A Kingsman Carol

by TheAlphaFox

Summary

Harry and Chloe have been together almost a year, and things are going well. But Christmas means different things to different people, and when Harry insists he has to work on Christmas morning (being Arthur is difficult sometimes) it causes a rift. Harry needs to learn a lesson about what matters- and who better to teach him that than the Ghosts Of Christmas Past, Present and Future?

He has till midnight on Christmas Eve to right his wrongs and give the woman he loves the Christmas she deserves. But will he?

Notes

Soooo... I had an idea for this crossover. And although it is perhaps a little unrealistic, I really love it and I feel it deserves a place in this series. So here we are.

Merry Christmas, cubs! This is my favourite day of the year, so I hope you're enjoying yourselves- and if you don't celebrate Christmas, I hope you're having a wonderful day!

Here goes- I hope you like it! <3
See the end of the work for more notes.
The Clock Strikes

T'was the night before Christmas
And all through HQ
Some readers were tiptoeing
That's me, cubs, and you
To follow the story
Of a brooding gentleman
As he drifts off to sleep
A whisky glass in his hand
The clock is a-chiming
The stage I have set
So let us rejoin him
We shall walk where he treads
The candles a-flicker
The fire dips low
This is a true tale
Set not too long ago
Of the new Arthur's journey
On the night he was taught
Pride is noble but useless
When your heart's truly caught
Past

Scents of pine and sharp orange peel drift across the room to the huge leather armchair where he reclines, the pile of satsumas glistening richly in front of the Christmas tree. The magnificent (and real, none of your plastic imitation) tree stands majestically in the corner, bedecked in beads and tinsel and every imaginable shape of bauble, all in tasteful maroon and silver. Kingsman colours.

She helped him with it this Christmas Eve morning, standing on a chair and stringing up garlands. He even lifted her up at one point, amidst shocked squealing and jokes about mince pies. He'd been ignoring the twinges of protest in his lower back (not that she's heavy, far from it, but he's all too aware that he's getting on a bit now).

She makes him feel young, though, like some smitten teenager. Especially when she's throwing tinsel at him and giggling hysterically. There's always such a deep quality to her eyes, as if she knows things he could never even think of.

The fire crackles in the grate, whispering secrets only it can hear, soft plumes of grey smoke disappearing up the chimney as a beacon for Santa Claus. Harry sighs to himself, and absently swirls the alcohol around in his glass. At 51, he should perhaps accept that he is getting too old for this, but truthfully Christmas has always been a time that makes his heart sing.

As a child, opening his presents... he can picture it now. His father taking the entire day off work to spend with them, his mother taking charge of the kitchen for once to cook a splendid turkey, and then falling asleep in front of the fire as his father told him a story about a little boy named Harry who got to meet Santa.

As it turns out, young Harry became a professional killer and never did meet old Saint Nick, but the memory remains very fond all the same.

He takes a sip of the liquid amber in his glass and leans back against the well-worn armchair, wishing that it was warm arms embracing him and not old leather. The words exchanged earlier can't seem to cease ringing his ears, almost drowning out the spitting fire, and the soft sound of Frank Sinatra from his prized vintage record player.

"You really couldn't have taken Christmas morning off too?"
"I don't have a choice, as Arthur I have to chair the meetings."
"But... I just thought..."
"What, that I'd drop everything? Just because it's Christmas?"
"N-no, I just... It's our first Christmas together, that's all, it's been almost a year, and I thought that perhaps..."
"You'll have me all evening, will that do?"
"Of course..."

Ah, Chloe. He can see it now, what an arse he's been, but some stubborn part of him would rather sit here and drink whiskey, dreaming about her, than go and tell his partner that he's sorry. Maybe he should beg forgiveness, say that he will absolutely reschedule the meeting, because all he really wants is to wake her up with her Christmas present. He spent an age picking it out, he laments, but maybe he'll never get to give it to her now. Perhaps she won't want it.

Perhaps she won't want him.

After all the time he spent staying away, not telling her how he felt because he thought he'd tie her down, Harry feels like he's fucked up royally. Maybe she'll resent all the times he's been uncertain,
the wasted years. Maybe this is it, now.

He just sits there, staring into the flames in the hearth, and remembers.

The way she laughs when he says something overly serious, her bright blue eyes lighting up and her ever-red lips widening. The way her hair goes ever so curly when she washes it and doesn't bother drying it: mad, mahogany ringlets fluttering around her face. How she's been wearing adorable Christmas jumpers over his old shirts since the first of November, because apparently "Christmas really starts in August".

Lady Chloe Hannah Peacock-Cowen, the only women in the world as far as he's concerned.

He loves her, and he is truly sorry for being such a self-centred twat, but there's still some proud part of him that doesn't want to apologise. That doesn't want to admit that the infallible Harry Hart has been defeated by the pull of mistletoe kisses and still-warm brandy snaps.

Two thoughts pull their way free from the swirling alcohol-induced mess of his mind, circling relentlessly.

Apologise and beg forgiveness. She'll understand.

Don't apologise. She won't forgive you, so save face.

It's like a child picking at a flower, trying to predict another's heart with the falling petals. She loves me, she loves me not.

Apologise, don't apologise.

The hours tick by, until the clock strikes a quarter to 9. Harry's eyelids grow heavy, so he sets the whiskey glass down on the table beside him and closes his eyes. The thoughts swim hazily in his mind, tinted warm shades of red and gold by the burn of his drink and the heat of the fire.

Time ceases to have any meaning, even as the clock ticks around, and at some point he can only suppose he falls asleep.

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The clock chimes in the background, startling him into a kind of half-sleep. He's not prepared to open his eyes and ruin it, so Harry just settles himself (as best he can with his eyes closed) and listens to the clock chime ten. One. Two. Three.

"'Arry."

Four. Five.

He groans slightly, stretching to try and ease the ache in his back. Sleep beckons to him, keeping him under. Whoever needs him can wait.

Six. Seven.

"'Arry, wake up."

Is that Eggsy? It sounds like Eggsy. He briefly considers the fact that Eggsy was booked to be at home with his mother and Daisy for Christmas. Perhaps he came back for something.

Eight.
"'Arry. It's important. Wake up."

Nine.

So Harry sighs, and opens his eyes begrudgingly. The fire has dipped low in the grate, he notices as he squints against the invasion of (admittedly dim) light. "What is it, Eg- bloody hell."

Because it's not Eggsy.

It's Lee.

Lee Unwin- the very same man that died taking a grenade for Harry. Lee Unwin, Eggy's father. Lee Unwin, Harry's DEAD friend. And he's standing there in all his Kingsman-suited, class-can-be-earned glory, looking decidedly not dead.

And smirking.

"'Ello, 'Arry." he says, eyes gleaming. The exact same eyes as his son. The haze of the firelight behind him seems to be giving him a halo. But that's insane... Isn't it?

Harry just stares at him, completely flabbergasted. "Lee?" he tries slowly. "But you're... You're dead. I saw you die."

"Never claimed to be alive right now, did I?" Lee says gently, giving him a quizzical look. Harry has to agree. "Well, if you're not alive, you don't exist. There are no such thing as ghosts. Or after lives. Or anything like that, for that matter. Clearly I've had a bit too much whisky for one evening. Maybe I'm dreaming." Harry rambles softly, shellshocked. Lee sighs, and shakes his head in a mixture of fondness and pity. "Cut the 'orseshit, 'Arry, I've got a job to do."

Harry frowns at the language. "Which is?"

"I've got until," Lee glances at the clock, "10, latest, to teach ya a lesson."

Harry just stares at him. "I'm going mad. Completely, irrefutably mad." Lee shakes his head, smiling softly. He looks so much like his son that Harry's heart gives a painful twist. Poor Eggsy, never getting to meet this wonderful man. "Nah, ya ain't mad, 'Arry. Just a stubborn arse who needs a bit of 'elp realisin' what 'e wants."

"So you've been sent for a divine purpose, is that it?" Harry asks, trying to make it sound less ridiculous than it clearly is.

Lee laughs, but somehow it's not reassuring in the slightest. "Yeah, ya could say that. Do ya trust me?" Harry doesn't even need to consider it. The answer is what it's always been. "With my life."

Without saying another word, Lee holds out his hand to Harry, glancing at the clock. Heart pounding for a reason he can't quite explain, Harry reaches forward and laces his fingers into Lee's with an overwhelming feeling of "oh, sod it."

The room around them disappears.

Suddenly, with a great rushing feeling, like a parachute jump from the very edge of space (yes, he's done that before, like hell will he be doing it again), Harry feels the armchair below him fade away, as if everything was a daydream. As if he himself was an illusion.

Everything seems to be sprinting past him in a haze of colour and music, until his stomach starts churning and he can't see anything, the only thing he can rely on is Lee's hand in his...

It's surprisingly warm, and strong, the ghost's hand. Not that Lee is a ghost. But Harry really is going to vomit in a moment.
Without warning, life gives a sickening lurch and comes to a standstill.

Harry isn't in his office anymore. Lee lets go of his hand and gives his arm a steadying pat.

"Lee, where are we?" Harry whispers, taking in the massive wooden staircase and ornate antique furniture in this foyer, clearly some massive house or hotel. "Why would you bring me here?"

"We're in an 'ouse you won't know, but one that she would." Lee says vaguely, nodding towards the staircase. Harry takes another step forwards on the ruby red carpet, feeling the thick softness under his oxfords. "Chloe would know it?" he mutters.

"Yeah." Lee confirms, glancing at him. "Listen, 'Arry, as far as you're concerned, I'm the Ghost Of Christmas Past. I've been sent to show ya what the Christmases of yesterday can teach ya." "Ghost of... That's ludicrous." Harry says indignantly. Lee shushes him and narrows his eyes, gesturing around at the minimally decorated banisters and the comparatively small, real tree under the stairwell, decorated in white and silver. Harry inhales deeply, the smell of the cavernous room reminding him of his office. Dust, old books, Christmassy pine. "Try an' explain this, then."

Harry sighs. "Point taken. What did you want to show me? This place seems abandoned." He notes the thick layer of dust coating everything in sight, and tries not to cough. Unnecessary noise is not something a Kingsman indulges in.

"It ain't abandoned, but it may as well be." Lee says sadly, his eyes drowning in what Harry can only describe as pity. "First door on ya left, at the top."

Against his better judgement, having no better plan to follow, Harry tiptoes up the curved staircase and stares down the massive corridor at the top of it, before turning the gilt door handle on the first left. With every ounce of Kingsman training he possess, Harry slips inside, closing the door in Lee's face. Whatever this is, he'd rather not be judged on his reaction. There's been enough creepy shit thrown at him today.

He turns, the smell of old books even stronger in here, and ruins his stealth approach by gasping as loudly as he possibly could have done. There, sitting in an old armchair by the fire, is Chloe. His 25 year old, 5ft7 partner Chloe, not too much shorter than him.

The Chloe he is looking at now, curled in on herself and breathing softly, is just a child.

She looks about five years old.

This room is a library, wall upon wall of leather tomes lending an antiquated scent to the air, and an intelligent atmosphere. There is an open fire cracking in the grate- so like Harry's office- and the leather armchair Chloe occupies is an exact copy of his own. Strange.

"Chloe." Harry says, without thinking, just staring at the child in the seat. She looks so utterly adrift that all he wants to do is reach out for her.

Her hair is far shorter, curling to just below her shoulders. She's even skinnier than his version of Chloe, tiny stick wrists and limbs that look ready to snap. She's wearing a grey and black striped cardigan that falls to her knees like a dress, and pure white socks on her small feet, leaving her shins bare and slightly pink with the heat from the fire. Her eyes are still as blue as he remembers, but they are rimmed in pink and her eyelashes are spiked with tears.

Harry has a sudden surge of protective concern and decides that he's going to punch the person who's hurt her in the face, preferably with something made of concrete.

"Chloe." he tries again, thinking more rationally this time. The child doesn't react at all, staring into the fire as if transfixed. "She can't hear ya, or see ya." Lee explains helpfully from an inch behind Harry's ear, having floated through the solid wooden door. "Fu-" Harry jumps, and then
frowns at Lee. "Why?" he demands.
"So ya can't interfere with history. I know ya want to hug her, believe me I do too, but if you so much as say hello, you could alter the events of the future- the events ya know as your past. You could stop her joining Kingsman, meeting you, just by showing yourself to her. Butterfly effect."

Harry nods once. "Why is she crying?"

Lee shakes his head at the question, looking at Chloe. "Father couldn't get the time off work, an' Mother is gettin' drunk at the other end of the corridor. Chloe got a Christmas present from Chester, ya know, before he was a bastard. Book, one of 'er favourites, all leather-bound an' monogrammed an' fancy. 'Er mum burnt it in front of 'er, right in that fire."
"Why?" Harry breathes, horrified, staring at Lee as if he's just seen a- oh, the irrelevant simile.

"Why would she be so cruel? Chloe loves books, and she loved Chester." "Because she left the kitchen door open, an' 'er mum 'adn't bothered to tell 'er she wanted it shut. Weird, ain't it? She worships Christmas, always 'as. It's 'it 'er 'ard, though, this one."
"How old is she?" Harry demands, hands shaking with a mixture of rage and despair. Lee lets out a sigh of sheer regret. "She's six. 'Er parents are gonna split up in September next year."
"So next Christmas won't be any better?" Harry asks, swallowing hard.

"'Arry," Lee says softly. Harry turns to stare him down with evident self-loathing. "Why did you bring me here, Lee? What can I learn from this?"
"All 'er Christmases are like this. That's all she can remember from the birth to aged 12, when she could start stayin' at 'er boardin' school for the 'olidays."
"And yet she still loves it..." Harry says, watching as the child in the armchair shifts her position and stretches a little. "Why?"

Lee looks at him, before drifting even closer to the child. "You tell me."
"Because she likes the festivity, what it stands for."
"And?" Lee reaches out one pale hand to stroke an errant curl back from the child's face. It moves, but naturally, as if a soft gust of wind had shifted it. She shivers gently.
Harry has a moment of realisation. "And she's dreaming. Like she always dreams."
"Of what?" Lee prompts.
"A family of her own, one day. People she can spend Christmas with without being ostracised or picked on. People to buy presents for and spoil and laugh with."
"Basically, mate, what she saw in you." Lee says simply.

In the chair, Chloe glances up at the clock- 9:39pm- and gives a delicate yawn, showing off a set of perfect little pearly teeth. In a reedy, sweet voice, she begins to sing softly to herself, as she tucks her knees up into her cardigan and burrows into the arm of her chair.

"I don't want a lot for Christmas
There is just one thing I need
Underneath the Christmas tree
I just want you for my own
More than you could ever know
Make my wish come true
All I want for Christmas
Is you..."

As she falls asleep, leaning against her arm and snuffling gently, Harry genuinely wants to go back in time again and slap himself in the face. Forget the whiskey, forget pride, just full on slap to the face. He's been such a... "All she wanted was someone to spend Christmas with." he whispers to himself. Lee nods, looking almost proud.
"Lesson learned?"
"Lesson learned." Harry agrees fervently. "Can we go back now, please? There's something I have to think about."

Lee smiles, takes one last glance at the sleeping child, and nods. "Yeah, sure. Picture her like this, 'Arry. Think of 'er sleeping in the chair whenever ya remember this lesson."

"I will." Harry promises, as he takes Lee's outstretched hand and the universe spirals out of control around them once more. He watches Chloe closely as she blurs out of his vision, committing every part of the past to his memory.

As the clock strikes 9:45, Harry is randomly aware of sitting in his own armchair, in his study. "Good luck, and remember the lesson." Lee says, smiling, thumping his shoulder with one fist. "Merry Christmas, 'Arry. Take care of my boy for me."
"Merry Christmas, Lee. I've endeavoured to do so, and will continue. Thank you for this."
"No worries. Just remember what I taught ya, okay?"

With that, and a cheeky wink, Lee fades away into the air.
Present

Harry can't remember drifting off again, what with the revelations of the past and all, but he must have done because he is once again awakened by the clock chiming, this time at 10pm.

One. Two. There.

He sits bolt upright, staring around the room with hazy eyes, wondering if the new hour will bring something- or someone- else to his office. "Hello?" he says into the silence, the fire slowly sputtering in the grate. "Is anybody there?"

Four. Five. Six.

He stretches, and stands upright with a wariness well-earned. The half-finished glass of whiskey sits abandoned on the table.


"Anyone?" he tries again, but his voice is far quieter, almost defeated. Crestfallen, Harry wanders slowly over to the iced-up windows and contents himself with staring out into the brewing blizzard.

Ten.

"Hello, Harry." says a soft voice from behind him.

Not him. Shit, ANYONE but him.

Harry spins round from his musings in horror to see the ghost of Chester King, the previous Arthur and the disloyal betraying BASTARD, looking at him with unusual interest. "You!" he gasps, glaring at the spirit.

Chester gives him a look, an apology that they both know will never be good enough. "The decisions I made... I thought they were for the best."

"I got SHOT. Because of you. You KNEW." Harry says, anger robbing him of an ability to form decent sentences. "And Chloe... She LOVED you... You were like an uncle... She never... You..."

"-Then maybe I am the one most suited to showing you what you're doing." Chester interrupts quickly, shaking his frail-looking head from side to side. "Harry, you are going to lose her if you aren't careful, just like I did. What I did was wrong, horrendous, I know. And I don't expect any kind of forgiveness. But I am here until 11, to try and give you an insight into what your life is currently like, and how you are affecting the here and now."

"So you're the Ghost of Christmas Present, is that it?" Harry asks skeptically. Chester nods, and gestures towards the wall. "Come on. I have something you need to see."

"You want me to walk through the wall?"

Chester sighs, and nods again. "If you take my hand, you'll be able to."

Somewhat hesitant to touch the lying scoundrel, Harry takes his proffered hand as gingerly as he can and slips through the solid wall, following Chester. And another. And another.

They walk through two more offices and a storage cupboard before they finally reach Merlin's lab, a bright and spacious place full of artificial lighting and bits of machinery. Harry gasps again, then curses himself for forgetting his training for a second time.
This is HIS Chloe.

She is wearing a pair of old jeans, acid-washed and faded, and a white Christmas jumper with gold reindeer on it. Somehow, she still manages to look like a Kingsman in the way she carries herself, even whilst dancing.

And Merlin is there too, his Merlin, with a soldering iron in his hand and a soft expression on his face, trying to join together two strings of fairy lights with some molten solder. By the look of it, he's almost got it done.

Damn it all to hell, they both look so happy, and why didn't Harry just come down and join them earlier?

"They can't see you." Chester says, much like Lee did. "Why, so I can't interfere?" Harry asks, frowning.
"No, not exactly. They can't see me, so if you were to suddenly appear as if you'd drifted through the wall, they'd think you'd gone mad."
"Oh."

There is a Christmas song playing over the radio in the corner, "Not Tonight Santa" by Girls Aloud blaring out. And Chloe, his Chloe, is dancing around to it with armfuls of tinsel, merrily making Merlin's personal space a bit more festive.

"So," she says, and her voice stops Harry's thought process in its tracks. "What's your Christmas wish for this year, Merlin?"
"Guinevere," he says, giving her an exasperated look, "I am 44 years old. I do not make Christmas wishes."

Chloe smiles, a bright, winning smile, and leans on the desk in front of him. "It's just me and you, nobody's going to know. But I've been making one every year since I was little, so you can have one too. Go on. Please?"

Merlin rolls his eyes, but it's obviously just a show because he's a little too eager when he says, "Fine, then. I wish Roxy's flight would land early so she could be home for Christmas." Chloe reaches out and squeezes the hand not currently holding the soldering iron, much to Merlin's apparent surprise. "Good wish. I hope it comes true for you."
"... Thank you. Chloe."

"No problem. Merry Christmas, Merlin."
"Merry Christmas. Can you just flick the switch for me? I think I've done it." Chloe reaches for the plug on the lights and turns them on, cheering as the entire twelve-foot string illuminates in a flashing stream of colour. "Amazing!" she says, patting Merlin on the back. "These'll make it round the tree in the foyer now."

"That's the last work I'm doing now until New Year." Merlin sighs at her, winking to show he's not begrudging the Christmas attitude. "Come on, then- I've had my turn, what's your wish?"

Chloe's face falls, ever so slightly. Harry notices it, and so does Merlin apparently, as he puts the iron into its holder and takes her hand properly in his own.
"I wish that Harry would walk through that door now." she says quietly, looking up at the door to the tech room, directly behind Harry.

"She can't see me... I can't make her wish come true." Harry says sadly, staring at his best friend and his partner, both covered in leftover bits of tinsel and glitter. "I wish I could make her happy again."
"It's getting late." Chloe notes, glancing up at the clock and trying to force the Christmas spirit back into her voice. Merlin nods. "Almost 11."

Chester suddenly reaches out for Harry, and instantly they are back in Harry's office. Harry blinks a few times in surprise. "My time is almost up." Chester explains quickly. "But that was something you had to see."
"Now I know that she still wants me, after everything." Harry says slowly, nodding to himself. "And I have the power to make her happy."
"Good." Chester agrees, smiling sadly. "Harry... I will never get the chance to tell her this, but I am sorry for what I did. Underneath everything, she was still the daughter I never had. Make this Christmas a special one for her... and for me."

Harry just nods. There's nothing more he wants to say to Chester, not even at Christmas. There's no way he's going to say it's all okay. Even Christmas spirit won't stretch that far.

"Good luck, and congratulations on becoming the new Arthur." Chester calls, as his voice and his image begin to fade away. "You'll be better than I ever was... Make it count."

And with that, Harry is left alone again to collapse into his armchair and, exhausted, fall asleep.
The chimes of 11 come when Harry is still awake, barely five minutes after Chester has abandoned him to his own thoughts. He paces up and down to it, wondering if another person will visit him, trying to figure out who it could be, where they could go.

One. Two. Three.

His Oxfords squeak gently against the polished floorboards as he pivots and paces back the other way.

Four. Five. Six.


Ten. Eleven.

"You're going to wear out a perfectly good pair of shoes if you carry on like that." Lancelot says conversationally, his upperclass voice bright with amusement. Harry spins once more to see his old friend, far more whole than the last time he saw him, standing by the Christmas tree. "I like this," the spirit continues, gesturing at the baubles. "Nice theme. Very true to the establishment." "Lancelot!" Harry gasps, his face splitting into a grin. After the painful memories Chester dragged to the surface, Lancelot's familiar face brings to mind the glory days, when Harry was still young and trying to change the world. Back when honeypot missions were still fun, back when shooting someone was easier than buying the weekly shop, and didn't result in a shittonne of paperwork.

"Hello again, old friend." The ghost says fondly, smiling at Harry as if he's just popped round for a cup of tea. "So... You're the Ghost of Christmas Future?"

"In a manner of speaking, I suppose I am." Lancelot confirms. "I've got until 11:30, so we'll have to be quick."

"The other two had an hour." Harry says, wondering if there's some sort of ghostly worker's union they can appeal to so Lancelot can stay for the full 60 minutes. He's missed his old chum, more than he'd care to admit. Lancelot laughs, a warm, plummy sound. "Well, Harry, I need to make sure you've still got time to get your Christmas sorted before it turns into the big day itself!"

Harry inclines his head thoughtfully. "Quite. Where are you taking me?"

"You know the drill, I assume, so I'll show you. Don't worry, old sport- this is the last trip of your evening. After me, the afterlife will leave you alone and let you get on with things." Lancelot promises, holding out a hand, warm and tanned from the ski trip he never got back from. Harry takes it with all the strength he has.

The room spins violently but the rushing sensation is completely gone, much to his relief. He still feels very sick, and the motion isn't helping, but at least he feels like his feet are firmly planted on the ground. Indeed, when it finally stops, they haven't actually left his office.

"What-" he begins, turning to Lancelot, but he follows his friend's gaze to his armchair by the fire. The flames are roaring again, clearly having been tended to, and the light illuminated the pair of happy people sitting together, all curled up in his chair.

It's him. And Chloe.
The Harry looks exactly like the Harry he sees in the mirror these days, and the Chloe looks the same as ever, so he can only assume he's close to present day. That, and the Christmas decorations he put up this morning are still there.

"What's going on?" he asks Lancelot, staring as the Harry holds the Chloe close, her sitting on his lap and leaning into his shoulder. "This could be later this Christmas Eve, depending on which path you take."

Harry just watches, as the Chloe and the Harry share a kiss. It's not overly passionate, not desperate, not angry- just loving, warm and soft. His heart begins to truly ache for her.

"So I could have her back?" he asks softly. Lancelot smiles. "Of course."
"Can we... Can we stay a while? Just watch what happens? Please?" Harry near begs, eyes glued to the Chloe as she hands the Harry a beautifully wrapped gift. "Ten minutes." Lancelot allows. "But it'll spoil the surprise of your Christmas present, I warn you."

Harry ignores him and watches as the Harry rips open the A5 sized parcel to reveal a small box, and then opens that to reveal a pair of plane tickets. "Venice?" The Harry says in surprise, beaming. The Chloe laughs, and presses a kiss to his hairline. "Well, our Venice trip wasn't exactly the best, so I thought we could try again," she explains. The Harry laughs, eyes bright with happiness, and pulls her in for another kiss.

Harry squeeze his eyes shut, just as Lancelot puts a hand on his shoulder. "Harry, time to go."
"Right. I've made my decision, Lancelot."
"Good." says the ghost, winking. "Now, I'll save you the misery. Blink hard for me."

Harry squeezes his eyes shut, his ears roar for half a second, and when he opens them, the room is his own again. The Chloe and the Harry and their presents are gone.

"What are you going to do?" Lancelot asks interestedly, giving Harry a knowing look. He pulls out his phone in response, and sends a quick message.

To: Guinevere
From: Galahad
Something's come up. Come to my office, please. Urgent.

"I'm going to get her back." he says with no small degree of certainty, as Lancelot beams and begins to fade away. "Merry Christmas, Harry. I wish you all the happiness in the world."
"Merry Christmas, Lancelot." he replies, watching as his friend disappears. "There will never be another Kingsman to match you."
"Maybe not, but there will be ones that exceed me. Like her."

And with that, Lancelot is gone.

"Harry?" Chloe's concerned voice asks from outside the door. "Are you alright? Can I come in?"
"Yes, the door is open." Harry calls back, settling himself more comfortably in his chair.

Chloe walks in to stand near the armchair, wearing the acid-washed jeans and the jumper and looking so utterly festive that his heart seems to jump. "What's going on?" she asks, looking around as if half-expecting to see an assassin in the corner. "Your message was urgent... Are you alright?"

"I'm fine, my dear. I just have something important to say." Harry stands up, barely a foot away from her. She looks up at him- he's not for much height on her, but there's a definite difference- and looks a little wary, confused even. "Right?"

"I'm sorry I was such an arsehole, and I'm sorry I didn't realise what Christmas meant to you. I'm sorry I didn't think about how long you've been waiting for a Christmas like this, I'm sorry I didn't realise that you wanted me to apologise sooner, and I'm sorry I didn't invite you here in the first place. Please forgive me. I won't make the same mistakes again- I want to make sure Christmas is perfect, for the pair of us."

Chloe's eyes are sparkling with tears by the time Harry is finished, and when he opens his arms she steps into them with all the natural fluidity of two halves of the whole. "I love you." she says, muffled against his chest. He presses a gentle kiss to the top of her head. "I love you, too."

"I suppose I can give you your Christmas present now." she says, stepping back and wiping her eyes with a glimmering smile. He laughs. "Actually, I was rather hoping I could go first." Harry admits, looking at her with a question in his tone. Her smile grows. "By all means, go ahead."

Harry takes a deep breath, feels in his pocket, and gives runs through his words again.

And then drops down onto one knee in front of her.

He pulls the ring out of his pocket and opens the little leather box so she can see it, a beautifully ornate silver band with a single opal nestled in it. An antique, perfect and simple, exactly what he could imagine her wearing.

Her eyes flicker down to it and well up all over again, one hand clasped to her mouth in surprise. Harry takes another deep breath, and begins.

"Chloe, I realise now that everything I want is right here in front of me. Not the job, not the acclaim, not the lifestyle- you. I want to make this Christmas and every Christmas in the future special for you, and every other day, for the rest of our lives. I know you dislike your name, and I think I can do something about that. So... Chloe Hannah Peacock-Cowen, will you do me the great honour of becoming my wife?"

Chloe's gasp of "Yes!" is lost in the midnight chimes of the clock, as Harry slips the beautiful ring onto her finger and kisses her like he could never let her go again.

And he won't.

Christmas Day is here.
End Notes

Please comment and let me know what you thought, cubs, this one might be just me. I'd love to know what you thought!

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR! Xxxxx

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