enough.

Chapter End Notes

Hi so Golden Circle still has me screaming and I’ve been writing pretty much nonstop since leaving the theater. I decided to put up a little first chapter just to get the ball rolling, but I should update pretty steadily until the end! The sequel finally gave me the final push into Hartwin hell after two years of hemming and hawing about it, and of course there’s no reason Roxy couldn’t come back as well! (It’s Roxy, come on now, of course she can.) Honestly this is so completely self-indulgent but I’m hoping some other people besides me might enjoy it anyway.

Let me know what you think if you’d like, or feel free to come to my tumblr to just scream with me about this movie for a while because wow do I need it~ Another chapter should be up in a day or two if you’re interested!
Chapter 2

There are a lot of qualities about Tilde that Eggsy loves, but the number one has to be the insane amount of understanding she possesses. Like when it was first suggested they move in together and she discovered that meant moving into the ghost home of Harry Hart. Oh sure, babe, I happen to live in the house of a dead man who collected butterflies and tabloid front pages and I still keep his stuffed dog on its shelf above the loo. Say hi to Mr. Pickle, princess. Eggsy never had to say any of that, even once he actually sat down and realized how completely absolutely bonkers he must look.

Tilde also possesses quite a lot of tact, which meant not asking exactly why Eggsy couldn’t bring himself to change a thing about that place. It also means not asking why Harry and Eggsy had rather wordlessly moved in together after returning to London from Kentucky. Tilde has her own house outside of London, and Eggsy had officially moved in with her following their marriage, but in the months beforehand, it had been a simple comfort to slowly pin pages of butterfly sketches to the walls and drink whatever fine tea Harry set in front of him as they reviewed what it would take to rebuild Kingsman from the bottom up. The official excuse was that, as the only two surviving members, Harry and Eggsy might as well live together so they can work the long hours required. But really Eggsy knows that he’d needed those months of reminding himself that Harry really had come back to him, needed to be able to turn the corner and find him relaxing at the table with the morning tabloids, needed to find excuses to touch Harry’s shoulder, bump his arm, lean over to point when Harry’s limited vision range is causing trouble, needed to be able to wake up from nightmares and tiptoe over to Harry’s room, watch the form under the covers rise and fall as Harry breathed and continued to be still alive, still alive, still alive.

And Harry, though he might never admit it, might have needed Eggsy too. For the long hours when Merlin’s loss was a deep pit both of them toed the line of, for the days Harry’s head was filled with butterflies. Eggsy was happy to spend the day helping Harry get back to top shape in his hand-to-hand combat, or enforcing the completion of mental and physical exercises that Whiskey né Ginger Ale had sent home with them. Harry probably resented him a little sometimes for that, but slowly days turned into both good and bad days, and then the good days began to outnumber the bad more and more. Now, Harry can shoot a penny flipped into the air twenty meters behind him without more than a glance, and Eggsy doesn’t have a mini heart attack at the idea of him returning to Kingsman, especially as Arthur.

Anyway, the point is that Roxy doesn’t have to look so judgemental when he tells her halfway out of London that oops, he didn’t actually mean that home when he said he wanted to go home. He means Harry. Please bring me to Harry.

Roxy parks down the street from the townhouse and walks Eggsy to the door. And Harry, who must have been watching out the window, bless him, opens the door to meet them at the step. Mr. Jalapeno—Eggsy’s name suggestion that somehow stuck—circles around Harry’s legs nervously, but calms as Eggsy approaches. Harry scratches the dog behind the ears and nods politely to Roxy.

“Lancelot, glad to see you again.” That friendly smile turns to Eggsy and transforms. “What sort of bloody idiot are you? I was just about to go try to find your body.”

“Sorry Harry,” Eggsy mumbles. He expects Harry to follow it up with a ‘well you bloody well should be’, but instead Harry just stares at him for a moment and sighs before stepping aside.

“You best both come in.”

Turns out Harry is a fucking saint and ordered out sushi from that place they both love so much. It’s
all laid out on the table set for two, but it turns into a meal for three with a few clinks of cutlery.
“Coffee doesn’t really suit the meal but I think I’ll need it if I’m going to listen to this story,” Harry
mentions as he pours himself a large mug over at the counter. “Either that or half the liquor cabinet.”

Eggsy explains. He really does. He let his guard down, plain and simple. He’d mentioned to Tilde
that he might have a few days free after he finished this mission, and he hadn’t been listening
carefully to the new techie telling him exactly where he needed to turn in order to not die. Harry
listens silently, occasionally lifting an eyebrow as he drinks, and Eggsy can’t believe he has to
explain himself to the man who was swatting at imaginary butterflies until Eggsy helped him get
through the worst of it. Talk about ungrateful. Eggsy finishes his recap with a gentle mutter about
how Roxy saved his ass and waits for the inevitable judgement.

“Well,” Harry finally says, “You were a bloody imbecile.” He turns to Roxy. “Thank you Lancelot,
for saving our bloody imbecile.”

“Of course, Gala—” Roxy stops, and glances at Eggsy for her cue.

“Oh, Harry’s Arthur now,” Eggsy explains, relieved to be talking about something other than his
mission. “With only two of us now, you know? Plus the Statesmen but they don’t count. You know
the one is named Tequila? I’ll go with Galahad, personally.” He pauses, eats a piece of sushi, and
adds, “It’d be a real parade if we had a Lancelot again, you know.”

“I only agreed to get you home,” Roxy counters with immediately, and then pushes back from the
table. “Thank you, Arthur, but I should be getting back.”

Harry nods and stands up as well. “It is quite late. Let me see you to the door.” The two of them
head off together while Eggsy hurriedly tries to finish what’s in his mouth and follow them. He
reaches the hallway while Harry and Roxy have their heads tilted in close, muttering to each other so
low Eggsy can’t make a word out. Harry reaches into his pocket and passes across one of the new
Kingsman business cards, just printed three days ago. Roxy takes it, and then accepts a handshake.
Harry lets her out the front door, and doesn’t say a word when Eggsy pushes past him to follow.

“Rox!”

She turns, phone to her ear, and waits for Eggsy to catch up. “What?”

Fuck but he misses how she used to smile so easily at him. “Thanks. Again. For saving my ass.”

Roxy nods, and lists the street address into her phone. Getting a cab. She could have just taken
Eggsy’s car. He could get another easily enough.

“Will you come visit at least?” Eggsy asks once she’s slipped the phone away. “Not as Lancelot, not
if you don’t want to be, but as you?”

She hums and studies the business card. “I might. I have to think about some things.”

“Yeah, yeah...of course...” Eggsy jumps up and down a little on the balls of his feet, increasingly
aware of Harry still waiting in the open doorway. “Take care, Rox, okay? Promise me you’ll be
careful.”

She laughs a little, a harsh bark of noise. “Being careful is why you thought I was dead for nine
months. I’ll be fine, Eggsy.” Her face softens though, and she reaches out to take his hand. He
squeezes her fingers tight. “I’ll be fine. And careful. You too.” She smiles, a little sad smile, and
sticks both hands in the pockets of her sweatshirt as she turns to walk down the street, flashing in and
out of the light of streetlamps as she goes. Eggsy turns away reluctantly and troops back to the door.
Harry is watching him with a pensive expression, in a way Eggsy is sure Harry understands how torn he is right now, torn between wanting to cry with relief that Roxy is alive and cry for the parts of her that seem to have died. Harry shuts the door and switches off the porch light. He locks the door, all three mechanical locks and the passcode, and then turns to Eggsy.

“It’s alright, Eggsy,” he says, and doesn’t say another word when Eggsy buries himself in Harry’s arms, because that seems like the safest place in the world right now.

After a few minutes, Eggsy gets a hold of himself because he’s a big strong tough secret agent who never cries during animal rescue commercials. “We should put the sushi away,” he says as he pulls away from Harry and straightens his tie.

“Of course,” Harry agrees, and they go about boxing dinner up and stocking the refrigerator with even more leftovers that will probably go bad before they get eaten. “I’m sorry,” Harry says as they stand side by side at the sink doing the daily dishes. Mr. Jalapeno has curled up in his bed in the corner, done for the night.

“For what?” Eggsy asks, and carefully dries a plate before setting it with the others.

Harry frowns into the soapy water and then sighs. “I had my suspicions that Lancelot might have survived, but I never told you. Not even a trace of a body was ever recovered and there were hospital records for a Jane Doe matching her description days after the attack.” He turns to Eggsy with those great sad eyes that bear the weight of the world several times over. “Perhaps I should have…”

Eggsy shakes his head and goes back to drying. “Nah, Harry, you shouldn’t have. Rox didn’t want to be found and...and if I thought she might be alive, and then she wasn’t…”

Harry studies him for a long moment and then gently nods. “I understand.”

They finish the dishes and Eggsy sends Tilde a message to let her know he won’t be back tonight. The thought of getting in the car and driving all the way out of London when his bed here is just a few steps away is exhausting enough in itself. Harry’s fallen asleep in his chair by the time Eggsy is done in the shower in the way he does sometimes and then denies, so Eggsy grabs the blanket from the closet and covers him head to toe. It gets chilly at nights sometimes, that’s all. Slowly, carefully, he reaches out and removes Harry’s glasses and puts them on the table. He avoids looking at where the eye used to be. He only gets bad dreams if he stares.

Harry. Roxy. Who will be the next of them, Eggsy wonders, to come back to life but not come back whole?
Chapter 3

They end up firing the techie guy, who’d always been a temporary result of complete necessity anyway. The new girl that Statesmen digs up for them is possibly the world’s most wanted hacker, with bright eyes, colorful clothes, and a heavy Egyptian accent that Eggsy would happily follow wherever she leads. Harry and Eggsy are pouring over her credentials together after the initial interview when Eggsy raises a hand. “Permission to address the court?”

Harry gives him a patented Look, though he can’t hide the smile playing around his mouth, and Eggsy grins. “Petition for Jahi to fill the position of Morgan.”

“Morgan?” Harry repeats, and stares down at the paper he has in his hands.

“Yeah, well, Morgan le Fay, right? The enchantress?” He had this conversation so planned out in his head. “So it’s basically the same as Merlin, but not...but not the same name because...” Eggsy sighs and fiddles with his glasses. “She’s brilliant, this girl is. But I don’t think I can get used to calling anyone else ‘Merlin’, Harry, I just can’t. Not with the way he went. And if it’s just you and me calling the shots, I’d rather have this girl become Morgan, if it’s all the same to you.”

Eggsy is sitting on Harry’s bad side, a mistake on his part, so Harry has to turn his head to a very awkward angle to be able to study his face. He does so, without blinking, for a long moment, and then slowly closes his eye and nods. “Yes, that sounds acceptable. If it’s all the same to you.”

Neither of them mention the endless repeat of John Denver songs playing from Eggsy’s phone in the background. Sometimes it’s easier to do these things if they can pretend some piece of him is still around. Merlin is retired as a Kingsman position. Morgan takes its place.

Roxy shows back up three months later, strolls into the tailor shop and asks for a fitting room. Eggsy is sitting at the table with his feet up on Bedivere’s chair, playing a very competitive game of jacks with Jahi i.e Morgan when Roxy walks in, doing up the cuffs of her new Kingsman suit. Eggsy grins and lets the little rubber ball scatter jack pieces everywhere as Roxy pulls back Lancelot’s seat and settles in. Harry’s just a moment behind her, and he watches from the door as Eggsy introduces Roxy to Jahi and proceeds to lecture her about the entire new facility, which is small right now but with big potential. Two knights, a techie, an Arthur, and spare Americans if they need them. It’s beginning to feel like Kingsman might actually exist again, not just as a distant dream Harry and Eggsy had to hold onto to stay sane, but as a real and tangible thing that Eggsy can brag to absolutely no one about because of course if it exists, then it absolutely doesn’t exist at all.

His absolute giddiness over having Roxy back must be infectious, because Tilde cannot stop laughing with him the entire night. And that’s another thing that’s great about her, is that Tilde while of course knows what he does for a living, she never asks for the details, not unless Eggsy gives them up for free. She’s proud to be married to a tailor, even if Eggsy’s relationship with her father is still a bit on the rocky side. She comes and helps Eggsy and Roxy get Roxy’s new apartment furnished once Roxy moves out of that dump of a place she’d been living. It’s a full weekend of browsing furniture in the store and arguing how many chairs Roxy is going to need for entertaining. “Don’t you two live in like...a mansion?” Roxy points out. “If we’re going to have a whole agency get-together, it’s going down at your place.”
Eggsy has a brief moment of horror imagining some certain Americans having access to his house, but Tilde has met most of them at the wedding anyway, so it probably wouldn’t be too much of a disaster. “Still got to get you a banging bachelorette pad, Rox.”

Tilde and Roxy abandon Eggsy while he’s putting the bed frame together to make some coffee and probably laugh at him from the kitchen, if he’s to judge by their hushed voices and loud peals of giggles that suddenly stifle behind hands. When he pokes his head out of the bedroom they’re suddenly sitting up very straight with no hint of a smile, so now he’s positive he’s the butt of the jokes here. Roxy seems to be adjusting well, though, so he guesses he can take a bit of laughter at his expense every now and again. She does have the tendency to never show her back to a window or door, both at her apartment and at HQ, but that’s the most obvious sign of her trauma. The rest she’s learned to keep hidden beneath an expensive suit and a pair of glasses. Eggsy knows that the girl in the sweatshirt and jeans he met again that night must still be there, but she rarely ever shows. So he lets her be. God knows Eggsy hides a lot beneath his suit as well.

By Sunday night, the apartment is filled with new throw cushions, sheet sets, shower accessories, sofas, and some large posters of butterflies Eggsy had quietly removed from his room at the townhouse because his room is not a storage unit for Harry’s excess lepidopterist shit, thank you very much. (Now Roxy’s place is.) They order in pizza and sit among the empty cardboard boxes that need to be broken down, and try to discuss some normal things, like upcoming movies and recently released albums. No terrorist cells, or biochemical weapons, or just how fucking complicated it’s going to be trying to fill all the empty Kingsman positions. Just normal young person conversation.

It feels a little empty. Biochemical weapons are just more interesting, no matter how you look at it. But Eggsy smiles and nods along because that’s what he should do, right?

Right.

But having Roxy at his side, or on the phone, or just existing in general somewhere, makes him feel like a helium balloon cut loose and sailing through the clouds. There she is, sitting at the table with suit and glasses on. There she is, in the car, driving away to her safe new apartment. There she is, with a blob of mustard at the side of her mouth as they catch lunch at the nearest cafe. There she is, laughing with Jahi over something Eggsy didn’t catch and he can’t believe he actually managed nine months without Roxy there.

Kingsman rebuilds. It’s a resilient little organization. With the resources from their foreign branches, mostly Germany and Sweden, plus the Statesmen, the new little tailor shop expands underground and then to an estate ten minutes away by express train. An entirely new location from where the old training grounds stood, with new sorts of building layouts and safety protocol built in to prevent the same sort of disaster happening. They should be able to start recruiting within two years, once everything is constructed to their exact specifications.

“We remove the dog test,” Eggsy lays down at one of their meetings. “It’s unnecessary. We don’t ever have to shoot the dog for an actual mission.”

“It’s a blank,” Harry shuts him down immediately.

“Oh, but wouldn’t...wouldn’t forcing them to sacrifice their mates, wouldn’t that be a better test?” Eggsy taps the table and glances up at the chandelier rather than meet anyone’s eye. “More relevant, I mean, seeing if they can lose someone and keep going?”

He can see Roxy’s head snap up at his words and winces a little. She probably feels he’s attacking her directly, but she’d said it herself: none of the tests prepared them for losing everything.
“It could be simulated,” Roxy agrees after a minute of nervous silence, and Eggsy is actually able to breathe again. “Send them in pairs on a fake mission, hijack the video feed with something manufactured, make it seem like the other’s just been shot. Jahi could do it.”

Jahi nods along. Of course she can. Harry, when Eggsy glances down from the ceiling, doesn’t look convinced.

“Look, the train test is enough to make sure they’re not going to rat us out.” Boy, does he ever remember that one. “And, you know, sometimes people give orders that are fucking nuts. Like shoot your dog. Wouldn’t it be better to have agents who are able to think for five seconds and make their own judgement? Who can say no when it’s the wrong order? Who can act when someone isn’t giving them orders?”

If Harry Hart, the man who encrypted his own video feed and shot Agent Whiskey in the head (even if he was right), tries to argue against agents making their own personal judgement, Eggsy will devour his tie, right here in front of them all, in a fit of rage.

“Come on Harry,” he adds in a softer voice. “You know there were a lot of things about Kingsman that needed changing. Let’s start with people not shooting their own fucking dogs, eh?”

“You think it’s easier to let them think that their fellow trainees are dead?” Harry’s mouth turns into a hard line, and Eggsy knows that Harry is recounting every single Kingsman he’s seen die over his years here. Too many.

Eggsy sighs and runs a hand through his hair. It’s getting too long and Tilde’s been on him about getting it cut. “It’s rough. But at least they don’t come away with the fact they’d be enough of a complete prick to shoot a puppy.” He remembers his audience. “Present company excluded, Arthur, Lancelot.”

Jahi snorts into her sleeve. Roxy rolls her eyes and Harry looks like he’s about to go into another lecture about how much he loved Mr. Pickle, which Eggsy quickly interrupts before it can even start. “Look, all I’m saying is that this is more relevant to what agents actually deal with. And when it turns out their mates aren’t dead?” He meets Roxy’s eyes, and then stares at Harry, waiting for him to break. “It’s the best feeling in the whole fucking world, I’ll tell you that.”

If either of them dare try to argue with him here, he’ll eat his socks as well.

“We’ll remove the dog test,” Harry finally concedes. “And replace it with your idea.”

Eggsy pumps a fist in victory. “But they still get puppies. Right?”

“I would like a puppy,” Jahi volunteers, raising her hand as high as it can go.

“They still get puppies,” Eggsy decrees, and slaps a hand down on the table. “Next question?”

JB jr. is an incorrigible mama’s boy. Eggsy comes home and the little pug couldn’t care less, but Tilde comes home and it’s twenty minutes of spinning in circles and yapping excitedly. On a rare day Eggsy is off and Tilde is gone, he tries putting on a vest and jogging around the house with JB jr. tucked inside. It doesn’t feel the same. There’s a certain bond—like the one he shares with Roxy—that comes of surviving Kingsman initiation together. It makes him think that JB jr. is not a good
name at all.

Tilde asks him what’s wrong that evening with dinner, and as awesome as she is, Eggsy knows she just wouldn’t get it. He’s not sure he could explain it well either. Why the loss of JB hurts perhaps even more than Harry’s did, sometimes. Maybe because Eggsy always knew that Harry, or Roxy, or Merlin, or even Brandon weren’t his to take care of, as much as Roxy accuses him of being a mother hen sometimes. JB was his responsibility, his partner, his dog, and JB died while Eggsy was out for a fancy dinner with his in-laws. Of course, Eggsy wasn’t as prepared as Roxy for nuclear fallout and the only result of him skipping that dinner would have been dying alongside JB, but it doesn’t stop him from feeling like complete shit.

The fact Roxy had used her dead dog’s name as a password makes him think she kind of gets it.

“I don’t know, just tell Tilde you want to change the dog’s name,” she says over lunch, stabbing at her salad. “She’ll understand.”

Eggsy makes a face. “But she bought that dog for me, Rox. She was trying to replace JB. How do I tell her a year later that I don’t want to replace JB?”

Roxy waves her fork through the air in some complicated motions. She’d wordlessly chosen a corner table, and keeps peering over Eggsy’s shoulder periodically even though her back is to the wall. “Didn’t you do the same to Harry? Hypocrite.”

“I wasn’t trying to replace Mr. Pickle, I was trying to get Harry to remember who the hell he was,” Eggsy informs her as sullenly as he think he can away with without her giving him that exasperated look. “And he loves Mr. Jalapeno.”

“I can’t believe you named a dog Jalapeno.”

“I can’t believe that Harry had a dog named Mr. Pickle and got him stuffed so he could go above the loo, but Harry’s a complete lunatic sometimes so maybe I can.” Eggsy stuffs half his sandwich into his mouth and speaks around it. “He hasn’t asked after those posters I gave you, has he?”

Roxy shakes her head. “No, not yet.”

“Want some more?”

“Maybe you just need to tell Harry you don’t want butterflies in your room.”

“He’s nuts about butterflies though. More than before, even.” Eggsy swallows the sandwich with a slightly painful gulp. “You should have seen his fucking room, Rox. Where the Statesmen kept him locked up. Whole walls of butterflies he drew by hand. I mean...I knew he liked them because he kept a whole bunch pinned to the wall in his old place, but this was something else.” He frowns and rests his chin in his hand. “Makes you wonder if the world would have been destroyed by now, if Harry’d actually become a lepidopterist, instead of an agent.”

Roxy shrugs. “Same with you. Saving the world.”

“Yeah, except before that the only thing I was on the fast track for was incarceration.” He flicks the end of his straw with one finger. “If Harry had chosen different, he’d probably be off somewhere warm now, with both eyes. And I’d be resting on my ass in prison.” He flicks the straw again, and again, and then finally looks up when he feels Roxy’s judgemental eyes. “What?”

“A lot of our conversations always circle around to how you think Harry is the center of the universe, you know that, right?”
Straw flick. “No. No they don’t.” Straw flick.

Roxy narrows her eyes. Straw flick. “Maybe it’s best you move out of the townhouse for good, Eggsy. Make things easier on yourself.”

Eggsy stops torturing the straw and frowns. “But it’s really easy, having a place to go that’s closer to the shop.”

She makes a frustrated sound and skewers a baby tomato with her fork. “Not that. I mean...maybe still having a foot in the door with Harry isn’t helping you move on.”

“Move on from what?”

She sighs dramatically. “Just...be careful, alright Eggsy?”

“Careful with what?”

She lifts her fork and scrutinizes the tomato. “Careful that living a double life doesn’t split you in two.”

She doesn’t elaborate after that.
Chapter 4

Eggsy spends way too much time thinking about what Harry had said on that last plane ride, that he saw nothing while looking back on his life before Valentine tried to end it. At first he’d been a little insulted because, hey, Eggsy was there now and shouldn’t Harry have thought about him? But then he actually thinks about how bloody stupid reckless Harry has always been with his whole life and thinks that maybe Harry’s coping mechanism is to purposefully cut ties with anything and anyone that could matter, because then it’s easier to leave it all behind. Dead butterflies pinned to walls, front pages of tabloids that will never know his name, a dog long gone the only thing in that quiet house to hold a conversation with, a position at Kingsman easily replaced as someone new took his name. Harry was always ready to die.

Things are slightly different now. Have been, since that moment in a padded room when Harry came back to him. Eggsy likes to think he’s helping Harry build a life that is worth a flashback. Their time together lost its formality once they moved in with each other, both of them drudging around the place in sweatpants and t-shirts instead of suits, or eating cereal together in their pajamas at ten at night. Even now that Eggsy is sort of not really completely moved out, there are days that he gets his console hooked up to the television and proceeds to absolutely destroy Harry at Mario Kart. Other days, Harry digs out his box of Stratego and they spend the whole afternoon snacking and gleefully announcing that the other has, in fact, found a bomb. And then sometimes Eggsy sits eating a sandwich and making bewildered faces at the fact Harry can’t find some of his butterfly posters that he’s sure he put down somewhere…

Maybe it’s because spending time with Harry, whether they’re talking manners or weapons or if colorful swears should be allowed in Scrabble, seems to transcend time a little, a bubble of safety and illusion of immortality, like the day could stretch on forever and that would be okay. Maybe it’s because if Eggsy is going to have Harry’s face on insta-play every time his life is in danger, he wants Harry to have to suffer the same bloody fate. Maybe it’s because when Harry came back, he might have been missing an eye but there was suddenly a lot more of him, that soft and vulnerable side that Eggsy catches in brief glimpses every once in awhile he’d never known existed before.

Harry must be mighty lonely, Eggsy decides, as the only Kingsman over thirty. Aside from one wild night with backstage passes to an Elton John concert, Eggsy isn’t sure Harry has spoken more than ten words to someone his age bracket other than Agent Champagne ever since Merlin died. But Eggsy wants to be there. He wants to be the one Harry can turn to on days his head still isn’t working quite right, when the weight of Kingsman is a little too much, on any day that Harry might need him in any way because it’s not fair that the only person Harry has ever turned to for help is himself.

If he’s being honest, he mostly wants to be the one Harry fights to come home to.

Kingsman isn’t taking on a lot of missions now, mostly just affairs located in England, but every time Harry runs off to take care of things by himself, Eggsy can’t concentrate on anything like he should. He ends up spending a lot of time hanging onto the back of Jahi’s chair, watching Harry’s feed and backseat driving via a pair of glasses until Harry tells him to bugger off and let Morgan do her job. “I found this real classy bar that does a mean martini,” Eggsy tells Harry over the feed when he’s about to do something either stupid or dangerous or both. Or sometimes he says, “I beat you in that last Stratego game, so it’s officially fifteen to thirteen. Wanna rematch?” Or perhaps, “Mr. Jalapeno misses you. You should probably come home soon.”

“Go away Eggsy,” Harry and Jahi order him at the same time, and Eggsy leaves the room.
reluctantly. They never make Roxy leave when she’s there. So unfair.

But then Harry comes back, and he isn’t in a coma, or dead, and most of the time also relatively uninjured, and they go for martinis and play Stratego and take Mr. Jalapeno for walks in the nearby park and it’s as close to perfect as Eggy’s life has ever been.

Tilde tends to get a little quiet when Eggy starts talking about Harry these days. When Eggy asks if anything has happened, she just shrugs and doesn’t give a straight answer. So Eggy just stops mentioning Harry to her altogether. He doesn’t want to create a fight.

A fight goes ahead and creates itself anyway on their ten-month marriage mark. Tilde talks about going away somewhere for their one year anniversary and Eggy brings up that he never knows when work will need him now they’re taking missions again and Tilde insists that Harry can survive for a few weeks without him and Eggy admits that a few days would be fine probably and next thing Tilde is packing her bag and insisting she has things to do in Sweden before slamming the door in his face.

Roxy is in Germany so Eggy ends up unloading to Jahi. He never could bring his relationship problems to Harry, for some reason he can’t figure. Jahi’s a good listener at least, spinning in her chair at HQ over and over and over as Eggy explains the situation while sitting on the floor.

“Well, what did you expect?” she scoffs when Eggy has finished, which is a little depressing, to say the least. She tugs her cap off her head and starts fiddling with the multitude of buttons and pins she’s affixed to it. “You’re both living double lives. That’s a lot of lives for two people.”

Eggy blinks. She kicks the floor and starts herself spinning again. “Tilde is a princess, no? And you’re a spy. And those other parts of yourselves, they don’t interact very often, do they?”

“No, not really,” Eggy has to admit. Jahi slows and puts her cap back on at a jaunty angle.

“Well, I was wondering when you would retire anyway.”

“What, retire?” Eggy stares at her in bewilderment. “Why would I retire?”

Jahi grabs the desk to stop her spinning completely and peers at him through thick eyelashes. “You’re kidding me.”

“No, I’m not. Why would I retire?” None of the women in his life are making sense today.

Jahi sighs in exasperation. “She’s the crown princess. You’re her husband. One day she’s going to be queen, and you know what that means for you. I don’t think being a Kingsman will mix well with being royalty.”

Eggy is quiet for a moment, picking at his nails. “I’m technically kind of royalty already, ain’t I?” he asks eventually. “So why does it have to change?”

“I think we both know you’re slacking off on your royal duties, your highness.” Jahi rests her chin on her arms, crossed over the back of her chair. “And part of being a spy is being unknown. It’s why we’re a secret organization. Prince of Sweden? Not anonymous.”

Eggy’s stomach churns. “Yeah, but…”

“You must be the only one who hasn’t realized this,” Jahi tells him quietly, voice tinged with pity. “Once Tilde takes the throne, you will have to stop being a Kingsman. I know it, I know Roxy knows it, and I’m sure Harry knows it too.”
“Okay, but—!”

Jahi sighs again, louder this time, more dramatic. “Look, Eggsy. Don’t tell her I told you this, but one of the reasons Roxy came back to Kingsman was because she knew you would have to leave. It’s only a matter of time before your father-in-law steps down, and she wanted Harry to have someone else other than you to be there to help.” She tugs her cap down over her eyes and swivels the chair so she faces her computer screens instead of him. “I’m sorry.”

Eggsy spends a very long time worrying at his shoelaces this time. “She told you that?” he asks at last. Jahi’s head bobs up and down. “And didn’t tell me?”

“I don’t think she wants you to feel like you forced her into anything,” Jahi explains quietly. “And she came back for other reasons too. But you leaving was definitely one of them.”

“Do you…do you think that’s why Tilde is mad at me?” Eggsy ventures. “Because of Kingsman?”

Jahi nods again. “I mean, I’m not your wife, so I can’t say for sure, but I think she’d be a little annoyed you can’t seem to put her above your job, especially when you basically agreed to quit that job in order to marry her.”

“I didn’t agree to that.”

“Yeah, you kinda did, when you said ‘I do’.”

Eggsy slumps against the wall, a slow, inevitable fall backwards. “I wanted to marry her, though. I want to be married to her. I just…don’t want to be a prince. I want to be a Kingsman.”

“Well, unless she feels like abdicating, you don’t get everything you want.” Jahi’s words are harsh, but her tone is soft, and when he looks back up at her, she’s fiddling with her hat again. “Sorry mate.”

Tilde wouldn’t abdicate. Eggsy would never ask her to. Tilde preferred being imprisoned by Valentine for an indefinite amount of time over abandoning her people. She would never abandon them because of her idiot husband. Because she’s strong, with morals that don’t budge. Being a princess is just a part of who she is.

Eggsy slumps further down the wall. He supposes he just won’t get everything he wants. That’s not his kind of happy ending.

But being a Kingsman is who Eggsy is. That’s the problem. He has been proven superior to his former self time and time again, to the point he’s not sure he would recognize that punk kid who dropped out of every commitment he made, who stole joyrides backwards through the streets with cop cars trailing, who cowered before the abusive asshole in his home for years. It’s why Chapter Three: Before Harry Hart Came Into His Life is such a pathetic mess. And why chapter four is the great turning point in his story, the one that changes everything, sets him on the path of actually saving the entire fucking world like one of the superheroes he read comic books about as a child. He might not have been born into Kingsman the way Tilde was born into royalty, but at this point it might be as well be threaded through his genes.

Eggsy’s not sure who he would be without Kingsman anymore. Doesn’t exactly want to find out.
Harry must have an opinion, even if he’s been keeping it quiet, because apparently the whole damn world has been waiting for Eggsy to announce his imminent retirement. Harry isn’t home when Eggsy drops by, so he lets himself in. The dog is missing too, so Eggsy guesses Mr. Jalapeno is out for some quality walking. He spends the time doing the couple of dishes left in the sink and admiring some of the more colorful butterfly displays. He can hear Harry when he comes home, and Mr. Jalapeno comes running to find Eggsy and attack his legs. Eggsy lets himself go down with a cry of dismay and is just squaring up for the wrestling match of the century with the furry little monster on his chest when Harry walks into the room, not even trying to hide his smile this time. “He has toys he can chew on, you know.”

But Eggsy’s fingers had pretty much single-handedly gotten Mr. Jalapeno through his teething. “Nah, we’re good,” Eggsy says, and messes around with the dog in the time it takes for Harry to make a pot of tea, tickling and teasing the way he always played with JB. He sits up with hair mussed and clothes wrinkled when Harry offers him a cup. “Thanks Harry.” He gives Mr. Jalapeno a final good rub behind the ear and relocates to the second armchair after clearing a couple of books out of it.

“Any reason you’re here or did you just miss the dog?” Harry asks, watching Eggsy with a content expression.

Oh yeah. The reminder puts a bit of a damper on his mood again.

“Harry?” Eggsy asks, and maybe Harry picks up on his tone because he leans closer in his chair. “Can I ask you something?”

“Of course.”

Actually asking it is a lot harder though. Eggsy takes a sip of tea and swishes it around his mouth for a second before swallowing. The heat travels down to his stomach and calms the roiling there just a little bit.

“What is it, Eggsy?” Harry prompts, and Eggsy shuts his eyes as the teacup warms his hands.

“Just...what are you planning to do when I leave Kingsman?”

Harry doesn’t answer immediately, and Eggsy opens one eye to study Harry’s concerned face.

“Are you planning on retiring soon?”

“No, no, not at all! I just...” He gnaws on his lip a little, enough to hurt but not hard enough to bleed. “Would it...would it be okay?”

Harry’s eyebrows rise but he nods with a little smile that doesn’t seem quite natural. “Yes, of course. I think we’d all be happy to lose a Kingsman to something happy like a marriage for once.”

“But...but I probably wouldn’t see you very often. Or ever.” Eggsy looks away towards the bookcase instead. “What...for you, what would it be like?”

Do you want me to stay, Harry? Do you need me the same way I need you? Will you remember me when greeting death and want to come home?

“You’re asking what it would be like if you left?” Harry clarifies, and Eggsy nods without looking back. “I imagine very much the same as it was before you came,” Harry answers simply, and Eggsy feels like his entire chest has been turned to ice. He sets down his cup and clenches his fists, trying not to lose it here. He needs to be in control, able to accept Harry’s answer even if he hates it.
“So...it wouldn’t matter at all to you?” He keeps his voice soft. “I’d just leave and you’d go back to life like normal?”

Harry hums and shifts in his seat with the sound of fabric against fabric. “Eggsy, I would never want you basing your decisions on my personal feelings.”

“So it wouldn’t matter. I could leave and you wouldn’t care.”

“That is not at all what I said.”

“You said it would return to normal!”

Harry sets his teacup down with a clank. Eggsy jumps a little in his seat and his eyes are forced back to Harry’s expression, which is faintly annoyed. “Why are you getting so upset over this? What would you like me to say?”

He takes a deep breath to just let Harry have it, but then stops. Maybe he knows exactly what he wants Harry to say, but when the thought comes to actually saying it, it does seem a little…

Well, maybe a little inappropriate. Eggsy’s not sure why, but he feels like maybe those desires are best kept secret.

“Nothing, Harry,” he mumbles at last, and stands from the chair. “Sorry for the bother.”

“It’s quite alright,” Harry assures him from his seat as Eggsy takes his tea to the kitchen and dumps the rest of it down the drain. He quickly washes the cup out and puts it back in the cupboard, and then takes one last forlorn look at the back of Harry’s chair before sighing and heading for the front door.

“Eggsy!” Harry calls just as he’s slipping on his shoes. “I think you came away with the wrong impression.”

Eggsy sighs and sticks his head back around the corner. “What?”

Harry leans forward in his chair and turns so they can make eye contact. “Yes, things would return to how they were before I met you,” he says softly, almost like he doesn’t want Eggsy to really hear. “Rather lonely and considerably more sad.” And then Harry smiles at him, a small smile that just breaks Eggsy’s heart in fucking two. “Don’t underestimate the joy your presence has brought me Eggsy. But it would be utterly selfish of me to want to keep you from the rest of your life.”

And now there’s Eggsy, with one shoe on and feeling like an utter tit. “Oh,” he says for lack of inspiration. Harry nods a little, widens his smile for just a moment, and then sits back in his seat so he’s facing away once more.

Really, he should say something. Do something. Anything. But his brain doesn’t offer up any solutions. So Eggsy just very quietly finds his other shoe and lets himself out.
Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Things remain very awkward once Tilde comes home. Eggsy agrees to a week off for a vacation and they don’t bring up the fight after that, but the echo of that door slam just won’t seem to fade.

The next time he sees Harry, the cheery greeting dies on his tongue. Rather lonely and considerably more sad. Given time to think the words over, Eggsy feels even worse. The knowledge that he’s somehow improved Harry’s life—a little less lonely, a little bit happier—would have meant the world over just a few weeks ago, but now it just makes him feel sick. And he can’t see any way he won’t rip half his heart out when he leaves.

Rather lonely and considerably more sad. Well, maybe he can slowly cut ties with Harry, make it so his departure won’t feel so abrupt. So while Galahad and Arthur continue a professional relationship, Eggsy slowly limits his visits to the townhouse. The days and nights of games and walking the dog and takeout disappear. Eggsy ends up spending a lot of time in a cafe nearby since it’s so tense at home and he doesn’t want Roxy to know because then she’ll insist he should talk about it. Harry doesn’t mention anything about the sudden absence, same as he’s never again brought up those vulnerable words he shared with Eggsy that afternoon. He just lets Eggsy slip away, with an ease that might have hurt if Eggsy didn’t understand that this is how Harry simply does things. Eggsy can become just another thing of yesterday, another mere memory stuck in the past.

Fuck, but doesn’t it make him feel even worse thinking about how hard it must have been for someone like Harry to let Eggsy in like that, and now Harry probably thinks he said something wrong and this is somehow his fault.

But there’s nothing to be done. The best he can do is to gradually fade from everyone’s lives so that when he leaves, nobody will really notice at all.

He doesn’t want to leave.

With only a single year of marriage approaching its finale, Eggsy is lying awake at night wondering if it had been the right thing to do after all. He loves Tilde. He does. It’s not about a lack of love. And if it was just Tilde, and not the crown princess of Sweden, he wouldn’t have this problem. But it isn’t just Tilde and he’s not just Eggsy Unwin the tailor either. Like Jahi said: four identities might be too much in a two person marriage.

He goes on vacation for a week and is pretty much miserable walking along the sunlit streets of Italy. He tries his hardest not to let Tilde know, because it’s not her fault he asked her to marry him, but she definitely picks up on his mood anyway. The whole vacation tastes sour and they enter an unspoken silent treatment upon coming home, retreating to different areas of the house. His wife is sad in ways he doesn’t know how to fix, the dog is the entirely wrong dog, this isn’t the home he wants to be home in, and all Eggsy can think about is Harry sitting in his armchair, rather lonely and considerably more sad until he goes and dies and sees nothing worth remembering before the bullet hits. Eggsy sits on the kitchen counter and tries to swallow the lump in his throat, tries to wipe every tear away before it can even appear, but it doesn’t work. He feels like he can’t breathe, the collar around his neck getting tighter and tighter and tighter until he’s lightheaded and panicking. He leaves in the middle of the night out of sheer need to get out of the house and can feel Tilde watching from the upstairs window as he backs out of the driveway because he is just a fucking pro at handling marital strife, apparently.
He spends five minutes idle at a stoplight with no one behind him since he can’t figure out where he should go.

What he wants is Harry, of course, but that would undo all the careful work he’s done over the last few weeks putting some distance between them. Doing a couple loops through the city and then returning to Tilde is probably something he should consider, before his excursion makes things even worse if it hasn’t already. But he’s in no way ready for a fight, not with the way he’s already engaged fighting tears, and going back to that house has his breath stopped up just by the thought. For a moment he thinks maybe he’ll go see his mum. After all, it’s technically his house. One that he never really lived in once Kingsman gave it to him since he realized he preferred Harry’s place, but still his house. And he really never gets to see his mum and the baby as much as he wants. But while he’ll definitely receive sympathy and possibly waffles if he goes there, he can’t really confide in his mum what’s the root of the problem here. She just won’t get why Eggsy is putting his marriage at stake because Eggsy Unwin the Tailor is definitely trumped by Swedish Prince Eggsy Unwin, and couldn’t he always visit his friends here anyways? So no, to the well-meaning but ultimately unhelpful mother.

Which leaves Roxy of course, who really belongs at the top of his list. She doesn’t answer when he calls, but she probably just has her cell on silent. If Eggsy had an emergency, she knows he’d just contact her via the glasses on his nose. She’s just sleeping. So he might as well go to her place. Otherwise he’ll be parking somewhere and sleeping in the backseat. He sends her a text saying he’s coming and lets the GPS in his glasses lead him to her home.

Multiple texts go unanswered once Eggsy is outside her door, but he doesn’t want to wake the neighbors or force Roxy out of bed at this hour to let him in just so he can crash on her sofa. This is the sort of reason he has his own key for Roxy’s place. Her own personally-designed security setup knows him as well, so he’s able to let himself into her apartment very quietly without being electrified by the doorknob.

Maybe he didn’t want to force her out of bed, but he’d also feel like a complete creep if he didn’t at least alert her to his presence. He makes his way in the dark to the bedroom and knocks gently at the door. “Rox? Rox, you awake?” Of course she isn’t, it’s the middle of the goddamn night. “Roxy? It's Eggsy, I’m—”

The door swings open and a pillow slams into his face before he has time to react. “Eggsy, you idiot!” That’s Roxy’s voice, as the hand pressing the pillow to his face steers him away from the bedroom blind, backwards, and at high speed. His legs hit the side of the sofa and he tumbles down onto it, and just as he manages to sit up and get his bearing, the pillow collides once more with his head with no small amount of force. “Use that!” Roxy orders, and when he pulls the pillow from his eyes he can make out her form in the dark as she stalks back to the bedroom.

“Rox…”

“Goodnight Eggsy.” Her door shuts with a sort of finality and Eggsy takes a moment to let his heart rate slow back down before curling up on the sofa with the offered pillow, free of his glasses and jacket and shoes. It’s not as warm as sleeping next to Tilde, nor is it as peaceful as sleeping in the townhouse with Harry, but it’s what he has for tonight, and he definitely owes Roxy one. Breakfast, he decides. He’ll go out and get breakfast early in the morning to surprise her with. He sets the alarm on his watch and falls asleep to the sound of rain starting to slowly fall over the city.
He’s still exhausted when the alarm goes off, of course, but by now he’s trained himself to work on no sleep. Eggsy yawns and sits up, puts his shoes back on and wipes at his eyes before replacing his glasses, stands and turns towards the door, and then stops to stare at Jahi, just in the process of sneaking out.

Eggsy blinks. Jahi continues her impression of deer in the headlights. Roxy covers her face and then plucks at the back of Jahi’s shirt. “Cover blown. Might as well stay for coffee.”

“Coffee on me!” Eggsy blurts out, and makes use of that open door as fast as his legs can take him. “Breakfast too!” he calls as he escapes down the hallway. The rest of his journey for breakfast and back is mostly made up of swearing profusely under his breath. Things are awkward with Harry, even worse with Tilde, and now he’s made things awful with Roxy and Jahi all in one great swoop. He’s an idiot, total idiot, and now the food is getting wet because it’s *fucking raining* and he hates his life.

The door to the apartment is open and both Roxy and Jahi are sitting around the kitchen island waiting for him. Eggsy kicks the door shut behind him and toes off his shoes before approaching them with a wince. “I am…”

Roxy is still dressed in her pajamas, hair falling mussed around her face. She takes the coffee Eggsy offers and sighs. “You’re sorry, I know. It’s fine. Not the way I wanted you to find out, but fine.”

Eggsy turns to Jahi. “I don’t know what kind of coffee you like, so I…”

Jahi is sleepy-eyed, dressed in a striped pink and purple sweatshirt with a beanie to go over unruly hair. “I like the caffeinated kind,” she says, and does the grabby hand motion until Eggsy hands her one of the two options he’d thought she might like. He slowly slides into his own chair, taking a drink from the remaining coffee, and then places the bag full of pastries in the middle of the island like a peace offering. Jahi perks up considerably and grabs every single custard pastry there is. Roxy studies Eggsy for a moment and then sighs again.

“Okay, why are you here? What happened with Tilde? What about the vacation?”

Eggsy frowns and reaches for a tart. “Vacation’s over. We’re having a not-fight. I know she’s mad, or sad, or something, but she doesn’t say anything and I don’t know what to do to fix it. And I’m mad at myself too but I still don’t know what to do.”

“Coming and staying at my place probably isn’t the solution.”

Eggsy groans. “I just couldn’t be in that house anymore. They’re not my things, not my dog…”

“Don’t you crash at Harry’s place?” Jahi asks around a mouthful of custard. “You have a bed there, right?”

Eggsy feels his face flame up. He takes a bite of his tart and doesn’t answer.

Roxy frowns and leans closer, reaches out and touches his arm. “Eggsy…”

“Oops.” Jahi takes a long drink of coffee and adjusts her glasses on her nose. “Sorry, I think I have to break this up.”

“A mission?” Roxy scrambles off her chair and into the bedroom, returning seconds later with her glasses on. Eggsy simply taps his and studies the files Jahi is quickly relaying to him. It’s only a moment before the audio signal for Harry joining the conversation appears blinking in his line of vision.
Harry doesn’t waste any time on pleasant greetings. “Morgan, I need you back at HQ ten minutes ago. Lancelot, Galahad, you’re going to Spain.”

“Right Arthur,” the three of them agree at once, and the switch has been flipped. There’s no time for marital strife or discovered dalliances. Twenty minutes later and Jahi is successfully updating Roxy and Eggsy on the mission as they speed underground towards the jet that awaits them.

Harry had been there at the shop to say goodbye, at least, but it had felt as terribly stilted as all their other conversations these days and hadn’t helped Eggsy feel better at all.

“Stop brooding,” Roxy tells him on the ride over. She’s busy inspecting the weaponry onboard. Thankfully she remembers that they’re both connected to HQ via their eyewear right now, so she doesn’t mention Tilde, or the fight, or anything at all except how exactly they’re going to carry out this mission. Jahi speaks so fast her words all blend together, trying to tell them everything they need to know over the short trip. Harry jumps in now and then with some advice but is mostly silent, which is kind of what Eggsy needs right now. He sits in his seat and tries to reclaim a few minutes of sleep.

It’s a simple mission on paper. A group of white supremacists is planning an attack on the Barbican Centre during an important conference, and it would be best if said terrorists were halted in their tracks before they got to London. Hence Barcelona. They’ll be dropped off above the city with what information they have and three days to complete their objective before rendezvous.

Eggsy is all ready to give Roxy her pep talk before the drop point, but she simply stands there with parachute strapped on once they’ve both suited up and fully armed themselves. Eggsy goes and visits the pilot—one of their operatives from Berlin—just to make sure everything is as planned, and then it’s ten minus nine, eight, seven…

Roxy jumps first, silently and without hesitation. Eggsy rushes to the door and stares down at her rapidly disappearing figure before his common sense kicks in and he tumbles out of the plane after her.

Skydiving has, admittedly, lost its appeal after having to do it so many times. Eggsy is perhaps a little too reckless, waiting a little too long before tugging on his chute, but Roxy seems close to hitting the ground before she finally reacts at all. They both touch down in a field just outside the city. The farmer whose land they’re on is an affiliate, who stores their chutes and gear and gives them a car after they’ve stripped down to simple suits once more.

“Morgan, could you pull up that map for me?” Roxy asks as she slides behind the wheel. Eggsy’s glasses suddenly fill with a street map of Barcelona before the map shrinks to the right hand corner of his vision. “Thanks,” Roxy says simply, and accelerates so suddenly Eggsy nearly topples into the back of the car.

“What’s wrong with you?” he hisses, very conscious of every word being broadcasted right back to Jahi. “You’re acting…”

Roxy shrugs and takes a turn left onto the road that will lead them to the city center. “This is my normal now.”

There’s not much more to say. They can deduce the approximate location of the terrorist base based
off suspicious bombings over the last few weeks that triangulate to a wealthy district near the sea, but will have to pose as tourists in order to know for sure. After that, taking out the cell as well as any weapons they may have created is top priority. In case of failure, Harry will be at the Barbican Centre as a last resort on the day of a large international conference. Roxy finds a swanky looking hotel and uses an unfair amount of money to get a room even though they’re completely booked. Eggsy digs through his go-bag to find his casual tourist-y clothes, and Roxy changes into a sundress with an overlarge hat. The innocent appearance is a little countered by the fact Eggsy knows she has at least five hand grenades and two revolvers strapped to her legs, but he’s one to talk, with the trusty pieces of his rifle stored in various places beneath his clothes, ready to be reassembled in ten seconds or less. With the standard Kingsman rings, shoes, and various poisons, they are significantly more dangerous than the common tourist.

They leave the hotel and hook arms as they travel the packed streets, eyes scanning for anything even remotely suspicious. The fact the terrorists are in this area suggests some very rich backers, so it’s entirely possible they are using a hotel as a base, or some similar expensive set-up. This job will get tedious real fast if they have to go door to door on all the beachfront properties.

Eventually they find a cafe with a table available and take the chance to communicate with Morgan. “I think we have an identity on at least one of our targets,” Morgan informs them, pulling up a picture of a suited, well-polished man. “He’s got a history of Neo-Nazi association, and moved to Barcelona six months ago. If he gets anywhere within your sight, my sensors should recognize the face and ping him. So try to act like tourists and look around as much as you can, alright?”

Eggsy nods and takes a sip of his lemonade. A piece of his rifle rubs against the inside of his leg. It sends a bit of a thrill through him, knowing that at any moment, they could spot their man and be on the hunt. It’s a sort of exhilaration he doesn’t know how to explain. Even when faced with a very high possibility of death, being on a mission sets his blood on fire like nothing else. Perhaps it’s the feeling of having a purpose, one that really means something. Or maybe it’s just his bloody recklessness that must be inherent in the position of Galahad. Harry would understand, he’s sure. Harry always tends to understand.

Roxy kicks him under the table. “I said that maybe we should take a walk along the beach?”

Eggsy nods and takes his lemonade with him as they head towards the ocean and walk along the sandy shore, glancing everywhere they can and occasionally making small talk about the scenery. After the beach, they hit up the hotels, strolling into conventions like they’re meant to be there and scanning the guests for their man. But nothing shows. They return to their own hotel around dinner and agree to take a brief rest before seeing what Barcelona at night might have to offer. It’s as he’s sharing a room service meal with Roxy that Eggsy realizes with a guilty swoop of his stomach that he’s had more fun today trying to track down terrorists than he did that entire anniversary trip with Tilde. And it’s not because he’s suddenly in love with Roxy. He’s being a Kingsman. That’s all there is to it.

“Are you alright?” Roxy asks, and Eggsy realizes he’s gone completely still. “Not food poisoning?”

Eggsy shakes his head and tries to finish as much of his dinner as he can. He needs time to think, and unfortunately, now is not the time.

No. If he’s being completely honest, what he doesn’t want is time. He wants to talk to Harry. Because no matter how much he fucks things up, no matter what kind of trouble he might be in, he knows that Harry will set aside his book or magazine, and lean forward so to give Eggsy his full attention, make it seem like Eggsy is the only thing in the world.
“Rox, do you think we could stall for a half hour?” he asks, and she nods before cutting a green bean in half and sticking it in her mouth. Eggsy carefully tugs off his glasses and leaves them on the bed, and then disappears into the extensive closet with his phone. Of course, he’ll need to crush and throw out the phone after this, but it’ll be worth it. He has extras prepared anyways.

“Eggsy?” Harry answers, already sounding a bit panicked. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine, Harry,” Eggsy answers with a little relieved sigh. “I just...are you with Jahi right now?”

There’s the sound of shuffling from the other end, low murmured voices, the opening and shutting of a door. “Not anymore. What is it?”

“I…” Realizing it in his head is a lot easier than saying it aloud, but it’s just Harry. He can do this. He can do this. “I think I made a huge mistake. Getting married, I mean.”

“Ah,” Harry says softly, and doesn’t add more after that.

Eggsy rests his back against the wall and slowly slides down to the floor. “What do I tell her?”

“I find the truth to usually be the best if not the easiest path.” Harry clears his throat. “I hope...I hope that my personal feelings didn’t influence this at all.”

“No, God, no, Harry, no.” Eggsy snorts a little laugh and Jesus fucking Christ he’s missed the sound of this man’s voice. “It’s everything. It’s being a Kingsman. It’s that I can’t just leave Roxy, and Jahi, and you...or all our plans for what Kingsman is going to become. Maybe if I really was a tailor I could make this work, but with Tilde as crown princess...I’d have to say goodbye for good, wouldn’t I? I couldn’t be even a small part of Kingsman.”

Harry hums. “Probably, yes.”

Eggsy presses an arm across his eyes, hopes that if Roxy can hear him she at least has the grace to pretend she couldn’t later. “I love Tilde, Harry.”

“I don’t doubt that at all.”

“But I love you all too. Roxy and...and you ...and...” Eggsy stops and sucks in breath as he pulls his arm from his eyes. Who would have thought his problem would end up being loving too many people all at once? And why does it have to hurt so badly? It’s unfair, that the price for loving and loving and loving some more should be a pain in his chest like it’s all barbed wire tangled up in there.

“...and we’ll figure this out when you return,” Harry keeps talking to him, despite Eggsy’s sudden disconnect from the conversation. “But now I need to know your mind is on the mission, alright? We’ll get this sorted out when you return. I don’t want you worrying about it now.”

“Okay Harry,” Eggsy agrees. “I guess...see you when we get back.”

“I’ll be waiting,” Harry tells him, and ends the call. It eases the pain a little bit, the fact that he knows Harry will be there and will probably have a solution for everything, because what Harry and Eggsy do, see, is they fix each other. And here’s the thing about the grand story of Eggsy Unwin: there was a before and after Harry Hart came into his life. The before pretty much sucked. The after helped him find out who he could be, his max potential that continues to grow. But it’s more than that now. Actually, it’s always been more than that. It’s that Harry has always seen him for exactly who he is, and doesn’t care about the details of the before, only what he knew Eggsy could become. It’s that Harry never gave up on Eggsy when it seemed the whole world had, and that Eggsy misses his bed
in that townhouse even with all those fucking butterflies because there’s nothing in the world besides the thrill of a mission that makes him feel as content as a lively game of Stratego, or lectures on cutlery, or anything at all as long as it’s with Harry. It’s that he tried for two weeks to live in the new house with his mum and the baby before it became easier to quell the nightmares by sleeping in Harry’s bed, sipping coffee on Harry’s balcony, staring for hours at those stupid tabloid pages and missing the bloody strange man who showed up like Henry Higgins and My Fair Lady -ed his way into Eggsy’s life with the sort of permanency a few months shouldn’t have allowed. And as much as Eggsy can admit to being Eliza Doolittle, maybe Henry Higgins needed her more than he could ever admit.

And this Eliza Doolittle really can’t imagine a life suddenly without Henry Higgins again. Not after Eggsy already thought he’d lost Harry forever. He can’t go through that again, even if this time Harry would still be alive. Being stuck in Sweden while he knows Harry is in that townhouse feeling rather lonely and considerably more sad might feel even worse, with the knowledge that under a different set of circumstances, he could be by Harry’s side instead, that the possibility of mending that hole in chest exists, if only he could grasp it.

Really, what it all boils down to, is that five words he spoke to Chester King have ended up being some of the truest words he’s ever spoken, a fact of his life that’s as woven into his genes as being a Kingsman.

“I’d rather be with Harry.”

God, he is so fucked.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you very much for the kudos and kind comments! <3
Roxy gives him a full five minutes before knocking gently on the closet door. “Galahad? We should head out.”

Eggsy straightens his clothes as best he can and greets her with a smile. “Yeah.” He retrieves his glasses and follows Roxy back outside the hotel, into the Barcelona nightlife. He chooses a little bar on a side street and downs a martini way faster than he should. If he’d been scrutinizing Roxy earlier, he’s getting that back tenfold right now.

“I’m fine,” he mutters, and focuses on the people on the street. He can feel her doubtful looks the rest of the night. Which turns out to be quite uneventful, disappointingly enough. The streets are filled with the usual tourist parade, but no suspicious goings-on, and no face matches for their one suspect. They retire to the hotel around five a.m, catch two hours of sleep, and are on the move once more. They drive a little ways from the city center, park near the beach, and grab coffee to go as they patrol the sidewalk, looking everywhere to give Jahi as much footage as possible.

“Arthur, this is hopeless,” Eggsy mutters as he hooks arms with Roxy to avoid being separated by the crowd. “We’d need a week to canvas the city properly. A week without tourists.”

“I have faith in my agents,” Harry responds immediately, which is sort of cute considering it confirms Harry has probably been there with Jahi all night as well. Though really the man should be making sure he’s getting the right amount of sleep. Eggsy might have to get on him about that, though Harry does tend to get a little bit touchy when Eggsy brings up his health.

“Galahad.” Roxy executes a swift but light kick to his ankle. She must be getting tired of needing to nab his attention this entire trip. “Why do you think neo-Nazis insist on having such a recognizable hairstyle?”

Eggsy blinks and looks where Roxy nods. Sure enough, a couple of skinheads are making their way down a side alley, suspiciously quiet and reserved for twenty-somethings in a group. Without a word, Eggsy and Roxy turn to follow, keeping just out of sight as the alley leads further from the tourist district and into much seedier parts of the city that probably don’t feature in the brochures.

Eggsy’s vision magnifies when he has a good shot at one of the men, and ten seconds later Jahi informs them that yes, this man has a record of running with various gangs, though it’s not enough to link him to their specific white supremacist group.

“We have to get closer,” Roxy decides, and grabs Eggsy’s hand to pull him across the street. They remain unnoticed, however, and then men lead them their merry way all the way down to the shore.
before ducking inside what turns out to be the office for a marina. “Odd place for young men to hang out,” Roxy mutters, and drags Eggsy with her right to the side of the building.

“Are we being a little rash, maybe?” Eggsy suggests, but Roxy either pretends not to or really doesn’t hear him.

“It’s a marina, we’re tourists, we should be able to get inside,” Roxy mutters. “And what’s that big warehouse here? It’s connected. That’s a whole lot of space for a company that uses the ocean as its parking lot. I’m going.” And then she’s strolling up to the front door of the place, fretting and humming like any lost tourist. She pushes open the front door with the jingle of a bell, and Eggsy decides that she can handle herself in there. He’ll check what this warehouse next door is about. Well, no obvious points of entry beside the large sliding doors that will definitely attract attention, but there is a small window up on the second story. Easy enough if he just scales the uneven bricks of the office like so and then—hup—jumps to the roof of the warehouse and walks with a gymnast’s precision to where he’s standing above the window. He hooks his feet in the gutter and lowers himself down so he can peek inside, and well if there isn’t anyone standing guard over this innocent little window! It even pulls open at the slightest touch. Fuck but Eggsy loves it when he’s better than the bad guys.

It’s easy enough to slither in through the window onto the little balcony that is totally deserted except for boxes upon boxes closed off with black labels announcing contents such as paint and brushes and wax. The floor below, however, is not so quiet. There’s at least twenty men down there, and at this point Eggsy is able to recognize materials for bombs when he sees them.

“Lancelot, I got it. In the warehouse,” he hisses, hiding himself away so he won’t be noticed until he wants to be.

“I just took out everyone in the office,” Roxy answers, just a little out of breath. “Heading your way.”

Eggsy stares down at the set-up beneath him. “Just get them looking at the door,” he tells her. “I’m blowing this place. Easy and efficient.”

“You always just want to blow things up,” she argues.

“Yeah, because it’s easy and efficient!” Eggsy grabs the little lighter grenades he’d stuffed in his shirt pocket. “You ready?”

Roxy just grunts. He takes it that the diversion still needs a minute. “Okay,” she tells him after a few extra seconds, and Eggsy prepares his exit strategy of throwing himself back out the window and praying for a soft landing.

“Here I come,” Roxy says, voice cut off by the sudden rumbling of an engine, and something in her tone of voice immediately has Eggsy very very nervous before the entire building shudders and the wood beneath Eggsy’s feet shakes and groans as a car revs its engines beneath him from where, he’s sure, Roxy has driven right through the sliding doors.

Luckily, the men below seem as startled as Eggsy is, so he presses the switches on his grenades and sends them sailing through the air, one aimed at each back corner of the building and three more right into the center of the room where the majority of the activity is. Now he has to get himself back out the window before the whole building collapses or he can consider this his last vacation.

He grabs the sill on his leap outside to prevent himself from falling to the street and catches sight of Roxy’s hijacked vehicle backing out of the wreckage that had been the front of the building, down
far enough to hurt, probably not enough to break anything. Eggsy lets go and rolls with the impact on the top of the mini cooper, bright yellow. Okay, yup, that hurt like fuck. And he lost his glasses in the fall.

No time to complain about it though. He grabs hold of the side of the car to stop himself from spinning off when Roxy turns hard and slams on the accelerator, little car shooting off down the street as the grenades make contact with their targets of highly explosive bomb-making material…

A half-brick makes a dent in the car a finger away from Eggsy’s head, his ears blown with the sound and whole body slightly burned by the heat of the whole building going up. “Jesus, Rox!” He slams a hand down. “Slow down so I can get the fuck inside!”

She bangs on the horn twice, and Eggsy holds tight as the car suddenly slows amidst the ash and smoke. The passenger side door is pushed open and he slides down onto his seat. “You stole a car?”

“Be glad I did, you didn’t kill them all,” she says, staring back down the street. Sure enough, here come cars and motorcycles and a bunch of screaming men with weapons who probably don’t want a nice tea with the people who just blew a lot of their headquarters up. Roxy politely waits for Eggsy to close his door before she’s off, car wheels spinning dust in their wake as the sound of gunshots punctures Eggsy’s ringing ears.

Around now, Eggsy would love to have a conversation about what they’re going to do next, as a team, as partners, as people who really communicate when the time is right. Do they head for the rendezvous point early? Throw a couple extra explosives behind them to deter all pursuit? Aim for a little tiny bit of discretion that won’t have the entire Barcelona police force on their tail?

“Morgan, a map?” Roxy grunts, and Eggsy waits for the map to appear for him too before remembering, no shit, he lost his goddamn glasses. But it must mean something to Roxy because she spins the wheel and sends the car rattling down a tiny alleyway, knocking over garbage bins and sending cats yowling up the walls.

Eggsy wipes the smoke from his eyes and peers up ahead. The way looks clear for now, and their pursuit is getting bogged down at the entrance to the alleyway, tiny as it is. “Hey, Rox, what say we ditch the car? Yellow’s conspicuous and they’ll never get through here with it parked in the way.”

Roxy nods and slows to a stop. “Is my face clean?”

Eggsy licks his thumb and cleans a black smudge from her chin. “Now you’re good.”

“You look like you were shot out of a volcano.”

“Great. Might want to stay away from the tourists then.” Eggsy pushes his door open and stumbles into the alleyway, and then makes room for Roxy, who doesn’t have the space to open her own door. “Let’s just detour through one of these buildings…”

He picks a door at random, just as grimy and abandoned-looking as the rest, and uses his hips to force the door open. He’s expecting a rusty squeal and a good deal more resistance, but the door opens so easily he almost stumbles into the brightly lit interior. Clean workspaces and tools, a few cars parked over in the corner, barrels marked with all sorts of warnings grouped against a wall.

At least thirty people look up from their work and reach for their weapons.

Okay then.

“Oh, ah, so this is our Barcelona office,” Eggsy announces, and sweeps an arm to invite Roxy
inside. “You can see that production is going very well.”

“I do see,” Roxy agrees, and swans into the room with her big hat and pretty dress. “But I would like to know the details of your objective before investing my money in your venture.”

Eggsy is pleased to see that their complete bullshit has at least earned some confused stares. “You there,” he commands, singling out a man working with chemical gloves up past his elbows, “Tell Ms. Oxford about the attack in London.” Fuck, but this guy looks familiar...

“Who are—” the man starts, but it’s bought enough time for Roxy to slip the grenades from beneath the bow of her hat and toss them towards the barrels, which explode magnificently.

Both Roxy and Eggsy are blown off their feet by the blast and collide with the wall. Once again, Eggsy’s ears give up on him. It’s Roxy tugging on his elbow that gets him moving again, back out the door to where the stolen car is reliably waiting.

“That didn’t work! That didn’t work!” Eggsy can tell that he’s yelling but can’t seem to stop. Roxy scrambles into the car and waits for Eggsy to at least close the door before going zero to forty and possibly leaving half the engine behind. “What the fuck? What the fuck was that?”

“Morgan identified the man we were searching for in there,” Roxy gasps, and checks the back mirror. Their detour has given their original pursuers plenty of time to catch up. The only problem is that their cars and motorcycles keep colliding with men escaping the second building they’ve blown up in a five-minute window. “I think...I think we just busted two completely different neo-Nazi organizations.”

“You’re fucking kidding me.”

“I wish. Morgan…” Roxy pauses, and then swears a particularly colorful set of words he’s never heard grouped together before. “I lost my glasses.”

“We’re so fucked.” Eggsy turns in his seat to watch the cloud of dust and sound of engines get ever closer. “We’re so fucked, Rox.” He reaches into his shirt and begins assembling his gun.

Roxy just grunts and ploughs through some trash cans in their way to exit the alleyway, wheeling into the street in a flurry of garbage. Eggsy looks left, and catches sight of the line of vehicles popping into view down the way. If he still had his glasses and their magnifying ability, he’s sure he could see the guns the men riding those cars are carrying, but for now he has his imagination. The surviving men from the second building, he reckons, joining their little terrorist friends to hunt him and Roxy down together in a splendid example of solidarity. “Turn right, turn right!” he tells her, and Roxy obeys without question, shooting off down the street, this one populated with (now screaming) tourists and cute little shops. They’re way too close to the city center. He can see the outline of Sagrada Familia rising before them and Harry is really going to kill him if they destroy a landmark over a hundred years in the making.

“Roxy?” he asks, and Roxy just uses one hand to slap the hat off her head and hand it to him.

“Just get your gun ready.”

Eggsy nods and assembles the rifle before turning in his seat. Their car is doing a fine job of clearing the streets for their pursuers, but at least it means no civilians are in the way of the gunfire. Eggsy takes out their own back window with a single shot and then the two front tires of the car leading the chase and is answered with a peppering of bullets that destroys their front windshield as well. Roxy grimaces amidst the shattering glass but speeds up, and Eggsy assigns himself to taking as many
vehicles out as he can.

But of course, because he’s about to die, suddenly the only goddamn thing he can focus on is how fucking lonely Harry is going to be without him, and it’s the most important thing in the world to get back to London so he can have just one more cup of tea in the flat that feels like home. And if he can just get home, make some comment that gets Harry to smile, then it’s all alright. It’s all alright as long as he can get Harry to smile.

“Eggsy, would you just shoot them please?” Roxy shrieks next to him as another barrage of bullets nearly takes out her ear, and Eggsy shakes his head clear before managing headshots on two men riding motorcycles. They tumble to the street and the motorcycles crash with a flare of light and smell of gasoline and Eggsy uses the confusion to shoot the tires out on another car before he has to duck for safety.

“Roxy…” he warns, and can feel himself pale as he looks up the road to the farmers’ market in the street.

“Eggsy, for the love of God, just keep shooting. I’ll try to lose them here.” Roxy doesn’t sound so completely sure of her plan, and Eggsy can already hear the screaming of the people who’ve seen what’s coming up the road towards them. He pokes his head back up and tries to make another headshot, but the impending disaster has his hands shaking and unsure. He tries to clear his mind, calm down a little, but that embarrassing trembling in his fingers just won’t go away. This isn’t any way for a Kingsman to act. He chances a look over his shoulder. “Rox, holy fuck!”

She brakes hard just before the row of tents and screaming people, and then veers left, circling around a fountain and knocking a few market stalls down. Oranges cascade over the hood and splatter beneath the wheels. “Keep shooting! We ditch the car soon as we lose them!”

Eggsy nods and rolls down his window to sight the cars still on the other side of the fountain. The falling water masks him from view, and a driver slumps down in his seat and drives straight into a streetlamp. Eggsy gives himself a moment of personal victory before Roxy banks right and Eggsy nearly falls out the window.

Maybe, maybe Eggsy thinks, the reason he sees Harry’s face when he thinks he’s about to die is really just his mind telling him he can’t actually snuff it yet, not without seeing Harry’s smile one more time. He maneuvers the top half of his body back inside the car and kills another motorcyclist who really should have been wearing a helmet.

Roxy sails through a couple of stalls and takes a short detour through a park, scattering panicking civilians everywhere. They both duck at the spattering of bullets that punctures the backs of their seats and knocks out what was left of the front window. “Eggsy, do something!”

Eggsy reaches for Roxy’s discarded hat, takes another grenade from beneath the ribbon, activates it, and lets the grenade fall innocently to the trampled grass behind them. The explosion takes out three cars in a blaze of fire and the sound of two hundred geese all trying to exit the area at once.

“Yes Eggsy!” Roxy cheers, and whacks the horn to clear the sidewalk before she careens out of the park back into the winding streets, trailing water and goose feathers. Eggsy tosses another grenade out the back for good measure, and then grins as Roxy takes out a chunk of a priceless Spanish archway and parks hard against a tree as the next explosion fills the air with smoke and shards of cobblestone. They stumble out of the car and immediately hook arms like any Barcelona lovers, even if they’re also trying to keep each other walking upright. It’s easy to disappear into the gawking crowd as what’s left of their pursuit speeds around the corner and brakes hard, all yelling in confusion around a little stolen car with both airbags out. Roxy and Eggsy grin at each other, and
then they speedwalk the hell out of there.
“Well, I have to say, that was...top class Kingsman material,” Eggsy says later, maybe just a little tipsy off the bad wine they bought before holing up in a dirty apartment to pass their remaining time until rendezvous. “Efficient, thorough, _discreet_: a masterful completion of task if I do say…”

Roxy rolls her eyes and reaches for the bottle. “You’ve had enough.” She stretches her arms up and then lies across the hard floor with a small groan. “Anyway, since neither of us are connected to HQ anymore, why the hell are you sleeping at my place?”

Eggsy frowns at the lack of alcohol in his hand. He wants to speed the high of having escaped about eleven million evil lackeys with guns, not remember his marriage. “Rox…”

“Nope,” she shuts him down immediately. “If you’re going to be living on my coach when we get back home, I want to know why.”

“I told you, we had a fight,” Eggsy mumbles, and turns so he can’t see her prying eyes. “You’re my best friend, ain’t I allowed to crash at your place?”

The wine bottle pokes the small of his back. “Of course you can, but what’s such a big fight you can’t go home?”

Eggsy sighs and rolls over onto his stomach. Maybe the floor—which smells of years of accumulated dust—will just swallow him. “It’s not a big fight. I’m not sure what we’re even mad about. I just…don’t want to be there.”

“Where do you want to be?” When Eggsy dares a peek, he can tell from her expression she knows exactly what his answer will be. There’s no use lying.

“I want to be with Harry.”

Roxy nods to herself and passes Eggsy the wine. “Thanks,” he mumbles, and takes a sip. Goddamn, this really is terrible stuff.

“You know, I think I know what your problem is,” Roxy says after a moment, and Eggsy places the wine on the floor between them before settling on his back so they lie identically side by side. If they just crossed their arms over their chests they could pass for corpses.

“What’s my problem?”

Roxy turns her head to look at him, frowning a little before opening her mouth. “I think you might be in love with Harry.”

Eggsy blinks, and then reaches for another drink. He considers the proposition from a couple of
different angles. Here, in this dusty and dirty room safe from the world, he has the time to think about it. How did he know he loved Tilde? Because he could spend hours and hours in her company and never be bored, or at least it was a comfortable boredom born of total trust and no need for words. Because he wanted to see her smiles and her frowns and her tears and be there for anything she might need, because all those emotions were worth protecting. Because she saw in him someone able to save the world, and he wanted to prove himself worthy to what she already knew was true.

He performs a little name-swap and runs those sentences back through his head.

Well shit, Eliza Doolittle might have fallen for Henry Higgins after all.

“I think I might be,” Eggsy agrees very quietly. And it’s not like this is some huge revelation that’s sent him rocking either. It’s a simple admission to what he thinks should have probably been a very obvious fact. Why didn’t he realize it before now? Because Harry is older? Because he’s Eggsy’s boss? Because he’s a man? None of those explanations feel right at all.

“You want to know what I think?” Roxy asks, and Eggsy nods emphatically. He could seriously use Roxy’s level head here. “I think you fell in love with Harry, and then he died.” Roxy steals the wine away again. “He died, and you met Tilde, and fell in love with her, and then it turns out Harry wasn’t dead at all.” She takes a long drink and has to cough a little after pulling the bottle from her lips. “So suddenly you were in love with two people at the same time. And then you married Tilde, because you thought that was the next step, except now that you’re married to her, it doesn’t magically stop you from being in love with Harry.” She sighs. “You’ve fucked yourself, is what you’ve done.”

“But…” Eggsy frowns. “I really do love Tilde.”

“Of course you do. I know you do. She’s lovely and you should love her very much.” Roxy stretches an arm up towards the ceiling, like she might steal the sun away if only she could see it. “You didn’t even do anything wrong. Harry really was dead. It was okay for you to fall in love with someone else. Him being alive is...a complication. A good thing, but still a complication.”

Eggsy steals the wine. “You’d think I’d notice something big like falling in love with Harry though. I guess...busy time…” Busy time of his life, yes, but also...Harry had died. Harry had died and Eggsy had mourned him through living in his house as if Harry might walk right back in at any moment. And then he’d dragged Tilde into that house and tried to move on alongside her to some sort of future while at the same time fighting tooth and nail to remain in the past, with those butterflies and newspaper clippings pinned to the wall keeping him safe in the memory of a moment when Harry was there, safe and alive and there. So he grieved for Harry but then came the heady rush of actually falling for Tilde, and it was just so much at once, and maybe some other feelings had gotten all wrapped up in there and stuck in the gears and broke the machine. But it didn’t matter. It didn’t matter back then if he’d actually questioned any of it, where his heart was broken and where he was pledging it, because Harry was dead. He was dead, he was dead, he was dead, so Eggsy wore his broken heart on his sleeve and told himself everything was normal until he actually believed it.

Fucking Christ, he really is in love with Harry Hart. But...

“But it doesn’t matter, Rox,” he whispers, and laces his hands beneath his head. “I married Tilde. And Harry...no way he feels the same way about me. It’s better this way.”

“So when the day comes you have to become a prince and leave Kingsman behind, you’ll really be better off that way?” Roxy makes a sympathetic sound and reaches over to dust some ash from Eggsy’s cheek. “There’s just no good way out, is there?”
The smell of smoke, the thunder of his heart, the sudden calm and taste of cheap wine on his tongue. This is what Eggsy lives for. No, there’s just no good way out, but leaving Kingsman isn’t a way out at all.

He can’t do it. He can’t leave Kingsman behind, not even if it costs him his marriage.

Eggsy’s known it, really, for a while now, but actually putting the thought together in his head makes everything so much more.

He really is going to ruin his marriage.

It’s not even about Harry. It’s not at all. Rather, it’s about who he would become, the man without Galahad to give him pride and purpose. And it’s not just about him. It’s about what he wouldn’t ever want to wish on Tilde, the woman he loves. Because Tilde doesn’t deserve a husband who would live exclusively in memories of a few precious years past, and she doesn’t deserve the guilt of knowing she took him away from what he really wanted. Even if Eggsy tries his hardest not to let it show, to never resent her for her royal blood, she’ll know that he left his heart back at Kingsman headquarters, and there’s just no growing a new one after that.

“I think we should buy some better wine,” he says, and Roxy gives him a half-hearted thumbs up.

“It’s your turn. I don’t think I can move.”

Which is how Eggsy ends up walking through the Barcelona streets in the hum of nightlife, searching for a slightly nicer place to buy wine than the cheap store they’d hit up before. He ends up ditching the idea of wine for a nice brandy, and uses the credit card assigned to him this mission, the same card they used to buy the crappy wine earlier. It was more than enough to let Jahi know he’s still alive, which eliminates the need to call in. She’ll know they’re just both keeping their heads down, and also be able to switch to any news station and figure out why. Efficient and discreet, fuck yes. Also, like hell he wants to phone in and get Harry on the other end. Not because Eggsy loves him or anything—a fact he finds all too easy to insert into his life—but because Harry is going to absolutely murder him over this and Eggsy would rather get drunk first.

He loves Harry. Of course he does. It’s a relief, actually, finally being able to put that feeling into tangible words. It also answers some pressing questions, like why he always goes flashback mode on every second of footage he has of Harry when faced with even a taste of death, for one. And he’s been in love with Harry for a long, long time. That’s another thing. It makes him feel a little less like a piece of shit who is going to ruin his marriage over a job. Because he never set out to wrong Tilde, never wanted to hurt her. He didn’t fall for his boss once Harry came back alive and mostly whole. He’s loved them both, nearly the whole time, real true devoted loves that he never could have imagined himself having five years ago.

Knowing now, though, that it’s love, forces the question of what is he going to do about it?

He’ll probably need to go home. The home with Tilde, Eggsy means. If anything is to change between them, he needs to do it now. Dragging the pain out won’t make it hurt any less, if that’s all it’s going to do in the end.

He’d rather just keep on walking down this street forever, he decides, and pops the stopper out of the brandy to take a sip. Good shit. Maybe he could just...keep walking and time would stop and no one would have to be hurt. There wouldn’t have to be an end, if time could just let him keep walking this street forever. He wouldn’t have to be hurt, and his fickle heart wouldn’t hurt anyone else either. If only.
Why did he ever think it was a good idea to fall in love? Why did he ever think it was a good idea to let Tilde fall in love with him? He never should have tried, never should have tried to grasp at that kind of normal happiness. There’s a reason Kingsman only appear in the paper twice. Marriages just never work out.

And it’s why he can never let Harry know how he feels. Because when it comes to Harry, he forgets what he needs to be as a Kingsman. Because when it comes to Harry, he’d surrender his own life or the lives of millions of people, just to keep him safe. He still remembers the horrific realization that the late Agent Whiskey had his skipping rope around Harry’s neck. Still remembers the sound the case had made when Eggsy slid it across the floor, those millions of lives suddenly insignificant in the face of losing Harry when he just got him back.

God, this is so fucked up.

Well, at least Roxy approves of the brandy, when he gets it back to her. They slowly get drunk together like true professionals, and if Eggsy ends up crying a little bit on her shoulder as the hours wear on, then there’s only the drink to blame.

She won’t tell anyone.
Chapter 8

It’s only Jahi who greets them upon their return to London.

“On a scale of one to ten, how fuming mad was Arthur?” Roxy dares to ask as Jahi gets them both new sets of glasses.

Jahi hums softly and spends a little too much time tucking Roxy’s hair back behind her ears. “An eight. A solid eight. He calmed down in the end, though, so you should survive.”

“And where’s he now?” Eggsy asks, trying to sound casual and simply ignoring the look Roxy sends him. Jahi just shrugs.

“Left a few hours ago, said he needed to be sure of something.”

Goddamn that man and his absolute bloodymindedness. If Harry ends up in a coma again after doing something completely stupid, he won’t wake to find Eggsy at his bedside, that’s for sure.

That’s also a lie. Eggsy would completely wait night and day for Harry to wake up.

“Any clue what he needed to be sure of?”

Jahi shakes her head no. “But,” she adds, “It might have something to do with Barcelona. Arthur was worrying that enough terrorists might have survived to pull off an attack.”

Roxy frowns and crosses her arms. “It’s possible. But we did go back and check both locations. They were cleared out.”

“Yeah, it’s when he heard that that Arthur left.” Jahi shrugs again. “I don’t know. Can we go home, you think? I wasn’t left with instructions.”

Eggsy feels the grin spread across his face and pats her shoulder. “Good news. You’re Merl—ah, Morgan. You make the instructions.”

Jahi promptly instructs them home, stating that case reports can wait until tomorrow, and Eggsy spends ten minutes just sitting in his car wondering if he should call Harry to make sure the man isn’t doing something completely insane. They’d only had a phone from the pilot at the rendezvous to contact Jahi with, so no fancy projections or video playback, and Roxy had done all of the talking, so Eggsy’s last words with Harry had been those exchanged while hiding in the closet.

He wants to talk to Harry, so badly, to call him up and hear his voice, but if he does that, he’ll only want to see Harry more, when where he needs to go is his home with Tilde. Harry will just have to wait.

Tilde isn’t there when Eggsy gets home. The dog races around the corner only to find out it’s not the right person home, and then goes back to sleep. Eggsy changes into his slouchiest clothes and fixes up a couple of sandwiches. By the time he hears Tilde at the door, he’s had time to compose himself a little and breathe along to a ten minute online meditation session. Tilde enters the room, folding her coat neatly over one arm. She studies Eggsy sitting at the table for a brief moment before a very faint smile graces her lips. “You’re home.”

“Yeah. Sorry. A work thing came up and…” He’s already starting to sweat. God, he doesn’t want to do this. “Tilde, I...I think we should talk.”
Her lips thin but she abandons her jacket and purse on an armchair before joining Eggsy at the table. She looks professional and stunning in her suit. Eggsy just looks like a mess. But putting off this conversation for any longer would be cruel.

“Tilde…” he starts, but the scramble of paws on hard floor interrupts him. JB jr. rounds the bend to the kitchen and comes racing towards his mum, apparently wide awake now his favorite person is home. Tilde laughs and picks him up and nuzzles the top of his head with her nose and Eggsy loves her.

“Tilde,” he starts again, voice beginning to choke up, and she looks up then, and her mascara is a little bit smudged beneath her eyes. “Tilde…” he repeats, because that seems to be the only word he knows right now, and she laughs a little and wipes under her nose.

“I think we had a happy marriage, overall,” she says with a little sniff before burying her nose back in JB jr’s softness. “Not perfect,” she continues, voice muffled. “But I was happy. Were you?”

Eggsy nods as emphatically as his bruising will allow. “Yes. Yeah, I was happy. I love you. But Tilde…”

She shakes her head and shuts him up. “The thing is, I’ve been thinking, and you love me, and I love you, and we can make each other very happy but…” She sniffs hard again and lifts her head. “But maybe two people can make each other very very happy without it...without…” Her lip wobbles a little and Eggsy wants to just leap across the table and hold her tight, but he can’t do that. He offers his hand instead and she stares at it for a moment as the first tear slips down her cheek. She reaches out and touches his wrist with a butterfly’s delicacy. “Maybe two people can make each other very very happy,” she continues at last. “But they won’t ever be as happy as they could be.”

Eggsy shakes his head this time and his voice comes out a croak. “Tilde, babe, I love you.”

“I’m not saying we don’t love each other,” she cuts him off at once. “It’s just means that...that…” JB jr. jumps from her lap as she covers her face with her free hand. “It just means things don’t work out the way you wished they could. And when it comes to us...Eggsy...I am going to be queen. Even if you asked me to give that up for you...I wouldn’t.”

Eggsy tilts his hand, inviting her to properly take it, and she does. He squeezes gently. “And I can’t stop being a Kingsman,” he admits, and she shuts her eyes with a little shudder, forcing more tears stained a little black with makeup to run down her face. Eggsy’s crying too, he realizes, when the table beneath him suddenly stains wet in little drops. “I’m sorry,” he says. “I should have thought things through. I just...was being stupid and thought I could have you and Kingsman at the same time…”

Tilde wipes her nose on her shirt collar and suddenly blurts out, “Things changed after...after he came back. I knew there was something between you two but suddenly he was back and I wanted to ignore it and—”

Eggsy squeezes her hand tight to cut off the sudden torrent of words. “Wait, what?”

“Harry Hart,” Tilde tells him with emphasis and starts crying in earnest. “I lost you the moment he came back.”

“Hey, no, now, that’s not true.” Eggsy stands and circles the table so he can hold her. She buries her face in his stomach and he rubs his hands through her hair and across her tensed shoulders. “This is all on me. Me being stupid. If Harry wasn’t alive, then I’d probably be even busier, trying to rebuild everything with just Roxy to help me.” He leans down and kisses the top of her head. “This isn’t
Harry’s fault, and it sure as hell isn’t yours. This is all on me.” He sighs and keeps rubbing at her shoulders. “You didn’t know me before Kingsman, babe. Sure, you can guess, but…” He shuts his eyes and focuses on the warmth of her pressed against him. “But, really, the reason I met Harry at all was because I was gonna be serving time for vehicle theft and ramming that car straight into the police cruiser. Harry was the one who got the charges dropped out of a favor for my dad, and then everything just...happened.”

Tilde lifts her head and Eggsy opens his eyes to find her staring up at him. “You never told me that,” she says softly.

“I didn’t tell anyone,” Eggsy admits, voice just as quiet. “I couldn’t exactly tell people a super spy tailor bailed me out. Point is, you wouldn’t have loved the person I was before. Because before-me was a little prick. Being a Kingsman changed who I was. Or...let me find out who I was supposed to be, I don’t know. But I can’t leave it. Maybe I’m just a selfish asshole, but I need to know I can be something good, Tilde. I need…”

He sniffs as Tilde reaches up with both hands and strokes thumbs beneath his eyes. “You are something good,” she says, “And you’ll always be good. And you always have been. Kingsman just helped you realize it.”

“I’m sorry,” Eggsy whispers, and pulls his face from her grip. “I need Kingsman to keep on realizing it, so I never forget. Because I love you, but Kingsman is the best thing to happen to me.”

There they are, the terrible words right out in the open. Tilde slowly lowers her hands and Eggsy takes the opportunity to escape back to the other side of the table. He sits atop and waits. Waits for her to cuss him out or come over and slap him like he deserves. But instead Tilde sits quietly, for several long minutes as Eggsy’s heart slows back down to a healthy pace.

“So is that it then?” Tilde asks at last. “You’re choosing a job over me?”

“You are too,” Eggsy reminds her, a little bit of spite biting at his tone despite himself. “You want to be queen.”

“I was born into that.”

“Still,” Eggsy mumbles, and looks away as he crosses one arm across his chest. He can’t stay annoyed, not with the way her eyes have gone red, her perfect complexion ruined by splotches of color at her nose and cheeks. Once again they lapse into silence, but Eggsy is quick to break it this time. “I’m sorry I couldn’t be better for you. Be the person you deserve. I’m sorry that I...that I didn’t think things through and that I...I’m sorry for a lot of things. I’m sorry that I love you and still can’t be who I should be.”

The chair creaks as Tilde stands, and Eggsy watches from the corner of her eye as she walks around to him and stands between his legs. “Sometimes, people love each other very much, and still things don’t work out. It doesn’t mean that love isn’t real, and it doesn’t mean that it isn’t strong.” She hiccupps and Eggsy relaxes his arms so she can fold into his chest, face tucked against his neck. “People can love each other very much, but it doesn’t mean they belong together. I think that’s us. I love you, and I’m sure part of me will always love you.” She shudders, and Eggsy’s arms move on their own to pull her close. “I love you, but we’re not meant to be together. That’s not what we are.” She blinks, and Eggsy can feel hot tears sliding down his neck. “Starcrossed,” she whispers, and Eggsy shivers before wrapping his arms more securely around her. Starcrossed, he thinks. Maybe. Maybe not. He’s not sure the stars have that much personal interest in his life. But his marriage falls apart while he holds his wife all warm in his arms, and it’s all he can do to keep her close for as long as he can, because now their time is up, and tonight is all he has.
Tilde goes to bed early with the dog in her arms and Eggsy prepares himself to bunk on the sofa. His eyes are exhausted from crying and the rest of him exhausted from Barcelona. But there’s still someone he needs to talk to before he can sleep. He adjusts his glasses and shuts off his connection to Roxy and Jahi just in case before calling Harry.

“Eggsy?” Harry answers almost immediately, voice warm and comforting even in a whisper.

Why a whisper? Oh, right. Eggsy remembers with a guilty jolt that Harry might be out on Kingsman business. “Sorry, I can call back,” he blurts out, and ends the call without saying anything else. Harry calls him back within five seconds.

“It’s fine, I can talk,” he assures. “Are you alright?”

With that question out in the open, it’s hard to come up with a good answer. “Ehhhh,” Eggsy replies, and plays with the decorative fringe of a throw pillow. “I, uh...Tilde and I…” Should he lay this all out immediately, or slowly ease into the news? “More marital trouble, I guess.”

Harry is quiet for a moment and then says, very slow and careful, “Oh. I’m sorry.”

Eggsy wraps the fringe around and around and then lets go so it can spin back around to normal. “It’s not your fault. Um...about Barcelona…”

“Yes, about Barcelona.” Harry’s tone alone has Eggsy wincing. “If I want ten years taken off my life, I will let you know because you’re a bloody expert at it. The both of you. And I might have expected that from you, Eggsy, but I will let you warn Lancelot beforehand that I’ll be requiring some counseling sessions. I was an idiot to not require them before. You were both foolhardy and hotheaded and relied entirely upon luck, which is why we will be spending each day until the conference is over keeping watch over the Barbican Centre to make sure any surviving members of the organization don’t manage to pull off their attack. If we can get Morgan to hijack the airport security systems...”

Eggsy’s too goddamned tired to deal with this. He lets Harry go on until he pauses to take a breath and then goes for blunt honesty. “So Tilde and I agreed to a divorce.”

Harry goes silent immediately.

“So maybe we can talk about Barcelona some other time?” Eggsy mutters, and clutches the pillow to his chest. “I know I brought it up but I just sorta...need you right now.”

Harry clears his throat. “I’m sorry. That was callous of me.”

“’s alright,” Eggsy says, and lets the silence take over. A minute passes.

“Switch to my video feed,” Harry tells him out of nowhere, and Eggsy obeys with a few small adjustments to his glasses. And there’s Harry, sitting cross-legged in some sort of ventilation shaft. He must have propped his own glasses up in front of him to act as a camera. As Eggsy watches in the dim lighting, Harry reaches for his pocket and pulls out the eyepatch he uses when not wearing his glasses. He smiles a little at Eggsy—or at least the glasses—before concentrating on getting the
eyepatch on just right with fidgety motions. Then he interlaces his fingers and leans forward. “Is there anything I can do?”

“Where the fuck are you?” Eggsy asks, studying Harry’s surroundings. Then he sighs. “You’ve snuck into the Barbican Centre, haven’t you?”

He can instantly tell from Harry’s face that he guessed right. “I’m making preparations in case of emergency. Getting a few mics placed.” He coughs. “Anyway, back to my question. Is there something I can do?”

Eggsy shakes his head before remembering Harry can’t see him in return. “No. Just, being here. Is good.” It’s like what Harry had told him, back in the days when the butterflies took over. No, dear boy. Your being here is all I could ask. He studies Harry’s concerned expression, the creases around his eyes and mouth. “Harry?”

“Yes?”

“Does it get easier? Losing people, I mean. And I know Tilde won’t be dead but...but…”

Harry frowns and rubs at his forehead. Hopefully not another one of his headaches. “I wish I could tell you that it does, but...but it doesn’t. It doesn’t ever get easier. “

“Oh,” Eggsy mumbles.

Harry stares just a little too much to the left as he talks into the glasses, but Eggsy doesn’t mind. Whenever Harry looks straight at him, he feels a little too transparent for his own liking, even through the glasses. “I think that the sadness can be a good thing, sometimes,” Harry says, and then shrugs a little. “Maybe it’s odd, but the fact that I miss them, that I mourn for them, it’s proof that they were alive, and that they meant something. If I stopped being sad about the people who are gone now, I’d really lose them forever, and probably lose an important part of being human as well.”

He rubs at his head again and sighs. “I think you’re right, trying to train agents in how to react to losing their partners, but...but there’s nothing we can teach them in a simulation about the years and years you keep the dead close after, wondering if anything could have been done to save them.” A slight pause, and then: “I do that with your father, you know. When I was in the army, your father was one of the few things that kept me sane, who encouraged me to keep going.” He laughs a little, self-deprecating. “I was so jumpy back then. Just wanted to go home to my butterflies, most nights. But your father, he was a good man, down to the core. And when I left the army and joined Kingsman, I thought I could repay your father through giving him a job that meant something. Because that’s what your father wanted to do. He wanted to save people, and I thought I could help him. Dear God…” His hand slips down to cover his eyes. “And look where my help got him. It’s been twenty years, more or less, and I still lie awake sometimes thinking what could have been, if only I hadn’t missed that fucking grenade.” He goes quiet, just sitting there in a ventilation shaft with his hand over his eyes, and Eggsy kneads at the pillow with both hands, thinking back to when a simple misstep on his part stole Merlin’s life away.

It’s a wonder, sometimes, how they don’t collapse under the weight of their ghosts.

Finally Harry lowers his hand and stares back at the glasses, and it’s like the past five minutes never happened. “So what about the divorce?”

Eggsy shrugs one shoulder. “Dunno. We agreed to sell the house. She wants to live in Sweden anyway, and I don’t need that big a place. So I guess I’ll find an apartment or something. It’s all going to move pretty fast. Mostly just a matter of splitting the furniture, but she’s a princess and I got more money than I know what to do with, so even that should go smooth. I guess…” He hugs the
pillow tighter. “I guess it all depends on how fast it takes to sign the divorce papers.”

Harry nods along. “You are welcome to stay with me while in the meantime. Your, uh... your bed probably misses having someone to sleep in it.”

Eggsy studies the bags beneath Harry’s eyes and the slouch of his shoulders and decides that’s the closest he’s ever going to get to Harry Hart actually admitting that he misses him.

“Yeah.” He can already hear Roxy telling him he’s a complete jackass for shacking up with his boss before the divorce is even finalized, but then maybe he’s a jackass because he needs the warmth and safety of that home, longs for the quiet nights by the fireplace and mini manners lessons whenever he does something egregiously ungentlemanly.

Besides, nothing will come of it. He lived with Harry before he realized he was in love with him, and he can live with him now even with that realization. Nothing needs to change. Eggsy isn’t that much of a jackass to push his feelings onto someone who doesn’t want them.

He just wants to go back to where he belongs.

“Yeah,” he repeats, voice cracking in a way that would be embarrassing if this wasn’t Harry, “Yeah, I’d really, really like that.”

Harry smiles his soft little smile. “Then you may come whenever you please. You still have the key, I presume?”

Eggsy nods. “Yeah, I do.”

“Then I will stock up on those awful breakfast sandwiches you like so much,” Harry says, because he can’t understand the magic of a Feasters bacon roll. Eggsy laughs a little and relaxes into the sofa.

“Harry, you can’t stay in a ventilation shaft all night. Just get Morgan to hack their security system. You know she can do it. Why bother getting all squished up in there?”

Harry makes an expression Eggsy doesn’t know at all and casts his gaze around, avoiding the camera in the glasses. “I...may have been trying to avoid you and Roxy when you got back.”

Eggsy laughs again. “I think we were sorta happy you weren’t there to tear us a new one, so yeah, thanks I guess.”

Harry’s eyes stop wandering and he looks back to the glasses with a bit of a frown. “I was serious about the counselling sessions.”

“I know.” Eggsy thinks back to way Roxy had jumped from the plane, the absolute frantic madness of the car chase. “It’s probably a good idea.”

Harry doesn’t say anything in return. He sits and laces his fingers together and then pulls them apart and tugs at his tie. Eggsy simply watches. He’s always liked Harry’s hands: so good with straining tea leaves, drawing endless pictures of butterflies, turning pages of a book, taking apart a gun and reassembling it in under thirty seconds, that sort of thing. Finally Harry stops fidgeting and looks back at the glasses. “So you’ll come home?”

For some reason, the words seem oddly vulnerable, like Harry is afraid Eggsy might change his mind and say no. Home, Eggsy thinks. Yes, it is home, his house with Harry. This mansion has only ever been a place where he lived.
“Eggsy?” Harry asks after a moment, because of course he can’t see how Eggsy is turning the words over and over in his head. “You don’t have to move back in, I thought I’d offer—”

“No, no, no!” Eggsy cuts him off. “Yes, I’ll come home. I’ll come home. I won’t even complain about the bloody butterfly posters anymore.”

Harry scoffs. “Of course you still will. If you didn’t I might be concerned I’m having breakfast with your doppelganger.”

“Okay.” Eggsy shifts on the sofa. “I won’t complain as much.”

Harry just rolls his eyes with a little smirk. Eggsy wishes he could be crammed in that shaft with Harry, just to see that smirk in person. But speaking of:

“You should go home too. You’ll get a cold all cramped in there.”

Harry’s face stiffens. As always, his health remains a Touchy Subject™. “I know how to take care of myself, Eggsy.”

“Then get the fuck home, Harry,” Eggsy insists. “I’m hanging up on you and calling Morgan. She can take care of surveillance easy.”

“Fine, fine…” Harry grumbles, and then Eggsy’s view shifts rapidly as Harry reaches to put his glasses back on. “But I can call Morgan myself. Rest up so I can put you through the wringer tomorrow.”

“Fine, fine,” Eggsy parrots back, just to tease, and hears Harry’s snort before he grins and cuts the video feed. He takes his own glasses off and sets them carefully on the table before lying back on the pillow. Life is...not as bad as it could be right now. Which is an awful thing to think right after deciding to get divorced, but he can’t help his own thoughts. Maybe it makes him a bad person. Maybe not. He doesn’t know.

But life is not as bad as it could be.

Chapter End Notes

as always, your support and feedback is invaluable~
thanks for reading, another chapter up hopefully by next week! i think this thing is slowly winding to a close now so here’s where the hartwin content kicks in, i hope you all enjoy the story to the end!
Three months pass. The world doesn’t end. It doesn’t even threaten to. Eggsy thinks Harry is actually a little disappointed when nobody shows up to destroy the Barbican Centre. Terrorist group officially neutralized. Hah.

It takes less than two weeks for Tilde and Eggsy to nullify their marriage. Eggsy sees Tilde off to the airport and kisses her cheek one last time before she leaves. He watches from the window until the airplane is out of sight and then goes to spend the night with his mom, watching game shows and eating junk to try to drown out the last image of Tilde’s farewell smile. “Sometimes things don’t work out,” his mom says, smoothing Eggsy’s hair back. She knows far too well how bad relationships can turn. “I just want you to be happy. More ice cream?”

The house gets sold after a few weeks of being on the market, but it’s empty before the realtor even steps inside. Eggsy gives the man permission to rent whatever staging furniture he needs and focuses on unpacking his things in his new/old room at the townhouse. There’s very little to unpack, since Eggsy had never really moved out. Just clothes and a toothbrush, to be honest. Harry has, however, taken the opportunity of his absence to stuff the room with even more butterfly shit, and of all the outcomes being shot through the fucking eye could have had, did one of them really have to be a renewed interest in Lepidoptera? It’s fucking weird. Eggsy stuffs as much as he can into a duffel bag and leaves it in Roxy’s trunk like a dead body as a nice surprise. Days later Jahi is complaining about a bunch of dead insects being dumped on her welcome mat, and Eggsy has a novel idea for a new rookie initiation project.

Roxy accepts her fate of counselling without a fight. There’s no use arguing with Harry. He takes her, actually, to her first visit. And then the second. The woman has been very highly paid for Roxy’s information to stay off the books, and Harry starts mentioning the idea of hiring a therapist for Kingsman full-time, because God knows they could use one. Eggsy is more concerned with filling that actually-square round table with knights again, but he nods along anyway.

“We go for coffee too,” Roxy admits after the third appointment. “Harry takes me for coffee, asks how I’m doing, all that.”

“And what do you tell him?”

“That I’m working on it.” Roxy fiddles with a pen between her fingers. It’s just her and Eggsy in the conference room. “It’s nice, I guess. He gets it. The whole...coming back from the dead thing.”

“Ah.” Nothing much Eggsy can say there. “Well, I’m, uh, glad that you’re bonding, a little.”

Roxy flips the pen up into the air and catches it. “Yeah, me too.” She flips it again. “Although if I’m Lancelot, I suppose I have to sleep with you at some point, unfortunately, and that might ruin things between me and Harry a little bit.”

Eggsy snatches the pen away from her in the air. “What?”

Roxy sighs, gives him a pointed look, and then pulls a grenade from her pocket to begin fiddling with instead. “Arthurian legend? Lancelot was Arthur’s greatest knight, but betrayed Arthur and slept with Guinevere...”
“No, I know that shit,” Eggsy scoffs, and steals her grenade away as well. He swaps it back for the pen. “I’m saying I’m not fucking Guinevere, right? I’m Galahad. Ga-la-had.”

Roxy shrugs and sends him a little half-smile. “Sure, whatever you say. It was just a bad joke, anyway.”

“I’m fucking Galahad.” Eggsy mumbles one last time, and then Roxy laughs, a genuine laugh that makes him happier just to hear.

“Oh, you’re Galahad,” she agrees, and flips the pen between her fingers. “How’s living with Harry going anyway?”

Eggsy freezes up a little. He’d been wondering when Roxy would bring this up, but as the weeks passed, he’d sort of hoped she’d let it slip. She looks away from the pen to his face and snorts. “Relax. I think you handled everything best you could, given the situation.”

“But the situation sucked,” Eggsy groans, and she nods along.

“Maybe I’d be a little more judgemental if you were hopping into the sack with your much older boss while your ex-wife just got on a plane to Sweden, but that hasn’t happened.” She smiles at him again.

Eggsy sighs and runs a hand through his hair. “Wow. I totally thought you were gonna be like…” He can’t do the face right, but he still tries to send Roxy his best judgemental look.

“You thought I’d be going into labor?” she says dryly, and then lifts an eyebrow and sends him the exact look he’s trying to replicate. Eggsy gives up.

“You know what I mean.”

She just hums noncommittally. “Are you ever going to tell him? Not now, I’m not saying now, but…ever? Will you tell him?”

Eggsy drops his glasses down his nose so he can rub at his eyes. “What? That I love him? No, not ever. Things are…good, right now.” He wakes up to the smell of eggs and bacon, Harry knows exactly how he likes his tea, the Stratego tally is 25 to 23 his favor, and they sit by the fire talking long into the night. Eggsy keeps Mr. Jalapeno secure in his lap, and engages Harry with the more colorful and less simply depressing parts of his childhood, and Harry opens up in return. Talks about growing up in a country estate, about when he first became interested in butterflies, and, on certain nights, tells Eggsy about his father. About their time together in the army, and when his father was completing Kingsman training.

It’s a side of his father his mother was never able to talk about, because of course she couldn’t know. “You remind me so much of him,” Harry tells Eggsy one night, and then laughs. “You had almost the exact same choice of words, during the test with the train.”

Eggsy tries to place the shadowy figure of his father in his mind with a man bound to a track spitting profanities. It makes him more real, somehow. Someone Eggsy would have loved to know better.

And he loves Harry. It beats through him like the thumping of his heart. He really loves this man, weird as hell and a badass with an umbrella. It doesn’t matter if he never says it. It makes him feel warm just knowing someone like Harry Hart exists in the world.

So yeah, things are pretty much as perfect in his life as they’ve ever been, and he’s not about to tip
the balance either way with an awkward confession.

“So you’ll just...live with him and never tell him until one or both of you die?” Roxy asks, voice soft.
“He died on you once, Eggsy, don’t you think...?”

Eggsy props his glasses back up and clears his throat. “Well, I think we all know I am the master of not thinking. No, I’m happy this way.”

He chops up garlic that night, shoulder to shoulder with Harry in the kitchen. He stands to his left, because while Harry is getting better and better, sometimes his lack of eye still adds a little excitement to the concept of depth perception and sharp knives. Eggsy hadn’t insisted on hours upon hours of training to make dinner the same way they got Harry acclimated to a gun once more, but maybe he should. He gently corrects how Harry is holding the stirfry above the element, and Harry adjusts without complaint.

Things have changed a little since they first began living together. Of the two of them, Harry had been more of a cook. Not much of one, because Kingsman missions tend to either lead to small bites of disgusting astronaut food between firefights or lavish meals at expensive hotels, but on his days home when he wasn’t too exhausted to just order takeout, Harry had amassed a couple of staple recipes he’s very good at making. Eggs and bacon, for one. Spaghetti. Peanut butter sandwiches. But because it’s Harry, who likes routines, they were able to get through about a week of supper before the menu started recycling. And then somehow that had led Eggsy to browsing the internet for super simple meals with five or less ingredients, and then led to him borrowing some of his mum’s cookbooks, and now Eggsy is pretty much taking the helm in the kitchen, at least around supper time, because he can’t really get tired of eggs and bacon for breakfast, and tonight they’ll be dining on Thai food. Eggsy makes it, and then Harry lectures him for a half hour on Thai culture and the appropriate way to practice khluk because of course he’s a fucking expert, and Eggsy might get it purposefully wrong a couple of times just so Harry will scoot his chair around 90 degrees so he’s right next to Eggsy pointing out exactly how he needs to do things and sometimes takes a hold of Eggsy’s hand to make sure he’s holding his cutlery properly and Eggsy’s just been having some really nice nights lately, that’s all.

And so it continues for a few happy months. Roxy stops having her weekly therapy sessions after a few weeks, though she and Harry manage to maintain their coffee dates. Roxy walks easier now, doesn’t always move to make sure she has a clear dash to the door if needed, doesn’t jump if Eggsy taps her on the shoulder. She smiles more often too, to everyone, not just Eggsy. He sometimes catches her and Jahi being disgustingly cute in the tech room and makes faces until they flip him off. But, of course, there’s Kingsman to think about as well. Even with the Statesmen running around taking care of things—Eggsy has yet to figure out how their two organizations managed to operate all this time without colliding before now, like where the hell were they during the whole Valentine thing?—there’s a need to put Kingsman back in action. And not just a trip to Barcelona, but a full round table and knights travelling all over the world. To make things great once again.

“I think we should find some recruits, get started up,” Eggsy says during one group meeting for probably the fifth time. “We have a space again. Jahi might need to move out to the estate to run things, probably Harry too since he has the most experience with this, but I bet if we round up some potentials, we could have new agents in just a few months.”

“But we’re not equipped to handle Kingsman at its old capacity,” Roxy argues back. “Jahi is still building the computer system and we don’t have enough staff members. We need engineers and repairmen and pilots and doctors. And who’s going to keep developing our equipment if we don’t hire someone to? We don’t want to fall behind when it comes to weapons.”
She has a point. Several points. Eggy sits back in his seat and nods before glancing over to Harry, who has a furrow in his brow but is also nodding along.

“All excellent points, Roxy,” Harry agrees. Somewhere along the way they’d dropped the code names except as a formality. “I’d like you and Jahi to lead the staffing effort. Jahi, I am positive that Merlin backed up his files online in some way. I want you to track those down and see if there’s useful information. There might be a list of contacts that Roxy can use to find trustworthy employees. Roxy, you have my trust in this, so don’t wait for my approval to hire.” Harry leans forward and laces his hands beneath his chin. “I want the estate fully operating in a year. I will work to develop the tailor shop and make it more functional. The train out to the estate could probably use replacing, too. We installed it so quickly without much thought to functionality.” His gaze darts over to Eggsy. “And since you’re so fixated on it, Eggsy, I want you to develop a training program for recruits that includes the changes and additions we’ve discussed.” He unfolds his hands and glances around the room, with its simple square table and blank walls. “We three will all submit a candidate, but I want you to submit at least nine to make up for our lack of current members. Alright?”

Nine? How is he supposed to come up with nine different candidates? He doesn’t know nine people he would trust with an egg beater, let alone a gun. But Eggsy clears his throat and says, “Got it.”

So it’s agreed. In a (very busy) year from now, Kingsman will be back, for real, not just a storefront with a bunch of secret super spies hanging out in the back rooms.

Because they’re sort of self-indulgent secret super spies, they order in Chinese takeout and eat while sitting around the square table. Eggsy listens to Jahi enthuse about the challenge of finding this legendary Merlin’s personal files, watches Roxy laughing in that way that proves she’s really still alive, and then meets Harry’s gaze. “To think it was just us, once, eh?” Eggsy says, and lifts his glass.

“Things die, and come back again,” Harry murmurs, and sends a sad little smile Eggsy’s way. “Maybe a little different, maybe not ever as great as it was before, but things come back.”

No one can quite kill Eggsy’s mood like Harry.

That night, Eggsy stays up a little later than he should playing that stupid popping bubbles game on his phone, all swaddled in his blankets like a newborn with just the light of the screen to illuminate his room. It just means he hears it when Harry gets back up out of bed, the steady thump of slippered feet going down the stairs. Eggsy shrugs on a sweatshirt and pads on his own bare feet to the kitchen. Harry is sitting at the table, face buried in his hands, hair sticking up from sweat. He jolts a little when Eggsy knocks softly at the table, and shifts his hands so he can see Eggsy standing there. “Did I wake you?”

“Nah, I was still up.” Eggsy moves to put on the kettle. “Chamomile?”

“Please.”

Eggsy is a little noisier than usual, preparing the tea. It gives Harry a chance to get his irregular breathing under control. He doesn’t let the tea steep as long as he should, but he has the feeling Harry won’t care. He sets a saucer and teacup on Harry’s left side, and then sits at the opposite end of the table. Not his usual spot, but he never knows how much personal space Harry needs, when things like this happen. So he drinks his own tea and waits for Harry to stop hiding his face. Which he does, after a moment. He doesn’t have his eyepatch on, and must catch the quick grimace Eggsy can’t prevent himself from making because he immediately covers the scar again. “I’m sorry, I’ll put you off your tea…”
Eggsy shakes his head and puts his cup down. “Don’t apologize. I just…”

Doesn’t like the memory of Valentine putting a bullet in Harry’s head.

“Nightmare?” he asks instead of finishing the sentence. Harry slowly lowers his hand and nods.

“You could say that.”

“Kentucky?”

“Yes.”

“Oh.” Eggsy stares at his tea. There’s not much to say about Kentucky. They both have nightmares about it. Eggsy’s, of course, involve watching Harry die in glorious HD quality. Harry dreams of the people he killed. They were all bigoted fucking assholes, Eggsy had told him once. And Harry replied that it didn’t mean he had a right to kill them.

“Speaking of, we have a request from our friends the Statesmen,” Harry says, lifting his head and forcing some levity into his voice. “Something in Canada. They think the locals might respond better to the British than the Americans. I don’t have the details yet, but I think I’ll be soloing this one.”

Eggsy’s mother hen instinct immediately starts blaring sirens. “Don’t you want company?” he asks, trying to sound as nonchalant as possible.

Harry doesn’t fall for it. He sends Eggsy a withering glance. “I’ve been a Kingsman agent for longer you’ve been alive. I don’t need your constant supervision. And I’ve been given the impression this might take several weeks undercover. I’ll need you here making things are running smoothly in my absence.”

But besides from a few local jobs and cramming himself into the Barbican Centre air ducts, Harry hasn’t been taking assignments. Eggsy scowls and downs half his tea in one gulp. “Arthurs don’t take assignments,” he mutters, tea cup still at his lips. It was part of why Harry as Arthur had been the best thing ever.

“Well, we’re short-staffed,” Harry replies, and glances away so Eggsy can only see the right side of his face, the whole side. “I’m sure I can survive without you holding my hand.”

Okay, but what if Eggsy wants to hold his hand? But Harry’s gone all moody the same way he does when Eggsy worries about his health, and Eggsy can tell this conversation won’t go anywhere for the rest of the night, no matter how much he tries to argue. “When do you leave?” he asks with a sigh.

“Whiskey said it would take about a week to gather her materials.”

A week. And then Harry is heading across the Atlantic to a frozen barren wasteland—at least, that’s the picture of Canada Eggsy has in his head—and Eggsy just has to stay here and keep house and hope that Harry comes back with all the rest of his pieces intact.

Fucking fantastic.

Chapter End Notes
Hey folks! As always, thanks for sticking around and reading!
This will be the last update before the 25th. I have a bunch of obligations going on work-wise and fic-wise and want these final chapters to be as perfect as possible, so please forgive me for a bit of a break. When I come back, Canadian eh-spionage, cryptic cyber messages, and possible confessions? Might be, might be~
Is that enough to keep anyone interested until then? I hope so. But until next time, thanks again for reading and I hope you enjoyed the story!
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

And I'm not dead! I hope you enjoy this chapter!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Harry has been in Canada for three weeks before Eggsy realizes he’s really beginning to lose it. Honestly, he’d probably handled Harry’s death with more dignity than this. Maybe not much more, but at least he had work and a girlfriend to keep him distracted. Without Kingsman offering much in the way of missions, all he has is Mr Jalapeno for company and an endless playlist of pining love songs the neighbors are probably going to be pounding on the door complaining about any night now. He’s making no progress on his work assignment either. Well, the training plans are going alright, since he can mostly just piggyback off of what Merlin did, minus the shooting your dog part, but Eggsy still doesn’t know how he’s going to find nine recruits to put forth in a year. Sure he has a few friends but he’s already lost one too many to a missile not meant for him and Eggsy doesn’t really know anyone with Kingsman qualifications. So, a day in the life of Eggsy Unwin—superspy: wake up, miss Harry, heat up a breakfast bacon roll while missing Harry, walk to the storefront as opposed to driving so he has time to worry about Harry, get to work, harass Jahi for any updates on Harry’s front, wrack his brain for inspiration on where to find recruits for four hours, have lunch with happy girlfriends who clearly think his misery is cute, get maybe a good hour of proper planning down in the afternoon, check in with Jahi one more time in case Harry had called okay sorry he knows she’ll tell him right away if there’s any news, walk home, take the dog out to the park, throw together/order in dinner while feeling sorry for himself and missing Harry and playing aforementioned music too loud, wander around the house aimlessly for a bit before—thank fuck—it’s late enough to be considered bedtime, and he gets at least nine hours of not missing Harry.

He cannot go on like this.

He doesn’t know much about Harry’s mission, and he’s pretty positive Harry and Jahi did that to him on purpose. Probably thinking he’ll worry less if he can’t actually imagine what dangerous situations Harry might be getting himself into but Eggsy has a very good imagination, thank you, and wishes Jahi would just let him patch onto Harry’s video feed, just for a little bit so he could calm himself. But that is Not Allowed while Harry is on this very important top secret Canadian espionage mission that Eggsy hates. All he knows is that Harry is there, in frozen tundra wasteland—actually more Toronto area, but still—without backup and little communication back to headquarters for who knows how long and Eggsy can’t do anything about it. What if the butterflies come back? What if someone takes advantage of Harry’s blind left side? What if he’s lying on the ground somewhere, bleeding out, with only blankness in his mind because Harry can’t think of a thing in his life to come home to?

It’s when those thoughts pop up that Eggsy hangs around Jahi’s door waiting for her to assure him that yes, Harry is okay, I can literally list off his vital signs, no he doesn’t need a second opinion, things are going according to plan, thank you Eggsy, please go now because I can’t work with you breathing down my neck. Eggsy always feels like a scolded schoolboy afterwards, and the more times he’s turned away, the more annoyed he gets. Why can’t he talk to Harry, if only for a few minutes? Sure, it’s an important mission, but Harry must talk to Jahi, so why not Eggsy for once? He can’t remember Harry being particularly annoyed with him the day he left, no reason for the sudden
silent treatment. There must be a reason, he assures himself. There must be. Maybe it really is because they think it’s easier on him, not knowing. So he lets it slide after a few more days of pestering Jahi, though the annoyance stays simmering in his stomach. He’ll try to bring it up with Harry when he gets home.

Instead, he works with Jahi to piece together how they can simulate the death of a partner as a training exercise. It’ll be all about manipulating vocal recordings and false video footage to fake a gruesome demise while the partner trainee has to watch with horror and the ability to do nothing. Eggsy’s interested in how they will react after that. Silent and serious? Berserker mode? Falling apart? Increased focus? What had Eggsy done? Screamed at the laptop and tried to close it up, put it away, put it back.

What should the reaction be? To not care at all? Then Eggsy would wonder if that person is even a person.

He goes to his mum’s place and asks her if she’s kept in touch with any of his old school friends. The mums she’d used to hang out and talk to, before his father died and everything went to shit. A few of those mothers still maintain very weak connections, via Facebook or the yearly Christmas card, and Eggsy needs her to pull those strings now, see if any of his schoolmates just so happened to end up in convenient positions, like in the army, or security guard for the royal palace, or maybe international super spy. Anything that might make them Kingsman material. Sure, that’s definitely the Harry way of recruiting people, as opposed to reaching into the grabbag of little rich kids with too much time on their hands and a good education—fucking Charlie the utter, utter fucking shit— the way other, now dead Kingsman had once done, but Eggsy thinks the Harry way might be a little more sensible, Roxy excluded of course. Besides, Eggsy doesn’t have a grabbag of little rich kids, so he’ll take the ones who know how to use a gun without braining themselves. He gets three names from his mom, and spends the next week tracking them and all their information down. He cans the one guy for being a prick, but the other guy and girl seem promising. He creates a special little filing space in an empty drawer of his desk, just for their files.

Then he goes back to missing Harry.

Eggsy cleans. He cleans the flat from top to bottom, because at least scrubbing things down keeps his mind occupied. He revisits every single training exercise he went through, both for the Marines and for Kingsman, creates a checklist of skills trainees must absolutely be able to showcase by the end of the first month, as well as the second. He goes and buys expensive cookware, a nice new pan and a set of stacking pots, bright red. He buys some more cookbooks and practices to get his omelet making skills down under three minutes, to the point he’s sure Harry will be impressed. He even asks Jahi for the bag of butterfly items back, and rearranges the walls of the study and living room so more posters and framed specimens will fit.

God, he’s lonely.

In an act of desperation, he hangs back one night at the shop without letting Jahi and Roxy know. Walks around the corner, waits five minutes, and then lets himself back in. He knows all the passcodes by heart. Including the one into the tech room. Eggsy boots up the system and immediately chases after Harry. He finds the video feed on a small monitor in the corner and his heartbeat settles. There he is. It’s a small room, wooden, and all Eggsy can see through the video from the glasses is a small writing desk, placed near the window. Harry is sitting there, dressed casually in a sweater and jeans, jotting something down in what must be a notebook, though the angle is not the best to judge by. The Kingsman glasses have probably been placed on a nightstand or something so Harry can use his actual reading glasses without interruption. It’ll be in code, Eggsy knows, whatever Harry is writing, probably notes on locations, dates and times, the variety of people
to watch, to trust, to avoid: all those things that get important during a long undercover mission. It’s not like walking arm in arm with Roxy in Barcelona. Harry needs to completely become someone else for this job or it will fall apart. But judging by this peaceful scene, Harry is doing fine. Upon seeing him, just sitting there and humming a little to himself as he writes, the anxiety that has been eating away at Eggsy abides, and he is quite happy to just watch. Like a creep. He doesn’t need to speak with Harry as long as he can see him for himself, just to make sure he’s okay.

Why couldn’t Jahi and Harry at least agree to give him this? It’s not asking for much, just a few minutes a day to make sure Harry will be coming home. Sure, okay, he can see Harry not wanting to deal with Eggsy babbling about the Stratego scoreboard like he sometimes does, but not talking to him at all?

Did he really do something wrong? He’d been a bit sullen about Harry going on the mission, sure, but…

No, he can’t think like that. There’s got to be a reason. He needs to trust Harry and wait for him to come home. That’s all.

He watches Harry write for a few more minutes before shutting everything back down and leaving for real this time.

He wishes he could have been told beforehand that Harry wouldn’t be in touch for weeks. He might have given a more meaningful goodbye, instead of a yawn and a wave while sitting on the kitchen counter in pajamas with a cup of coffee. Still, Harry had smiled so sweetly it was painful to see and waved back like nothing was wrong and Eggsy just really, really hopes Harry’s able to come home soon.

Jahi is waiting just in the door of the shop the next morning when he gets there, the crossed arms and tapping foot effect just a little countered by the bright yellow sneakers and jean vest decorated with about two hundred pins. “I checked the video footage when my chair was out of place,” she states bluntly the moment he walks inside. “Care to explain?”

The chair? She found out because of the fucking chair? “A little anal retentive, maybe?” Eggsy asks, mostly to buy time to come up with an excuse.

“A little desperate, maybe?” she shoots back, and Eggsy sighs.

“Look, okay, I just...needed to see he was alright. For myself.”

Jahi’s foot slows to a stop and her arms slowly uncross. “Eggsy, I would tell you if something happened. But Harry asked me to keep this mission just between the two of us. It’s not like you’re the only one out of the loop. Roxy doesn’t know anything either. And you don’t see her sneaking into my office.”

Eggsy studies the cuff of his sleeve to avoid looking at her. “Did Harry tell you why? Why it has to be a secret?”

Jahi sighs and reaches out for his arm, dragging him further into the shop so he’s out of the way of the door. “No, but he didn’t sound mad or anything. I think…” She goes quiet for a minute, and when Eggsy looks up he can see she’s chewing on her lip, scraping away the purple lipstick. “I think this is the first real mission Harry’s been on since Poppy Adams, right?”

Eggsy nods.

“Well, maybe he needs to prove to himself that he can still do it. Without anyone’s help. Well, my
help, but you tend to talk a lot whenever Harry is out by himself and I think maybe he just needs to do this one alone.”

“He got shot and almost died last time he did a mission like this on his own,” Eggsy mutters.

“Yes, so now he needs to know he can do it without almost dying,” Jahi says patiently. “And he really isn’t in any danger, Eggsy. It’s mostly just information gathering. There’s a cult forming in the area with a very contentious relationship with the police, and Harry is just getting the feel for things before he goes in. We’ve talked about it. He has an alias, he has a plan. He’s going to remove as many people as he can from the compound and then probably take out the leader before any rash decisions get made. It’s almost entirely preventative measures, since no one has even brought up the idea of real violence or mass suicide at this point. It’s an easy mission, one he can do, and maybe he’ll feel a little more confident leading us as Arthur after this.”

She’s right. Eggsy knows she’s right. And maybe it even explains why Harry hadn’t just talked to him beforehand. He’s so touchy about this kind of thing. He places his hand over Jahi’s where it rests on his arm and squeezes. She smiles at him and then nods decisively. “Okay, today I want to dig up Merlin’s files for you. There might be something useful buried in there.”

“If I go buy you a coffee, will you forgive me for sneaking into your office and moving your chair?” Jahi grins. “Coffee and a cinnamon bun, please. Might as well get Roxy’s order while you’re at it.”

The line at the coffee shop is long, but Eggsy doesn’t mind the wait while the little old lady five places before him takes ten minutes to decide if she wants an extra pastry or not. Harry just wants to do this on his own. It makes sense. Eggsy’s been worrying over nothing. Harry will finish the mission, come home, and be amazed by Eggsy’s new recipes he’s been practicing and his three minute omelet. And by how clean the house is. There’s no Valentine or Poppy over there in Canada, waiting for the right moment to strike. Just a bunch of Canadian nutcases who want to worship shoelaces or whatever the fuck it is this time. Everything is good.

He takes his time walking back to the shop, and is a little confused when he sees Roxy running down the sidewalk towards him.

“Eggsy, Christ!” she gasps, stopping for breath when she sees him. “You need to come, you needed to come ten minutes ago!”

Oh fuck. He jinxed it. Harry got ambushed by a freakish Frankenstein’s monster made up of the dead bodies of Valentine and Poppy Adams. He’s dead. Oh God, he’s dead.

“Who did it?” Eggsy demands, a little annoyed when Roxy makes a face and dives forward to save breakfast before he can drop it. Talk about priorities. “Who pulled the trigger?”

Roxy stands up straight with the coffees and pastry bag safe in her hands. “What trigger? I’m talking about Merlin.”

Eggsy’s hand stops aching for a gun to hold. “What?”

“Just come on!” Roxy leads him back to the shop at a half-jog, heads straight for Jahi’s office and holds open the door for him with her foot. Eggsy slips inside just in time for Roxy to shove his coffee into his hands. “Okay, okay, so here’s the thing…”

Eggsy stares up at the multiple monitors strung along the wall, where ten different pairs of very familiar eyes stare down at him from every screen. “Merlin?” he croaks, half expecting a reply. Another miraculous return from the dead.
“It’s a recording, not a feed,” Jahi informs him from her chair, puncturing the hopeful bubble in Eggsy’s chest. She reaches into the bag from the bakery and grabs her cinnamon bun. She sticks it in her mouth and talks around it as she explains. “There was this file I didn’t recognize in with Merlin’s old things. It turns out it was sent from an unregistered email address a few months ago. It just...hid, right in my system, with these old files.” She scowls for a moment but then her face clears. “Nothing less to be expected from my predecessor, of course! But when I opened the file this video completely took over everything and I paused it as soon as I could in case it erases after a single play, or something.” She takes a proper bite of the cinnamon bun and spins in her chair to face the keyboard once more. “I figured at least you needed to see this Eggsy, and I can’t just leave my system like this until Harry gets back. One of you two record this for him.”

Roxy dutifully fiddles with her glasses to record the screen, and Eggsy takes a deep drink of his coffee, welcoming the scalding feeling. He has no idea what this video might be, but just seeing Merlin’s face again...

“Ready?” Jahi asks, and Roxy mumbles an affirmation. Eggsy just takes another drink. He doesn’t know how he’s supposed to be ready. But Jahi presses a few buttons and the face on the screens begins to move, picking up mid-sentence where Jahi paused.

“—ay to Cambodia. This video serves as my insurance.” His voice is just like Eggsy remembered. Warm. Rough. Comforting. The background seems familiar too. A jet, maybe. Yes, yes, definitely a jet judging by the moment of slight turbulence. Cambodia? Had he recorded this on the way to Poppy Land, with Harry and Eggsy in the other part of the plane?

“If I survive, this video will never be played,” Merlin continues. “If I am rendered comatose, I’ve left specific instructions that I want to be taken off life support after two years. So if I am comatose or if I die, then two years from now, this video will be sent to whoever is in possession of my files, probably my replacement as Merlin.” He stares out at the three of them with that cutting gaze. “I sure hope whoever you are, that you’re able to handle this.”

Jahi sinks a little in her chair.

Merlin clears his throat and reaches off screen. His hand returns with a glass of Scotch, which he downs in an instant. “Well, I’ve made enough of these videos over the years, every time I’m putting myself in the direct line of fire. Standard practice. I would recommend you do it as well, since Merlins don’t work the same as the knights. I don’t like this situation though.” His eyes drift off and upwards, a frown furrowing his brow. “I don’t like this situation at all.” He stares off into the distance for a few seconds and then focuses back at the screen. “But there are some things a Merlin has to know, and it’s probably easier learning from me than trying to figure it out on your own.” He turns his head a little as if looking for something and then returns. “I don’t have much time before I need to prep our agents,” he tells them, casually as though this is a face-to-face conversation. “Here is a lesson in being Merlin: you may not have all the field experience, but carrying a really big gun mostly makes up for it. Lesson two is that as Merlin, you get to make the rules.” He chuckles a little. “You think these agents could find their own arses with both hands without you directing them through those little glasses? No, of course not. So you let Arthur believe he’s in charge. Let them all think that. Because at least you know that the whole damn place would fall apart without you.”

“Thanks mate,” Eggsy mutters into his coffee.

Merlin’s smile disappears and he clears his throat again. “Anyway, I’ve been developing several systems over the last few years tailored to Kingsman needs. They’re unconventional and I haven’t found an excuse to try them out, but if I really am dead, then those are your best shot. In this video I’ll leave instructions on how to retrieve them. It’s just a safe box in a Geneva bank, nothing
complicated. I can teach you the basics now.”

Jahi pauses the video in a flurry and grabs for her pad of paper. She searches for a pen among the mess of documents, hand slapping down on the desk until she finally finds what she needs. Then she scoots back into place and starts the video up again, scribbling furiously.

It’s all tech talk that Eggsy doesn’t really care about, so he just watches Merlin’s face, enjoys the cadence of his voice, remembers how it was to have Merlin properly on the other end of a wire, or standing warm and solid beside him. Roxy, still warm but not as solid, sniffs a little and reaches into the bag from the bakery. She stuffs a bun in her mouth to stop up the crying.

By the excited little sounds Jahi keeps making, what Merlin is talking about is actually really helpful, even if trying to understand five words of it gives Eggsy a headache. Merlin has his serious expression on as he relays the instructions, and Eggsy remembers that it’s him and Harry over in the other end of the plane, having a drink and talking about the nothing Harry sees when he thinks he’s about to die. And in a few hours, the bad feeling that Merlin had will be justified, when Eggsy’s stupid mistake gets him killed.

Merlin should be the one standing here. Not Eggsy. It was his fuck up, but Merlin didn’t even give him a choice. He went out singing at the top of his lungs, and Eggsy wonders for the first time what Merlin might have seen before he died. Anything? Or just a blankness? He finishes his coffee in one long gulp and feels the liquid settle warm in his stomach, completely contrary to his mood.

“That’s about it,” Merlin says in the recording, and Eggsy re-engages interest. There’s a small rise of voices that Eggsy thinks at first is coming from the hallway, but Merlin turns his head again to look off-screen and Eggsy realizes that the noise is him and Harry. “Another lesson in being Merlin,” the man murmurs, suddenly much quieter and softer. He turns back to the camera and smiles a little, quick quirk of one side of his mouth. “Being a Kingsman is lonely work. Find people to hold onto, and don’t let go. It might just be the thing that gets you all home safe.” He grimaces. “If I do die today, it’s the responsibility of whoever is watching this to make sure Kingsman rebuilds. There’s some bloody stupid traditions you can trash, but some of it is good.” He glances off to the side again. “Some of it is good.”

A brief silence, only punctuated by a slight murmur that might be Eggsy’s. Then Merlin looks straight into the camera, claps his hands together, and declares in a much louder voice, “Now, to prove you’re up to the task! This video looks to be...oh...let’s say fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes for my little friends to wreak havoc on whatever poor system you opened this video on.” He winks. “Have fun.” And the video stops, the image freezing on that wink, the wily grin beneath it. Jahi sits silent for a moment and then pitches forward to her keyboard.

“Fuck! Fucking fucking shit, oh my God…” The video shrinks down to the corner of every screen, and Jahi starts tapping furiously at the keys, still muttering curses. Eggsy grimaces and takes Roxy’s elbow. The two of them back out of the room quickly, and Eggsy abandons a shoe to keep the door slightly propped open so they can hear Jahi’s progress battling against the virus. Possibly viruses, plural, because Merlin was a right bastard when he put his mind to it.

“Did you know about those videos?” Roxy asks quietly as they stand in the hallway, finishing breakfast. Eggsy shakes his head.

“No idea.” Find people to hold onto and don’t let go. “Oh fuck, Rox…”

She hugs him before he has to ask for it, petting his hair as he bunches his fists in her shirt and tries to regain control. “It’s my fault,” he whispers, and she holds him closer.
“No, it’s Poppy Adams’ fault. Merlin chose to save you. He chose.” She backs up and takes Eggsy’s face in both hands. “He loved us, you know?” she whispers fiercely. “He loved us like I love you and you love me and how we love Jahi and Harry...well maybe not like you love Harry, but Merlin loved us, even if he never said it, you have to know that. You have to.” She pressed her forehead gently to Eggsy’s. “You do know it, right?”

“I do,” Eggsy tells her miserably.

“And if you died to save me?”

“Rox,” he complains.

“And if you died to save me?”

Eggsy sighs. “I’d think it was worth it and wouldn’t want you to feel guilty about it. I know. I know, Rox, I get it. I just...” For a moment there, he’d thought Merlin was alive. It was stupid thought, but one he’d had anyway. “It’s just always going to hurt,” he finishes at last, and she goes back to hugging him. But Merlin was right. Right now, being a Kingsman feels so goddamn lonely. And all you can do is find someone to hold onto. In the hopes that you can save them. In the hopes that you can save yourself.

Fuck it, but they have an agent out across the Atlantic in fucking Canada who sees nothing to come back to because he refuses to hold onto anyone at all. And suddenly Eggsy is pissed. Not at himself anymore, but at Harry—fucking Harry—who won’t stretch a hand out and hold on no matter how much Eggsy tries to reach him. Merlin didn’t save their asses singing John Denver so Harry could just...go back to his life of framed newspapers and dead butterflies. He didn’t save their asses so Harry could be another miserable Arthur, alone and lonely. And if that was all Harry was going to get, then maybe Eggsy would have given up, let Harry go on not remembering, let him go and become a lepidopterist with no memory of Kingsman at all. And okay, he can admit it, maybe a lot of his reasons for wanting Harry back were selfish, but it never once crossed his mind that Harry would be genuinely happier without his memories back. Because as shit a job as Kingsman is sometimes, Eggsy knows Harry is the same as him. That he lives for the adrenaline and the blood, lives for the satisfaction of a job well done. He frames his invisibility in the press with a grim smile every time and de-stresses by beating up thugs in a pub. (Like Eggsy will ever forget those life-altering moments when Harry transformed before him from pompous asshole to a living wonder.) He knows that the Kingsman tailored suit is the most comfortable thing in the world to wear because it gives him the identity he needs, knows through hours and hours of practice with guns, with bombs, with hand-to-hand combat that Harry is willing to do whatever it takes to leap over his past failures and disabilities just for the rush of danger in his veins once more. Eggsy knows it because they are both Galahad: thrill-seekers, fate deniers, rebels who belong nowhere but within their little world of sweat and bullets in order to protect the bigger, more important world of everyone else.

Harry Hart isn’t really Harry Hart without Kingsman. It’s a job that’s threaded into his DNA.

But Harry needs someone to hold onto. He needs someone to hold onto, to remind him that there are things worth getting home for, leaving the sweat and blood behind for. Stratego, etiquette lessons, butterfly posters, Mr Jalapeno—it doesn’t matter. Harry needs to know that he has a home, that if he died in Canada or wherever else he might go, that there are people who he can’t just cut out of his life because it takes two to let go, and Eggsy sure as hell isn’t relinquishing his grip. As much as Harry might have survived in the past by creating a life of nothing that could easily be left behind, that’s not going to be good enough anymore. Not for Eggsy. He didn’t bring Harry back for that sort of nothing life. And Merlin didn’t die for it.

“Eggsy?” Roxy asks at last, voice gentle, like he’s going to break, but he feels better now than he has
in weeks, filled with a purpose. Eggsy straightens up and dusts his hands off on his pants.

He looks at Roxy and flashes his best winning smile. “Roxy, I need to get to Canada.”

There’s someone he needs to make sure comes home.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the lack of miraculous survival, maybe Kingsman 3 will surprise us all! Things will coming to a climax soon, so expect regular updates here until the end! If you’ve been keeping up since the beginning, I am very sorry for the delay between last chapter and this, but I hope you’ll stick with me and enjoy the rest of this fic! Your comments and kudos are, as always, invaluable. Next up, Canada!
Eggsy leaves on a commercial flight while Jahi is still busy battling the virus Merlin plagued her with. He’s got only Roxy on the other end of his glasses, but that’s more than enough for this.

They hadn’t technically asked Jahi. Jahi is busy, after all, and could possibly want to tell Harry if she knew. Roxy thinks Eggsy is an idiot, but she won’t be telling Harry. This is their own special secret mission, for just the two of them. She drills what they know about Harry’s work into Eggsy’s head during the flight while he pretends to watch the in-flight movie. There’s not much to it. There’s a cult that’s formed in the past year that has taken over a settlement near Vaugan, Ontario, preaching some shit about the end of the world. Eggsy doesn’t have much patience for that, having stopped the end of the world twice, thanks, but it’s not like this kind of talk isn’t on the rise lately, after Valentine and Poppy. Except these particular cultists have declared their settlement as neutral territory that the Canadian authorities have no say over, and are apparently spotting quite a few weapons that definitely aren’t legal without a permit, which is the kind of thing that requires the Canadian authorities. There’s about sixty people in the cult, according to Roxy’s files, which include forty-three men, fifteen women, and two children, plus a few people who wander in and out of the area who can’t seem to decide whether they want to belong or not. The leader of the group is a man called Jedidiah, birth name Frank Davids, and his wife, who skipped the dumb Biblical alias and just goes by Megan Davids. Both have criminal records, her for petty theft, him for arson and assault. Match made in heaven. Eggsy can have a bit of sympathy for the fact the arson was a Valentine tech store, but accosting the employees had been completely unnecessary. Frank had been released eight months ago, joined up with his wife again, and turned over a religious leaf. It took less than three months for the cult to gather devout followers. ‘Jedidiah’ and his campaign of hatred against the sinful Americans is a bit of a fresh twist to the cult angle to Eggsy, but apparently it was effective. Plenty of Canadians and Americans both were seriously eyeing up the U.S, especially after Poppy Adams. And just like that, you had a cult problem.

Anyway, Eggsy can see why Agent Whiskey had asked for Harry’s help here. A bunch of religious nuts preaching about the Americans bringing about the apocalypse probably wouldn’t take well to anyone who oozes southern American charm the way the Statesmen do.

He’s exhausted by the time he touches down in Toronto, and doesn’t have much more of a plan past this. Roxy’s files don’t have information on where Harry is currently housed, and Jahi had fallen asleep on her keyboard. Eggsy would feel guilty to wake her and inform her he’s chasing Harry down in some bizarre desire to stretch out a hand for Harry to take. He doesn’t want to explain why it’s so important he does it now. Roxy had seemed to understand without Eggsy even trying to justify it. Maybe it’s because he’s afraid that if he doesn’t bring Harry home this time, he’ll never have another chance. With Merlin’s words still ringing in his ears, it’s suddenly vital that Harry knows he has someone to hold onto, and that Eggsy is never letting go.

He checks into the nearest hotel and changes out of the suit into his old street clothes he’d stuffed into his suitcase. They feel so awkward and baggy, but a tailored suit probably wouldn’t go over well with this cult either. Because that’s what he’s going to have to do, isn’t it? He can’t compromise Harry by meeting with him directly, in case Harry’s being watched, so the next logical step is to insert himself into the cult. That way, he can also be of use in getting this assignment wrapped up quick and Harry home safe.

No suit also means no umbrella, no guns, nothing that could arouse suspicion. He goes down to a shop down the street and buys a few packages of cigarettes so the few grenade lighters he’d smuggled past airport security won’t seem out of place, as long as no one expects him to actually
smoke. His alibi is also tight, or as tight as he and Roxy could make it with their forgery skills and the span of a plane ride. He walks back to the hotel and up to his room reciting the details in his head. He can’t ever show an inconsistency. Jedidiah and Megan are sure to be extra wary of newcomers as tensions with police rise. He’s Sammy Richardson, London born and raised, moved to Ontario four years ago chasing after a girl who dumped him six months later. Since then, he’s bounced from job to job, got himself paralyzed when he smoked some of Poppy Adams’ weed, and developed a hatred for Americans and government in general after that. His mum walked out when he was three, but his dad was a firm Protestant. He wants to follow the teachings of God and gain salvation in the face of the apocalypse. Pretty good for a rush job.

He’ll take a day or two to case the joint out, and then move in. The way Jahi had described Harry’s mission makes him think Harry will proceed far more slowly and cautiously, so Eggsy should be very comfortably in place by the time Harry makes his move. And then he makes sure they both get out of there intact, and home, and then he drills it into Harry’s thick head that he doesn’t have just a blank space to see when his life flashes before his eyes, that there are people there waiting for him, even if he can’t see them sometimes.

Roxy has long since fallen asleep on the other end of his glasses, so Eggsy doesn’t feel at all guilty flopping into bed early. He has to try to combat the jetlag somehow. Even the hunger beginning to gnaw at his stomach can’t battle the exhaustion. But it does end up waking him up at four, before the complimentary continental breakfast is even served. Eggsy runs through his alibi one more time, makes sure he still has the right Canadian driver’s’ license and other paperwork, that his clothes don’t carry even an ounce of class, that his credit cards have been replaced by rumpled cash that will soon run out.

The one problem is the glasses. No one with any sort of street cred would be caught dead in glasses like these, and yet those glasses are his only lifeline. And if Harry shows up wearing the exact same pair, that’s suspicious. Eggsy compromises by sticking them in his front jacket pocket. If need be, he’ll claim he needs them for reading. And Roxy will still be able to hear what’s going on.

By the time he’s packed up what he needs in a ratty old backpack he’d found in his own closet, the breakfast nook is open. Eggsy is still planning on returning to the hotel tonight after his day of surveillance, but it won’t hurt him to start playing his character now. He eats two waffles, three cherry pastries, a donut with rainbow sprinkles, and washes it down with a large cup of black coffee, guaranteed to keep him awake even after the sugar high runs out. Sammy Richardson has a shit diet.

He’s on a bus out to Vaugan when he takes the glasses from his pocket and puts them back in place. It’s an early enough bus he was able to find a deserted area in the back corner, and he doesn’t worry about anyone listening in. “You there, Rox?”

“I’m here,” Roxy answers immediately. “Jahi is still stuck trying to get rid of Merlin’s present. Cheeky old bastard.” The words are said with extreme fondness. “What have I been looking at? It’s been all black.”

“My pocket. These are nerd glasses, Sammy wouldn’t wear these.” Eggsy makes a face that Roxy cannot see. “So you can just cut to audio for now, I think. Today I’m just checking the place out.”

“Okay, well be careful. Don’t fuck up Harry’s job.”

“I know, I know. I’ll be careful.”

He hears her sigh. “Because you always make rational decisions when it comes to Harry. I forgot.”

He’s still too jet-lagged to deal with this. The glasses go back into his pocket.
Once he hops off the bus and walks the long way around to where the cult is based, surveillance is so easy it’s boring. The cult bases itself out of an old church, which isn’t much of a compound, but they’ve added some messy stone walls here and there where Eggsy supposes snipers could wait to take out government agents, so at least that’s something. When he looks through his binoculars he can see there are a few little buildings surrounding the church, and a cellar beneath the place that he sees a man emerge from carrying a barrel of vegetables. A root cellar, then. The place doesn’t look at all like it could support farming enough for the cult to be self-sustaining, with craggy rocks everywhere and ancient trees and stumps that would have to be removed for the space to even garden, and this area of Canada has a short growth season on top of it. Eggsy hopes they stocked up on their non-perishables. Maybe all Harry has to do is wait for them to starve themselves to death.

But no, not with two children in the cult. Everyone else can be responsible for their own idiotic deaths, but the two children didn’t make this decision, and shouldn’t suffer for it.

He keeps up the watch even though it’s bloody boring, in hopes he might gain at least a tidbit of useful information. Around noon a man—not Jedediah—gets into one of the many pickup trucks parked behind the church and drives off down the main road. He returns an hour later and a couple more people come out of the church to help him unload supplies out of the truck bed. Grocery bags of cereal and soup cans, bottled water, firewood. Do they have stoves or something inside the church? It’s an old building after all, and Eggsy doubts it has good insulation for the chilly weather. He hopes those kids have good winter coats.

If given this mission himself, Eggsy would be long gone by now. The place looks hardly difficult to infiltrate, and it would be a cinch to remove the children (he shoves the word ‘kidnap’ from his mind) and then demand the cultists give themselves up or freeze to death. With his available information, it seems the worst that could happen is the cultists try to take out some Mounties with their machine guns, but all those little stone walls they’d erected would work just as well from the other side for snipers to take care of any sort of resistance. But Jahi was probably absolutely right about Harry wanting to do this himself to prove he can still be a Kingsman, and Eggsy will bet Harry is going for that ‘no casualty’ route. The most bothersome route, the one Eggsy can rarely be bothered with, especially if the fuckers are shooting at him already, but objectively the best. Which is why Harry isn’t long gone the way Eggsy would be. He’s being frustratingly, ridiculously, endearingly noble.

Eggsy pulls his glasses out and sends a ping to Roxy, letting her know her opinion is both valued and needed.

“You rang?” Her voice is loud against the barren silence of the landscape.

Eggsy adjusts the glasses to do a heat scan. There’s a heat source in the center of the church, it looks like—probably a stove—with people in the cult gathered around it. “Hey Rox, I’m not wrong in saying this entire setup is bloody pointless, right? I mean, what are they waiting to happen? Either they live here in this church that nobody cares about and do nothing for the rest of forever, they disband on their own, or someone cuts off their food supply and they have to surrender.”

Roxy hums, and Eggsy can clear the clicking of a keyboard. “No, not the most organized cult ever.”

“So why…?”

“Why is it such a big deal that Statesmen or Kingsman need to get involved at all?” Roxy finishes his thought. “There must be something more there. I’ll see what I can find on this end.”

Eggsy switches his glasses back to normal and narrows his eyes in the direction of the church. “Can you do it by tomorrow?”
“You want to be in there by tomorrow?” She sighs deeply.

Eggsy packs up his bag and readies to scurry on out of there. “I just wasted a whole day out here watching nothing, and the deeper into the cult I am when Harry makes his move, the more help I can be. So yeah, I want to infiltrate by tomorrow.”

Roxy hums her acknowledgement and all Eggsy hears is typing while he sets off back the way he’d arrived this morning, out of sight of the church. “How’s Jahi?” he asks after about ten minutes of silence. It’s at least another twenty until he reaches the bus stop.

“She’s sleeping,” Roxy says, immediate fondness coloring her voice. Eggsy can’t believe Roxy gives him shit about Harry when she talks about Jahi like that.

“What about the virus?”

“Well, every screen is now showing back to back airings of Braveheart. It’s a complicated virus, I guess.”

“You guess?”

“Well, with Merlin I thought somehow he’d make things explode, and that hasn’t happened yet, so hopefully having to stare at Mel Gibson’s face for hours and hours is punishment enough.”

Eggsy laughs, full and hearty. It feels a bit strange, and he realizes he hasn’t laughed like this in a while. He hopes Merlin’s last gift will at least make Harry smile too. Hopes that he’ll see Harry soon, and they can leave this stupid cult behind and go home.

Home.

“Hey Rox?”

“Yeah?”

“Whiskey might be able to tell us more about the cult. On the downlow. She owes me a favor, I think. But don’t let her know I’m here.”

Roxy scoffs. “Do you think I’m an amateur? Go catch your bus. I’ll contact Whiskey and get back to you.”

Eggsy smiles and closes the link. The trek across the rocky landscape is slow, calming, and he can feel the tension leaking from his body as he goes. This is an easy mission, and soon he’ll see Harry again. And then they’ll go home and everything will be just how it’s supposed to be. He keeps that thought warm and safe as he travels by bus back to his hotel, and grabs a good night’s sleep in a soft bed before the achy cot he’s sure is awaiting him at the church. If not the floor.

In the morning, Eggsy eats as much as he can at the continental breakfast once again, and then packs up his room. He drops into the local gym and stuffs the Kingsman gear he won’t be needing into a locker. It should be safe enough. No one bothers stealing an umbrella.

Sammy Richardson swaggers onto the street and waits by the bus stop, trying to decide how much of his more colorful language he should slip back into his vocabulary. Too many Brit-specific phrases will probably ostracize him, especially if he’s supposed to have lived in Ontario for four years. Should he say ‘eh?’ Would that be overkill? No, best to just stick to the tried but true four-letter words. He sits on the bus and spreads his legs wide with arms crossed over his chest. Just like when he was a teenager, trying to prove to the world he wasn’t so goddamned scared of it.
His glasses are still safe in his pocket. Roxy hasn’t gotten any extra information out of Whiskey at this point, but Eggsy’s sure he’ll be able to find times to take the glasses back out and reconnect with her, even under Jedidiah’s watchful eye.

He gets off the bus the same place as yesterday, but takes the road instead of cross country. He’s arriving at the church at the front door.

He starts gnawing on a cigarette while he walks, the crumbling shape of the church growing closer and closer with each minute. It tastes disgusting, the cigarette on his tongue, but he practices on keeping his face emotionless. He’d tried cigarettes as a kid, never found them to his taste. Reminded him of Dean. Marijuana was a kick for the first few hours, but it hadn’t been able to beat out booze, in the end. He hadn’t ever been looking for a good time; he’d been looking to forget.

But Sammy Richardson likes marijuana. It’s what had gotten him in trouble. Eggsy needs to remember that. Accept any joint he’s offered. It hopefully won’t be the deadly kind this time.

He’s able to pick out individual bricks in the crude walls built for sniping before someone actually opens the door of the church and stands there, waiting for him. Eggsy breathes deep and lets his inner teenager take over as he steps under a crumbling archway onto church grounds.

“Yo, this the place they talking about, in the paper?” The cult has actually been featured in the local Vaugan paper, he’d checked.

“This is the stronghold against the Satanic forces of government and the demons of America!” the man proclaims, crossing his arms defiantly. Eggsy carefully doesn’t roll his eyes.

“Yeah, so this is the place!” He hikes his tattered backpack up his shoulders as he approaches the church. “I wanna see your leader!”

The cigarette drops right out of Eggsy’s mouth, and he lets Sammy Richardson take over, spinning around and nearly falling off the steps. “Who the fuck—?”

Frank Davids smiles at him. He looks very different from his mug shots. His beard and hair are trimmed neat, and he wears a clean flannel and jeans, completely in contrast to the spitting man. His smile is warm and welcoming, and reminds Eggsy a bit of his mother when she greets him at the front door. But it’s a fake smile, Eggsy reminds himself. This is a fake smile from a fake man. “My name is Jedidiah,” Frank says graciously, and reaches out a hand to shake. “And I hear you’re Sammy Richardson.”

Where the fuck had that man popped out of? Eggsy takes the hand. “I am. Read about you in the paper.”
Jedidiah’s smile grows wider. “Are you interested in the Fellowship of the Hand of God?”

How did they pick the name, throwing darts at a ‘semi-religious word’ board? “Ah, well, I don’t know nuffin’ about the Hand of God, but few years back, them Americans got me dying just for a bit of weed? I didn’t do nuffin’ wrong, and they wanna kill me.” Eggsy puffs out his chest a bit more. “And before that, everyone going fucking crazy and killing each other? I wasn’t taught that way. That’s a sign of end times. My dad taught me that.” He watches for reactions, for Jedidiah’s, but also the other man. He can’t trust Jedidiah’s smile, but he can trust the reactions of the other one, who couldn’t contain his emotions if he tried. And what he’s getting there is some grim frowning and nods of agreement. Score.

Jedidiah, of course, is still smiling, but now he moves to put an arm around Eggsy’s shoulders. Eggsy tenses up automatically, but Sammy would too, so it’s fine. “It seems as though God has guided you to your true family,” he says in a warm whisper, and pats Eggsy’s shoulder twice. “Come in, my son.”

Through those church doors, it’s even worse inside than he’d imagined. All sixty some members of the cult must be crammed inside, sitting around the old stove in the center, lingering among the rotting pews, patrolling the inside with rifles ready. A few of them look up with interest when the doors open. Most just stay huddled. Eggsy can spot the kids immediately, right near the stove with hats and mitts on. Okay, they’re still alive, that’s good. But if this is the Hand of God, Eggsy will quite happily welcome hell. The air reeks of cigarette smoke, beer, and—he guessed it—poor quality marijuana, along with a mixing of unwashed hair and body odor. There’s no running water, of course, so how would anyone shower? If everyone were to simultaneously open their jackets, Eggsy’s pretty sure they’d die from the stench.

“Everyone!” Jedidiah addresses the room like it’s a standard turnout of Sunday best. “This is Brother Samuel. He has come to see our ways in the footsteps of Christ for himself!” His arm around Eggsy’s shoulders is much too chummy, and Eggsy wishes he hadn’t lost his cigarette. He could use something to anxiously gnaw on. Why is this cult even on Kingsman radar? He’s amazed it’s managed to last this long—a church this size is suited for maybe twelve or twenty people, not sixty. They have no income but their own personal savings, which must be being rapidly eaten up by the money needed for basic survival. But everyone turns eager eyes on Jedidiah, those worshipping eyes that follow this bright smile, believe this bright smile can maybe save them from a world gone mad.

Something’s wrong. Something’s very, very wrong. Eggsy can feel it with every particle of his being. For some reason, Jedidiah and his Fellowship of the Hand of God makes his skin prickle the way it had staring down Richmond Valentine.

He thought he’d be waltzing into an easy mission, all tongue in cheek and cheerful insistence that it’s time for Harry to come home. But now, with Jedidiah’s arm around his shoulders like a noose around the neck, Eggsy knows he is royally, tremendously, completely and utterly fucked.
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

I don't have any excuses for how long it took me to update. I'm sorry. Things will be faster from now on! I hope you enjoy the chapter!

He’s given a blanket. No pillow because apparently they’re short on those and of course Brother Samuel will understand. A blanket and half a pew that isn’t being slept on. The little money he’d had in his pockets is taken for the good of the Fellowship. He’s allowed to keep his cigarettes and lighter. They don’t search his boots, which is good, because that’s where he’d hidden the extra grenades. They don’t search him at all, actually, just simply ask he hand over what can benefit the collective. Jedidiah has a look at his fake driver’s license and it must pass inspection because Eggsy isn’t shot in the back by one of those big nasty guns being hoisted around.

“We all have a roll to fill,” Jedidiah explains. “I’m sure in the coming days we will come to understand yours, for surely God sent you to us for a reason.”

Fuck, but Eggsy hates that smile. It’s hard to sleep with the memory of it branded into his brain.

What kind of man preaches fear of the apocalypse while wearing a smile like that? Someone who’s ready for an apocalypse, that’s who.

Needless to say, he doesn’t sleep well. Luckily, not much is needed for the following day. The main occupation of the cult seems to be ‘sit in the church and wait for the end of world’, so Eggsy catches a little extra rest while leaned against the wall. Around nine, a woman who Eggsy has identified as Megan Davids—Jedidiah’s wife, if the calls of thanks “Thanks Meggy” are enough to go by—calls everyone near the stove so she can pass out bowls of porridge. It’s very sticky, and the grains are still too hard to be enjoyable, but at least it’s warm. Eggsy retreats to his spot of wall and focuses on memorizing who has weapons and just what those weapons are. Way too many semi-automatics for his liking without the protection of his Kingsman suit and umbrella. Taking down the cult head-on would be suicide. Sure, so was stopping Valentine and Poppy, but still. Eggsy would prefer to avoid it, especially while he’s not sure what Harry is planning.

Several of the men had left the church before everyone had woken up. Eggsy had stirred immediately at the footsteps and watched them go around the bend of a pew. There had been a certain purpose in their movements, and none of them have returned by noon, when Megan and two other women brew awful tea in huge pots and serve it with slightly stale white bread and peanut butter.

A few people Eggsy doesn’t recognize from yesterday do wander in and collect tea and sandwiches. He guesses these are the stragglers in the area who drop in occasionally, maybe for food and a roof over their heads. They don’t hold any specific loyalty to Jedidiah, so Eggsy discounts them as a threat.

Fuck but it’s boring just waiting for the day to end so he can lie down on a pew with a ratty blanket and waste even more time staring at the ceiling.

Sometime in the afternoon, some of the men with guns exit the church and Eggsy can see them
patrolling the gate through a gap in the wooden beams that bar the windows. It’s sad really, seeing them try to overcompensate like that.

Jedidiah and the rest are back in time for supper, which is the same as yesterday. Half a potato, green beans, and a roll. Eggsy wishes he could get his glasses out just to force Roxy to feel sorry for him.

And then it’s time for prayer. It’s pretty standard stuff for the first half, until Jedidiah starts going on about the devils.

“First they took our very minds from us, my brethren. Our very minds! Neighbor fought neighbor, brother fought brother, husband fought wife, mother fought children. It was as if the war of Cain and Abel spread worldwide. You think God didn’t notice? You think God will forget?” There. He starts to get worked up, hair falling from its perfect slick back. “It’s the devils, my brethren. The devils who disguise themselves as one of us, and cause us to break apart. Who else could it have been but the Devil himself who took the hearts and minds of those who call themselves our leaders and decided—no, doomed those of us who sought to escape the pain in this world? Sins brought Hell down upon us, and whose sins are those?” He smoked a fist into his open palm. “It was the sin of the rich, the powerful, the mighty! The government who will not protect the meek. The Americans, who dare to say their country is the greatest in the world while they live squandering in sin every day. These were not our sins, brethren, and yet the devils come time and time again, and it is our turn to battle sin, to prove to God that there are still some worthy of his love!” A little bit of spittle flies out of his mouth and lands on his beard. “We must slay the devils who stand between us and salvation! Or we shall be damned as sure as they! We will live in Hell for eternity. We must take back Heaven by climbing the corpses of the devils and their believers, and only then will God know we are worthy of His blessing!”

Jesus fucking Christ. Eggsy nods along with the rest of them, grunts a few agreements, tries not to look too disturbed when one of the women bursts into tears. The two kids are there as well, seated in the front pew closest to Jedidiah. They seem more occupied with each other than with him, though, so maybe given a couple years of therapy they’ll be able to put this behind them.

And then Eggsy’s back with his blanket staring at the ceiling willing himself to sleep at least a little bit, just enough so he has the energy to get the fuck out of here the moment Harry swoops in and saves the day. What sort of plan is he hatching, Eggsy wonders. Harry was Galahad after all, so it should be a blaze of glory. It always is, with Harry.

The next two days are the same mind-numbing boredom. A couple of younger cult members start smoking pot in the corner of the church and sickly sweet scent of really poor quality stinks up the entire place. Eggsy curls into a ball and breathes through his shirt and generally regrets everything.

The next day, his fourth full day, right after tea and sandwiches, Jedidiah appears at Eggsy’s side while he’s dozing off against the wall.

“Hghgh!” Eggsy manages to choke out when he opens his eyes to Jedidiah’s smile.

“Brother Samuel!” Jedidiah cries, and then his voice drops dramatically, though the smile stays. “You must be bored of this lifestyle after living on the road for so long, eh?” A hand goes in Eggsy’s and oh fuck now he’s up with Jedidiah’s arm around his shoulders, leading him through the church, to the door. “I want to use your talents, Samuel! The Fellowship is in need of bright young men. How are you with a rifle?”

“Used to shoot gophers in my neighbor’s lawn,” Eggsy drawls. “Why?”

Jedidiah laughs and pushes through the front door. “Gophers! How perfect! A precision shot! Well,
this will be a little different from shooting gophers…” Down the steps, around the side of the church to where the root cellar is. Jedidiah clambers down the steps while waving for Eggsy to stand back. Eggsy tries to get a glimpse of what he can, but it’s too dark to make out more than some wooden boxes and shelves stocked with peanut butter and canned green beans. It doesn’t take long for Jedidiah to reappear, carrying the type of gun that belongs in Kingsman testing facilities, not church cellars. He pushes it into Eggsy’s hands, and Eggsy makes sure to study it with bewilderment, like he’s never even seen such an efficient killing machine in his life. “Do you think you can get a handle on that, Brother?” Jedidiah asks. “It’s already loaded up.”

“You were right. This ain’t for killing gophers,” Eggsy jokes, and Jedidiah laughs, actually throws his head back and laughs like the villains from cartoons. He claps Eggsy on the back.

“Why don’t you go out into the fields out there, bring a few cans, try your aim?” He points out to the barren land outside church grounds. “Sister Megan should have some empty cans for you to use.”

Eggsy nods, and slings the gun over his shoulder. He can feel Jedidiah’s eyes on him until he turns the corner of the church.

Megan is still cleaning up after lunch. She gives Eggsy a nasty look when he interrupts her, but Brother Samuel wouldn’t care, would he? He waits for her to fetch some empty cans, and then heads out. He walks outside the church for at least ten minutes before he sets the cans down and fetches the glasses from his pocket. “Roxy?”

“Christ Eggsy,” she replies immediately, and he relaxes at the sound of her voice. “You’re in with a bunch of nutjobs. What are these sermons?”

“Fucking insane, that’s what,” Eggsy agrees, and starts setting the cans up for target practice. “But hey, now I have a big gun, which always help to de-escalate the situation.”

Roxy huffs a laugh. “Okay, well, I did get some information out of Agent Whiskey. I’m not sure how much good it will do you.”

“Anything would be helpful at this point.”

“Okay, well, first of all, that church is ancient. And is was a designated sanctuary during the War of 1812. I know it doesn’t look like much anymore, but those walls used to be some serious business.”

Eggsy frowns and begins to walk away from the cans as he takes the gun in hand. “Does that mean anything?”

“Not really, I just thought I’d mention it. I did, however, find some information on some of the cult members. Turns out a few followed Frank out of prison. He started preaching the apocalypse soon after being sentenced, but it wasn’t until he met with Megan that they really got organized, found a base.”

Eggsy thinks about Megan, serving all the meals and generally keeping peace while Jedidiah and his chosen few are out and about during the day. “Yeah, that matches with what I’ve seen.”

Roxy clears her throat. “Eggsy, some of those other inmates are bad news. Attempted murder, assault, one of them bit someone’s finger off—very bad news. And if they’re devoted to him…”

“Which they all are,” Eggsy interjects.

“Yes, like they all are, then I can see why Whiskey wanted Kingsman to help out. The cult itself seems fragile, but there are plenty of dangerous individuals in there who are possibly volatile. If the
local police try to force them out of the church or give up their weapons, it will turn deadly very quickly. And judging by the records of the Vaugan police, they’re getting nervous. I bet there’s going to be some action taken on their side within the next few weeks.”

Eggsy selects a patch of grass and settles into it, testing how the gun fits into his arms. “You think Harry’s working with the police?”

“Maybe. He’s trained to negotiate, which is more than small town cops really know how to do. Perhaps he’s decided that’s the best way to avoid bloodshed.”

Eggsy grunts and sights up a can. “I guess all I can do is keep trying to fit in so I can at least get the kids out of here when shit goes down. Chance of mass suicide?”

Roxy hums and a screen with her face appears in the corner of his vision. “Not sure. Definitely wants to slay the American devils, but his sermons haven’t said anything about dying themselves.”

“He’s talked about reaching Heaven.”

Her nose screws up. “Metaphorically or literally though?”

Eggsy sighs. “I’ll keep an ear out for anything going one way or the other. So, has Jahi—” Wait, shit, there’s someone coming. “Sorry, gotta go, bye Rox.” He slips the glasses off and back into his pocket. It’s not Jedidiah approaching him from the church. Too big. Eggsy makes a show out of trying to adjust the gun to his liking until he ‘notices’ the company. “Does Jedidiah want me?” he calls out to the burly man. He’s pretty sure this is the guy who goes and buys supplies in town. Maybe he’s the one who bit someone’s finger off. The man settles into place where he stands and crosses his arms.

“I just wanna see how you can shoot, kid.”

Eggsy shrugs and lines up for a shot. He misses by quite a margin, and makes a show of studying the gun with surprise.

The man laughs. “Not used to that sorta firepower, eh?”

Eggsy shakes his head. “Nah, just hunting rifles, mostly.” He lines up for another shot, tries not to flinch when he hears the man approach and kneel down beside him.

A hand smacks against his arm, correcting his grip. “Well, you’re holding her wrong, for one thing. Here, let me show you…”

So Eggsy spends a half hour being taught how to use a gun he knows how to disassemble and reassemble blindfolded, and finally makes a big show of knocking down two of three cans. The burly man grins though, and throws an arm around Eggsy to drag him back to the church. “You’re a fast learner, kid. We’ll have you out on patrol soon.”

Eggsy nods enthusiastically and shoulders the gun. He’s just as excited for it as Sammy would be. Being stuck in that church is bloody boring.

The daylight is beginning to fade when they reenter the gate. There’s a blue pickup Eggsy doesn’t recognize parked in front of the church.

“Supplies?” he asks, nodding his head towards the truck. The man shakes his head.

“Nah, just Prof. Comes by on Fridays.”
Another wanderer? Eggsy brushes it off and follows the man through the front doors. There’s the usual gathering around the stove, though heads turn their way when Eggsy and the man enter. The man raises a hand in greeting. “Hey Prof!”

A man seated on the steps near the pulpit—sweater vest, scruffy hair, big round glasses—looks up from the large picture book he’s reading to the children, one who sits beside him and the other in his lap. “Ah, hello John!” Harry calls back. “How are you tonight?” His eye travels to Eggsy, the empty socket hidden beneath a little white patch, and there’s barely a pause before Harry smiles, and reaches to push his glasses back up his nose. “I see there’s someone new?” He chuckles a little and pets the head of the child in his lap. “Well, isn’t the world full of surprises?”
Eggsy freezes in place at the sight of Harry’s smile. Let’s see, there was a plan, wasn’t there? A purpose? Yes, he’s here to bring Harry home, to give him a hand to hold onto, someone to be there in his memory when his life flashes before his eyes. He’s supposed to find Harry and then drill into his thick skull that Eggsy is real and alive and needs him and is never going away. Except now Harry is sitting there on the steps with a nerdy sweater vest with his hair all mussed and a child in his lap, and dear God does the look ever suit him.

“You a professor?” Eggsy asks, and crosses his arms as he walks between the pews to where Harry sits. He hopes it comes across to everyone watching as honest curiosity.

Harry laughs again, eyes wrinkling at the corners. His body language is open. Calm. “No, just a teacher. Only a teacher.”

The big man—John, his name is John, he needs to remember that—comes up behind Eggsy and leans against one of the pews. “Prof’s a local teacher. He heard our kids weren’t getting much in the way of education, so he comes up on Friday nights for a few hours.” His attention turns to the little boy leaning against Harry’s shoulder. “You paying attention?”

“Yes Dad!” he pipes up. “We’re doing ge’graphy.”

“Geography,” Harry corrects softly, and the child copies.

“Ge-o-graphy.”

John’s smile is soft. Eggsy reminds himself this could still be the man who bit off a finger. “That’s good, kiddo.” He reaches over and shoves at Eggsy lightly. “Speaking of geography, you and Prof are both Brits, aren’t you? What, you ever teach him in one of your classes, Prof?”

Harry smiles up at Eggsy. “Well, I grew up in the countryside, and unless I’m mistaken, Eggsy is sporting the remnants of a London accent. Cockney, to be specific. Am I right?”

Should he try to communicate? Some sort of secret code? The way Harry is looking at Eggsy reminds him far too much of when Harry had forgotten him entirely.

“That’s right,” he answers. “Born and raised.”

“So I doubt he was ever in one of my classes then,” Harry says, and turns back to the book in his hands. “I would have had him read Hemingway.”

Hemingway.

*There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self.*
Eggsy grins. “Yeah, good luck with that, bruv.”

“Come, children,” Harry says, and turns the page. “Let’s prove you’re better students than that young man, shall we? Now, let’s talk about a mountain range called the Pyrenees, which have a fascinating microculture…”

What is meant for a lesson for the children has captured the attention of everyone in the church. Eggsy sits in a pew and leans forward to rest his arms and head on the row in front. Even those sitting around the stove or leaning against the walls have their heads turned Harry’s way. The group of people who tend to spend their time smoking weed in the corner have even left their post, and are seated a little further down the steps from him. Eggsy can’t blame them. Harry’s voice is gentle, steady, patient, and Eggsy—who hasn’t slept well for nights now—is almost lulled to sleep by it. He fights the impulse so he can keep his eyes on Harry instead, who never looks back at him, but the Hemingway mention was enough. Harry doesn’t need to risk giving himself away. Instead, Harry points to pictures in the book and spouts off his random bits of knowledge about the Pyrenees that Eggsy usually hears in the form of manner lessons, but it turns out Harry is full of trivia no matter what the subject. He’s quite happily led off topic too, when one of the younger cult members leans in and asks a question about French history. French history leads to learning how to count to ten in French, and then in Spanish, and then one of the kids asks if it’s different in England. It earns a round of laughter from the room when Harry tells them they simply have to lift their pinky finger up.

Harry could have been a teacher. He definitely has the patience for it, if he was able to put up with Eggsy. A professor, even, with long office hours open to anyone who wants to steal his time away, stare at his easy smile, maybe kick off a little illicit professor and student romance…

Eggsy could bang his head against the wooden pew a few times, maybe focus, if that’s not too much to ask? He’s a Kingsman agent, Goddammit, he should be able to keep his wits about him in the middle of a lunatic fest. He goes to lean against his spot of wall with arms tightly crossed. The gun that had been slung across his back is set carefully on the floor. He lets his fingers fidget, tap against his elbow with increasing nerves. Anyone looking his way won’t think twice when he needs to go out for a smoke in a few minutes.

The doors push open, and Jedidiah walks inside, lifting a hand in greeting to Harry. “Hello there, Prof! How are you faring?”

Harry snaps the book shut with playful annoyance. “Better, if I wasn’t being constantly interrupted.”

Jedidiah laughs and waves that aside. “Sorry, sorry. Get back to your lessons.” He casts his eyes around the room and Eggsy steels himself when they fix on him. Jedidiah squeezes between the pews so he can join Eggsy while Harry resumes his lesson. “How did it go?” he asks, with a glance down at the gun.

Eggsy shrugs one shoulder. “Alright. Comes back easily.”

“Ready for killing gophers again?”

“Thought you said it weren’t for killing gophers?”

Jedidiah nods sagely. “Yes, that gun is for the greater purpose of God.” He lapses into silence, and Eggsy takes him up on it. They both stand with ears cocked to Harry’s teachings, until his voice begins to give out a little and he has to stop and cough every few minutes before finally stopping.

“Well, children, I think that will be it for this week. And we are doing math next time so I don’t want to hear complaints.” Eggsy watches from the corner of his eye as Harry stands and brushes off his
pants. He pats the kids on their heads and grabs his bag from the floor, sliding the book inside with one easy motion. Harry glances around for Jedidiah and then waves goodbye as he makes his way towards the door. “Next week?”

“You’re always welcome here, Prof,” Jedidiah reassures him. “You say hello to Geoffrey now, eh?”

“Will do!” Harry calls, and lets himself out. The doors bang shut behind him, and after a moment, Eggsy hears the blue pickup start up and drive away. He turns to Jedidiah with a slight frown.

“Is Geoffrey another teacher?”

Jedidiah meets Eggsy’s gaze and smiles. “No. Geoffrey would be Prof’s husband.”

At least the hitch in his breath is completely natural. “Husband?” Eggsy runs a hand through his hair and fiddles with his pocket lining. “You...you alright with that sort of thing?”

Jedidiah steps away from the wall and raises his eyebrows. “Are you alright with it?”

Harry being married to some other guy? Not really. But Eggsy just shrugs one shoulder again. “My dad didn’t like it. I don’t really care one way or the other.”

He’s fixed with a fervent stare, the bit of height Jedidiah has on him suddenly seeming so much more. Jedidiah’s voice is pitched low, just for the two of them to hear, even inside the packed church. “We are not like other extremists, Brother Samuel. It was not homosexuals who had us killing each other like savage animals. Not homosexuals, not abortions, not gender neutral bathrooms. Those horrors that the people in power would preach about never held any harm to us or to God. It was the wealthy and powerful. It was those who coveted the world twice over.” Jedidiah reaches out and takes Eggsy’s shoulder, and Eggsy flinches but the fingers are gentle, turning him to survey the other people in the church. “Here, Brother Samuel, we simply fight for God. Not amongst each other. Because we know we suffer together.” He waits for Eggsy to nod confirmation. “Dear Sister Jessica, over there in blue?” He sighs, world weary. “When Richmond Valentine tried to destroy the world, she killed her own child while not in her mind. And when she found herself pregnant again, she chose to end the pregnancy rather than bring another child into this evil world. How could any man of God hear her story and judge her sins? Tell me, Brother Samuel…” Eggsy is guided back around to face Jedidiah. “Did you kill the day that Valentine unleashed Hell upon us?”

Eggsy’s mouth gapes as he stares at Jedidiah’s haunted expression. What to answer? “Erm...yeah,” he finally admits, because it’s the truth, and Jedidiah shuts his eyes, his thumb stroking Eggsy’s shoulder reassuringly.

“I knew it. I saw it in your eyes. You see, Brother Samuel, that is something that almost all of us share. We have killed while controlled by the Devil, and there is no going back after that. We must earn our place in Heaven once again. How many?”

“What?” Eggsy takes a few seconds to collect himself. “Oh...um...five. I think. See, it was me and a bunch of blokes in a bar…”

Another stroke of the thumb. “Say no more. I understand.” Jedidiah leans forward and Eggsy tries to duck out of the way, but then their foreheads are pressed together far too intimately for Eggsy’s liking. Jedidiah’s breath mingling with his own as the man continues. “Like I said, most everyone here knows your pain. That is how God brings us together. My wife slew her own parents. One of the children here killed their younger sibling. Even the teacher returns to us time and time again because he shares our story. How do you think he lost an eye?” Jedidiah’s other hand goes to Eggsy’s spare shoulder, anchoring them firmly together. “I myself killed twenty-nine men that day...
while the madness had me, and after it had passed I stood with their blood on my hands and knew the Devil as intimately as myself.”

Twenty-nine. Twenty-nine? Fuck, that was a lot. Obviously Eggsy had killed more but for a non-Kingsman to kill that many other screaming fighting people in the moments that Valentine had control? That was impressive. And of course, something that wouldn’t have shown up in background checks. In order to prevent the entire population from going to jail, all murders and attempted murders that day had been dismissed as legal charges. No arrests, no permanent records, everything smoothed over and blamed on one rich maniacal genius.

Eggsy was standing in a church full of murderers. That was what he and Roxy had missed, why this cult was such a problem. They’d killed under the influence of the Devil. They wouldn’t hesitate to kill for the glory of God.

Eggsy’s hands pry Jedidiah’s fingers from his shoulders. “I really need a smoke, bruv,” he whispers, and Jedidiah pulls away, nodding in understanding.

“Please, take your time to think. You are among friends here, Brother Samuel.”

Eggsy acknowledges that with a little grimace and heads for the doors. He bursts out into the night and sucks in great gulps of cool air. Jesus Christ. Fucking Jesus Christ, what was he supposed to do now?

Roxy.

Eggsy walks further out into the church yard until he’s sure he won’t be seen from the building and then crouches down behind one of the erected sniper walls. He draws the glasses from his pocket and pops them on his nose. “Rox!” he whispers.

She doesn’t reply. “Rox!” Eggsy hisses again. “Roxy. Roxy. Agent Lancelot. Christ, Rox, pick up! I’m in serious need of emotional support!”

A crackle, and then her voice is in his ear. “Sorry, I fell asleep.” She yawns. “Is Harry still there?”

“No, he left a little while back,” Eggsy tells her. “Rox, Jedidiah killed twenty-nine people because of Valentine. Most all the people in that church killed too.”

“Twenty-nine? Shit,” she mutters, and then groans. “And that doesn’t go on…”

“...your permanent record,” they say together.

A beat of silence, and then Roxy adds, “I can’t protect you anymore. Harry knows you’re there, and that means Jahi’s going to know the moment she wakes up and touches base with him.”

“Virus gone then?”

“Finally. Right after I talked to you earlier. She’s sleeping.”

Eggsy winces. “Like, right there with you? Did I...?”

She laughs. “No. You’re fine. She’s still at HQ. I just put a blanket over her, to be honest.”

“Such a caring girlfriend.”

“Well, not all of us can chase their loves to Canada and back. Harry sounds like a good teacher, by the way.”
Eggsy resolutely ignores that first part. “Yeah, they love him here. And I guess he told Jedidiah about killing people on Valentine’s Day, too. I think that’s why they trust him so much. Also I think I got lectured by a lunatic on why I should be more accepting of gay people.”

Roxy snorts. “What, he couldn’t see the gay written all over your face when you first saw Harry again? I’m going to assume it was pretty obvious.”

“Rox, please, I’m a professional.”

“Then remind me why you’re in Canada again?”

He can’t help but grin. See? Less than a minute of talking and Roxy has him smiling. Best wingman. “Harry can use someone on the inside. I’ll be ready for when he makes his move.”

“Mm. What can I do, then?”

Eggsy settles more comfortably against the rock wall to his back. “Harry and I can’t talk much to each other directly, so we’ll have to use you and Jahi to keep in touch. I can probably check back in with you tomorrow, or maybe the day after that. I think they’re going to station me out here so I’ll have more reason to be alone.”

“So I let you know when he’s about to make his move?”

“If you could, yes, that would be capital.” Eggsy nicks a cigarette from the box in his pocket and sticks it in his mouth to chew on. “Hopefully soon, because much more of this I’m going to go nuts.”

Three weeks. Three more weeks Eggsy stays in the church, porridge for breakfast, peanut butter sandwiches for lunch, half a potato and green beans for dinner. Jedidiah gives a sermon every night on the evil of Americans and rich people and government, and Eggsy entertains himself by guessing how many people each of his comrades in the cult killed on Valentine’s Day.

He’s given his gun and told to stay behind one of the sniper walls in front of the church for six hour shifts, guarding against potential threats. Eggsy guesses this means police, because each of the wandering individuals who come for food but not much else are met with smiles and handshakes from the other men sent out into the yard. Eggsy hadn’t noticed any sort of force keeping watch when he’d first arrived, so he’s guessing this is new, all these men stationed with guns waiting for intruders. A few times a week he claims target practice and steals some cans of green beans so he can put his Kingsman glasses on.

“Hey Rox,” he’d said the first time, two days after his last conversation with her.

“Ding ding ding, wrong!” Jahi’s accent was impossible to mistake. “How could you run off to Canada without telling me? I am going to make your life hell when you get back, you hear me?”

“I am already there,” Eggsy had groaned, and she’d let up a little.

“Harry is posing as Miles Gerrich. A British primary school teacher who moved there to be with his now-husband, Geoffrey. He goes to the church once a week to give lessons to the children.”
“And what does Geoffrey do?” Eggsy had asked her, strangely jealous of this fictional man.

“Ex-military doctor. Gives abortions.”

Eggsy had filed that away as a little weird. “Are the police going to take action anytime soon?”

“Well, they can’t keep ignoring it. I’d give it a month, looking at their computer records and correspondances. Harry said to tell you to sit tight and wait and you’ll have words when you get back.” She’d tutted. “Sorry about that, mate.”

Three weeks. Every Friday, Harry comes by and gives a lesson. He doesn’t give Eggsy any more attention than he would Sammy Richardson—their eyes meet a few times and he smiles vaguely once but that’s it.

Three weeks, and a lone police car wails to a stop at the edge of church grounds. Jedidiah arms himself and goes to meet it. That night his sermon is quiet and calm. “My brothers and sisters, the Canadian government has deemed us a danger to their wicked society. We have been ordered to give up our land and our arms. But we will not surrender to them. For we are the just, seeking Heaven, and they shall know our strength.”

The cult is given three days to disband and hand in their weapons or the Ontario government would take action. After the sermon, Eggsy escapes outside and chews on a cigarette. He would kill for some gum. Or a shower. He feels disgusting.

He’s gotten better at listening for Jedidiah’s arrival. The man has cat feet, but he breathes too heavily. “Brother Samuel.”

“Jedidiah.” Eggsy crosses his arms and keeps staring out across the church lot to the gate, where in three days, there’s going to be a hell of a lot of activity. “Is there something I can help with?”

“Just a little heavy lifting,” Jedidiah tells him with a smile, and claps Eggsy on the shoulder before leading him around to the cellar. Most of Jedidiah’s trusted men are there already, hoisting food supplies up out of the cellar. “We’ll take all this inside. It’s the stone we want, though.”

“Stone?” Eggsy grunts as one of the men deposits a large rectangular stone in his hands, the type he’d expect the church foundation to be made of. It’s too dark outside to see into the cellar itself, but are they really digging up the foundation?

“We need these stones built up in front of all the windows,” Jedidiah explains, and Eggsy shrugs before spitting out his cigarette and hauling the stone inside. And then another. And another. The men working in the cellar pile them up for Eggsy to take. Eventually, those men begin to disappear one by one, yawning as they go to rest. Eggsy is too worked up, anxious about what will happen and how Harry is planning on stopping it. Eventually Jedidiah himself emerges from the cellar, face smeared with dirt. He shuts the doors to the cellar and wraps a set of chains around the handles. The lock clicks. “Brother Samuel! Why don’t you go sleep?”

Eggsy indicates the few stones remaining. “I’ll just take these in. I’ll be inside in a moment.”

Jedidiah nods and claps him again on the shoulder—so touchy-touchy—before working his way around to the front of the church. Eggsy makes a show of carrying three more stones around to leave on the pile in front of the windows, moving slightly slower each time so it might be natural to assume he’s stopped after the third. He opens the door, and lets it fall shut. There. That was the sound of him going to bed. Now he’s free to see what’s hiding in that cellar. He waits a few minutes there in front of the doors in the dark, but no one appears to ask him what he’s doing. Apparently his simple
deception worked. Once he’s sure he won’t be missed, Eggsy travels back to the cellar while he slips the little metal pick from the hem in his shirt. Always be ready to pick a lock. Something both his upbringing and Kingsman had agreed on, for once.

It’s a simple lock, and Eggsy pulls the chains out using his jacket to muffle any clanking. He opens one door and peers into darkness. It’s useless. He can’t make anything out without light. Or without his glasses. With a cautionary glance around, Eggsy takes his glasses out and slips them on. He looks once more into the cellar and toggles with the settings until he hits night vision.

“The hell…” Eggsy drops down the steps into the cellar, which still holds some peanut butter and green beans but, more importantly, also extends into tunnels, reaching far beneath the church, perhaps even further, branching out in all directions. “Rox?” Eggsy whispers. “Jahi? Either of you there?”

“I’m here,” Roxy answers, her voice a relief in his ear. “Well. That’s something. Remember when I said this was built as a sanctuary?”

Eggsy keeps one hand on the wall as he ventures into one of the tunnels. This is where the stone had been coming from, he realizes as he looks at the entrance to the tunnel. All of these had been blocked up. “Escape tunnels?”

Roxy hums agreement. “Probably. These will lead off of church grounds, I’m sure.”

Eggsy pauses, runs back to close the cellar door so nothing will seem amiss to the casual eye, and then ventures forth into one of the tunnels once more. His fingers brush against the damp earth to his sides and above his head as he walks, out from under the church he’s positive, into the land beyond. “How far I wonder…” His eyes light on something left in the middle of the tunnel. “Oh fuck.”

Roxy sucks in breath as Eggsy gets closer to the bundle of explosives, and the little detonator, flashing, waiting for a signal. “Well, I guess that answers the question as to whether they’re a suicide cult or not,” she says at last. “If those are placed in all the tunnels, it’ll easily either explode or collapse the church, as well as take out any police response outside the walls. A lot of people will die.”

Eggsy rubs a hand across his face, suddenly exhausted. “But hardly anyone knows about these. Only Jedidiah and his crew. He’s going to murder them. Everyone in that church.” The children. The young people who smoked bad weed in the corner. All those eating porridge and peanut butter and halves of potatoes while they waited for some sort of salvation.

“Send them to God,” Roxy corrects. “He thinks he’s righteous.”

“We have to tell Harry,” Eggsy says, turning around and jogging back up the tunnel. “We have to tell him about the bombs.”

He catches movement in the corner of his eye but is too slow to avoid the butt of the rifle that slams into his face. The glasses go flying and Eggsy falls backwards, clutching at his nose, at the split skin of his forehead. Someone lands on his chest, hands yanking at his collar. There’s faint light coming from where both doors to the cellar have been flung open. It glints off of Jedidiah’s smile.

“Just who are you going to tell, Brother Samuel?”
Chapter 15

They tie his wrists behind his back way too tight, and Eggsy’s fingers have turned a mottled purple by the time one of the morons actually listens to him and lets the ropes a little looser. His hands are in constant pain after that, for the full three days he’s kept locked up in the cellar. He watches through the cracks in the cellar doors as night and day pass. Occasionally Jedidiah or some other member of his crew come down and disappear down a tunnel, some toting even more of the homemade bombs. God, this whole place is going to go up like a matchstick.

John manages to maneuver his bulk down to give Eggsy water twice a day as well as his peanut butter sandwich, and a stringy little man Eggsy doesn’t know the name of hops on in a few times over the course of his confinement and beats Eggsy down a little, asking who he’s working for and all that typical shit. It’s pathetic, as far as beatings go. Eggsy had received worse when he was nine years old running rampant with the other kids. And it’s definitely not enough to make him spill his secrets. He doesn’t even bother lying, just stays silent. The longer he is a mystery, the longer Jedidiah will have to get nervous about just who’s been watching him, and the longer he’s nervous, the more likely he is to make a mistake. On the third day, John slings Eggsy over his shoulder and carries him out into the sunlight, bumping Eggsy’s head against the top of the cellar door as he goes, probably not on purpose since otherwise he’s quite gentle and reserved and has been giving Eggsy his food and water with what could almost be called caring. Eggsy shuts his eyes tight against the sudden sunlight and gasps in the clean air. He risks opening his eyes, vision blurry from the knock to the head, as John carries him towards the front of the church. There’s a few police cars, parked quietly outside the gates, and a blue pickup truck inside.

Harry.

Was Roxy able to get the message through? Does he know about the bombs? Eggsy ducks his head this time as John carries him inside the church, and then casts his eyes wildly around. The windows have all been blocked up, he realizes, with stone stacked up on the outside and what looks like the wood of the pews on the inside. And sure enough, it looks like most of the pews have been ripped out. John sets Eggsy on the ground and bars the door. Hardly enough to keep the Mounties out, but that’s not the end goal, is it? Eggsy twists around so he can look towards the pulpit and the steps. Most everyone seems to have gathered there, in various states of panic. He can hear one of the children crying. John’s son? The big man seems in a hurry to join them up there once he hears the cries. And there’s Harry, still dressed in his nerdy sweater with mussed up hair, talking urgently with Jedidiah, hands waving wildly. He glances Eggsy’s way when the door shuts and stops for a moment, just staring, and then goes back to Jedidiah. But Jedidiah isn’t having it. He too, turns his attention to Eggsy, and steps through the crowd so he can walk down the center aisle, smiling, always smiling. Except his neat hair and beard look wild, and his smile is crazed. A gun is strapped along his back. A man who’s finally arrived at his preordained judgement day. Harry follows, shoulders slumped and head ducked to make himself seem submissive, still going on.

“You don’t have to do this! Think about the children! They’re watching you now, watching to see what kind of people they should become. Let me go speak with the police. I’m sure I can reason—”

“Shut up Prof,” Jedidiah replies conversationally, and squats near Eggsy. He draws the Kingsman glasses out of his flannel pocket. Puts the glasses on himself. “I blink a few times and a screen appears in front of my face asking for a password. Apparently my iris scan didn’t match up. Fancy
things, these.” He slips the glasses off, and goes to snap them in half. It doesn’t work. Kingsman
glasses are built sturdy. But Jedidiah doesn’t even look embarrassed. He just tosses the glasses over
his shoulder instead, and they land somewhere among the broken pews, skittering against the floor.
Jedidiah smiles, and then the boxcutter appears in his hands. Eggsy barely has time to jerk back
before the blade is slashing across his face. Blood spurts into his eye, but he’d managed to avoid
Jedidiah taking his eye out completely. He can feel the cut burning down from eyebrow to cheek,
and is vaguely aware of Harry’s voice, gone high and panicked. Still playing the part.

“Oh my God, oh my God, your eye…”

“Shut up Prof,” Jedidiah says with a little more annoyance to it, and wraps his hand in the front of
Eggsy’s shirt, yanking him up off the floor and choking him as Eggsy tries to blink away the blood.
“Now I know being tossed around a little won’t be enough to make you talk. Not from where you’re
from, with those fancy glasses. You’re trained not to talk. But the thing is? You don’t need to talk.”

Eggsy manages to get his other eye open in time to see the boxcutter whipping back towards his
face. This time, he cries out as the blade digs into his lip and drags down across his chin. Fuck, but
he’s going to get some scars. Jedidiah drops him to the floor with sudden disinterest and stands,
turning back to the people huddled on the steps.

“See how the devils have tried to infiltrate us, my brothers and sisters! Brother Samuel has been
corrupted by their ways, and sent to block our path to salvation!”

Eggsy spits blood onto the floor, watches through blurry vision as one of the children begins to cry.
Fumbling hands hold the too-long sleeves of a sweater to his lip and he feels himself being lifted,
propped against Harry’s chest. He can feel the warmth of Harry’s body, hot breath fanning the top of
his head. “You bloody idiot,” Harry mutters in his ear. “You fucking idiot, Samuel.”

Eggsy laughs a little and shuts his eyes. Yeah, he’s a fucking idiot. “Prof...they have bo—”

“I know,” Harry whispers, still sounding furious in a way that totally contradicts his gentle hands
trying to stem the blood flow from Eggsy’s eye and lip. Jedidiah is starting one of his fire and blood
sermons, voice overpowering the sound of sobs. American devils and the corrupt government blah
blah blah. It isn’t enough to drown out the sound of sirens, as more and more vehicles surround the
church grounds. The RCMP really is coming out full-force. Probably including the Emergency
Response Team. Eggsy twists to try to see through the crack in the door, but it’s too small a space
and his one eye is completely useless. He has to judge by the sounds, of tents being erected and
doors of vans slamming, the bustle of very many people who don’t realize the danger right beneath
their feet.

“We will fight these devils, my brethren, fight to find God’s light once again and—!” Jedidiah stops
as the voice through a bullhorn sounds from outside.

“Frank Davids, this is Joseph Hardy of the RCMP. We’ll ask one more time for you to surrender
your weapons and exit the building. Nobody needs to be hurt today. Please comply and surrender
your weapons, and slowly exit the building with hands visible.”

Jedidiah snorts and waves that all aside. “So they can kill us all as we leave our sanctuary? Don’t be
fooled, my brethren.”

“Surrender your weapons and slowly exit the building with your hands visible!”

“Dear God, Frank, listen to the man!” Harry urges. “If they storm the building, who knows who will
get hurt?”
“Shut up Prof!”

“Daddy, Daddy!” the child wails.

“Jedidiah…” John’s low voice implores. He knows about the bombs, and there’s a desperation in his voice Eggsy wouldn’t have expected. “Jedidiah, please...let the children out. Let the children leave.”

“Yes, let the children leave.” Harry again.

“*The children have just as much a right to Heaven as the rest of us!*” Jedidiah roars, and all at once, any semblance of sanity is stripped away. This is the man who killed twenty-nine people on Valentine’s Day, spit flying everywhere and eyes wild. “We seek salvation, my brothers and sisters. You must follow me now, let me be your guide!” He splays a hand across his chest and stalks down the aisle to where the rest of the cult huddles. “Have we not waited for this exact moment? It is our time. It is time to rise, rise, rise…”

He chants the word alone for a moment, and then it’s taken up by his wife, by some other women, by some of the men. Those who stay silent fidget and hang their heads. The crying children are drowned out by the voices repeating the word, again and again: “Rise, rise, rise, rise…”

There’s people missing, Eggsy realizes with a sudden drop in his stomach. Aside from John, he can’t see any of Jedidiah’s core supporters, the ones who were armed. “Prof…” he whispers.

Harry’s sleeve wipes his face once more, sopping up even more of the blood. And then there’s Harry’s face, hovering above him. And it’s Harry this time, not some alias. It’s written into the furrow of his brow and tension lines around his mouth. And as appreciative Eggsy might have been of the whole professor aesthetic, the real Harry is a thousand times more beautiful. “Don’t worry Eggy,” Harry whispers, and slowly drags Eggsy across the floor to lean against the remnants of a pew, out of the main aisle. “Just stay put.”

They’re surrounded by crazy cultists and a leader willing to blow them all to hell and back. How is he not supposed to worry? Eggsy struggles to sit a little more upright and finds the grenade masquerading as a lighter, still in his pants pocket. If need be, he’ll tackle Jedidiah and take him down that way. Sure, it’ll mean he won’t be bringing Harry home himself, but at least Harry will go home in one piece. After all, the last time Harry faced off with a bunch of nutters in a church…

Eggsy stops and turns to stare at Harry, who still has a supporting hand on Eggsy’s back, though his eyes are fixed on Jedidiah. Prof’s husband is Geoffrey the ex-military abortion doctor. There was a reason it had sounded odd, and not just because it was, well...odd. It was because it was familiar.

He spends a lot of time trying to forget that church in Kentucky, which is impressive considering how deeply every detail of that day was permanently etched into his memory, especially the sound of a single gunshot and Harry’s body hitting the ground. He remembers it now, Harry’s words just before Valentine decided to test his little toy.

“I’m a Catholic whore, currently enjoying congress out of wedlock with my black Jewish boyfriend who works at a military abortion clinic. So hail Satan, and have a lovely afternoon.”

And then Harry had killed them. Still has the nightmares where he wakes up shaking, spends the night trying to warm himself over a cup of tea, and there’s not much Eggsy can ever do to help. Because Harry returns to that church in Kentucky, over and over forever.

He’s back there now. He’s been back there this whole entire time.

“Harry,” Eggsy rasps, and plucks at Harry’s blood-soaked sweater sleeve. “Harry, I have to tell
“Later, Eggsy!” Harry insists, but Jedidiah isn’t going anywhere. Eggsy gets a hand in Harry’s collar and pulls him down so they’re face to face.

“No, now!”

Harry’s eye goes wide behind his glasses. And Eggsy knows he has about thirty seconds to say everything he needs to say, and that’ll never be enough time but it’s what he has to work with. “Harry,” he repeats, and bonks their foreheads together. Shuts his good eye, so he doesn’t have to have the courage to stare at Harry head on as he says this. “You know what I see every single fucking time I think I’m going to die? I see you.” His voice strangles on the last word. He swallows and tries again. “I see you, Harry, because you’re the most goddamn important thing to ever happen to me, and I know...I know you see nothing. I know. But...I came here because...you don’t have to see me. It’s okay if you don’t see me. But I see you so I have to try, don’t I? I want to...I want to reach you and for you to reach back, because I’m always reaching for you and you never...you never grab on.” He’s having trouble speaking clearly with the cut on his lip, swallows down his own blood by accident and has to cough it out. Harry’s sleeve goes to the corner of his mouth to wipe it away, and Eggys leans into the touch. He’s too frightened to open his eyes. He needs to say this, all of it, and he might not be able to if he gets a glimpse of Harry’s face. He spits out more of the blood and presses their foreheads harder together, until he can feel Harry’s glasses digging into his skin. “So I’m here, because I need to bring you home. To me. Because you’re my home now and I’ll be yours if you want me because there’s nowhere I would rather be than with you, Harry. Don’t you get that?” That’s mostly everything now. He tries opening his good eye. Harry is just staring at him with both eyebrows raised. Eggys leaps back so their foreheads are no longer touching. He feels clammy with sweat that isn’t his. “You don’t have to see nothing,” he croaks, and wonders if Harry can even hear him over the cult calling out, “Rise, rise, rise, rise!”

He stares straight at Harry, this ridiculous stupid man he’s in love with, and knows that his words aren’t working and probably never will. But he still has to try. One last time. “I’m right here,” he says, “If you want to see me.”

Harry shuts his eye and breathes out slowly. For a moment Eggys hopes for the impossible. But then Harry shakes his head a little. “You put yourself in danger for a reason like that?”

Eggys just fucking bared his soul and this is the reaction he gets? He spits out blood again and really regrets probing the cut with his tongue. “Fucking Christ...ouch...” He glances back at Harry’s face, furrowed in a frown. His neat little sweater is stained with blood all over the sleeves and front. “Harry,” he says softly, and Harry looks back up at him. Eggys tilts his head towards Jedidiah. “This isn’t Kentucky. This won’t fix Kentucky.”

Harry draws himself up a little, voice acerbic and leaving no trace of that nervous little teacher. “I’m fully aware of that.”

“But I gotta bring you home.” Shit, but why can’t he come up with the right words? The right words to make Harry understand? “I’m just...I’m...fuck...”

“Stay right here and do not move.” Harry’s hands shove his shoulders as if to staple him in place. “I don’t need your help with this.”

Eggsy knows that. Harry can handle almost anything on his own. But he shouldn’t have to think he has to. Find people to hold onto and don’t let go. That’s what Merlin had said. His last words, in a way. Harry just needs to open his stupid fucking hand so Eggys can grab it. But Harry’s hands are fists as he stands up and approaches Jedidiah. The cult members keep chanting as Harry forces
Jedidiah around, and the nervous little teacher is back. Eggsy can’t hear their conversation, but he’s sure it has something to do with letting the children go, if Harry’s gestures in their direction mean anything. Eggsy watches the tension building in Jedidiah’s arm, sees the spittle fly from his mouth as he argues back, cringes when Harry doesn’t even flinch away from the punch and is thrown backwards down the aisle with a small and feeble cry of pain. His glasses crunch and break when they impact with the floor. Not Kingsman issue. The chanting falters, and the little girl breaks away from the crowd with a cry.

“Prof!”

Jedidiah snatches her off the ground as she tries to run past him, carries her struggling and screaming back to the front. The chanting dies away completely as Jedidiah dumps the girl into someone’s lap. He unslings his gun and studies his congregation.

“It is time for our salvation,” he says, and turns away to march down the center aisle. Past where Harry is still laid out on the floor, past where Eggsy is propped against the pews. He rips the bar away and throws the doors open and Eggsy gets a glimpse outside: flashing lights, troops in full body armor, tents erected just outside church grounds crawling with people who don’t have a clue about the bombs beneath their feet. “Am I visible to you yet?” he screams, and fires into the air. Eggsy hears the shouts of panic and confusion over on the other side, but it’s too late. Jedidiah’s men have been hidden behind the stone barricades all this time, and at his shots, they pop out of hiding and begin shooting in the direction of the gates. Eggsy listens to the cries of action from the police force, and then looks to Harry. Harry, who opens his arms as the little girl scrambles up from where Jedidiah dumped her and back to him. Harry rocks her gently with a protective hand pressed to the back of her head. Slowly, bleeding from a cut on his cheek where the broken glasses must have gotten him, Harry stands with the girl in his arms and stares towards the people huddled on the steps. The spell had been broken the moment Jedidiah’s fist collided with Harry’s face. No more chanting. Some stand up and tense to fight while others try to make themselves even smaller on the steps. They all look increasingly more terrified as the seconds tick on. Except for Megan. Jedidiah’s wife breaks away from the crowd, draws away off to the side, simply watching.

“Prof…” one of the young potheads whimpers over the sound of gunfire and shouting.

Harry carries the girl slowly up the aisle, persona falling off in bits and pieces as he goes. Confident stride, sure hands, a blazing anger that only shows in the crisp beat of his steps and the way Eggsy sees Harry’s mouth twist in distaste when he glances back over his shoulder towards the front door. A woman holds out her arms for the little girl when Harry reaches them, and Eggsy knows that he’s not the only one who’s seen the change in Harry. They stare up at him like they’d stared up at Jedidiah just moments ago, these lost people so desperately searching for a way home.

Eggsy pushes up against the pew behind him to get himself standing. He can’t walk with his legs still bound, but he can see Harry better, listen in on what he’s saying. “John,” Harry murmurs, his son attached to his hip, softly sobbing. “How many of them know?” Harry asks.

John shakes his head. “Just me and the ones outside. And Megan.”

Harry pinches the bridge of his nose and pushes his hair back from his face. “Alright.” He straightens his clothing and gestures for everyone to quiet down. And they do. They hang on Harry’s every word. It’s fucking amazing. Harry clears his throat and waits for a slight lull in the noise outside to start, and when he speaks, it’s with that full, uppity British accent Eggsy hadn’t realized he’d been dampening so much. “I’m sorry to tell you that your leader hasn’t been very honest with you. He does not plan on any of you living through the day.”
will do.”

She scoffs. “Of course I know. But there’s nothing that can be done about it now.” She turns to watch the door, eyes skipping over Eggsy. She gnaws on her lower lip, and Eggsy can’t tell from where he is whether it’s out of nerves or irritation. He’d barely ever seen Jedidiah interact with his wife at all, even though she’s clearly been a vital part of keeping the cult members alive. He’d sort of assumed it was dismissal of her as a whole, but Megan knew about the bombs. She was part of that small minority that knew, and yet isn’t out front right now, fighting off the police force and trying to win a spot in paradise. John, at least, seems to have given things a second thought when it came to his own kid getting blown up, but Eggsy can’t understand why Megan doesn’t just book it for the door to join her husband if she’s been in on the plan all along.

Oh well. He’ll have to think her through later. Harry is speaking to the cult members, calmly explaining that the church is prepped to blow. None of them seem that keen on salvation all of a sudden. Forty-some dirty anxious people gathered on the steps shuffle and even more get to their feet, visibly trembling even from Eggsy’s perspective. “You mustn’t panic now,” Harry says, and reaches out to pat the head of John’s little boy. “The only way out of the church is too dangerous to attempt right now. We must find cover so that when the police take the building, we’re not caught in the midd—”

The front doors burst open and Jedidiah leads the retreat indoors, some of his men looking back and firing a few parting shots before the doors are closed once more. They find the bar and slide it into place, and then begin grabbing at other pieces of wreckage to pile by the entrance. Eggsy sits back down and scoots across the floor to a place he won’t be in their way. He’s not looking to add any more cuts and bruises to what he already has. At least the slashes on his eye and lip are clotting. They were painful and long but evidently shallow. When he looks back for Harry, he’s busy trying to herd people into the corners of the building, far from the doors and hopefully out of the line of fire. Not everyone goes. A few hesitate, and then go to help Jedidiah with the door. Megan goes to Jedidiah to speak directly into his ear, points out Harry, and then stands watch by the window, peeking out from behind the stack of wood and bricks blocking the entrance, no doubt keeping an eye out on the police force out there. None of Jedidiah’s followers seem to be sporting injuries. Looks like it was a one-way battle, one probably abandoned when the other side decided to get armed. Now either the RCMP starves them out, or they storm the building. Harry is obviously expecting the latter, and since he’s been here for a lot longer, Eggsy will trust that judgement.

He wishes Harry had at least untied his feet. How is he supposed to help all trussed up like this? But that’s the thing, isn’t it? Harry is trying to show he can do this all by himself. Well, fuck that. Eggsy is not about to watch Harry or any of these people die because Harry has some fucked up need to prove he’s still useful, still a proper Kingsman. He wasn’t good at gymnastics for nothing. As Jedidiah shouts his orders above the bustle of noise from outside, Eggsy begins to squirm his arms underneath himself. His cheap baggy clothing catches and tears as he works, and Eggsy flops over onto his side to try to pull his arms just a little bit further. But it’s no luck. He needs just a little more leeway.

A dislocated shoulder isn’t too bad. He’d suffered worse under Dean. It’s still a bitch of a move to pull on yourself, though. Eggsy grits back the cry of pain as his shoulder pops out of place and gives him that little extra room to slip his hands out from behind his back, under and over his legs so now his wrists are bound in front of him, solid Boy Scout knots that Eggsy could undo in his sleep. Merlin had spent three solid days coaching his potential recruits the tricks of getting out of these kinds of situations. Eggsy tries to ignore the throbbing pain in his shoulder as he yanks at the ropes around his wrists with his teeth. At least it’s not handcuffs. He wouldn’t have been keen on dislocating a thumb right after his shoulder to get those things off.
“Frank Davids.” The man on the bullhorn again. “Exit the building with your hands above your heads. If you do not comply, we will be forced to enter. You have five minutes.”

Eggsy looks up in time to see Jedidiah smirk. The moment those troops enter the building, it’s over. For all of them. Harry has five minutes to prove himself.

The children are crying again. Eggsy finishes untwisting his hands and starts working on his feet. The pop of his shoulder back into place is even worse than the initial dislocation, but once again, he’d had practice living with Dean. He’d never wanted his mum to deal with the consequences of multiple hospital visits.

His feet are uselessly numb, and his first attempt at standing ends up with him sprawled on the floor. He crawls and stumbles his way along, ignoring Jedidiah and Harry and everyone else in favor of heading for where Jedidiah had carelessly tossed his glasses away. He finds them beneath one of the few pews not salvaged for wood and places them on his nose. There. Now he feels like an agent.

“Jesus Christ Eggsy!” Roxy’s voice is in his ear immediately. “You are so—”

“Utterly fucked, I’m aware,” Eggsy mutters back, and takes the time now to search around the building. With his glasses back, he can easily watch the heat signatures moving to surround the building, the mass of people out front readying to attack the front door. Perhaps ten members of the cult have joined up with Jedidiah and his core followers to help build the barricade in front, and some of the men have positioned themselves behind the broken pews with guns at the ready. It’s going to be a fucking mess, and then completely obliterated.

Harry. What’s Harry doing? Still trying to get most of the cult secured in the corner, out of the line of action. Not that it will do any good if the whole church and grounds surrounding is rigged to blow. And Harry knows about the bombs. He’d said. So why bother?

“Four minutes,” the voice on the microphone says, and there’s cries of panic from the cult members that Harry works to quiet. God, it’s noisy. Sirens and bullhorns and crying children and the smash of brick on brick and wood as they keep barricading the door and Harry shushing the children and now Jedidiah has started one of his sermons again, all God and the Devil and the evils of the government and the power to reach Heaven by proving their devotion to God. And Roxy still babbling frantically in his ear and he knows she’s probably making some really useful observations that could possibly save his life but at this point it’s just part of the babble. Eggsy cuts the sound and tries his feet again. Still wobbly, but he can walk. He can still feel the grenade in his pocket they’d never bothered to confiscate. He’ll reach Jedidiah, and put an end to this. If he can only walk fast enough.

“Three minutes!”

Jedidiah is pacing the aisles, gun in hand, ranting at the top of his lungs. “You will see my brethren, even those of you who turn from God’s light in our final moment, you will see!” He stalks over in the direction of where the cult members have taken refuge, and Eggsy can see him grabbing for Harry, but at that moment, John steps forward and spreads his arms protectively across the others. It’s enough to take Jedidiah aback just a little. “You too, brother John? You, who have been by my side this whole time?”

John clears his throat before speaking. “I believe in what you say, Jedidiah. I believe that the people responsible for what happened to us should pay. For Valentine. For Poppy Adams. I believe that God will guide us to salvation and punish those who made us suffer. But I cannot agree with your actions today.” He shakes his head, slow and sad. “I cannot agree with the decision you have made for these people without ever letting them know.”
Jedidiah makes a disgusted sound and turns his back on John. “Why stay then, if you refuse to follow my guidance?”

“Two minutes!”

“Because I believed in you!” For the first time, Eggsy watches John use his size to try to intimidate. He lurches forward with fists clenched. “I met you, Frank Davids, with us both in orange uniforms and I believed in what you said, about finding hope in all this darkness, about placing blame on the ones who deserve it. And I stayed by your side all this time. I followed you out of prison. I stole my little boy from his foster parents to live here with you, because I thought it would be a better life for us both. And the moment I step off these grounds, I know they will take him from me again. So I prayed and I prayed that God would speak to you and tell you that this was wrong before this day came. But you aren’t listening to God.” The tension seeps from his body, and all he does is shake his head sadly once more. “I think it’s just your own crazy voice, echoing around in your head.”

Jedidiah considers him for a second, and then fires a row of shots into the floor right at John’s feet. The floor flies up in chips, and in the moment John cringes away, Jedidiah’s hand darts out and grabs Harry—his original target—by the collar, dragging him away from the group. “You’re no teacher!” he snarls, and tosses Harry into the center aisle. The gun presses against Harry’s cheek, turning his head this way and that. “Who sent you?” Jedidiah demands, and jabs the gun a little harder. “Who sent you?”

“One minute!” the voice from outside warns. Eggsy can see the heat signature of everyone ready to take the front door, the snipers set up outside to take any shots they can through the windows. None of them are in as much danger as any of them. Except none of it really seems as important as the gun pointed straight at Harry’s face. A shot like that, and none of the Statesmen’s technology will be able to do a thing. The men with guns and those helping with the barricade shout and run about, trying to find the best position. The rest of the cult huddles in the corner. Eggsy spots John folded over his little boy, as if that would be enough to protect him. The rest of them seem to be catching on that this is the final moment, that this church really is about to blow. A few try to break for the doors or the windows just be stopped by Jedidiah’s forces. “Let us out! Please...please...” a woman begs, struggling against the man who’s caught her around the waist. “Let us out, please!” A good number of them begin to pray, voices week and wheedly with hands clasped, voices lost among the chaos into just a low and frantic murmur.

Megan Davids takes a primitive flip phone from her pocket.

It just speaks to Eggsy’s insane amount of Harry-centric senses that he catches the words that Harry grits out with the gun jammed into his cheek. “How many did you kill on that day, Frank?”

Jedidiah blinks, and then smiles his awful, crazed smile as he leans down. “Twenty-nine, Prof. Twenty-nine.”

And then Harry is moving, twisting out from under the gun and sending one foot straight into Jedidiah’s jaw, knocking the smile clean away. The boxcutter is easily swiped from Jedidiah’s pocket and slits the strap keeping the gun attached to Jedidiah’s shoulder. Harry flips the gun about and smacks Jedidiah in the temple when the other man tries to recover. “Forty!” Harry grunts, and knocks Jedidiah’s legs from under him with a clean sweep of his foot. “Forty people, Frank!” The gun goes off, and anyone who wasn’t staring before has definitely had their attention diverted by now. Two shots, right in Jedidiah’s thighs. Hurts like fuck, but it won’t kill him.

“What the hell?” one of the armed men near the door cries, and Harry dives for the cover of the pews. Raises his head. Lifts the gun. One, two, three men go down with shots through their arms. Perfect precision. The result of months and months of work until Harry got used to only having one
eye. Four, five, six. Harry ducks and rolls to the other side of the aisle and begins targeting the rest of
the men. The man who’d captured the struggling woman goes down with a bullet clean through the
shoulder, and the woman drops the ground, sobbing. Eggsy blinks, and finally thinks to connect his
sound again. Roxy sounds less than impressed at having been muted. “You moron, go secure their
guns!”

“Right!” Eggsy books it as fast as he can towards the nearest downed man and nabs the gun from the
ground while the man is still moaning over the shots through his lower arms. And then the next one.
The next one. His feet are still numb from being tied up for three days, but he’s better off than these
poor buggers. None of them put up much resistance as he relieves them of their weapons.

“Thirty seconds!”

One of the men gets his wits about him in time to take a shot at Harry on his blind side. Eggsy yells
out, but the bullet hits anyway, right through Harry’s side. Nothing vital, thank fuck, and Harry only
pauses a moment before raising his gun with barely a glance and shooting the man in the knees.

It’s only ten more seconds and not a single armed man is left standing, except Harry, who is wincing
and holding onto his side, and Eggsy, who is a one man armoury with about twelve guns hanging off
various limbs.

“Tell them...not to come in…” Harry orders in a gasp, waving Eggsy in the direction of the doors.
Eggsy nods, and reaches the doors just in time to look back and see Megan raising the cell phone,
calm indifference on her face. Those were crude bombs he saw below, the type to be set off by a
single call. If Jedidiah planned on fighting on the frontlines, it wouldn’t make sense for him to carry
the detonator, now would it? Not if he wanted to be sure to send them all to their judgement. Eggsy
opens his mouth to shout, knows they’re going to die, and just like that, Harry’s face is all he can see:
smiling over board games and take out and butterflies, exhausted in the middle of the night while
cups of tea scare the nightmares away, soft while listening to Eggsy talk or petting the dog on the
head, so serious—too serious—while playing the Arthur role and trying to prove he can do it, and
vulnerable too, the day Eggsy brought him back to himself, made him remember he was Harry Hart
once more, and always, always always always that first glimpse that he can remember of Harry
waiting outside the police station that morning, about to change Eggsy’s entire life.

What a pity to die now, before he can make more memories.

And then the phone is shattered into pieces. Megan screams as the shards dig into his hands and arm
and drops to the ground. The bullet embeds itself into the wall with a tidy little cracking sound. Harry
lowers his gun, panting only slightly and maybe a little pale. The room is suddenly incredibly silent
but for the noise from outside, only slight moans from the injured interrupting the stunned silence.
“Eggsy,” Harry murmurs, and Eggsy snaps out of it. He pushes aside a few of the larger pieces of
barricade and shouts as loud as he can: “We give up! We give up! Don’t break in! Frank Davids is
immobilized!” He pauses a moment and then adds, “Also, he was planning on blowing this whole
place up, so maybe get bomb squads into the cellar?” It doesn’t seem like enough. “Please?” he adds.

There’s a pause, and then someone right on the other side of the door relays his message to the
higher-ups. “Yeah, bomb squad. A bomb squad. Davids is down. Apparently.”

“No, he’s definitely down,” Eggsy says, and pushes another broken bit of pew out of the way.
“Look, just get your bomb squads down there and we’ll take down the barricades. Most of the
people in here didn’t want this. There are children.”

Again, his message gets passed up the grapevine. Eggsy leans against the barricade and catches his
breath. Watches Harry drop the gun and walk to where Jedidiah is trying to stand, without much
success. A quick chop to a certain nerve cluster, and he’s down for at least a few hours now. Harry pushes his hair back from his face and smiles towards the cult members. “It’s alright now,” he says in his soothing professor voice, and laughs a little—a real genuine laugh—when the children run to him and grab hold of his legs.

“That was something,” Roxy whispers in Eggsy’s ear. Eggsy grunts in agreement, and then the events of the last sixty seconds catch up to him.

It’s over. Jedidiah is out cold on the floor. Megan is trying to wrap her injured hand in her shirt. All the weapons the cult members had been sporting are slung around Eggsy’s neck and arms. And not a single person in this church died today.

All sixty of them, alive.

Eggsy looks up and finds Harry, standing there with blood on his sweater and John’s little boy in his arms while the cult members surround him, crying and babbling their gratitude. And as Harry smiles, Eggsy knows that, for this one brief moment, it really is like Kentucky never happened.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter brought to you by this one really nice comment I received last night. Thank you, you are awesome and motivational!
Next chapter is the last one! It's been a ride, I'll try to have it out within a week!
Eggsy is hardly surprised to find Agent Whiskey hidden among the RCMP outside. She easily takes command of Harry and Eggsy and spirits them away past the madness to where an innocuous black car is waiting for them to escape in while the rest of the cult members are taken in for questioning and possible jail sentences. Eggsy can hear wailing as John passes his little boy off to a government agent, and tries to tell himself it’s for the best. Whiskey shoots Eggsy a dirty look after she’s done thanking Harry for all his help, and Eggsy ducks his head and pretends to feel chastised, but really all he feels is relieved. Harry gets behind the wheel and Eggsy slips into the passenger seat after accidentally going to the wrong side. He watches the church disappear in the rearview mirror until it’s completely gone, and then checks out his injuries. His face is all smeared with blood from the cuts across his eye and lip, but he’s not actively bleeding anymore. Harry has him more worried. He has one hand pressed hard against the place in his side where he was shot, and Eggsy can see the blood spreading through Harry’s sweater. “Harry…” he starts, and Harry’s grip around the steering wheel tightens until his knuckles turn white. “Harry, where are we going?”

“My place,” Harry tells him, voice clipped. “Tell Lancelot or Morgan or whoever you’re talking to right now to send the jet. I want to be out of here by tonight.”

“Got it,” Roxy says, and then mutters, as if Harry could hear if she was accidentally too loud, “I’ll clock out for a few hours. You two probably have…stuff to talk about.” And the voice feed cuts out.

Eggsy studies Harry out of the corner of his eye. “Roxy is sending the jet.”

Harry nods. “Good. Is there anywhere else we need to go before setting off?”

He thinks back to his Kingsman gear, stuffed in a gym locker. “Yeah, I have some things to pick up. In Toronto.”

Harry nods again, and then follows the road in a lazy turn to the right. Eggsy can see a town beginning to take shape ahead. Vaughan, he assumes. “You’ve been living here?”

“Yes.” Harry’s brisk questions and answers are beginning to make Eggsy nervous. Okay, so Harry had definitely been annoyed with him in the church. Annoyed enough to want Eggsy all trussed up and out of the way where he couldn’t interfere. But Eggsy had helped, hadn’t he? He’d been the one to discover the bombs, he’d gone and grabbed the guns after Harry incapacitated the cultists, he’d been just generally pretty useful, right? So, really, Harry has no reason to be mad.

Okay, maybe a little. Eggsy had inserted himself right into Harry’s mission without asking permission or even a warning, and Harry is definitely Not Pleased. He navigates through the little town which is probably quite picturesque but Eggsy can only focus on the slow seep of blood through Harry’s sweater and worry about just how pissed Harry is at him. He’s only jolted out of his thoughts when the car stops, and he looks out the window at the little red cottage they’ve parked by.

“Put your hood up,” Harry orders as he opens his door and steps out onto the gravel driveway. “So the neighbors don’t see the blood on your face.”

Eggsy could come back with some comment about Harry’s bloody sweater, but it’s probably better to not provoke any more ire. He reaches for his coat hood and draws it up over his face and clambers
out of the car to join Harry at the front door of the cottage as Harry takes a key from his pocket and
lets them in.

It’s the room Eggsy recognizes from sneaking into Jahi’s office to spy on Harry mid-mission. The
little desk, and a bed, and a nightside table. A small kitchen area off in the corner and open door to
the bathroom where a hot shower beckons. Eggsey wonders just how badly he smells after weeks of
not washing. Maybe that accounts for half of Harry’s sour expression as he locks the door behind
them and turns to face Eggsey. Or maybe not. “Of all the goddamn fool things,” Harry mutters, and
clutches even tighter at his sweater. “Of all the goddamn fool things, Eggsey. You could have been
killed. You could have been killed and I wouldn’t have been able to do anything to stop it.” He
breathes in deep as if to launch into a lecture, but then sighs and goes to the kitchen. He wets a cloth
and returns to Eggsey’s side, dabs at the blood crusting along his eyelid. “This is going to scar,” he
continues in a scolding tone. “You could have lost the eye completely. And just look at your lip…”

“’Arry,” Eggsy mumbles through the cloth pressed against his mouth. “You literally got shot. Could
you at least look at that before my lip?”

Harry scowls and looks down at his side like it’s a minor inconvenience he’d completely forgotten
about. Maybe he had. “Fine. But this conversation is not over.”

Eggsy takes the cloth from Harry’s hand and keeps it pressed to his lip as he shrugs noncommittally
and watches Harry travel back to the kitchen and pull a first-aid kit from beneath the sink. Harry
fishes a roll of bandages from the kit and slips off his sweater, and then goes to work on the collared
shirt beneath it, fingers nimbly working out all the buttons until he can strip that off as well. He’s too
thin, Eggsy notices at once. So many weeks abroad and all the good work Eggsy had made keeping
the man well fed is gone. But Harry’s work is still clean and quick as he disinfects the wound and
wraps it just so. God, but if that bullet had been just a bit more to the right…

Harry holds up his ruined sweater with a rueful look. “I can get the stains out of that,” Eggsy
volunteers, slowly approaching until he can pull at one of the dangling sleeves. “My mum was
always good at getting blood out.” She’d had to be. But Harry shakes his head and tosses the sweater
onto the counter.

“No matter. It was all for an alibi anyway.”

An alibi that Harry had loved. An alibi that had made him laugh so honestly as the cult members
surrounded him, had turned him gentle and loving for at least a few hours a week with children in his
lap and a church full of people listening in on his little lessons. Does Harry regret it’s over now, even
just a little?

“Let me fix you up,” Harry says now, and forces Eggsey to stand still while he disinfects his cuts and
patches them over with bits of tape. He mutters a little bit about stitches but ultimately decides not to
bother. He studies Eggsey’s hands and his feet and the livid marks still around his ankles and makes
Eggsey check that he can still feel each of his fingers and toes. Gets him to test his vision and follow a
light with his eyes to make certain Jedidiah didn’t actually do any damage there. Harry’s cheek is
blooming purple where he was punched and the cut from his glasses is a dark slash along one cheek,
but Eggsey doesn’t mention it. It’s better if he just lets Harry do his thing, work out his anxiety.
Finally, Harry steps back and nods before turning to wash his hands. “Alright. All done.” The water
washes pink from his hands and Eggsey watches it disappear down the drain with a sudden queasy
feeling.

“Harry…”

Harry reaches to adjust glasses that aren’t there and settles for running a frustrated hand through his
hair. “Why did you even come here Eggsy?” Harry asks in a low voice. His free hand grips the counter tight. “You don’t even...you don’t trust me with my own missions anymore? You felt you had to come collect me?”

Eggsy blinks and his mouth drops open before he begins shaking his head, hands out in protest. “No, Harry, where did you even…?”

Harry’s jaw tightens and his forehead furrows. “You said you came to take me home.”

Aw, Christ. “No, Harry, you’re taking it the wrong way.”

“How should I be taking it then?” Harry snaps, and looks pointedly towards the window, fingers drumming on the counter. Nervous? Angry? Eggsy can’t be sure. Harry isn’t usually one for unnecessary movements.

“Harry, it ain’t about trust.” He steps to the side, and then steps again until Harry is forced to either look at him or shift his gaze. “I trust you with missions. I trust you with my life. You know that. I know you do.”

Harry stares hard at him and Eggsy can tell how exhausted he is by the bags beneath his eyes, the pallor of his face, the way he keeps wincing like whenever he doesn’t get his afternoon cup of tea. “If it isn’t about trust, then what is it?”

Damn it. Eggsy crosses his arms tight across his chest and breaks eye contact. “Didn’t I...didn’t I say it, back in the church?”

“Yes, that you felt you had to come bring me home.”

Jesus fuck, is that really the only thing Harry took out of everything Eggsy said? “No, Harry...it’s...it’s more than that. I…” He can’t do this. Not for the second time today. It already took everything to say it to Harry once. He can’t manage it now, with Harry so close and the room so small, no one there but the two of them, even counting anyone listening on the other end of his glasses. “I want you to see me,” he whispers so soft he doubts Harry hears, and then clears his throat. “Can I take a shower. I probably smell ripe.”

“Go ahead,” Harry says, and Eggsy takes his chance to escape. He locks the bathroom door and peels off his clothes. Gross. Disgusting. Revolting. The grime of several weeks in the church washes off with the help of the entire bar of soap he finds in the shower, and his hair rinses out brown the first time he washes it, so he lathers up and tries again. The blood washes from his face, and he knows he’s probably undoing Harry’s bandaging work, but the need to be clean supersedes all else. He only really realizes just how long he’s taking when Harry knocks at the door. Eggsy shuts the shower off quickly.

“Sorry, sorry, I didn’t keep track of ti—”

“There’s clean clothes outside,” Harry interrupts, tone a little gentler than earlier. “Take all the time you need.”

Then Eggsy can hear Harry walking away again, and he shrugs and turns the shower back on. Okay, he’ll at least try to get his hair to rinse clean.

Ten minutes later, he shuts the water off for good and realizes he’s left himself without a towel. He drips water all over the floor walking over to the closet and digging one up. He dries his hair and pats his face dry, wipes away the steam on the mirror to check if he kept his bandages intact. Mostly. And he looks much better now without blood all over his face and skin no longer grimy from sweat and
A lot more ready to sit Harry down and tell him he’s a bloody idiot who doesn’t understand a goddamn thing.

He opens the door a smidge to retrieve the clothes Harry left for him. Harry himself is sitting at the desk, writing away in his journal, head bent low to the page because Jedidiah broke his reading glasses. He’s replaced his dirty clothes with his Kingsman suit, though it doesn’t seem to fit right on him somehow. Eggsy snatches the clothes off the floor and dresses in the soft t-shirt and lazy sweatpants Harry had provided him. He hangs his glasses from the front of his shirt for when he needs them again. He folds his old dirty clothes into a pile to toss the second he sees a trash bin big enough and emerges from the bathroom. His bare feet are chilly on the floor, and for a moment, Harry doesn’t bother to turn around, still working at the journal. Eggsy casts his eyes over to the bed and sees that Harry’s Kingsman glasses are folded up on the bedside table, replaced by the eyepatch, and turned down to face the wooden surface. Nobody listening in. Nobody watching.

He takes a few more steps towards Harry. “Harry, you can write up the report at home.”

Harry’s hand pauses in midair, and then he slowly turns in his seat, and from the carefully controlled expression alone Eggsy can tell he’s about to hate his life. “So now on top of barging into my assignments you’ll tell me when to write them up?”

He’s tired, Eggsy reminds himself. He’s been on this job weeks longer than Eggsy has, he’s been shot, and he does kind of have a right to be annoyed about Eggsy stealing his work from under him. That’s what keeps Eggsy from physically grabbing and shaking Harry to try to knock some bloody sense into him. He fists his hands in his t-shirt—Harry’s t-shirt, it smells of cheap detergent—and breathes deep. Harry always gets tetchy when Eggsy comes after him about his health. This is just that but bigger.

“Harry,” he says carefully, making sure to enunciate every word, “I swear to God none of this was about thinking you couldn’t do the assignment alone, or that I in any way doubt your ability in the field or as a leader.” He catches Harry’s gaze and holds it. “Yeah?”

After a moment, Harry sighs and nods. “Alright. Then why are you here?”

Eggsy bites back his automatic response, that he just wants to bring Harry home. That’ll start all sorts of arguments about how Harry can get himself home just fine without anyone’s help, thank you very much. He shrugs one shoulder helplessly and winces as he remembers he dislocated that shoulder just an hour ago, maybe. “I...I want you to see me,” he says, knowing fully that Harry didn’t understand when he said this before and he won’t get it now.

And yep, there he goes, still not getting it as he stands and puts his hands on his hips. “I can see you just fine right now. I still have one working eye.”

Eggsy ruffles a hand through damp hair and looks all around the room for some sort of inspiration. “No, not that way. I...you...” His gaze lands on the little patch covering the hole where Harry’s second eye used to be, and Eggsy’s stomach heaves in a different way this time. Not because he remembers the shot, like it usually is, but because this time he remembers what Harry had been thinking in that moment. He coughs and goes on in a raspy voice, “You told me once that just before Valentine shot you, you looked back on your life and saw nothing. Remember?” Harry peers at him in confusion but ultimately nods. Eggsy laughs a little, a helpless laugh, and tugs at his t-shirt again as he studies he ceiling. “Well, every time I think I’m about to kick the bucket, I see you. Not Tilde. Not Roxy. Not even my mum. I see you, every time Harry, because I think my brain knows you’re the one thing that might...I don’t know...make me want to stay alive so I can see you again.” He can feel his face and neck beginning to burn bright with embarrassment, and his careful words transform to babbling. “Which is weird, I know. I know it is. And I don’t expect you to feel the same way.
about me or anything. But I want...I want to make it so the next time you might be about to die, you
look back on your life and see something worth staying alive for. It doesn’t have to be me. It can be
Kingsman, or the dog, or the Sunday paper, I don’t give a fuck as long as you’re…” Fuck, but he
has to stop and dash the tears from his eyes. “As long as you’re not looking back and seeing nothing
because your life isn’t nothing, Harry. Don’t you get it? If something happened to you...I just got
you back, Harry. I don’t...you don’t know…” These traitor tears, rolling down his face. He hides his
eyes in the crook of his elbow and tries to breathe even. Waits for Harry to respond. To say anything
at all.

Eventually, he lowers his arm and looks to Harry, who still looks confused, even if his expression
has softened a little. He reaches out and pats Eggy’s shoulder. “Eggsy, everyone in Kingsman knows
how it feels to lose someone they’re close to. Roxy lost her mentor as well and—”

“I’m not talking about you as a fucking mentor.” That came out a lot angrier than he intended. “I’m
talking about...oh Jesus Christ…” He turns away and stalks across the floor towards the kitchen.
“I’m talking about you as something else.”

Harry goes quiet, and Eggsy can feel his muscles tensing, waiting for a reaction.

“I can’t ever hope to replace your father,” Harry says at last, and Eggsy could just brain himself on
the kitchen tap to offer some sort of escape.

“I’m not talking about that either,” he grits out, and beats an agitated rhythm along the counter.

Harry sighs deeply, sits back down, and buries his face in his hands. “Then what are you talking
about, Eggsy? Am I expected to read your mind?”

It would make things a hell of a lot easier. “Can we just go home?” Eggsy asks, and Harry nods, still
hiding his face. He packs up his small case of personal belongings while Eggsy gathers up his dirty
clothes and dumps them in the trash can outside. Whiskey will take care of the rest. Come a few
hours time, the man called Prof will never have even existed. Sammy Richardson too.

It’s a complete whim that has Eggsy grabbing the bloody sweater from where Harry had abandoned
it. He folds it as small as he can and tucks into the waistband of his sweatpants. Harry doesn’t seem
to notice. He leaves all his other clothes behind and joins Eggsy at the door within a few minutes.
His ruffled hair and exhausted expression still contrast so oddly with his neat and clean Kingsman
suit. He leaves the key under the mat outside and then they’re driving away in the discrete little car,
away from the house, away from Vaughan, away from the cult and the persona of a man who taught
children with a smile. The drive to Toronto is silent, and Eggsy collects his things from the gym
locker with growing unease. He wishes Harry would just talk to him. Let Eggsy know what’s going
on in his head. But that’s never been Harry, has it? There are very, very few times that Harry has
actually showed the true depth of his feelings to Eggsy. Once on a plane, when he admitted to seeing
nothing. And once in their home, when he admitted to feeling lonely.

All this time, Eggsy had just sort of assumed that Harry was the same as him. Fearless Galahad, who
had Kingsman blood running true in his veins. True, once upon a time he wanted to study butterflies,
but being a Kingsman is a fundamental piece of who Harry is, isn’t it? Or does that suit not seem to
fit just right anymore because Eggsy has seen just how easily Harry could shed it off to become a
local teacher? Prof had seemed like a much happier person than Harry. Even in the thick of battle
when Eggsy’s blood thrums with adrenaline and he feels more alive than ever, he’s not sure that he’s
been as happy as that teacher with the mussed hair and nerdy sweaters, reading to children on the
steps of a church. That teacher, who might have looked back on his life and seen something worth
living for.
If he asked the question now, and Harry answered true, what would his answer be? Harry, are you glad I brought you back to yourself, back to Kingsman? Or would you have been happier if you’d never remembered at all?

Was it all for me, asking for Harry Hart to come back?

Harry falls asleep on the jet, and Eggsy spends most of his time studying Harry. He needs to take responsibility for this. It was his decision to go buy a dog, after all, to force Harry’s memories back onto him. Without Eggsy, Harry wouldn’t have been shot today, wouldn’t look so fucking exhausted even as he sleeps. Without Eggsy, Harry could have run off and studied butterflies or taught children or whatever the hell he wanted to do, no guns or blood or memories of Kentucky keeping him up at night. Without Eggsy, Harry might have been much happier than he is now, and how fucking selfish was it for Eggsy to ignore all that in favor of his own need to have Harry back?

He finally grabs his glasses and pings Roxy until she answers. “It’s way too late for a friendly conversation,” she mumbles in warning.

“Roxy, I am the biggest asshole on the planet,” Eggsy tells her, and Roxy gets a little more sympathetic after that.

“He never needed to become a Kingsman,” she reminds him. “He never needed to accept his application in the first place.”

“Yeah, but that doesn’t mean he’s happy,” Eggsy argues. “I mean, I fucking love my job. Even the sucky parts. Kingsman is the best thing to happen to me, ever.” He glances a few seats over and back to where Harry is still sleeping. “But it doesn’t mean it was the best thing to ever happen to Harry. What if he’s just here because...because he’s good at it? He found out he was good at being an agent so he stayed one, even though he hated it?”

“Then that’s his choice as a grown man and you need to stop trying to be his mum.”

Eggsy pouts. “I can’t help I have maternal instincts.”

“Then you’re going to have a hell of an Oedipus complex coming up.”

Eggsy buries his face in his hand. “God, Rox. I thought...I thought I would go to Canada and find Harry and everything would just sort of work out. Except now I’m more confused and guilty and...I shouldn’t have come. I should have just let Harry work this out for himself, like he wanted. I fucked it all up.”

Roxy is quiet for a long moment while Eggsy wallows in misery. Then she finally says, “Let him watch Merlin’s video. Jahi told him that it exists, but Harry didn’t want to know what was said. Let him see that. Maybe it will help him understand what you were trying to do.”

“You think?”

“I do think. I’ll have Jahi send it to Harry’s tablet.”

He’ll take whatever he can at this point. “Thanks Rox.”

She yawns. “Yep, best agent, I know. Now let me get some sleep. And you get some sleep too before you have a nervous breakdown.”

Eggsy curls up in the seat directly opposite from Harry. It’s much more comfortable than church pews. And much better company, even with Harry fuming mad. He sleeps easier than he has in
weeks, since Harry left for Canada in the first place. Even with everything else falling apart around him, it’s comforting to close his eyes and hear the soft in and out of Harry’s breathing, alive and safe beside him.

Chapter End Notes

Last chapter was much longer than the others, so I'm just splitting it up a little. Will post the next bit tomorrow. Thanks for reading!
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The jet lands at the estate in the very early morning, and neither Harry nor Eggsy are eager to start up a conversation on the bullet train back to the tailor shop. Jahi and Roxy haven’t arrived yet, and Harry heads towards his office as if to actually start writing that bloody report. Eggsy knows he’s risking getting his head bitten off, but he darts in front of the door and and blocks it off with his arms before Harry can enter. “Later, Harry.”

Harry scowls and opens his mouth and Eggsy is sure he’s about to hear some lecture about how Eggsy can’t be telling him when to write his reports, blah blah blah, but Eggsy just sighs and drops his arms and rubs at his eyes. “Look, I’m still exhausted, and you could use a shower, and...and I just want to spend some time with you. Harry, please? No bombs, no cults, just you and me and I can get some pastries from the place down the street. Or make omelets, because I’ve gotten really good at those. Can’t we just...exist for a day, no Kingsman?”

Harry peers at him with his one good eye, and then slowly steps back from the door. “Alright. A few hours at least.”

Thank God. Eggsy could collapse with relief, but instead he grows a spine and insists he makes the drive home. The townhouse is eerily quiet, because Mr. Jalapeno is still bunking with Roxy, but Harry seems to decompress a little. He disappears to go shower, and Eggsy sets up making tea and omelets. The bloody sweater he’d held onto for whatever reason is tossed in the washing machine for later inspection. He sets all the food on a tray and travels upstairs to Harry’s bedroom. Breakfast in bed, or whatever. Harry emerges from the shower in his robe and slippers and no eyepatch. He winces when he spots Eggsy waiting on the bed.

“Apologies, I’ll put you off your—” he begins, like has dozens of times before, whenever Eggsy sees his scar, really, but Eggsy shakes his head firmly and interrupts.

“It doesn’t put me off my breakfast, Harry. Or my supper or my tea or whatever it is. I don’t think the scar is gross or ugly, okay?”

Harry still travels to his dresser and finds the eyepatch to put on as quickly as his slippered feet will allow. “Your expression always says otherwise.”

Eggsy moves to sit cross-legged on the bed and grabs the teapot and the strainer. Pours some of Harry’s favorite blend into his cup. “It isn’t because I think it’s gross. It’s because everytime I see it, I remember what happened. Reliving basically the worst moment of my life sometimes shows on my face. Sorry.” He lifts the cup and offers it in Harry’s direction. “That was a bad day for both of us.”

Harry is cautious as he approaches and takes the teacup. He raises the cup to his lips and makes a humming noise. “Steeped for just a little too long.”

Honestly? Talk about ingratitude. “Well, sorry that I—”

“I missed your tea,” Harry murmurs, and takes another sip. “You always tend to get distracted and let it steep too long. I always know I’m home when I taste your tea.”

Oh. Eggsy settles back down and pours his own cup. Adds a bit of sugar because that’s how his mum always made it. “Omelet,” he says, pointing at the tray, and then rolls his eyes at how
Harry’s hair is still dripping wet from the shower, and when he sits up on the bed as well, the robe parts slightly to show a bit of his chest, one leg up to the knee. There are more, less visible scars all over his body, the type a tailored suit keeps carefully covered. The type Eggsy doesn’t want Harry to have to hide from him, ever.

“Harry,” he says carefully, as he breaks off a piece of his own omelet with his fork. “I keep trying to tell you something, and I don’t think you understand it.”

“Well, that’s because you’re being nonsensical,” Harry states, and finishes his tea.

Okay, fine. He doesn’t have the energy to deal with this. Eggsy will finish his delicious omelet and too-steeped tea downstairs if that’s how it’s going to be. He grabs his breakfast and stands. “Whatever, Harry. Just…” He sighs, and troops towards the door. Harry calls out his name as he steps onto the landing, but Eggsy ignores it as he travels back downstairs. He eats alone in his room, playing the popping bubbles app. Wonders how long Harry is going to be so goddamn touchy. Eggsy isn’t asking for much, just for him to listen. But Harry just doesn’t seem to want to hear anything right now.

The little kitten in the app throws the bubbles and saves her babies. Yay. Eggsy puts his dishes on the floor and hides underneath his blankets for a while, sleeps a little more, wakes up completely disoriented by the fact he’s actually in his bed, and then decides he’s going to get the blood out of Harry’s sweater. He finds a bucket and fills it with cold water, and spends half an hour rooting about the kitchen for some ammonia. His mum always used ammonia, once Eggsy was past the age of eating everything within grabbing range. He almost thinks they might not have any, which is stupid for a house with two spies, but he finally finds some on the top shelf in the pantry alongside the canned tomatoes. He rescues the sweater from the wash and lets it soak, and then wonders where he might find a needle and thread to fix the bullet holes, and then wonders why the hell he cares about this sweater so much.

That’s where Harry finds him, trying to get the bloodstains out of a raggedy sweater. Eggsy can sense him there at the kitchen door long before Harry says anything, and then all Harry says is his name. “Eggsy.”

Eggsy leaves the sweater to soak and stands up. Hooks his thumbs into the pockets of his borrowed sweatpants. “Yeah?”

Harry’s still in his robe hours after his shower, and his hair is sticking on end like he’s been running his hands through it over and over. He frowns and lifts up his tablet. “Was this why you came to Canada?” Merlin’s face is frozen on the screen. Ah, so finally Harry’s seen it.

“It was a tipping point,” Eggsy admits, and studies the floor instead of Harry’s face.

“And…” Harry’s voice is very hesitant. “And I remember...that you said something about seeing me, when you think you might die.”

“Every single time,” Eggsy admits again, eyes still trained on the linoleum.

Harry clears his throat and shuffles his slippered feet. “Why?” he asks at last, sounding so completely and utterly lost that it shocks Eggsy’s head right up to stare at Harry’s distraught expression. “Why would you see me?” Harry croaks, and runs a hand through his hair in distraction. “Why...why…” He trails off with head shaking slightly, looking suddenly so very vulnerable in just a bathrobe and slippers.
Eggsy shrugs the shoulder he didn’t recently dislocate. “Because. I said. It’s like...it’s like my head is like ‘Oh, what would make Eggsy want to keep himself alive the most?’ and my head is like ‘Oh yeah, Harry!’ and it throws a bunch of pictures of your face at me and then I somehow make it out alive.”

Harry doesn’t look any less lost. “Of all things, why...me?” He pinches the bridge of his nose. “What about...Tilde, or your mother, or Roxy?”

God, is that what this is about? Is this...honestly…?

Is this why Harry couldn’t seem to hear him?

“Harry,” Eggsy says softly, and takes a step forward so he can reach out and pluck at Harry’s sleeve. “I think you kind of seriously underestimate how much I...how much you mean to me.” Harry keeps his eye closed but his jaw tightens. “Harry,” Eggsy continues. “Remember what you told me, when I asked if you would care if I left or not? That...that you were lonely, and sad?”

Harry lifts his hand away, eye wide. “You remember that?”

What, is that weird? Eggsy clears his throat and keeps going. “Okay, well my life before you was also...lonely and sad. Like, maybe I didn’t realize it but...” No, he had known the whole time. Ever since his dad had died, his life had been one steady shitstorm he’d never managed to claw his way out of. So he’d covered it up with booze and petty theft and suddenly Harry was there, giving him purpose and telling Eggsy that he was worth something far more than Eggsy had ever believed he was. Suddenly he was there, and Eggsy had a place to belong.

Someone to belong with.

He takes a deep breath and looks back to the sweater soaking in cold water and ammonia. “Was it selfish of me?”

“What?”

“Was it selfish of me?” Eggsy repeats. “To bring your memories back? You...might have been happier if I hadn’t.”

“Eggsy…” Harry whispers, and then coughs to clear his throat. “My happiness is not the issue here. My work at Kingsman…”

“Saves lives, I know!” Eggsy blurts out, and covers his face with his hands, feels the cuts still raised red over his eye and lip. “But...would you be happier if you could have...I dunno...gone off and researched butterflies, or been a teacher? If you never knew about Kingsman, didn’t know about this job, you could have been happier.”

Harry doesn’t reply for the longest time, and then when he does, it’s as he bends down to study the sweater soaking in the bucket. “Why did you take this?”

“It seemed important at the time,” Eggsy mumbles in response, and makes an escape to the refrigerator. He hadn’t really cleaned the kitchen out of perishables before he left, so he’s not sure about the quality of the milk, but there’s some orange juice that still looks trustworthy. He drinks straight from the carton and carefully doesn’t look at Harry, who goes quiet again for several minutes before finally saying, “It was just a disguise, Eggsy.”

“A disguise that you loved,” Eggsy shoots back, and watches out of the corner of his eye as Harry stands straight and crosses his arms.
“Eggsy,” he says gently, and it’s a voice that Eggsy hasn’t heard in a long, long time. Perhaps not since that day when Harry admitted to feeling lonely and sad. “Eggsy, there might have been bits and pieces of that alias that I liked, but the most content I have ever been is when I’m in this home with you.” Then: “When I saw Megan with the cell phone, I didn’t have time to look back on my life, the way I did when I knew Valentine was about to shoot me. I could only think about you, and the children, and everyone else in there, but mostly you, who would die if I didn’t make that shot. So I can’t tell you what I see, Eggsy. Perhaps it has changed. Maybe not. But I can’t tell you if I see you in my memories because I was too busy seeing you there, when you needed me, and I think that was more important. It was so much more important.” He nods and grimaces a bit when Eggsy makes eye contact. “Very much so.”

Christ, Eggsy has no clue where to go from here. He shuts the fridge door and leans against it. He’s feeling hungry, even after the omelet not too long ago. He flips open one of the cupboards. “Can I interest you in some...canned microwave spaghetti?” He grabs the can and tosses it from hand to hand. “It's dinosaur shapes.”

Harry shakes his head and stands there, simply staring at the sweater soaking in the bucket, as Eggsy prepares lunch. He stays that way until Eggsy has taken a seat up on the counter, and then it’s only to look up disapprovingly. The table exists for a reason, Eggsy knows he’s dying to say, but Harry must restrain himself because he only goes and gets himself a cup of water and then leans against the counter besides Eggsy and nods towards the sweater. “The blood won’t ever completely come out.”

“Well, my mum—”

“No, Eggsy,” Harry says very softly, and shakes his head. “Sometimes...blood just stays.”

And just like that, they’re back in Kentucky. Eggsy swallows his spoonful of t-rexes and pterodactyls and puts his bowl down. “Well, then sometimes we need to understand that there’s nothing we could have done and move on.”

Harry stretches back over the counter with a small groan, eye closed, and Eggsy could lean over and kiss him. Longs to push his hand through Harry’s hair and hold him still and just...kiss him until neither of them can remember their own names or how they’ve wronged the world. But as much as he would like to kiss Harry, it wouldn’t actually solve anything.

“It wasn’t your fault in Kentucky,” Eggsy says, and watches as Harry’s eye opens, unfocused, to watch the ceiling and whatever ghosts he might see there.

“I killed so many people that day. Innocent people, Eggsy.”

Eggsy fiddles with his spoon and cuts a stegosaurus in half. “They were practically a lynch mob waiting to happen.”

“That doesn’t mean they deserved to be killed.”

God, the man he loves is so mule-headed. Eggsy lowers himself off the counter and takes his bowl with him as he wanders around the table, spoon waving through the air and, okay, probably, spattering tomato sauce on the floor. “Yeah, well, I killed a lot of people too. All those security guards in Valentine’s place?” A jab of the spoon into the empty air. “Probably decent guys, just unfortunately being paid to point a gun in my direction. All those people with the implants?” Spoon jab. “World leaders and shit?” Spoon jab. “That was me and Merlin. Yeah, some of them had it coming, but not all of them. We blew up their heads anyway, and we weren’t under Valentine’s control in the least.” He takes a bite of spaghetti and chews furiously as he continues circling the table, drawing in and out of Harry’s space over and over as he goes. He stops near the soaking
sweater and taps the bucket with his toe. “We both have a lot of blood on our hands, and no amount of scrubbing will ever get it off. That’s the job.” He stops pacing and puts his lunch on the table. “That’s why…that’s why I’m sorry. I wanted you back and I didn’t think about what you might want. I was the one who chose to bring your memories back. If I hadn’t…you wouldn’t be able to see the blood at all.” He kneels down and studies the sweater in the water, the light pink color of what once was white, the purplish hue of what was baby blue. “That’s on me. So if you have to hate someone…”

“Good God, Eggsy,” Harry mutters, and then insistent hands are tugging at Eggsy’s clothes, pulling him upright and into a clumsy hug. Harry is warm and solid and smells of nice shampoo and lots and lots of soap. Eggsy squeezes his eyes shut with a little gasp and hugs Harry back, just as fierce. This. This is as good as kissing. “How could I ever hate you?” Harry whispers. “How could I ever hate you for bringing so much happiness into an empty life?”

“What?” Eggsy huffs a laugh and turns his head to watch Harry’s face.

Harry just shrugs. “I have a rather dismal view of life in general. Or, at least certain people have told me. Apparently I get rather—quote unquote—melancholic without assignments to keep me busy.”

Eggsy thinks of gossip magazines tacked in perfect order along the walls. Dead butterflies stuck with pins and a stuffed dog for company. A life built around being Galahad.

“But that changed with you.” Harry smiles a little and creases form at the corner of the eye Eggsy can see. “No matter what I did with my life, I would have been the same person with the same temperament. And you…you, my dear boy, are the first to truly make me happy.” He pauses, and then goes a little pink, or is that Eggsy imagining things? Harry coughs and pulls out of the hug, makes sure his robe is tied as tight as it can go. A lock of his hair flops across his forehead. “I suppose what I’m saying is that I can deal with blood on my hands when you’re around.” He coughs again and starts out of the kitchen with a quick pace. “Now, you should finish your food and I—”

“I love you,” Eggsy says, and watches as Harry freezes in place in the midst of his escape. Doesn’t take another step. Doesn’t speak. Doesn’t turn around. And then Eggsy realizes that he’d just said that out loud. Oh fuck, that was bad timing. Awful timing. He should not have said that. “Shit,” he whispers, and slaps a hand over his eyes. “Um...we can just pretend I didn’t...say that just now.”

He hears Harry’s slippers on the floor, probably turning around. “I’m quite fond of you as well, Eggsy. I thought you knew that.”

No, no, no, no, this is just leading to another misunderstanding, another point of Harry just not getting it. Eggsy drops his hand from his eyes in exasperation. If he’s already slipped the words, he might as well go for broke. “No, Harry, not like that.” He shakes his head. “Not like a mentor, not like a father-figure, not like a friend.” He runs his hands through his hair and rubs at his temples, knows that Harry is standing there watching him with that confused but patient expression. He tugs at the neckline of his t-shirt and looks to Harry for help, but there’s none coming from there. “I want…” he explains very slowly, so he’s sure Harry catches every word. “I want with you...what I had with Tilde.”

Harry blinks, very very slowly. Bites on his bottom lip for a moment. Then finally says, “Eggsy, I myself have never been through a divorce, though I understand that perhaps the event could push some...extreme feelings…”

“It wasn’t the divorce,” Eggsy cuts him off. “Nothing about how I feel about you has anything to do with how I feel about Tilde, and nothing about you has anything to do with her.” He fixes the t-shirt to look a little less lopsided. Meets Harry’s eyes. Frowns. Yes, he might as well say it, with
everything cut loose now. “Honestly, Harry, I think I knew I was always gonna fall for you. The moment I saw you take down those blokes in the pub. I knew it.”

The grand story of Eggsy Unwin—two-time saver of the world and general kickass super spy—is actually quite easily divided into neat little chapters.

Chapter One: Before Dad died.

Chapter Two: When he did.

Chapter Three: Before Harry Hart came into his life.

Chapter Four: When he did. And Then Eggsy fell in love with him like it was goddamn inevitable. Fucking inescapable gravity.

Harry is still staring, but his expression has subtly changed now. Anxious, Eggsy can tell. Anxious and a little confused with a bit of ‘Eggsy have you lost your bloody mind?’. Eggsy grimaces a little and rocks back and forth on his feet. “That’s just how it is. Sorry.”

“I am...quite a bit older than you,” Harry hazards after a minute.

Eggsy laughs a little, more of a snort really. “Yeah, I know.”

“Much much older,” Harry continues, voice still cautious. “On top of also being your boss. And a man.”

Does he think Eggsy hasn’t thought about this before? “I don’t care about any of those,” Eggsy says flatly. He crosses his arms and tilts his head to one side. “Y-you? What about you?” He glances at the floor, swallows, rubs his fingers together just to have something to do with his hands. “Do you think you could love another man?” He lets his gaze slide back up from the floor to Harry. Just watches Harry’s face turn from surprised to probing to slightly suspicious to...embarrassed? He thinks back to right after they saved the world from Poppy Adams. The wild Elton John concert and few hours Eggsy had somehow lost track of Harry altogether. A couple of simple statements, lost in time. Things click.

“Eggsy, I’m not straight,” Harry says at the same time Eggsy knocks himself on the side of the head and blurts out, “You fucking banged Elton John!”

Harry slaps a hand over his face, shoulders shaking, while Eggsy wonders just how messy a death drinking the ammonia water would be. But the awkward tension between them is broken. Eggsy breathes easier as Harry tries to muffle his laughter. “Elton is happily married,” Harry mumbles through his fingers after a moment, and then holds his other hand out to Eggsy, palm up. “Stay...here please. I’d just feel better having this conversation dressed.” He turns rather quickly and heads for the stairs. A few steps up and he looks back to Eggsy with laughter still written into every line of his face. “We just had drinks, if that’s what you want to know. Finish your dinosaurs.”

Eggsy waits for Harry to completely disappear upstairs before dragging a chair out and flopping over the table before his knees completely give. God, he really should have written some of this shit down. He’d be doing a lot better with a script right now. But Harry doesn’t actually hate him, so that’s a plus, he supposes.

The dinosaur spaghetti shapes have gone cold, but cold canned spaghetti had basically been the bottom of his childhood food pyramid. He eats while Harry dresses, and washes the bowl and fork. He sets both in the drying rack while he listens to Harry’s footsteps coming back down the stairs. Harry reappears and smiles—almost shyly—in Eggsy’s direction. He’s dressed in slacks and a worn-
in sweater, one of those soft looks reserved for afternoons of Stratego and cups of tea, instead of the harsh Kingsman uniform that could so easily be called a shield, both literally and figuratively.

Suit on, Eggsy thinks, we become the things that fight the horrors of the world. Suit off, we become...something both more and less real than Galahad or Lancelot or Arthur. The only horrors of the world we focus on are the ones that have managed to live on in our heads.

“Should we start a fire?” Harry asks, and Eggsy nods with his mouth gone dry. He sits in his usual armchair while Harry gets the little fireplace started up. Harry asks when the kennel is expecting them to retrieve Mr. Jalapeno, and Eggsy jogs himself a little back to the moment. “Roxy has him.” By the way things are going, what with the dog and Jahi, they might as well all pack up and join Roxy in her apartment. Save some time. Eggsy frowns a little as he watches Harry by the fireplace. “How’s your wound?”

Harry stands and places a hand over the place where he was shot. He still has a spectacular bruise where Jedidiah punched him, turning yellow in hue now. “I am an above-average field medic. I’ll be fine. What about you?”

The cuts still hurt like a motherfucker whenever Eggsy uses that part of his face, but he doesn’t want a trip to the hospital. “Sting a bit.”

“It won’t scar too badly,” Harry assures him and Eggsy manages a wink and tongue click.

“Girls dig scars.” Actually, if these do scar badly he’ll start looking like a fucked up game of tic-tac-toe and Roxy will never let him live it down. So really he hopes Harry is right and he can get back to unrestricted facial movement soon. He loses so much nuance without use of that eyebrow. God, is that what Harry’s had to deal with? He studies the eyepatch as Harry settles into his own chair. He only had a few months of knowing Harry before he lost the eye. How many mannerisms, how many expressions, how many odd little Harry Things™ did he never get to witness before Harry lost the ability?

“Eggsy,” Harry says, and Eggsy quickly redirects his attention. He watches Harry cross his legs and fold his hands in his lap. Harry frowns a little and his mouth turns downwards. “I’m sorry, but I can’t help but feel that your...feelings for me are a misdirection. You say that it isn’t so, but the fact remains that we are mentor and mentee, Arthur and Galahad.” He holds his hands up to demonstrate, fingers active and expressive as they travel through the air. “I am the same age your father would have been. You met me at an impressionable part of your life, while you were being abused, and I took you from that situation, so there’s another element. I died at the same time you met Tilde. I was also...recovered at the same time as your proposal. Your feelings for me romantically...are confused.”

Eggsy lifts his good eyebrow. “You think I don’t know when I’m in love?”

“Well, your marriage was hardly exemplary,” Harry mutters and, okay, that was unfair. And Harry seems to realize it too. He winces the moment the words leave his mouth. “I’m sorry, that crossed the line…”

“Yeah, it did,” Eggsy agrees, and lets Harry fumble with regret for a second because damn straight that crossed the fucking line.

After a half-minute of muttered apologies, Harry rests his head in one hand and sighs deeply, whole body deflating. “I am anxious and it is bringing out the worst in me. I am truly sorry for that comment. However, my points still stand.”

“That you don’t think I know when I’m in love?”
Harry’s free hand waves through the air half-heartedly. “That your feelings for me are confused.”

Eggsy sinks further into the cushions of his chair. “I’m not confused. Well, I was, but then I realized that everything that was confusing me went away if I was in love with you. In Barcelona.”

Harry lifts his head with a mortified expression. “Barcelona? You realized this in Barcelona?”

Eggsy nods.

“And then you came home and ended your marriage?”

Oh God, now he thinks he’s a homewrecker. “Harry…” Eggsy tries to start, but Harry’s up and pacing, back and forth in front of the fireplace.

“And then I invited you right back here, Jesus, what a stupid goddamn fool I was…”

“It wasn’t going to work out,” Eggsy says over Harry’s mutterings. “With or without you, Harry, it wasn’t going to work out. It was never about you.” He sticks a leg out to give Harry a little kick when he gets close enough. “Hey, oi, you hear me? It wasn’t choosing you over Tilde. It was choosing Kingsman. So sit down. You’ll mess up your bandages or something worse.”

Harry sits. Probably just reacting to the voice of authority. He’ll get annoyed that Eggsy used it on him later, but now he just looks frazzled. Frazzled is not something Eggsy sees very often. He runs hands through his hair and pinches the bridge of his nose. Hopefully he won’t get one of his headaches. Not now. Maybe Eggsy should make another pot of tea.

“Let me get you something to drink.” He stands and tries to sneak away but Harry’s hand darts out and grabs the hem of his t-shirt.

“What do you want from me, Eggsy?” Harry asks, like it’s fucking hostage negotiation. Eggsy pauses, and then reaches down to encase Harry’s hand in both of his, and then slowly remove his fingers so he can go to the kitchen. At least one of them needs to be composed.

“I want you to stay here while I steep some tea for just a little bit too long, and maybe we can order in tonight because I’m fucking exhausted. Thai. Can we do Thai? I’ve been eating peanut butter sandwiches and canned green beans for weeks.”

Harry frowns just a bit, and his fingers clutch a little at Eggsy’s hand. “Yes, alright,” he says, and takes the hand back. Eggsy goes to the kitchen before remembering he left the tray with the teapot upstairs, and spends the next fifteen minutes bustling about, taking refuge in the activity, something to do with his hands, something to keep his eyes off of Harry’s form stilled in the chair. He tries to list off the teas they have on hand to keep his mind occupied, and then checks and begins memorizing the correct list this time. He tries to think of what he should be doing next, but honestly, it feels like the ball is in Harry’s court now. Eggsy’s come clean. All he can do is wait for how Harry will respond.

Harry is studying the fire intently when Eggsy brings him his cup, and doesn’t look from the flames as he thanks Eggsy and begins to drink. Eggsy sits in his chair and draws both legs up into it, feels aching muscles protest the change in position. He’s so happy to be home instead of in that fucking church. He drinks his tea and eventually grabs his phone from his pocket to play the bubble pop game when Harry gives no sign of starting up a conversation. He’s stuck on level 87. Eventually Harry seems to notice the cutesy music and turns his head slowly to watch Eggsy’s increasingly frustrated attempts at passing the level. He can’t see the actual screen, Eggsy knows, but it must be interesting enough because he watches while Eggsy completely fails at least eight more times before
finally pocketing the phone in frustration. Harry smiles a little when Eggsy meets his eyes and glances back at the fireplace. His fingers thread together and then go back apart.

Eggsy studies Harry’s fidgety hands and then slowly lowers himself out of his chair so he sits cross-legged on the floor. He’s close enough to reach and take one of Harry’s hands in his. God, he loves Harry’s hands, no matter how permanently bloodstained they might be. Harry goes very still as Eggsy lifts his hand and presses the gentlest of kisses on the back. “I know when I’m in love, Harry,” Eggsy mumbles, and leaves another kiss. “I know there’s a million reasons why I shouldn’t be, but I am. There’s no talking me out of it.”

“Oh,” Harry says. Doesn’t try to take back his hand, which is probably a good sign. Eggsy keeps a good grip on it. Together, they watch the fire flicker.

“Can we order Thai tonight?” Eggsy asks again after a while. Harry nods.

“Yes. Get whatever you like. But order me some of those vegetable dumplings.”

“Gotcha.” Eggsy thinks back to how thin Harry had looked back in the cabin in Canada. Extra dumplings. And dessert. And second dessert.

“Eggsy.” And then Harry is getting out of his chair too, kneeling by Eggsy on the floor near the fire. His brow wrinkles and then his free hand finds Eggsy’s face, fits along his cheek and strokes a thumb just along where the cut across his eye runs. He’s so intent in what he’s doing, maybe so much that he misses the way Eggsy goes breathless at the touch. “I’m not sure what you want from me now. To say that...to say that I love you back? Is that it?”

Eggsy shivers a little and tilts his face into Harry’s touch. “Only if you really do. If you don’t I guess I’d be grateful if you forgot this whole day ever happened.”

Harry smiles a little before his face turns back to a frown. “And if I did say I loved you back, what would change?”

Eggsy hums and studies the ceiling for a moment before answering. “Not much. We already live together.” He presses his lips together in thought. If Harry is asking, he deserves a thorough answer. “Honestly, Harry, I don’t know that much would change at all. Would it have to?”

“I’m not sure either,” Harry admits, and pulls his hand from Eggsy’s face. “I haven’t had exactly a lot of experience with long-term romantic relationships in my life.”

Yeah, and Eggsy’s relationship with Tilde, as much as he adores her, is not one he wants to use as a model. “We could figure it out as we go,” he says, and catches Harry’s hand so now he holds them both. “See what we’re comfortable with, go slow and all that.”

Harry’s frown deepens with thought. “I think it would be wise to set down an agreement.”

“What sort of agreement?”

Harry scans Eggsy’s face for a brief moment and then the frown lifts. “An agreement that we would not let our feelings for each other interfere with our work or create unfair biases for anyone else. An agreement that we can be in a trial romantic relationship, one that either of us can call off at any time, and that termination of that relationship would not harm our working relationship, for the sake of Kingsman. Does that...sound fair?”

If Harry thinks Egg’s feelings for him haven’t already completely fucked over everything in Kingsman ten times over, he’s got another thing coming. This agreement had better have some
massive loopholes. “Yeah,” Eggsy agrees, and hopes he’s a better liar than Harry is a lie detector. “Sounds fair. But that’s...only if you want to try for the whole romantic thing.” He lets go of Harry’s hands. Relinquishes control. “If it’s just me what feels this way, then don’t force—”

“I’m not sure how I feel about you, Eggsy.” Harry cuts him off, voice quiet but firm. “So much has happened in the last few years and I don’t think I have my own emotions quite sorted out. I tried to be careful to keep our relationship professional but I think we both know I failed spectacularly at that. I was also very careful to not think of you in any sort of romantic capacity, though...perhaps I failed there in some ways as well. I know that I am very fond of you, but I’m not sure if that will become love. I can’t promise that.” He pauses, brow knitting, and then sighs harshly. “No. It’s more than fondness.” He dusts his hands on his pants and fiddles a little with the hem of his sweater. “I’ve said so before. You bring happiness to my life. A happiness I don’t ever want to lose.”

Eggsy’s breath hitches and his heartbeat thunders in his ears. It’s almost like the feeling when he’s about to die, but now Harry is right here, and it’s the only thing Eggsy wants to see.

“I suppose most people entering relationships aren’t sure if they will end up in love or not,” Harry says, lifts his head, and smiles in that heart-aching way as he laces their fingers together, small and soft and vulnerable in a way Eggsy is privileged to see. “Maybe...maybe it would be alright to try.”

Harry eventually just can’t stand it anymore and grabs his journal from Canada and his tablet so he can write his report at the kitchen table. Eggsy lets him do his thing while he finishes getting the blood out of the sweater. The ammonia almost did the trick. Now, he only notices the slight discoloration because he knows it’s there. Also the bullet holes in the fabric are a bit of a giveaway. Eggsy rinses the sweater out and holds it, still damp, to his chest. Why had it seemed so important to bring home? Maybe because this sweater seemed a symbol of the life Eggsy stole from Harry. But now Harry is sitting right there at the table, and seems perfectly willing to trust his life to Eggsy, and the sweater doesn’t seem to matter anymore.

Eggsy will still put forth the idea Harry go for the frazzled professor look more often. Definitely, definitely remember to do that.

Bored, he grabs his Kingsman glasses and checks in with Roxy. Doesn’t tell her that he confessed. No, that conversation is a face-to-face kind of thing. Mostly just complains about Canada some more and stresses how fucking cool Harry had been in that thirty second time period. Roxy has to end their call for a meeting with some German engineer she’s eager to bring into the Kingsman tech team, but Eggsy still feels better for talking to her. When he gets back to work, it’s time to buckle down and really build that recruit program. It’s time for Kingsman to be back.

He’s reading in his bed when Harry appears in the door and knocks on the frame. “Shall we order dinner?”

Eggsy flops out of bed with grace of a pancake. “Yes please. Hold up, let me find the menu…”

They eat right out of the takeout boxes, chairs so close their knees keep bumping and Harry tells some stories Eggsy has never heard before. About joining Kingsman. His time spent in training. The day he met Merlin and the two of them became Chester King’s biggest headache. Wonderful stories that Eggsy loves, that make Harry laugh and smile to tell, and it’s as perfect as Eggsy’s life could ever be.
Tomorrow, they will go to work, because they are very awesome super spies, and maybe they’ll even save the world. They’ll retrieve Mr. Jalapeno from Roxy, and Eggsy will buy Jahi at least three apology coffees for running off like that behind her back. And then Jahi will use that caffeine to continue working with the new systems that were Merlin’s gift to her, the systems to jump Kingsman forward again. And with the Statesmen financial support, they will create the perfect estate for Kingsman to operate out of, with tech and science and medical divisions always working to improve their agency. And Eggsy will have twelve potential recruits lined up, about to endure the most vigorous, back-breaking, sometimes downright sadistic training Eggsy can put them through. There will be puppies.

“What are you thinking about?” Harry asks, chin resting on tented fingers.

Eggsy drags himself from his thoughts and tilts his head from side to side with a grin. “The future.”

“Good thoughts then?”

“You could say that.” Eggsy lays his hand on the table and waits for Harry to take it. He does, fingers a little chillier than Eggsy’s own. Eggsy squeezes Harry’s hand tight, and smiles at the sensation of Harry squeezing back.

Now hold tight and don’t let go.

Chapter End Notes

little bitty epilogue coming up soon to officially call this over~
Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

And...finished. Thank you so much to all of you who chose to read this story, whether you've been here since the beginning, somewhere in the middle, or reading this long after I'm done publishing. This story got a lot longer than I was originally shooting for, so thank you for all your patience and support and wonderful comments. I hope you enjoy this final chapter.

The world turns.

Roxy fills the estate with staff of every kind, the kind to develop new weapons, and new medical treatments, and an anti-missile defense system that will prevent anything like Poppy Adams from happening ever again. There are doctors on standby and even a therapist, paid quite well, because times are changing and even the best spies get PTSD. The bullet train that connects estate to tailor shop gets tinkered with and improved so it has as even shorter trip without the G-force pressure, and the jets are outfitted with new camouflaging foil with new pilots trained for defensive maneuvers. The buildings of the estate are all outfitted specifically for their purpose, including rooms for all knights, staff, and a separate compound to house the recruits. Thanks to Roxy, they have a fully-functioning support system before a single new recruit has even visited the grounds.

Jahi begs Harry to let her hire some underlings, and then reaches into the criminal underbelly to pull out some of the best young hackers she can find, because, she says, these are the little bastards you want on your side because who knows what they would get up to otherwise? She calls them her little Morganites, and it isn’t uncommon for Eggsy to watch her leading them like a flock of ducklings around both the shop and the estate. Some of the Morganites are placed in the tech department, some in security. Three are trained completely on Merlin’s systems so they can support agents if Jahi isn’t available herself or if there are multiple missions going on at once. Eggsy sort of loves it. The Kingsman he’d been introduced to was drowning in antiquated ideas of dignity and secrecy. The knights, and Arthur, and a Merlin, with staff kept beneath the estate. Now there are a bunch of little hackers running around underfoot and it isn’t unusual for Eggsy and Jahi to order a small fortune of takeout and lug it all onto the train to share with everyone at the estate. Eggsy sits alongside doctors and engineers and gets a first look at the new tech that’s being developed, and Harry watches everything with a gleam in his eye that Eggsy recognizes as a smile. Harry had been trying to open Kingsman up beyond the bourgeoisie for years, and now here they are.

The tailor shop expands underground to give Jahi more room, and they hire an actual tailor to man the front and go crazy with the types of suits he wants to design. They cram more chairs into the meeting room so the heads of divisions can sit in on important decisions, and Harry starts keeping his office door propped open with a geode Eggsy had bought him to replace the pile of butterfly books. Sometimes later in the afternoon, or when he’s been assailed by too many Morganites at once, the door is closed and locked, but Eggsy has the one extra key and lets himself in with tea in hand. Sits up on Harry’s desk while Harry massages his forehead and kisses the top of his head like that will be enough to take the headaches away. It isn’t, of course, but Harry always perks up and smiles while he drinks his tea. He begins to introduce himself to anyone new to the team with the phrase ‘my door is always open’, and for the most part, it really is.
Eggsy finds two potential recruits through his mum, the ones he’d been checking out before he left for Canada, and then tries to remember the people he’d met during training for the Marines. He finds four more that way, and then discreetly asks among the staff if they know anyone who could be a good fit for the job. He puts files together on each of them, trails them sometimes when he doesn’t feel he has a full grasp of their potential, and when the year mark is up, he has his nine recruits to add to the names provided by Roxy, Jahi, and Harry. He runs through his training regime with the others. A few changes are made, a few elements are added or deleted, and finally they’re ready to gather their potential knights.

The night before training is set to begin, Eggsy wakes up to a cold bed because he is weirdly attuned to that. He brings the blankets with him when he travels downstairs, yawning, and finds Harry up and making a pot of tea. Harry hasn’t been up with nightmares as often anymore, at least not since he and Eggsy started sharing a bed, so it’s a little disconcerting to find him up tonight. Eggsy approaches Harry from behind and locks arms around his waist, blankets trailing across the floor. “What is it?” he asks, and Harry turns in his arms and rests his chin atop Eggsy’s head.

“Nerves, I suppose,” Harry answers as the water begins to boil. “It doesn’t feel real that Kingsman is nearly back.”

Eggsy hums contentedly. “Yeah. But we did it. What has you worried?”

Harry sighs. “Just...wondering if I’m up to task.”

“Planning on teaming up with a maniacal homicidal genius to kill off most of the world’s population?”

“Of course not.”

“Then you can’t be any worse than Chester King.” Eggsy piles the blankets into Harry’s arms and scoots him towards the table as the kettle starts to whistle. “Sit. I got this.” They drink twin cups of chamomile tea, steeped just the right amount, and Harry seems to settle down enough to sleep. Once they’re both back in bed, Harry turns under the covers and places a hand alongside Eggsy’s face.

“Thank you,” he mumbles, and Eggsy shuffles closer until he can kiss him, slow and soft and still a little hesitant. Kissing is not something they’ve been doing for very long, shorter time than sharing a bed even, but Harry seems to take comfort in it, sighs happily and pulls Eggsy even closer so their legs tangle together. “Thank you,” he says again, and falls asleep within minutes. Now Eggsy is the wakeful one, tracing patterns on Harry’s back through his shirt—meaningless loops and swirls—and hoping his training will go alright. He wishes Merlin was still around to give him pointers.

The recruits love their puppies, anyway, and Eggsy feels like some sort of benevolent god of spies as he watches the recruits pick which puppy they want and spend time naming them and playing and generally enjoying life a lot more than they had when he’d flooded the sleeping chamber.

They take three out of the twelve after the months of training are over, and because Eggsy has really been digging the benevolent spy god vibe, he lets them pick their own knight personas, so Galahad and Lancelot are joined by Gawain, Bors, and Tristan. Bors makes a frantic plea for Mordred, but Eggsy lays down the law, because if Kingsman is ever going to have an epic supervillain bent on the destruction of the organization (again), then Eggsy is going to make a personal plea with whoever they are to go by codename Mordred because that would be so fucking awesome. Each knight is given a year to come up with another potential recruit, until they build back up to the full Round Table again, and then Gawain, Bors, and Tristan are thrust out into the field for a joint assignment in France, and all Eggsy, Harry, and Roxy spend practically the whole time hanging onto the back of Jahi’s chair overseeing and being generally underfoot.
“My office door is never open!” Jahi tells them firmly after the new knights are safely home, so they just have to trust that Morgan and her Morganites have things under control. She’ll be as good as Merlin in no time.

Eggsy keeps himself busy with assignments, particularly when Harry is going to be caught up doing Arthur things. He travels to Australia, and Iceland, and Poland, and then spends some time with the Statesmen, learning from Whiskey what their personal training for recruits looks like and enjoying drinks with Tequila. He goes to Sweden to thwart an assassination attempt on the life of the newly crowned queen. He waffles back and forth on whether to say hi or not, but Tilde texts him saying she knows he had something to do with the assassin dropping dead in her hallway, and they have a quiet dinner, just the two of them. Eggsy asks her if she’s happy, and she smiles and nods. Being queen suits her. There’s a lot of good she has the chance to do now as chief representative of the royal family. She asks him the same question, but they both know it isn’t necessary. Of course he’s happy. He’s doing what he loves. He leaves Tilde with a kiss on her cheek and feels so much more at peace with what happened between them on the jet out of there.

Harry turns out to be pretty awesome at the political side of being Arthur. Eggsy thinks it’s in the eyeballing. There’s something so completely disconcerting about being eyeballed by someone who only has one eye when in a meeting. Also Harry’s tone of voice that promises he knows twenty ways to kill you with his pinky finger and can pay people to dispose of the body is really effective, though the first time Eggsy describes it as that he gets the weirdest look from Jahi and Harry chokes a little on his drink. They’re all at the townhouse that night, because it’s nice for the four starting members to get together regularly for a meal. Roxy feeds Mr. Jalapeno bits of salmon as he sits in her lap, and Eggsy knows Jahi has started thinking about proposing because she comes and freaks out about it to him about twice a week. Eggsy has promised to get Roxy’s ring size in a discreet manner as long as he gets dibs on best man. Hopefully the next wedding he attends will have a happily ever after.

Eggsy snatches a recruit from Whiskey for the next round. Training goes easier the second time, and Percival and Kay join the team. Bors almost gets herself killed in Paris, which lands her in a month long hospital stay and a lot of hot water. Harry and Eggsy go personally to permanently fuck up whoever thought they could touch their agent, and the thrill of fighting alongside Harry makes every breath, every movement a thrill of being alive. After they’ve washed the blood away in their swanky hotel room, they go to dinner and watch Paris light up as night covers the city. Eggsy stands against the balcony gate, taking in the view, and then Harry is beside him, and he places his hand over Eggsy’s on the railing. Strokes his thumb across Eggsy’s fingers.

They don’t talk much about what happens between them at this point, just sort of let things happen as they happen. Agreeing to a trial relationship where everything was out of order had at first led to a lot of hesitation and general bewilderment. Holding hands in private had been the first step, done while sitting at the kitchen table drinking morning or afternoon cups of tea, or while sitting by the fireplace. And then nightmares had brought Eggsy into Harry’s bed for the night, and the next night, and every night after that, as they both discovered how well the other’s arms shielded them from the memories. A few weeks later, they’d been getting groceries when the sky opened up on them. Eggsy had been incredibly smug about being able to pull out his bulletproof weaponized umbrella to shield them from the rain. They’d walked home shoulder to shoulder with groceries held between them, and the torrential downpour was comforting in a way, blocking them off from the rest of the world. Eggsy was fumbling with his keys to get the front door open when Harry had leaned in and kissed him, very short and cautious, and then he’d coughed and rushed through the door, leaving Eggsy standing
with his umbrella and the dumbest expression. Harry had been in the midst of shelving the canned goods when Eggsy had strode into the kitchen and kissed him properly that time, wet hands and dry lips and desperation and oh God how Eggsy had wanted that. Wants this. He flips his hand over on the Parisian railing so they can hold hands properly. Leans in and kisses Harry just because he can and he wants to.

“What if…” he says between kisses, “We asked for a mission in...southern Italy maybe? And stayed for a few extra days?”

Harry grins. “As soon as you find the time on my calendar, let me know.” True. Arthur is very very busy now. It had been sheer outrage at the number of Bors’ broken ribs that has them in Paris at all, and it hadn’t been all that official. Only one of the Morganites and the jet pilot had known they were leaving before they were actually gone because Galahads are more spur of the moment kind of knights. But Eggsy jots down Italian vacation in his mental memo anyway.

Jahi proposes to Roxy and Roxy has probably seen this coming for a while but she still cries right there in the middle of the estate dining hall and all the Morganites start chanting ‘chug chug chug’ for some God awful reason but everyone else is clapping and a few of them are crying one of which is definitely Eggsy and Harry also looks a little teary. Cue months of Eggsy being called in for consultation on venue, menu, and what size of twinkly fairy light should be strung up along the arbor. As best man, he guesses he sort of brought this on himself. Roxy and Jahi decide to get married in the country, not at the Kingsman estate, but at one that looks a hell of a lot like it. The decorations seem a bit more up Jahi’s eclectic artsy alley than Roxy’s, but Roxy seems perfectly happy with fairy lights and soy candles and bouquets of wildflowers, so that’s alright. He goes dress shopping with both of them, mostly to make sure their dresses don’t end up clashing. Eggsy actually snags the guy from the tailor shop to come with, because he seems a lot more knowledgeable on the whole topic, and both girls end up consulting more with him than with Eggsy. The guest list is actually pretty wild, with all the Kingsman employees as well as family from both sides. Roxy’s folks are as posh as Eggsy had always imagined, and on the summer afternoon of the wedding, he welcomes both them and the loud chattering mess that is the tech department, and then watches Roxy’s parents wonder just what the hell their daughter is doing for a job. The service is short and sweet, possibly because the brides know how pathetic the attention span of their audience is, and the air possibly implodes at the sudden sound of wild clapping with they seal the vows with a kiss. Eggsy is standing right up front, the dashing best man, and he meets Harry’s gaze from the front seat. Harry smiles and keeps clapping, doesn’t even try to hide the tear that slides down his cheek. Good, because Eggsy is a bawling mess. His best friend that he thought was dead, getting married right in front of his eyes. Getting her name in the paper for that second time. Roxy saves a dance for him during the reception, and he hugs her tight and doesn’t let go for the entire song. Roxy’s hands clutch in his tuxedo, and she mutters something about her mascara running, but he can feel the little hiccups of breath that mean she’s crying too. “Love you, Rox,” Eggsy whispers when they finally pull apart. She nods and leaves a very wet kiss on his cheek before wiping at her eyes and returning to Jahi.

Anything and everything that Eggsy has gone through up to this point is worth it, to be able to be here, at this time, with these people.

He and Harry keep their relationship more on the downlow at work. Roxy and Jahi know, of course, and a few people have cottoned on to the fact Eggsy and Harry have the same address. Some of the more annoying Morganites, who Jahi just keeps hiring more and more of, have noticed that Harry and Eggsy always arrive together in the same car and tend to leave in the same way. They tease Eggsy about it, but never Harry, because everyone knows that you don’t tease Arthur about anything if you want to live. Eggsy also hears a few of the tales being passed through the ranks, stories of the Kingsman from before, of how Eggsy killed Richmond Valentine, of the legendary Merlin, and then the speculation of how Harry lost his eye. The best explanation he’s heard so far is Harry took it out
himself in a display of dominance during a meeting with the crazy Americans. He makes sure to share that particular tidbit while making dinner that night. Harry looks aghast. Eggsy laughs and keeps chopping tomatoes to go with the pasta.

Things are good. There are birthdays and holidays and Eggsy sends his mum on a cruise, which leads to a fun week of him and Harry babysitting Eggsy’s sister. Kingsman grows, and it changes, and for the most part the change is for the good. They no longer need Statesmen as a crutch, and the two organizations, now made aware of each other, are capable of pulling off so much more than they ever could before.

And then one night Eggsy wakes up because the bed is empty and goes to find Harry so they can both get some goddamned sleep. Harry isn’t in the kitchen making tea, which is definitely odd. Eggsy reaches under the table for the gun he has taped under there, and sneaks through the dark house, looking for anything out of place. He doesn’t find intruders, but he finds Mr. Jalapeno, who happens to be sleeping at Harry’s feet as Harry stands by the window, staring out into the night sky lit up by the city. Eggsy breathes a sigh of relief and puts the gun down. “Harry? What the hell are you doing?”

Harry doesn’t stir at Eggsy’s voice. No doubt heard him creeping around. He turns slowly, forehead furrowed in a contemplative frown. His hand starts up automatically to cover the scar of his eye, not hidden by a patch now, but then the hand falters and falls helplessly to his side. “It’s been five years,” he says, and looks to Eggsy for a reaction.

Eggsy does a quick run-through in his head of things Harry could possibly be talking about, and then his breath hitches when he realizes. Has time really passed so quickly?

He goes to the window and grabs both of Harry’s hands in his. Doesn’t really have a clue what to say.

Does Harry remember this every year, the anniversary of the day Valentine shot him?

Harry’s hands are shaking a little and Eggsy’s chest hurts. He brings one of Harry’s hands to his mouth to press dainty kisses everywhere he can put his lips. And then stands on his toes so he can kiss Harry, long and deep and yearning. “You’re here now,” he whispers, and reaches to tilt Harry’s head down so they can press their foreheads together. “Not there.”

Harry takes a deep breath and closes his eye. “I know,” he says, and moves to kiss Eggsy again. “I know.”

Eggsy places his hand on Harry’s hips so he can maneuver them as they kiss, gets Harry perched on the arm of a chair with Eggsy standing between his legs. He pushes Harry’s hair back from his face and stares down at him. “I love you,” he says.

Harry nods and opens his eye again, smiles a little, and for the first time, he says, “I love you too.”

Eggsy blinks. “What?”

Harry snorts and pulls Eggsy down for another kiss. “I said that I love you,” he repeats, breath fanning hot over Eggsy’s cheek.

Eggsy pauses for a moment, and then feels himself begin to grin. “Say again?”

Harry really laughs then and stands, making Eggsy stumble back a few steps, almost stepping on a docile Mr. Jalapeno. “Would you prefer it in writing?”
“Maybe, yeah,” Eggsy tells him, and bumps their mouths together in something too smiley and toothy to be called a kiss. “Then you can’t take it back.”

Harry looks down at him with a wry little smile and places a hand alongside his face. “Why in the world would I ever want to take it back?” he asks. And Eggsy kisses him, again and again, gets them back upstairs to the bedroom so he can prove with every careful touch how much love he has stored inside of him to give, an endless supply that he’ll never take back. They might just have to take a spontaneous day off tomorrow.

Time passes on inevitably, the world moves toward morning, but in this home of theirs, the night could go on forever.

“I love you, I love you, I love you,” Eggsy murmurs as a mantra, and understands now that every touch of Harry’s hands, every kiss is his unspoken reply.

I love you too.

And the next chapter begins.

End Notes

Thank you all for reading and for all your wonderful support! Love you guys~

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