Felicity told him to let her go, but even when Oliver tried, it didn’t seem to be something he was capable of. In the end, there would be nothing in the world Felicity was more grateful for.

Weaving in and out of the final four episodes of Season 5 and beyond, follow Oliver and Felicity’s emotional journey back to one another, one step at a time.

AU after 5x23

**Complete**
(No) More Apologies to Give

Chapter Summary

This chapter weaves in and out of the ARGUS med bay scene at the end of Arrow 5x20. The episode was damn near perfect, before going off the rails a bit at the end. So, I fixed it. For, you know, science.

I hope everyone enjoys my attempt at a little pixie dust making everything better. I recognize that the topic of the break-up and reconciliation is a hot one in the fandom and there are people who will disagree with my fix-it, thinking one or the other one of them needs to apologize more or less. I feel this is balanced, though, (I have gone back and tweaked it with new eyes to improve this) and hope you agree.

Most of the original episode dialogue has been summarized and skimmed over to avoid redundancy and because this is already too damn long.
Oliver struggled to regain consciousness. He didn’t have the luxury of staying passed out.

Of rest.

Of death.

Felicity was depending on him.

Completely.

A thousand bad choices on Oliver’s part had led to her being trapped underground, without the use of her legs, his most recent terrible decision causing him to bleed out and progressively become more and more useless.

Though…it would be a peaceful way to die.

And, after everything, would he really mind? Slowly bleeding to death, fading away in Felicity’s arms?

Hearing her words of forgiveness…

Oliver could finally rest.

Except…
No.

No…no…no…no…

If Oliver didn’t get out of here, then Felicity didn’t get out. And that was…totally unacceptable.

He could still hear the echo of Felicity’s words, “Let me go…”

NO!

Oliver shoved himself back into consciousness.

He awoke with a start, gasping for air. And, immediately, there was a hand on Oliver’s chest, keeping him from sitting up, pushing him back onto the…mattress?

Blinking away the confusion, Oliver’s foggy senses took in the over-bright room, the far from lush pillow behind his head, the unfamiliar voices…

“It’s all right, Mr. Queen. You’re safe in the ARGUS med wing.”

It was a female voice and, while, it was probably a doctor or a nurse of some sort, Oliver hated waking up to strange voices. He tried to push against her hand, it should be easy to break free, but he was too weak. Or too drugged. Fuck. Neither option was a good one.

“I’ve never seen a patient wake from anesthesia like that.”

“You haven’t had many with PTSD then. Another year here and you’ll be amazed at what you see.”

The second voice was male, also unfamiliar. When Oliver’s eyes finally managed to do their fucking job and focus, he saw that they were both in scrubs, surgical caps on their heads and face masks hanging around their necks.

So the team had managed to get them out of the Bunker and to ARGUS. That was good. Except…

Where was Felicity?

And, of course, Oliver was having an even harder time getting his mouth to form the words than getting his eyes to focus. Goddamn anesthesia. He hated that shit. He managed to swallow around his dry scratchy throat, trying to remember…

They had gotten out. Oliver hadn’t let go. He hadn’t let Felicity fall. He’d managed to pull her up. And Digg pulled them both out. The team had gotten them out of the ventilation shaft and…

Oliver didn’t remember much after that. He just hoped those memories were real and not drug induced.

Wetting his lips, Oliver tried again, “Felicity?” It was a pitiful croak and they probably thought he was calling one of them ‘Felicity,’ which he sure as hell was not. Fuck. Frustrated, Oliver tried clearing his throat and asked again, “Felicity, ‘is okay?”

It still came out pretty pathetic, but that was the least of Oliver’s worries. At least it made something resembling sense.

Mr. Blue Scrubs seemed confused and just wrinkled his eyebrows at him. It made Oliver feel pretty damn motivated to regain his strength, if only so that he could shove the idiot out of the way.
and go find Felicity himself.

But the lady doctor/person saved them both. “I think that’s the woman he came in with,” she whispered to her colleague. “She’s fine, Mr. Queen. No major issues. Well, except for that paralysis, but I was told that isn’t new. Actually, I was told it was a tech issue?” And from her expression that was a new one for her. She really hadn’t been at ARGUS long. “And since that’s not my department, your friend was brought to someone who could help.”

The wave of relief that followed was intense enough for Oliver to collapse back onto the bed from the weight of it. He hadn’t even realized he had managed to lift himself up in the first place, but… it didn’t matter.

What mattered was it felt like Oliver could finally breathe again.

It was all okay now. Felicity was fine. Probably with Curtis, working on her chip. And, of course, Curtis would fix it. He was a genius. It was his masterpiece.

Please God, let that chip be fixable. Quickly fixable. Oliver hated the idea of Felicity being trapped in that chair one minute longer than was absolutely necessary.

His eyes flew around the austere room as he took stock and realized…he was still anxious. God damn it. He hated this. It was a itch beneath his skin and sitting still was torture. Being told by some stranger that Felicity was okay wasn’t enough. Oliver wanted…needed to know exactly where she was.

No, he needed Felicity here. In front of him. Right the fuck now. That was the only way Oliver would really believe she was okay. And if she wasn’t okay…

“His heart-rate is kinda high,” the male idiot said.

Oliver really hoped he wasn’t a doctor since…idiot.

Also, no shit. Oliver had a feeling his heart-rate wasn’t going to get any better until he saw Felicity, preferably walking, with his own two eyes.

Oliver pressed his lips together and clenched his jaw. He couldn’t ask. Not anymore than he already had.

It wasn’t his right.

Not any longer.

Christ, a year ago it had been Felicity in a hospital bed, his fiancé, and Oliver had barely visited her. And at that time, she’d had every right to want him there. No, to expect him to be at her side.

Now, Oliver was laying here, with no rights what-so-ever, and…He was pathetic. But Karma really was a bitch.

“He probably needs more pain medicine.”

Oliver’s eyes snapped open and flew to the tall man in the scrubs. He’d been wrong. That man wasn’t an idiot. He was an asshole.

Leveling said asshole with his best Green Arrow stare, Oliver hissed, “No.”

“Are you sure?” the woman asked, not sounding even a little impressed by his Arrow voice. When
the fuck had that stopped working? “Your heart-rate is awfully high.”

“I’m fine,” Oliver all but growled. Then, realizing they could be interpreting his tone as ‘in pain,’ he cursed himself. The pain wasn’t even bad. But that feeling of being drugged…Oliver could feel that. The foggy, blurry edge…God, he despised that feeling.

Oliver started to argue further, trying for less vigilante and more mayoral, but the lady doctor walked to the door and called for someone named ‘Ruth’.

When an older woman with a no-nonsense expression walked in carrying a small IV bag, Oliver just about lost it. They were giving him more drugs over his dead body. After that fucking Methane, he was so done being stoned.

“I said, ‘No!’” Oliver snapped as this Ruth tried to grab his arm.

Had Oliver said he was going to try a less Green Arrowy approach? Well, fuck that. That was before they tried to drug him.

But Ruth was even less impressed than Dr. Lady. She just tilted her head to the side and gave Oliver a hard stare over her glasses. “I don’t think you want to refuse your antibiotic, Mr. Queen. Mayors can’t do much good with Sepsis. Neither can Vigilantes.”

Did everyone in ARGUS know about their ‘secret’ identities?

Also, dammit, Oliver really liked Ruth. But that might just be because he had a soft spot for strong woman in glasses.

“Your large intestine was torn from whatever impaled you,” Asshole/Idiot said. (Him, Oliver did not like). “We sewed it up without too much trouble, but you’ll need some really heavy-duty antibiotics.”

Ruth grabbed Oliver’s arm again and, this time, he let her do her job with only a petulant eye-roll as protest. Though, if they tried to slip pain meds in there, heads were going to roll.

The doctors-slash-medical people started telling him more details about his surgery and injuries, but Oliver wasn’t listening. He really didn’t care.

He wasn’t dead. That was all Oliver needed to know.

Now, all Oliver wanted was to be left alone with his thoughts. The events of the last 24 hours were coming back to him and he…he really needed to process it all. And he couldn’t do that with people staring at him and jabbering on.

He could handle Thea or Digg, they’d know what to do. To talk when he needed it and to sit in silence when he didn’t. Or Felicity…God, he wished Felicity was there. She could say anything she wanted.

But Oliver couldn’t have that so…if everyone else could just leave him the fuck alone that would be great.

“I think Mr. Queen needs his rest.”

That came from Ruth. God, Oliver loved Ruth. She was definitely his favorite.

Oliver murmured, “Thank you,” and even managed a pleasant smile. The effort paid off and it
earned him a subtle wink over her fabulous glasses as Ruth ushered the other two out of the room.

When he was finally alone, Oliver blew out a breath and leaned his head back, closing his eyes. He’d really thought he was done this time. It had been a long time since he had been so certain he was going to die.

God, had Oliver really confessed…everything to Felicity? Told her about the real reason he had started killing? Told her about the monster inside?

And…had Felicity actually absolved him?

No, she hadn’t absolved him. Because Felicity hadn’t actually believed him. Hadn’t believed that Oliver enjoyed killing. Which he didn’t. Not anymore, but once…

Maybe Felicity was so used to seeing the best in him that she didn’t understand what Oliver had been trying to say. Maybe she was just too stubborn and too good to believe it was true. But…for the first time since the words left his mouth in Chase’s dungeon, Oliver considered the possibility that…that it wasn’t true. At least…

Well, there was a truth to it. Anatoli had seen it in him. Oliver knew he felt a thrill…especially early on in his vigilante career…a relief when he held someone’s life in his hands, someone horrible, and he just…ended it. Ended it forever.

But now that Felicity’s words came back to him…maybe ‘liking it’ was an over simplification of something incredibly complicated. And maybe…just maybe Oliver had changed. Wasn’t that man, that monster anymore.

If Felicity, the smartest, most intuitive person he’d ever known could see a good man underneath…

After all, Felicity had seen Oliver at his worst, been a victim of some of his poorest choices…

Well then, maybe the monster wasn’t his core. Maybe something else was. Something worth finding.

And maybe Oliver’s crusade wasn’t a lie after all.

He was glad he told her. Oliver couldn’t believe he’d found the courage to do it, but he was so glad he’d had the opportunity and the impetus…blood loss or gas or whatever. Even if that was selfish…

But, no, Felicity deserved to know. Oliver hated the idea of her walking around thinking he didn’t trust her. He’d always known that wasn’t right, but hadn’t the first clue how to convince her of it. Until last night.

So if this was enough to finally prove to Felicity that Oliver trusted her, trusted her far more than he trusted himself, then that alone was worth it.

“Hey.”

Oliver glanced up to see Lyla in the doorway. Not the woman he wanted, but it was good to see a familiar face. And, also, someone who knew what the hell he was talking about when he asked about Felicity.

“Hey. How’s—?”
“Everyone’s fine,” Lyla answered, cutting Oliver off with that straightforward way she had. “And the Bunker didn’t blow up, you’ll be glad to know.”

Oliver managed to smile, even though that wasn’t exactly the information he was looking for.

“How are you feeling?” Lyla asked, coming over to stand at his bedside and handing him the controls to the bed when Oliver struggled to find it.

“Fine,” Oliver muttered as he brought the bed into an upright position. That was better. He felt less like an invalid sitting up. But when he looked back at Lyla she was giving him a disbelieving expression and he just shrugged. “Been worse.”

A lot worse. Rather recently, actually.

Lyla shook her head like she still didn’t think he was being honest, but she didn’t press any further. She knew better than that. “Well, the team is outside. You up for visitors?”

He was up for one. As much as he loved them, the idea of dealing with Curtis or Rene right then made his skin crawl. Swallowing, Oliver asked, “Is Felicity…?”

Oliver wasn’t even sure how he wanted to end that sentence. ‘Is Felicity out there too?’ ‘Is Felicity asking for him?’ ‘Is Felicity okay?’ ‘Is Felicity…?’

Lyla gave Oliver a knowing smile. Like she understood his mind better than he did. It would have been annoying if the next words out of her mouth weren’t, “Do you want me to send in Felicity?”

Oliver swallowed, feeling guilty for asking for what he’d told himself he wouldn’t. But so grateful to Lyla for offering, so he didn’t have to say it out loud.

“Yeah. Yeah. I’d like that.” Though Oliver still didn’t feel like he had the right.

Squeezing Oliver’s hand, Lyla gave him one last smile. “I’m glad you’re okay.”

She was an incredible woman, Lyla Michaels. Forgiving too. After everything.

All Oliver could do was nod, his throat dry. He should ask if Lyla was okay. He wanted to know if…if she and John were okay, but he couldn’t get anything else out.

And then Lyla was gone and Oliver watched his heart rate speed up on the monitor and, God-fucking-damnit, the last thing he needed during a talk with Felicity was a monitor telling her how he was reacting to every word. Viscerally.

In frustration, Oliver tore off the horrible itchy hospital gown and the heart monitor leads. Then he realized that sitting there naked, waiting for Felicity was…really not going to work.

What was more, there was a bruise from where Felicity had shot him with adrenaline, right next the healing scars from the blow torch and…this was so not how Oliver wanted her to see him. Not now. Not yet. Not…

_Fucking hell!_

Oliver swung his legs off the bed and—

“Ahhh, Mr. Queen, don’t you look spry for a man who just flatlined?”

Wincing, Oliver looked up to see the lovely Ruth waltzing in. Thank God.
Trying for the sort of smile that always worked on Raisa, Oliver wheedled, “Ruth, could I possibly trouble you for a t-shirt and…pants?” (Because he was equally naked under these covers.)

Ruth gave him a disapproving look and went to grab a clean hospital gown. God, not _that_ again. Nothing made Oliver feel more like an invalid than a hospital gown.

“Is it possible to get a t-shirt instead or…?” Oliver searched his brain for a reasonable argument to avoid the gown. Other than it was it was emasculating and he _hated_ it.

Again Sargent Ruth sent him _that_ look, the one that Oliver was sure made grown men cower. So he was definitely not going with the emasculating argument. He got the impression that she enjoyed bringing down an overblown male ego or two.

As Oliver waited for a recitation of the hundred and one reasons why hospital gowns were what they used and wondered how Ruth would react if he told her the gown was itchy.

But then Ruth surprised Oliver yet again. Rolling her eyes, she came over to unhook his IV, handing him a white t-shirt and a pair of scrub pants that she had pulled out of thin air. He hadn’t even had to beg. Which he was fully prepared to do, by the way. He _hated_ hospital gowns _that_ much.

Ruth was a _goddess_ among woman.

Feeling his face dissolve into a relieved smile, Oliver sighed, “Thank you _so_ much.”

Somehow, Ruth managed an even deeper eye roll. “You’re going to be a difficult one, aren’t you?”

If she thought this was difficult she had no idea. “I’m hoping I won’t be here long enough to be difficult,” Oliver muttered, pulling on the shirt and trying not to cringe as his wound pulled. _That_ was the reason they used hospital gowns, but the last thing he wanted was to give the lovely Ruth a reason to take his prize away.

“How.?” Ruth re-hooked up the IV and sent him a hard took. “Just don’t mess with this or you _will_ be here long enough for _me_ to become difficult.”

Oliver gave his best obedient nod (again always worked on Raisa…well, it always worked on mom. It _usually_ worked on Raisa) and smiled pleasantly until Ruth was finished and had pulled the door closed behind her.

Then Oliver hurriedly swung his legs over the edge of the bed and struggled into the pants. Pain be damned.

Oliver wasn’t sure what was worse, Felicity walking in to find him half-naked or Felicity walking in to find him flat on the floor because he couldn’t stay upright while putting on his pants.

Both. _Definitely_ both.

Somehow, Oliver managed to get the scrubs on and climb back under the covers. He didn’t even reopen the wound. He thought. He _was_ sweating and short of breath. And the pain…well maybe he’d agree to take a pill before he went to sleep. But just one.

Then there was nothing to do but sit and wait. Wait and sit.

Where _was_ she? Oliver had been worried that Felicity would walk in before he was done and now…Lyla had been gone longer than it took to go to a nearby room and send Felicity back. Was
something wrong? Something with the chip or…maybe she wasn’t feeling well?

Maybe Felicity didn’t want to see him?

Or maybe he needed to stop being such an idiot. Felicity would come when she came. In the meantime, Oliver needed to at least try to appear relaxed and figure out what the hell he was going to say once he got her here.

Once, Oliver had found Felicity the easiest person in the world to talk to. In some ways, he still did but…things had changed. He hadn’t been able to talk to Felicity freely since…well, since he’d killed her boyfriend.

Just thinking that sentence, Oliver felt a now familiar cold wave of hopelessness. That was the day his hope that they would eventually reunite had finally died a hard, painful death.

Maybe it was Oliver’s punishment. For every horrible thing he had done in his life. To have the perfect life within his reach and to lose it through his own thoughtless actions. Maybe he deserved it. Even though it felt like the harshest fucking punishment anyone could devise…

No, he couldn’t think that way. It wasn’t true and even thinking it was inviting bad things to happen. Felicity was alive. Thea was alive. William was alive. Oliver could handle being alone forever if the people he loved were safe.

Still, Oliver had to wonder if Chase had arranged him to kill Malone for exactly this reason. That Chase knew destroying any chance Oliver had with Felicity would kill something inside of him.

Yet, after last night…or this morning…or who the hell knew…time had been meaningless in that dark basement…

It didn’t matter, what was important was that he and Felicity had reconnected, talked, been more open with each other than they had been…since ever.

Actually, Oliver didn’t think he had ever been that open with someone. Not after Lian Yu. And…not before either.

Now everything was out in the open. And Oliver had thought if Felicity knew it would only get worse but…it didn’t feel worse. It felt better. It felt…free. Of course, they had been fighting for their lives, so who knew how Felicity felt now but…things seemed different.

This could have been what they needed. Once. A few short months ago, Oliver would have hoped maybe it was enough to finally…

But after Billy, it was too little too late.

The most Oliver could hope to come from last night now was that their friendship could be healed. If things could go back to the way they were before he had ruined it all by bringing his stupid feelings into the mix…well, that would be enough. It would have to be enough.

He heard the door and, immediately, Oliver’s hands started to itch with the need to touch her, to reach out and…

Oliver laced his hands together and placed them in his lap. To keep himself from doing something stupid. And if his knuckles turned white, surely, Felicity would blame that on the blood loss.

Rehearsing his ‘thank you’s in his head, Oliver…
She walked in tall and, God, only his Felicity would walk in with heeled boots after being paralyzed for hours on end.

No, not his Felicity. Not anymore. Even if Oliver would always think of her that way.

The relief at seeing Felicity walking again was a punch in the gut, stealing Oliver’s breath, but he managed a soft, “You’re walking.”

Oliver couldn’t help but smile even as he took in Felicity’s worried, drawn expression. Her face was streaked with soot and dried blood. Her clothing was ruined.

It was incredible how beautiful she looked.

And even more incredible was how glad Felicity seemed to be to see him, how relieved. True, the last time he had seen her the chances of him continuing to breathe weren’t looking all that good, but…the love in her eyes…

No, that was just concern for a friend. Oliver couldn’t allow himself to think of it any other way.

Oliver made a stupid joke. Made light of his injuries (even though he was well aware of how very close a call this one was). All to keep himself from falling into that trap. He remembered quite clearly how much it hurt when he had misinterpreted their little slip-up in the bunker this summer.

He remembered how it had caused Felicity to put even more distance between them.

But then Felicity slipped her hand into his and squeezed and…Oliver was really glad Ruth hadn’t hooked him back up to those heart monitors.

Oliver pressed his thumbs to her fingers, holding them there, and…pushed ahead with the speech he’d been preparing in his head. He needed to get it out before he got…trapped into hoping.

So he thanked Felicity for her beautiful words, the ones that were even now pulling Oliver back from the brink, the same way her words had pulled him back a thousand times before, taking something he had been so certain of and turning it upside down, giving him a completely new perspective.

It made Oliver wonder when he was going to learn. If he just went to Felicity in the first place, it would save so much time. And pain.

Then Felicity was apologizing and…

Oliver was thrown. What did she have to apologize for? He kept thinking he should stop her. Except then Felicity mentioned Billy and Oliver had to wonder if she noticed the way his hands spasmed.

With guilt.

With jealousy.

With regret and that helpless despair just the thought of Billy Malone brought Oliver.

But then, before Oliver could even hope to be able to get a hold of that, Felicity turned it all around, saying she understood. Not about Billy. About…

About why Oliver had lied about William.
It was kind of amazing and a miracle and Oliver really wished she’d share because most of the time he didn’t know why he had lied about William. To her anyway.

But that didn’t mean her absolution didn’t feel like fresh clean water flowing over his bruised and filthy soul. And Oliver was just selfish enough to let it. To hold his breath and let Felicity’s words heal him.

“You know how you said that you didn’t know what kind of person you are. I think you should figure that out.”

Yeah, he should but…

“Felicity,” Oliver sighed her name, trying to gather his scattered thoughts.

He…he wasn’t sure what kind of man he was, but Oliver knew that he wasn’t the kind of man who could let Felicity take the blame for this. Not when it was entirely his fault.

“You don’t have to absolve me for lying to you about William,” as good as it felt, “you were right. I shouldn’t have lied. I didn’t…”

Felicity sucked in a sharp breath and held it. Oliver had a feeling that he knew exactly what she thought he was going to say.

She was wrong.

“I’m not going to say I didn’t trust you.” Oliver shook his head to emphasize that fact, praying that she would believe him this time. “Because…I know what I felt and the words ‘I don’t trust, Felicity,’ have never once crossed my mind. Not once in all the time I’ve known you.”

Felicity’s face wrinkled up and Oliver wasn’t sure if it was in disbelief or disgust or just…emotion. “Oliver—”

“Shhh.” Because Oliver had to get this out before he lost his nerve. “I didn’t interrupt your apology.” And now with the joking. Was this really the time for the joking? Maybe he had more pain meds than he thought in his blood stream.

But it made Felicity chuckle and squeeze Oliver’s hand. She may have even swayed toward him a bit so…maybe joking was a good call after all.

“A second apology in less than twenty-four hours?” Felicity teased, though Oliver could see tears in her eyes. “And you’re not even dying…you’re not dying, are you?”

That made Oliver huff out a laugh. “No. But it probably means you should let me finish.”

Felicity’s smile reached her shimmering eyes and she moved her free hand to make a locking motion over her lips and Oliver really, really wished he had the right to kiss them again. Not that he was doing this to regain that right. Because that wasn’t going to happen. Ever. He’d accepted that fact.

Deep breath and…now Oliver had to follow through with his promise. Hell. Okay, time for that apology. He’d better make it a good one too.

“I…I’m sorry, Felicity. For lying to you. For keeping things from you. I…I wish…” Oliver’s throat closed and he had to look away or he wouldn’t be able to finish. “I wish I’d told you as soon as I found out about William. As soon as I suspected. Before Samantha and her ultimatum.
Sometimes…” He let out a bitter chuckle. “Sometimes, I think Samantha’s demand was my punishment for not telling you right away.”

“Oliver—”

He kept talking. He needed to keep up the momentum even if he didn’t have the heart to shush her again. “I wish I could have been the kind of man you deserve.” The emotion in his voice was obvious now and Oliver could tell by Felicity’s indrawn breath she wanted to stop. He spoke faster. “The kind of man who wouldn’t shut down and retreat into himself when things get tough, locking my…feelings away…”

And, God, did it feel weird saying something like that out loud. It went against decades of being groomed to keep those things buried deep. “You deserve the kind of man who would have called you as soon as I saw a boy with Samantha in Jitters.” Billy would have. Oliver was sure of that.

“Oliver, I…I can’t even…” Felicity’s voice sounded almost as wrecked as his did. She licked her lips and swallowed and all Oliver could do was stare and will himself to not cry. “But…I fell in love with you.”

Oliver sucked in a breath, his eyes slipping closed and pushing the tears he hadn’t wanted to fall out. God, every time Felicity said that it twisted him all up inside.

“I knew what kind of man you were.” Felicity held up her hand as if to keep him from arguing. And Oliver did want to argue, but to what end he had no idea. “Even if you don’t know yourself. And even that…that you weren’t sure of who you were, even that I knew. That was what was so unfair of me. I shut you out when I knew…or at least should have known you were just doing something that was a part of who you were. Something I had accepted long ago.”

Oliver really wanted to protest now. He was shaking his head almost continuously, but Felicity looked so upset, so…passionate about what she was saying that he just held her hand as tightly as he dared and tried to memorize every word.

“I knew you were damaged and I accepted that,” Felicity swore, pure emotion dripping from every word. “I loved who you were. Not despite the damage, but because of who it made you. Which is why it was so unfair of me to keep saying I hoped you had changed or would change or should change…I fell in love with the man you were…are. Not the man I wanted you to be.”

Oliver sucked in a breath. It was too much. “But…but you were right.” His voice was gravelly and deep and it wasn’t from the damn surgery. “You deserve so much better.”

“Oliver, that’s not true—”

“That’s why I let you walk away.” And if that sentence ended in a little sob, Oliver hoped Felicity would never tell. “I knew…I knew you deserved better. I think I’d just been waiting for you to realize it.”

Felicity let out a small sob herself and covered her mouth with her hand. Oliver wanted to comfort her, but his throat had closed up and he wasn’t getting anything else out without breaking down completely.

“Oliver…” Felicity’s voice and her hand trembled as she spoke. “You need to stop putting me on this pedestal.” She wiped roughly at her cheek. “Haven’t these last several months shown you how not perfect I am?”

But Oliver could only shake his head. Nothing could ever show him that.
Felicity gave a little huff of frustration. “You keep saying that you don’t want me to be like you. Has it ever occurred to you that I might want to be like you? You’re my hero, Oliver.”

A sob ripped from Oliver’s throat. He lost what fragile control he had and reached for her.

Felicity slipped seamlessly into his arms and Oliver buried his face in her hair. Pressing his lips to the spot where her neck met her shoulder, he just breathed her in, until he finally trusted himself enough to speak. “And you’re mine, Felicity. You’re mine.”

She let out the sweetest little whimper and burrowed closer. Oliver wasn’t sure, but he thought, maybe, Felicity climbed up onto the bed as she wrapped her arms more fully around his neck.

For what was probably the hundredth time (that day alone) Oliver had the impulse to tell Felicity he loved her. He had to bite the inside of his cheek to keep the words from spilling out.

Because telling Felicity that…it felt like a burden. One more thing Oliver heaped on her surprisingly strong shoulders.

Felicity may have said those words to Oliver a handful of times since they had broken up…the thing was, hers always came with a ‘but.’ And…she was a loving person and he was never sure if she meant it as a friend or in past tense or…

Well, Oliver knew how he meant it and would mean it if the words ever escaped. And Felicity would know too.

Because there would only ever be one meaning for Oliver when he expressed his love for Felicity Smoak.


Forever.

God, how he loved her.

But Oliver wouldn’t…he refused to put that kind of pressure on her. Especially, when he knew he would never love another woman. At least not the way he loved Felicity. It was selfish of him to try. Susan had proved that with crystal clarity.

But even though Oliver couldn’t love Susan, it was clear that Felicity had loved Billy.

And Oliver had killed him.

Like a twisted version of an adolescent fantasy. Like the man Chase accused Oliver of being. A monster who had murdered the rival for the woman he loved, a man whose only sin was deserving her more.

“I’m sorry,” Oliver sobbed and it was pathetic and he hated it, but he couldn’t stop. “I’m so sorry.”

Felicity let out a watery laugh that was just…musical. God, he was such a sap. If they ever came across a meta that could read minds Oliver was gonna be laughed out of the vigilante club.

“Three apologies. Now I’m getting worried.” Felicity pulled back and cupped Oliver’s face, brushing away his tears (ugh, why couldn’t he stop crying?) with her thumbs and it felt far better than he deserved.

Felicity was smiling and her tears somehow just made her even more beautiful, her eyes shiny and
her cheeks pink.

“What are you apologizing for now?” Felicity’s voice was light, hopeful. She had no idea. God, she had no clue.

“I…” Oliver had to force the words out. “Billy. I need to apologize for Billy.” Felicity’s face fell and that made it all even worse. “I killed the man you love and sent you down this dark path and it’s my—”

Felicity’s hand slapped firmly over Oliver’s mouth, effectively stopping the painful recitation. “Okay, stop. This is something you are not apologizing for,” she insisted fiercely. “Because it is not your fault.”

But Oliver shook his head. Because it was. It was.

“Oh Oliver.” Felicity sighed. “Scootch over.” She pushed at his hip until he shifted, allowing her to settle onto the bed next to him.

He felt a sharp stab of pain from his wound when he moved, but it was easy enough to hide since he was sure he was looking wrecked he was looking wrecked regardless. Oliver breathed through his nose and tried to gain some measure of self-control. The more upset he appeared, the more Felicity would try to comfort him and he didn’t deserve to be comforted. Not for this. Whatever she had to say—

“I didn’t love Billy.”

Okay, Oliver wasn’t expecting her to say that.

And the hope that skyrocketed in response was fucking dangerous. To his soul.

“You don’t have to say that,” Oliver asserted, trying to stop himself from going down a very precarious path. “I know you would never have done what you did to get Chase if you hadn’t—”

“Chase killed Billy because of me,” Felicity confessed in a rush and, looking at her face, Oliver had no doubt she believed it.

Believed that bullshit. Christ, had Felicity really been beating herself up about this all this time? Why hadn’t Oliver seen it?

“That’s…that’s ridiculous. Felicity…” Don’t call her ‘honey’. Or ‘sweetheart’. Or ‘baby’. Just don’t. “Nothing could be further—”

“Oliver,” Felicity cut him off with a sigh. “I chose to date Billy and I kept dating him despite the fact that I’m on Team Arrow.”

On Team Arrow? Felicity was Team Arrow. But that didn’t mean—

This time, Felicity stopped him before Oliver had a chance to protest. “Which is something I chose. I chose to be on this team. To make it the center of my life. But I still brought Billy into it. Despite the fact that I didn’t love him. That I knew he had deeper feelings for me than…and, even though, I knew, deep down, mine were never going to match his—”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Oliver grabbed her hands, knowing he should be arguing against this ridiculous self-blame. A part of him (a selfish ugly part of him) was too busy lapping up her words like ambrosia to do anything else.
“I couldn’t even call him my boyfriend,” Felicity confessed, her voice cracking. “But he was a good man and safe and,” she laughed bitterly, “one of the most well-adjusted people I know…knew. And dating me got him killed.”

Okay, that was enough. Was **this** what Oliver sounded like all the time? “Felicity, Billy was a cop. Chase was targeting cops. Billy died because he went after Chase without back-up.”

Felicity’s expression changed from one of grief and guilt to challenge in a heartbeat. She gave Oliver a look…

Ah **hell**, he’d walked right into that one.

“So, you’re saying it wasn’t your fault?”

Oliver pressed his eyes closed for a moment. Felicity had trapped him cleanly and efficiently with that one. “Did you say all that just to—?”

“No,” Felicity insisted immediately, shaking her head. “No. I just wasn’t going to let the opportunity go by…” She gave him a small smile, but then she swallowed and her smile wavered. “My point was that while I cared for Billy and I **do** genuinely grieve him…”

“I know,” Oliver assured, because it seemed like it was important to Felicity that he understood that.

Felicity nodded, looking relieved. “But my drive to get Chase was…is more out of guilt than love.” She let out a soft grunt and harsh laugh. “Sound familiar?”

Oliver couldn’t do anything but give her a wry half-smile. “Yeah, it does.” The big difference was how much more self-aware Felicity was. It had taken her a few short months (or less) to realize something he had deflected and denied for **years**.

“We’re more alike than you realize.”

Oliver couldn’t help but fear that it was more of a contagion, something he had done to her. “I hate that there is darkness inside of you. Because of me.” Just like Chase said.

“No, Oliver.” And now Felicity just looked tired. “It’s because of **me** and **my** choices. Because of Havenrock—”

Was that still tormenting her? “Felicity, you saved millions—**billions** that day—”

But she didn’t let Oliver speak. “It’s because the life that I…we chose comes with consequences. We can’t fight the darkness without taking some of it on ourselves. It’s just the way it works. It doesn’t even matter where it came from anymore. It’s a part of me now. Just like it’s a part of you and…” Felicity took a deep breath, visibly gathering her strength. “And if we are going to move forward together…”

And, wow, that took the wind out of him. Felicity couldn’t possibly be saying what it sounded like she was saying. Oliver held his breath.

“…then we both need to accept that this is a part of us. We can’t…we can’t just love the good parts…the pretty parts. That’s not how love works.”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…”
Oliver clutched her hands, not sure what to say. His mind was spinning and he was just a little bit terrified, because it sounded like...it sounded like Felicity was giving him another chance. Opening that door again and...he was really, really afraid he was going to mess this up.

“Can you...do you think you can do that?” Felicity asked shyly.

And Oliver was honestly taken-aback. Do what? Love all of her? He couldn’t help but laugh. “Yeah. Yeah, I can do that.”

Felicity’s smile was...so beautiful. She turned her hands in Oliver’s, lacing their fingers together. It felt so much more intimate that way. Mind-blowingly intimate.

“No more pedestals?” Felicity asked hopefully.

Oliver had to laugh again. He was starting to feel a light-headed. Had Ruth snuck something into that IV bag after all? “Well, I can try. That one will be a lot harder.” Because he really couldn’t imagine a world where he didn’t think Felicity was perfect. Darkness or not.

Thankfully, Felicity's smile didn’t waver. “That’s all I ask for.”

That was good. Real good. But...

Okay...so what exactly was going on? It really seemed like Felicity was giving him a second (or tenth) chance. Were they agreeing to try a relationship again? A romantic relationship? Oliver was afraid to ask.

Reaching out, Oliver cupped her cheek, testing the waters, and when Felicity clasped his hand, holding it closer, closing her eyes and leaning into him, he...

Wow. Okay. Whatever this was, it was a good thing. Oliver was sure of that.

But was Oliver allowed to tell Felicity he loved her? Was he allowed to...? Shit, could he kiss her? Was that okay? It had been so long. Too damn long.

Felicity opened her eyes and wet her lips...but that was a nervous lip wetting, not a 'kiss me' one. Unfortunately.

“So...if we are going to do this...I have another confession.”

Oliver almost didn’t hear the word ‘confession.’ His brain had come to a full stop at the phrase ‘do this.’ Trying not to assume what this was, because really it could be a lot of things and he didn’t want to jump to conclusions.

But Felicity just kept talking, unaware of Oliver’s brain’s frantic misfiring. “I think I finally realized...or let myself realize why I’ve been avoiding talking about...us for so long.”

Us.

Felicity just said ‘us.’ Wow. Okay, she had Oliver’s full attention.

Not that she didn’t before, but...Oliver had kinda thought this was ‘the talk.’ Was there more ‘talking’? Was Felicity expecting him to say or explain something...else? Because he really couldn’t think of anything more he wanted to say. Or was supposed to say. A little niggle of panic settled into his stomach. He’d almost forgotten how hard this relationship thing was.

“You may have noticed it’s weird for me to avoid talking about, well, anything,” Felicity told their
combined fingers, laced together in his lap. She was acting strange, nervous.

And now that Felicity mentioned it, it *did* seem weird. Though Oliver had just thought… “I just thought you were done with me.” Even now, it was hard as fuck to say those words out loud.

Felicity deflated, her eyes becoming sad. “Oliver, I was never *done* with you. Even when I thought I was and *said* I was and…I don’t think I could ever be *done* with you.”

This time Oliver tried something new. He squeezed her fingers and let the hope come. Wasn’t it a risk worth taking?

“What I was doing,” Felicity continued, “was *avoiding*. Yup. Epic avoidance. Not just with you. With my mom. Curtis. *Myself*. And I was being a hypocrite.

She needed to stop saying that. No, she needed to stop *believing* that. “Felic—”

Her hand came up to stop him. “Let me tell you *why* I’m a hypocrite, before you try to tell me it’s not true, okay?” Her tone was light…but Oliver could only frown. He stayed quiet, out of respect, but he didn’t like it and he knew Felicity could tell because of the eye-roll she gave him.

But she quickly turned serious again. Serious and nervous. “I’m a hypocrite because…I *left you* because you didn’t trust me, when in reality…” Felicity gave an audible swallow. “I didn’t trust you.”

Well, *that* was a kick to the gut. If this was what Felicity felt at the mere *idea* that Oliver didn’t trust her…wow. Now he knew why she was so upset.

“I didn’t trust you not to…” Felicity’s voice cracked and her eyes found the ceiling as she visibly struggled with herself. “I didn’t trust you not to leave me.”

Oliver’s breath hissed on the inhale. He hadn’t been expecting that. It…it caught him completely off guard.

Yet…it shouldn’t have.

“Felicity, honey…” Oliver didn’t even know where to start.

“And if you weren’t willing to share *everything* with me, then clearly you weren’t invested enough to stay. You know, since *nobody* stays and—”

Jesus Christ! “That is *not*—”

But Felicity was in full-on babble mode now. Her words getting faster by the moment. “It was always in the back of my mind, you know, that you would leave, like my dad left, like Cooper left. So when you left William…I mean, I know you didn’t *leave* William. You sent him away, but it *felt* like you were leaving him…”

If the other was a kick to the gut, this was a knife. Oliver had trouble breathing after that particular blow.

“And, I know, that isn’t fair and that you didn’t *want* to send William away.” Felicity’s voice cracked. Her words were so fast and so full of emotion. Oliver was certain he wouldn’t have understood half of them if he didn’t know her so well. “And maybe my father didn’t *want* to leave me and maybe Samantha was just doing what mothers do, trying to keep her kid safe. Just like my mom and…wow, the similarities are kind of freaky, huh?”
It took Oliver a minute to realize Felicity had ground to a full stop and she was looking at him with tears running down her face, waiting for a response and he...what the hell was he supposed to say to all that?

“Yeah. Yeah, it is.” Oliver wondered if it was his imagination or if he truly did sound out of breath. His stomach was rebelling and...how had he not made these connections before? He knew he wasn’t nearly as smart as her, but...God, how could he have been so selfish as to not to realize? “I’m so sorry.”

Felicity shook her head, her free hand waving dismissively. “It was just my stupid childhood...issues—”

“No. For not realizing...or remembering that you had that fear.” Oliver felt so stupid. “You always seem so strong. So much more emotionally...competent than me. I forget. I should have been more aware. I...God...and I abandoned you after you were shot...”

Felicity winced, turning her head away. It told Oliver all he needed to know and then some.

This particular guilt brought a wave of nausea with it and Oliver cursed himself. “And I wasn’t there for you when your father came back and—”

That pulled Felicity’s eyes back to his. She shook her head, reaching out to cup his cheek. “Thea was dying, Oliver. I’m not telling you any of this to blame you or to...I’m just trying to explain—”

Oliver grabbed her hands, pulling them toward him, holding them to his chest as he told her fiercely, “Felicity Smoak, I will never leave you. Not willingly. Not ever. I swear it.”

Tears fell freely down her face, leaving trails in the soot, but Felicity smiled. “Not even for my own good?”

Felicity always did go for the jugular.

“Well, you’re always telling me it’s your choice.”

That earned Oliver a chuckle. Thank God. “Damn straight.”

“Even if you ask me to leave...” Okay, that seemed creepy stalkery and Oliver rushed to add, “I’ll always be there for you. Even if we’re not together.” Was that too presumptuous? Was he implying they were getting back together? “Or...”

Then Oliver had a flash of a memory.

“And what was that down there?” The rush of anger Oliver felt thinking about it was strangely stabilizing compared to all the other emotions he’d had to deal with over the last few hours. “‘Let me go?’ What the hell, Felicity?”

Felicity laughed. Which was not the appropriate answer. “You were bleeding out. I didn’t want you to die with me.”

That made it absolutely not even a tiny bit better. “You can’t seriously believe that I would have purposely let you go?” Even the idea struck terror in Oliver’s chest. So much more than the idea of bleeding out.

Still smiling, Felicity shook her head. “I didn’t really. It was mostly a gut reaction.”
Well, that was one gut reaction Oliver could live without. “Don’t even think about it. If you’d…” He shuddered, closing his eyes, trying to will away the image of Felicity falling from behind his eyelids.

When Oliver opened them again Felicity actually looked…happy. Clearly, she was not taking this seriously and he scowled.

“What?” Felicity laughed, picking up on his irritation. “You can sacrifice yourself for me, but I can’t sacrifice myself for you?”

Oliver thought about that for a minute. The double standard. The hypocrisy of it. “Yes, yes that’s exactly it.”

This was one hypocrisy Oliver could live with.

Felicity clearly didn’t agree and she gasped (though it was half-laugh) and smacked his shoulder. “Oliver!”

And it was so normal, so them that Oliver smiled. “Ow! I just had major surgery, Felicity.”

She rolled her eyes. “Such a baby.”

But then to Oliver’s complete and utter shock, Felicity leaned forward and pressed a kiss to the spot where she had hit him. He managed to keep himself from gasping out loud, but he was quite certain his eyes were wide as saucers.

Thankfully, Felicity couldn’t see his undoubtedly comic expression, because she had laid her head on Oliver’s shoulder and her hand on his heart (right below where that damn bratva tattoo used to be), relaxing against him.

“God, I’m so tired.”

Her words triggered a rush of affection and Oliver smiled into Felicity’s hair, wrapping his arms tentatively around her. “Then rest,” he whispered, wondering if he was being too presumptuous to suggest it.

But Felicity just kicked off those ridiculous boots and swung her legs onto the bed beside him and Oliver could have cried (not literally. He was done with the blubbering), it was so wonderful.

Swallowing, Oliver carefully pulled her glasses off her face and laid them on the rolling table next to the bed. Felicity snuggled closer and it felt like he took his first clear clean breath in…a very long time. He rubbed his cheek against her head and…what did all of this mean?

Resting his hand on the small of her back, over her chip, Oliver tried to process everything that had just happened. The conversation. Felicity lying there with him. Everything.

And as Oliver went over it in his head, for the first time…hope didn’t feel futile anymore. In fact, this felt like a new beginning. An open door.

Was it up to Oliver to walk through?

Swallowing, he asked, “Felicity?”

“Hmm?”

Her response was just a sleepy hum and Oliver couldn’t help but smile. He imagined Felicity was
having a pretty significant adrenaline crash. Though, for his part, Oliver was afraid if he fell asleep, somehow, everything would have gone to crap by the morning.

“Hypothetically, if I...um...if I were to tell you I loved you, you wouldn’t feel pressured or anything, would you?”

Felicity froze for a second and the butterflies in Oliver’s stomach kind of...went a little bonkers, but then she looked up at him with the sweetest smile and said, “Nope.”

Okay then.

Wetting his suddenly dry lips, Oliver let out a breath. “I love you.”

Wow, that was a relief to say.

Her face crinkled up with emotion and, for a moment, Oliver was afraid that she was going to start crying again. Instead, Felicity took a deep breath and rasped, “I love you, too.”

It was so quiet that Oliver almost felt like he was reading her lips, but for the first time since Felicity had found out about William, he didn’t hear a ‘but’ lingering just beyond the surface.

Oliver really didn’t trust himself to speak after that. He pressed a kiss to her forehead, but wasn’t about to tempt fate by asking for anything more.

It seemed to be a good choice, because Felicity hummed happily and yawned.

“Rest, hon.” The endearment slipped out before Oliver could stop it, but Felicity just nodded and snuggled closer so maybe that was an okay thing to do again as well.

Oliver smiled. He laid there, just enjoying the weight of Felicity against him. He was just starting to dose when…

His eyes snapped open.

Chase.

Fuck.

Oliver had forgotten why he and Felicity had been locked down in the Bunker in the first place. Chase’s evil fucking plan had worked. *Again.*

“Felicity? Are you asleep?”

Felicity looked up at him, her face concerned. Clearly, she had picked up on Oliver’s shifting mood, despite his trying to keep his tone calm and steady. “Not yet.”

Oliver blew out a breath (he needed to stop panicking) and met Felicity’s eyes. “In the morning, do you think you could...help me find William?”

Immediately, Felicity’s face melted into a reassuring smile and Oliver felt infinitely better. “I can do it now if you want,” she offered even though exhaustion was written across her every feature.

Part of Oliver wanted to say ‘yes.’ Now that he had made this decision, he wanted to *act.* To know where his boy was. To make sure he was all right. But neither of them were in any shape to *act* on anything.
Shaking his head, Oliver murmured, “Rest first.”

Felicity nodded and settled back in. Tightening his arms around her, Oliver closed his eyes.

Surely, one more night wouldn’t hurt.
Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

Author’s Note: Chapters 2 and 3 take place toward the end of Arrow 5x21: Honor Thy Father, when the team goes out drinking after capturing Prometheus.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
“To keeping our eye on the future and making it better!”

Oliver raised his glass, or rather his bottle, and there was a murmured round of agreement and clinking of glass.

Felicity felt the words expand inside her and she smiled so hard it almost hurt. Not that anything could hurt what with the copious amount of alcohol running through her veins. In fact, her face was just a tad bit numb. But…

“To the future!!” she echoed, probably louder than was strictly necessary, but Oliver’s answering grin made Felicity feel rather melty inside (she swore that wasn’t the alcohol) and there was more glass clinking.

Felicity was the only one holding one of Rick’s (the owner and bartender) delicious mixed drinks. It was something he had created just for her and whose name she had forgotten. They were on their third (maybe forth?) round. The others had started with bourbon and moved on to beer, but since this was Oliver’s round it was an expensive craft beer.

They could kick the boy out of the mansion, but they couldn’t take the mansion out of the boy. A Queen was a Queen was a Queen was a Queen. But, right now…well, Felicity wouldn’t have Oliver any other way. In fact, she couldn’t come up with a single thing she would change about him. And she didn’t even think that was the booze talking.

Everything Oliver had said and done over the last week…Felicity was so proud of him, so damn in love with him she…could just float (though that may be just the booze).
Felicity had spent the better part of a year trying, desperately, to make herself fall out of love with Oliver and, when that didn’t work, trying to forget. Or, at the very least, not obsess over being head over heels for her gorgeous ex (who she worked with and saw every fraking day).

Fighting it had been damn painful and a losing battle that had felt like it would eventually destroy her. But, sitting on that hospital bed in the ARGUS medical bay, Felicity had decided to…stop fighting. To try understanding. Him. Her. To understand and forgive and…

It was amazing how one seemingly small decision (she was very aware of how not small it was) could be so freeing. And now…Felicity couldn’t remember the last time she had been this happy.

Actually…yes, she could. It was at their engagement party.

In many ways, that night had felt a lot like this one. Oliver and Felicity, surrounded by their friends and family, sharing a rare moment of celebration in an otherwise insanely high stress life. Of course, instead of craft beer and mysterious mixology there had been champagne and…well, Felicity had still been in a wheelchair.

Was it ironic that the last time Felicity could remember being truly happy she had been paralyzed?

But maybe not, because that had been the night that Curtis had given Felicity the stimulator and they…her and Oliver…had both been filled with so much hope. Funny how hope could create as much joy as reality could. The future had looked awfully bright that night.

It didn’t look too shabby tonight either. Hello hope, her old friend. Felicity had missed her.

And tonight, everything just felt so…

Felicity wasn’t sure. She wasn’t sure she’d ever felt anything quite like this before. This hopeful anticipation. But, no…it was beyond hope. Felicity had confidence in the future (well, in her and Oliver’s future as a couple). And even though they weren’t technically back together just yet, there was this…hum…this knowledge that it was coming. Just over the horizon. Waiting patiently for the two of them to take those next few steps.

It made the journey (well, this last bit) kind of delicious. Felicity thought that, maybe, she had read about this sort of thing. This excitement, being on the precipice of a relationship, looking forward to each small step with a heightened anticipation. But she had never experienced it before.

In college, Felicity would have scoffed at such a…fluffy cheerful idea (she’d been such a moron) and her and Oliver…well, they’d gone from I’ve-lost-you-forever to run-away-with-me in less than twelve hours, with zero time to process the change, never mind enjoy the anticipation.

And every other significant romantic relationship Felicity had experienced…well, they had always been colored by the fact that she was kinda sorta helplessly in love with Oliver the entire time.

She was so lost in her thoughts, happy as they were (which was weird because she was thinking about some not so great times in her life) that Felicity didn’t notice Oliver approach until he was close.

Like right on top of her, breathing the same air…close.

Felicity might even say too close. If there was such a thing as too close when it came to Oliver and his proximity to her body and…

So not too close. Nope. Not at all.
Licking her lips, Felicity looked up at him and smiled (he was near enough that she had to look up, even in her four-inch heels). Oliver had a teasing look on his face and his eyes were bright. Bright in every sense. Intelligence. Happiness. Color.

God, the blue of his eyes…it was unfair that he had that body and those eyes. It gave him too much of an advantage over the female population. And the decent portion of the make one as well.

With a small, playful smile, Oliver reached over and closed his hand around Felicity’s, where it held her martini glass (very precariously to be honest). He lifted her glass, and her hand with it, to his nose and sniffed.

Felicity would have protested the presumptuousness of it…if she wasn’t so thrilled by the presumptuousness of it. And then Oliver upped the ante by tipping the glass and taking a small sip.

It wasn’t Oliver’s touch that was unusual. That hadn’t been taboo, well, ever. And after getting stuck in the Bunker together, the small, casual touches were back and becoming more and more frequent. But manipulating Felicity’s body like this, taking a sip of her drink, placing his lips where hers had been just moments before…that was a whole other level of intimacy.

Wow, this was something Felicity had…really missed. And that feeling in her stomach, all warm and aroused and excited, she hadn’t felt that in a really long time. Boy, was it welcome too.

But it was distracting. Distracting enough that she didn’t notice Oliver turning to the bartender until it was too late. “Rick, next round go real light on the strong stuff for Felicity, would you?”

“Will do, Mr. Mayor,” Rick immediately called back, even adding a wink. He just loved having the mayor relax in his bar (as rare as it was). Or maybe it was that Rick’s granddaughter had been saved by the Green Arrow a year or so back and Felicity was pretty damn certain that the old man had put two and two together.

It took Felicity a moment to remember that she shouldn’t be allowing this. Presumptuous in touching was one thing. That she encouraged. Making decisions for her, telling her when not to do something (like get blindingly drunk if she so desired)…not to be allowed under any circumstances.

“Hey,” Felicity managed to snap at Oliver (though it was a pretty weak snap, since she felt no anger what-so-ever). She gave him a (light) shove to his shoulder, which made Oliver move…not at all.

Which was good, really. Very good.

“I’m totally fine, Rick,” Felicity called out and she didn’t even slur. “You make your yummy concoctions any way you want and ignore Mr. Bossy pants. He forgets he hasn’t been the boss of me in years.”

“Ha,” Oliver huffed with a soft laugh. “As if I was ever the boss of you.” Then he gave her his sweet gentle smile (and seriously, it was much more dangerous a weapon than his damn bow) and whispered, “Felicity, you were standing here giggling to yourself.”

She tried for indignant huff, but it came out as a…giggle. Felicity slapped her free hand over her mouth to keep the rest of them from bubbling out and proving the adorable ass right, but it only managed to trigger a full belly laugh from Oliver.

“Strike that, Rick. Nothing but fruit juice and Sprite from now on.”
“No fair!” Then Felicity realized that she still had her hand over her mouth so it sounded more like ‘noomare.’ She removed the offending appendage to yell, “Rick, you will not listen to Mayor No-Fun. If I wants the alcohols, you will give me the alcohols.”

Oliver’s chest was shaking with barely controlled hilarity, his eyes all wrinkled up and sexy… damn him.

Felicity stuck a finger out and poked Oliver in the chest, but it was really hard to get a good poke in because Oliver was just that close to her. And she saw absolutely no benefit in taking a step back. “What do you think you are doing? You are not the mayor of me!”

Still fighting a smile, Oliver leaned even closer and, dear heavens, he smelled good. Felicity’s heart was doing that fluttery thing. How she’d missed that fluttery thing.

“Well, that doesn’t mean—”

“And I’m just looking out for my...teammate.” Oliver’s voice was low and smooth, as if that bourbon he’d drank had transfigured itself into words that were determined to make her even drunker, to wash any argument…any thought…from Felicity’s head. “And only a very drunk Felicity Smoak giggles.”

Felicity’s teeth clamped over her lower lip to keep herself from doing just that (again) and hoped she didn’t break skin because face…numb. But the familiarity and the closeness and the…Oliver…

Why were there so many people here?

It was actually just the team and Rick at this time of night on a Wednesday, but still…far too many people.

“That’s not true,” Felicity protested.

It was very much true and they both knew it.

Oliver lifted an eyebrow, an eyebrow that was too sexy for his own good, never mind hers.

“Oh dear God, now she was talking in third person. “I do not need to be very drunk to giggle. All I need to be is—”

“Moderately drunk?” Oliver suggested cheekily and Felicity managed an eye-roll.

God help her when Oliver was in a playful mood. Felicity loved every precious second of it, but it would be the death of her. “Tipsy. Felicity Smoak only needs to be tipsy to giggle.”

Oliver gave her a shit-eating grin that was so beautiful it made Felicity’s heart hurt. “What does she need to be to talk in third person?”

“Goddamn it!” He just had to be observant, didn’t he?
Oliver’s laughter flowed over and around them and it was really hard to be annoyed when it was such a rare and beautiful sound.

Felicity tried her best though. “Look here…” She tried to shake a finger at Oliver except… “Ooops.”

She kinda sorta shook the finger attached to the hand holding her martini glass. And, since martini glasses were not the best design for keeping the alcohol inside the glass, Felicity’s lovely drink went sloshing over the side. Considering Oliver was intent on cutting her off from her supply, she really couldn’t risk losing one precious drop.

So as it went cascading over the rim of her glass, Felicity dove for the dribble of deliciousness, catching it with her tongue.

Oliver’s laughter came to an abrupt halt and Felicity looked up from her task to see that his eyes were now very intent on her glass. Well, maybe not her glass so much as where her lips and tongue made contact with said glass.

His eyes darkened and intense…ified and Oliver may even be breathing hard and Felicity really, really wanted to smile. That cat got the cream smile.

But then Felicity would have had to stop what she was doing which…not gonna happen. Not until she had slurped up every last drop. And maybe ‘accidentally’ spilled some more and started all over again.

There was music in the background and the rest of the team was a bit rowdy, but Felicity was pretty certain she heard Oliver growl. That low and gravelly growl she hadn’t heard in forever, but would never forget because she could always feel it deep in her core.

Oliver was the only man on earth that could make a sound that felt like a caress. It left Felicity pressing her thighs together and maybe just a bit short of breath.

Once she’d lingered as long as she could, lapping up the spilled liquid, Felicity look a long, slow sip of her drink, making sure to catch Oliver’s eyes and hold them as she did.

And that eye contact…wow…Felicity almost shuddered. The way it made her feel…hot and tingly. Adored and loved. And so fraking turned on…

So this was eye sex.

Because Felicity thought that, perhaps, she was about to have an eye orgasm.

“Want some?” Felicity held her drink out to Oliver and, huh, was that her voice? It was kinda sexy. Good on her.

“Fe-li-ci-ty….”

It was a warning. She was certain of that. It was also one Felicity had absolutely no intention of heeding. (And she was pretty certain Oliver was hoping she wouldn’t).

Then the side of Oliver’s lip quirked up, lightening his expression and…it wasn’t just heat he was looking at her with. The depth of emotion underneath was just…damn…

Felicity thought she could happily stand here like this forever, with the two of them just looking… no, gazing at each other.
God, Felicity had missed this. Had she fully appreciated it before? Because it was a crying shame if—

“Curtis, dude, you suck!”

Rene’s loud (and obnoxious) voice broke the spell. And Oliver’s focus. His eyes flew to their teammates and, trying not to pout, Felicity’s followed.

But then Felicity had to shake her head a little to clear it. It felt like coming out of a spell or something. What had she been thinking? Another 30 seconds and Oliver was going to have to ask for the room and…well, were they ready for that?

Don’t get Felicity wrong. It would be awesome. But…

“I mean, I didn’t think you’d be good,” Rene ranted, either oblivious or completely uncaring of what he had interrupted. “But this is beyond suck, Hoss. This is being a menace to the bar-attending community.”

“That is just uncalled for!” Curtis snapped back, turning to Digg for reinforcement.

But John just gave the younger man a single raised eyebrow, his arms crossed and his smile wry, “Normally, I’d agree but, man, that is some really, really bad aim.”

It took Felicity a minute to realize they were talking about a game of darts.

Seriously? All this ruckus over a stupid bar game? Did they not see the very important flirting and gazing going on over here?

Blinking her eyes to focus them, Felicity was able to make out Rene’s green tipped darts scattered around the dart board and one red dart at the very edge. Frowning, she scanned the pillar the dart board was hung on and…duuuude…

Was that a dart in the back of a chair? So not safe.

And, really, this was why dart boards belonged on walls not pillars. Felicity was no expert but common-sense, people. They were taking drunk people. With flying projectiles. She was going to have to have a talk with Rick.

Also, as a card-carrying member if Team Arrow, Curtis should be extremely embarrassed.

Oliver certainly seemed to agree (about the safety issue and Curtis’ shame), because he stalked over to the chair, pulled out the dart, and turned to Curtis with a look…well, Felicity knew that look. She was never on the receiving end of that look (thank God), but Roy had been. And Rene and Thea and…

Poor Curtis had seen it enough that he had a Pavlovian response to it, hanging his head and shuffling his feet. Felicity almost laughed, which would have been mean, so she was glad she managed to restrain herself. Though, she totally blamed Rick and his goddamn giggle juice for the fact it was so hard to resist the urge.

Oliver stuck his finger out at Curtis and the poor man actually winced (even though Oliver was a good five feet away). “No more sharp, pointy things for you until you’ve had proper lessons. Very basic lessons. Lots of them.”

Oooo, Felicity knew what that meant. She looked to Digg, who met her eyes, clearly thinking the
same thing.

“Water slapping,” they said together.

Man, that would be fun. Felicity couldn’t wait.

“What was that now?” Curtis gaped.

“Aww, Hoss, look what you did?” Rene jumped right back into the fray because he was apparently a loud drunk, who didn’t know when to let things lie (and maybe liked being the center of attention). “You went and got Dad involved.”

“Pretty sure it was your yelling that got Oliver involved,” Dinah drawled, taking a sip of her beer.

Rene, predictably, ignored Dinah’s very excellent point. Probably because of how completely excellent it was. “Don’t you want a baby brother, Curtis? ‘Cause I’m pretty sure whatever was going on over there was going to get blondie pregnant.”

Felicity’s eyes went wide and she choked on her drink. Luckily it was drowned out by the synchronized head smacks by Digg and Dinah to the back of Rene’s head.

So…the others noticed the eye sex, then. That was embarrassing.

Downing the rest of her drink, Felicity prayed for some sort of control over her facial expressions (which wasn’t damn likely given how little control she had over them sober) and watched Oliver’s reaction over the rim of her glass.

“Watch it,” Oliver growled, turning that scary finger, all pointy and jabby, on Rene.

But if Felicity had been afraid being called out on their flirtation would make Oliver keep his distance…well, she needn’t have.

Immediately, Oliver was back at Felicity’s side, putting a protective hand on the small of her back, leaning in and whispering, “You okay? I can punch him. Not a problem.”

It was stupidly chivalrous and completely barbaric and Felicity really didn’t need to be protected from René’s inappropriate mouth but…it made her laugh.

She was giddy. It made her giddy.

But Oliver was so not drunk enough to punch Rene for something this dumb. Now a head-lock…that would be sexy.

Felicity smiled up at Oliver and Oliver smiled back and…had she been upset about something? She really couldn’t recall.

“Oh, come on!” Rene snorted. “He’s five seconds away from: ‘Give us the room.’”

And while Felicity now remembered why she was supposed to be annoyed-slash-embarrassed, she had to say, Rene did a rather impressive Oliver!Voice.

“You know what, Rene?” Digg jumped in, his voice raised and…ooo Rene was in trouble now. “If you really want someone to challenge you, I think you should play Oliver.” He gestured to the dart board with a jerk of his chin.

Felicity’s eyes lit up. She wasn’t actually upset by Rene’s teasing since…a) kinda too tipsy to
care, b) too happy to care, c) this was pretty par for the course with Team Arrow, and (most importantly) d) Oliver was being too adorable and attentive for her to mind anything.

But that didn’t mean Felicity wouldn’t thoroughly enjoy seeing Oliver kick Rene’s ass at darts.

Unfortunately, Rene wasn’t buying in. “Ha! As if that would be fair!”

Well, at least Rene wasn’t stupid enough (or wasted enough) to think he could beat the Green Arrow at darts.

But it would be so fun to see him lose…Felicity meant try. It would be fun to see him try to beat Oliver at darts. And then lose.

Everyone turned to Oliver, but it seemed to take him a minute to realize they were waiting for his response.

“What? He’s right,” Oliver looked like he didn’t understand why this was even a discussion. He glanced down at Felicity (who he was still right next to) as if looking for clarification and she shrugged. Only explanation she had was it would be fun to show the newbies what OTA could do. “I could beat him blindfolded,” Oliver argued and she didn’t doubt that for a second.

“Now that I’d like to see,” Curtis said with a gesture of his beer.

“It would be entertaining,” Dinah agreed, echoing Felicity’s thoughts. Though, probably, (hopefully) without the same ulterior motive of being turned on watching by Oliver win at…anything.

Rene let out a grunting sigh and threw his arms up in the air. “Fine. I’ll go up against a blindfolded Oliver.”

“Whoa!” Oliver put up his hands, clearly flummoxed as to how things had escalated so fast. He was so cute when he was flummoxed. “No way I’m letting any of you blindfold me.”

But Felicity’s favorite part was the way Oliver took a subtle step closer to her. As if he needed her to protect him from the drunken whims of the team.

“Except Blondie, you mean,” Rene smirked.

Maybe the step wasn’t so subtle.

But now Oliver was getting irritated. “Hey—”

“Oh oh, Dad’s got that loo-ok,” Rene sang. It was almost like he wanted to get trounced.

“Down Dawg,” Curtis threw out, but it sounded ridiculous coming from him. Maybe Drunk Team Arrow wasn’t the best idea.

Nah. What was she thinking? It was awesome.

Thankfully, Dinah stepped up before the boys could dig themselves in deeper (or start an old-fashioned bar brawl). “How about we play doubles. Me and Rene against Oliver and Felicity?”

Dinah must really want to see Oliver shoot blindfolded…whoa…wait…did she say ‘Felicity’?

“Me?” Felicity almost started choking again. No one in their right mind let her touch sharp pointy projectiles. Sober. “I’m probably worse than Curtis.”
“Hey…I mean, thanks?” Curtis tilted his head, undoubtedly trying to piece apart compliment from insult. He shouldn’t try so hard, any compliment in there wasn’t worth finding.

“That’s why it’s fair.” Dinah shrugged. She didn’t seem very drunk. Not that Felicity knew what a drunk Dinah looked like. Could be that it looked like this. Stoic and calm, but subtly egging on an epically disastrous dart contest.

Felicity’s already considerable respect for her ebbed up another notch.

“And we’ll make sure no one’s standing in the back half of the room,” Digg added, his grin wide as he peered over at Felicity. If he thought she didn’t catch the subtle insult, he was wrong.

“Fine,” Rene grunted, as if he were the one that had to agree to this nonsense. He always seemed to forget how not in charge he was. “But he still wears a blindfold.” Rene’s jerked a thumb at Oliver.

Oliver’s answer was simple.

“No.”

“I can put my hands over your eyes,” Felicity offered, though she had no idea why. She had no desire to humiliate herself playing darts.

Oliver’s eyes visibly softened as he turned his gaze to Felicity and he smiled that tiny smile that reached his eyes and…ohhhh, that’s why. Yup, they were playin’ darts. Time to do this thing.

But Rene shook his head, because he just had to be difficult. Dumb ass. “No way. Blondie will let him peek. Digg or Curtis can do it.”

Did Rene want to play or did he want to get punched? It really wasn’t clear.

But before Felicity could object to the implication she was a cheater (though now that she thought about it, she would totally cheat to kick Rene’s ass), a look of abject horror crossed Oliver’s face and he burst out with, “No one is putting their hands on me except Felicity.”

It was kinda awesome and even though she was definitely blushing, Felicity had to bite her lip from grinning out loud.

Wait…grinning out loud? Did that make sense?

Poor Oliver…he realized almost immediately what he’d said and he closed his eyes, his face twisting up in a grimace.

Finally, Curtis and Rene seemed to agree on something, because their laughter was synchronized and uproarious. Dinah and Digg were grinning ear to ear and with the laughter and the happiness and…much as Felicity tried to hold it in, a giggle popped out.

Oh well. Patting Oliver on the shoulder, Felicity tried to console him with, “Now you know how I feel.” She had humiliated herself enough times with accidental innuendos to not feel too bad for him.

“You know what they say about old married couples?” Digg smirked.

Even Oliver turned red at that one, narrowing his eyes at John and sending him the evil-eye.
It made Felicity want to run her fingers through the short hair on the back of his neck and pepper Oliver’s adorable face with kisses. Was that an odd reaction? She thought maybe it was.

Instead of petting him, Felicity managed a more moderate (and appropriate, she supposed) response and reached out to squeeze Oliver’s hand. Then, turning on Rene, she did her tipsy best to take control of this dog and pony show. “You heard him. You and Dinah against me and Oliver. I’ll put my hands over his eyes. Take it or leave it.” Then she added, just because, “Unless you’re scared, Dawg.”

‘Dawg’ sounded just ridiculous coming from her lips as it did Curtis’, but (in Felicity’s humble opinion) she owned it. Digg let out a bark of a laugh and Curtis leaned over to give Felicity a fist bump so...yeah, point Overwatch.

And it shut Rene up. He gave her a disgruntled glare, but he rolled his eyes and spit out, “Whatever. I go first.”

Oliver threw Felicity a smile, before following Rene to gather the darts, barking, “Hey, we get the green ones. That’s non-negotiable.”

Felicity smothered another laugh and went to take another sip of her drink, only to realize it was now empty. Well, that sucked. She placed the glass on the closest table and tried to figure out the best way to get a subtle message to Rick without Oliver noticing.

When Felicity looked up, Dinah was approaching her with a smile on her face. She was the only person Felicity knew who could simultaneously manage sly and friendly in one expression. Maybe she could be recruited to work around Oliver’s alcohol ban? No way Rick would say no to Dinah. Who could?

But as soon as Dinah was near enough, she threw Felicity for a loop by leaning in and whispering, “So when am I going to get the real story behind you and Oliver? Somehow, I don’t trust Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dwag’s version of events.”

And, miraculously, Felicity responded with a genuine laugh. It wasn’t even hysterical. Or awkward even. At least she didn’t think it was.

Two weeks ago, the same question would have given Felicity a horrible queasy feeling and she would have made the fastest excuse she could come up with (which, let’s face it, would have been pretty lame) and bolted. Like her ass was on fire.

But tonight…Felicity just gave Dinah a happy little (tipsy) smile. “Tweedle-dwag…great nickname B.T.W, I’m hoping that one sticks…wasn’t even around when Oliver and I were together…” Wow, was that the first time since the breakup she had had referred to their romantic history outright? “I can’t even imagine what his version sounds like.”

It was also kind of amazing that it didn’t bother Felicity at all that the team had clearly been discussing her and Oliver’s relationship status behind their backs. Not that in front of their backs would be any better. Probably worse, actually.

Dinah shrugged. “Goes something like this: Used to be engaged. Oliver fucked up. Now everyone suffers as we wait for him to get his head out of his ass and fix it.”

Wow. Felicity couldn’t help but laugh. Again. She was shocked at how much she didn’t hate Rene’s version. “What did Curtis say?” She couldn’t imagine that one was as…short and sweet.

The question earned her eye-roll. Felicity expected nothing less.
“I made the mistake of asking once,” Dinah told her, shaking her head. “I got a very confusing narrative that sounded a lot like a tele-novella. Star-crossed lovers, secret children, pining. Curtis seems to think you both enjoy being miserable.”

Felicity liked that version less. Curtis was way too into the modern soap opera. She pressed her lips together and frowned. “I can’t believe I’m going to say this, but I think I prefer Rene’s version.”

Dinah grinned, her eyes lighting up. “Curtis is also of the opinion that you overreacted to the whole situation but…” She leaned closer and whispered conspiratorially, “I think Curtis might have a tiny crush on our fearless leader.”

Smothering a giggle, Felicity’s eyes automatically found Curtis. It was no secret that her friend found her ex physically attractive…as luck would have it, Curtis’ eyes were currently glued, appreciatively, to Oliver’s back-side.

Not that Felicity could blame him. “It is one fine ass.”

Chuckling, Dinah nodded. “As an objective observer, I’d have to agree. In a completely aesthetic sense, of course.”

Felicity’s eyes flew back to Dinah’s. Oops. “I said that out loud, didn’t I?”

Dinah’s laugh was louder this time. “Is this something that happens when you’re drunk?”

“Tipsy,” Felicity corrected, scrunching up her nose. She was having a hard time keeping her eyes from Oliver’s ass now that it had been pointed out. Those pants were showing it off rather nicely. “And not just when I’m drunk. Unfortunately.”

It made Felicity realize that with everything going on this winter, she hadn’t taken the time to really get to know the only other woman on the team. Because everybody knew that Felicity occasionally spoke her thoughts out loud without meaning to.

Looking back at Dinah, Felicity impulsively blurted, “We should plan a girls’ day…night…pedicure-followed-by-drinks thing.” She tried not to wince at how awkward that sounded. “I’ll tell you the whole story. If you’d like.” Felicity didn’t overly love sharing, but, really, wouldn’t she rather Dinah hear the truth from her, than get a warped version from the boys (or the tabloids).

Thankfully, Dinah didn’t look at her like she was crazy or weird. Or too awkward to want to spend one on one time with. She just smiled. “Deal.”

Yay. Felicity made a friend. A girl one, no less. One that actually lived in Starling and didn’t disappear all the time for work or journeys of self-exploration.

“Hey, ladies! When you’re done gossiping, we have a game going on.”

Why did they put up with Rene? Felicity had a done a terrible job vetting this team. Also the boys were much bigger gossips than the girls, so really he should keep his stone throwing to himself.

Dinah leaned close and muttered, “He is such an asshole.”

Because Dinah was cool. And Rene was not.

Felicity nodded her agreement, but then Oliver distracted her. Completely. Simply by turning to her, holding out his hand, and murmuring a soft, “Your turn.”
And Felicity took it like the love-sick puppy she was, sliding her fingers across Oliver’s palm, trying to ignore the way Curtis turned to Rene and declared, “See, that’s how you treat a lady.”

They all needed to go home so Felicity and Oliver could enjoy all the lovely touches without the peanut gallery.

Luckily, Oliver must have decided not to let them bother him. He pulled Felicity over to the dart board and, placing a dart in her hand, he took her by the shoulders and adjusted her position. Then, leaning down, he whispered in her ear, “Try not to kill anyone.”

It was a clear dig and she should have been insulted. Felicity tried really hard to be annoyed, but instead she…giggled.

Maybe she was drunk.

Rene gave a frustrated grunt. “Come on now. No points for flirting.”

“Try not to kill anyone except Rene,” Oliver corrected, louder this time, before stepping back and leaving her with an even worse case of the giggles. That was actually funny.

Then Felicity realized she was supposed to throw the damn dart. Frak. She was so not good at this sort of thing.

Ah, the hell with it. It wasn’t like Felicity cared whether her friends thought she was good at darts or not. She had enough things she was good at that her self-esteem would surely survive.

Felicity threw the damn dart.

It landed about an inch above the score board. In the pillar.

So at least Felicity had done better than Curtis. This was something.

Rene, of course, snickered (maybe Felicity should aim the next one at him), but Curtis came over to give her another fist bump, singing, “Yay! Go nerds!”

Felicity rolled her eyes. Curtis could be so lame. But she returned the fist-bump anyway. He might be a lame nerd but he was her lame nerd. Solidarity and all that.

“I thought this was all angles and physics,” Dinah mused, eyeing the dart with a critical tilt to her head. “Aren’t you engineering types supposed to be good at this?”

As if. Felicity wished. “First of all, my Masters are in Cyber Security and IT, not Engineering and —”

“Second, you’re thinking of pool,” Curtis, the actual engineer, jumped in, defensive. Then he turned to Felicity. “We should have played pool.”

“Rick doesn’t have a pool table,” Felicity pointed out. It was either that or admit she wasn’t any better at pool. Just because she could calculate the angles, didn’t mean she could shoot worth a damn. It still required coordination.

“Maybe we need to buy him one,” Oliver murmured and…um…she hadn’t realized that he had gotten so close again. The man might move like a cat (or rather a panther), but he had gotten awfully close without her realizing. She really should have noticed.

His words puffed against her ear, making Felicity shiver. Oliver handed her another dart which…
what was the point anyway? Just give her zero points and move on.

But this time Oliver didn’t step away to let her shoot. If Oliver thought hovering was going to improve Felicity’s concentration he was soooo off. Especially when he put one hand on her waist and the other on her throwing hand…

Ohhhhh…Oliver was going to teach her to throw.

Okay, this Felicity could get behind. The heat of Oliver’s big body against her back and all the subtle little touches…ummmm. She was starting to see the advantages of that pool table. If those lessons were like these…add the leaning over…

Yes, please.

“Ready?” Oliver asked. He was so warm.

“Mmhmm,” Felicity hummed, leaning back into him and struggling to keep her eyes open. She really couldn’t care less about the damn game. She just let Oliver guide her hand and…

Oliver whispered in her ear, “One…two…three…throw!”

Felicity let go and…

Bullseye!

For real? Did that just happen?

“Oh my God. Eee!” Felicity clapped and maybe sort of hopped up and down on her toes. Just a little. Hey, she was drunk. These things happened. And also that was the most successful she had ever been, at anything remotely athletic. Ever.

Felicity spun around and…wow, Oliver was…still in her personal bubble. Yup, he was. What would he do if she just…kind of…leaned up and kissed him? In celebration, of course. Or maybe as a thank you?

Oliver was smiling down at her with those too blue eyes and that kiss was looking better and better and this was really an excellent excuse and…

“No way!” Rene called out. “No way! Not fair. That wasn’t Felicity throwing! That was Oliver using her hand as a…bow or something.”

Rene sucked. Really, really epically sucked. Felicity was so firing him. No more Team Arrow for Rene.

Oliver gave him a glare that would have shriveled a lesser man but whether it was the alcohol making him brave or sheer stupidity, Rene didn’t even flinch. It was almost impressive.

He was still fired.

“Fine,” Oliver finally barked.

Uh oh.

Oliver took Felicity’s hips and pushed her into the position he wanted her in and…okay, now this was not fair. He knew how much being manhandled turned her on. Was he doing it on purpose? Because she just might melt from the sheer hotness of it.
Wrapping himself around her, Oliver got her hand into position. Seriously, Felicity was really starting to see the advantage of this game. They hadn’t had this much physical contact (without either of them almost dying) in a year. Oh…well…except that one time in the bunker.

“Keep your hand right there,” Oliver whispered, sending tremors skittering up Felicity’s spine.

Mmm…*that one time in the bunker*…

But then Oliver pulled his hands away and stepped back and…it was _cold_! Goddamn it! Where was he going?

This was all Rene’s fault. Felicity was valiantly trying to restrain herself from sending him a furious glare (or an angry dart. Too bad she’d probably miss), when Oliver commanded, “Shoot!”

Felicity obeyed. Without a second thought. She just let the damn thing fly and…oh dear _God_, it actually hit the target!

Ha! Take that Rene, formerly known as Wild Dawg!

It wasn’t a bullseye, but _damn_ close!

Felicity squealed, clapping again. “I did it!”

Oliver grinned so wide his dimples showed. “You did.”

“Fine,” Rene grunted, sounding like he wanted to argue, but…actually Felicity wasn’t sure why he didn’t. He usually didn’t have that much restraint. “Dinah, you’re up.”

They all stepped back so Dinah could take Felicity’s spot. Felicity had every intention of nonchalantly stepping into Oliver’s space, but Curtis slipped over and pulled her aside.

He was the worst wing man.

Completely oblivious, Curtis cupped Felicity’s elbow and whispered in her ear (funny, no shivers with him), “You think Oliver would give me _those_ kinds of lessons?”

Jealous? Felicity managed to keep that comment inside though. Instead going with a cheeky, “I _dare you_ to ask him.” Because wouldn’t _that_ be fun?

Both of them looked at Oliver, who was standing, arms crossed, legs wide. His standard ‘relaxed’ pose. He wasn’t very good at relaxing. Well…outside of bed. Give Felicity a couple hours and she could relax him _real_ good.

Okay, recalibrating. Thoughts going a little too far over to the dirty side.

Felicity looked over Oliver (which probably wasn’t going to help with the recalibrating). His face was facing Dinah, but he was actually looking at Felicity out of the corner of his eye. In a way that made her heart speed up and her mouth water. If she had her guess _his_ thoughts were rolling around in a mud bath right about now.

“Yeah…” Curtis shook his head. “I don’t think I want to get in _that_ guy’s way tonight.” He turned to Felicity and put a hand on her shoulder. “Good luck. I expect the lowdown tomorrow.” Did Curtis have any idea how ridiculous he looked when he wagged his eyebrows like that? “Lookie here, you’re up, human blindfold.” He gave her a rather dopey and annoying wink (it was even worse than his eyebrow wag) and ended with a, “Knock ‘em dead.” It didn’t even make sense.
Felicity really hoped Curtis was drunk, because otherwise this was just embarrassing.

Dinah had finished shooting and done decent. Better than decent, actually. Better than Rene. Too bad she was on the other team. Still, Felicity felt like she should be rooting for her out of female solidarity or something. Go Girl Power! Hashtag-Feminism. Or something like that.

Then Felicity looked over at Oliver with all his bulgy muscles and his puppy-dog eyes and his secret insecurities…

“I think that Oliver should, at least, have a chance to show us what he can do without handicaps. A baseline of sorts,” Felicity said as innocently as she could manage.

‘Cause, Girl Power was great and all, but in the end, she was always gonna be Team Oliver. And, at the moment, it seemed really important that everyone here know exactly what he was capable of.

Oliver was already in position, twirling the three green darts casually in his hand and even that was impressive. He looked over his shoulder at her and…wow, that look…it was a wonder that Felicity wasn’t a puddle in middle of the floor. She was certainly damp in all her unmentionable places. She bit her lip, just to make sure she didn’t announce it to the world.

The darts flew in quick succession, before anyone else had a chance to offer an opinion about this ‘baseline’ Felicity was proposing. Oliver’s gaze never left hers.

“Woooo!” Curtis called and, yeah, maybe he did have a tiny crush. Who could blame him though?

Felicity tore her gaze from Oliver’s to see the three darts sharing a spot dead center and, dammit, if she wasn’t turned on even more.

“That did not count!” Rene quickly insisted. “We agreed to the blindfold…girl. Blindfold girl. That does not count!”

Oliver threw his protégé a smug (and horrifically sexy) look as he strode…no sauntered over and pulled out the darts. How was everyone not turned on by that?

Then Oliver turned to her with a single eyebrow raised. “Felicity?”

Okay, human blindfold time. It was both exciting and…kind of nerve-wrecking.

Oliver was, of course, very much taller than her, even in her four-inch heels, so, of course, Felicity had to lean against him as she reached up to cover his eyes.

Did she say nerve wrecking? She meant self-control wrecking. Because Felicity had to bite her lip to keep a dopey grin off her face as her breasts pressed against his biceps. She was minutes away from throwing herself at him.

And it wasn’t even sexual (well, not all sexual). Felicity had such an urge to lean her forehead against Oliver’s shoulder, something she had done a million times before. Something from another life. God, she missed it.

“Oh...no no no no no...this is not going to fly!”

What? Goddamn Rene!

“Didn’t I fire him?” Felicity grumbled.
“Not yet,” Oliver muttered back and his voice was even less pleased than hers was.

“I totally did. It might have been in my head, but I did. Rene should leave. He’s not on the team anymore.” Though maybe a dart in his backside first…?

Rene shot Felicity an unamused look as he pulled a chair up behind Oliver. “Since when do you have the power to fire me?”

“Since always,” Oliver and Digg responded together and Felicity gave Rene a smug look.

Ha! Take that!

“Fine,” Rene rolled his eyes. “I’m fired but we’re still finishing this game.” He extended his hand to Felicity like the gentleman he was not and said, “Up, blondie.”

“She’s not a dog,” Oliver hissed, before Felicity even had a chance to defend herself. And, wow, at this rate Rene really was gonna get fired. From his day job as well.

“Sorry, Dad,” Rene drawled, turning to bow to Felicity. Balls of steal. She’d give him that. “Miss Felicity, would you, please, do me the honor of helping you step upon this chair?”

Ummm. Alright, that was kind of adorable. Felicity even laughed. She couldn’t help it. She also gave in and took Rene’s hand, climbing onto the chair behind Oliver. “Fine, but you’re on probation,” she muttered as she did.

Rene placed an exaggerated hand on his chest as he took a step back. “Thank you, M’lady.”

Felicity totally forgave him. On the way Oliver was eyeing her heels from her perch on the chair (and maybe her legs) alone.

“Are you okay up there?” Oliver sounded concerned, but seemed to have trouble keeping his eyes on her face. This position also put the peek-a-boo part of her blouse right at Oliver’s eye level.

Felicity grinned. “I’ll just lean on you if I get wobbly.” Because her self-control was no better up here. It could be worse. Could she blame it on the air being thinner?

Her answer seemed to satisfy Oliver. A lot, actually. Felicity was pretty sure she saw a flash of pride and, maybe even possessiveness, before he turned back to face the dart board.

“Both hands over his eyes, blon…sorry, Miss Felicity, M’lady, please.”

Felicity rolled her eyes. Okay, it was becoming less and less cute each time Rene said it, but since she was pleased with his instructions, she let it go, placing both hands over Oliver’s eyes and leaning into him a bit. For stability.

Rene actually came over and adjusted Felicity’s hands to make sure no peeking could happen. It was probably a good thing that Oliver couldn’t see him doing it.

As if Oliver needed her to cheat. Though…just to make sure, as soon as Rene was out of their bubble, Felicity leaned forward and whispered in Oliver’s ear, “You want me to let you peek?”

“Nope,” Oliver whispered back and, luckily, he didn’t sound insulted. He sounded too confident to be insulted.

“You may shoot,” Rene told them oh-so-magnanimously and Felicity could feel the flutter of Oliver’s eyelashes under her hands as he rolled his eyes.
Then, before anyone could say ’boo’, Oliver let the darts fly. One. Two. Three.

All dead center.

“Whoohoo!”

Digg whistled and the clapping was rather loud for the small group that was gathered. Felicity laughed in triumph. As if she had thrown the shots. Her hands fell to Oliver’s shoulders and squeezed. Team Oliver always wins.

Well, unless it’s against Team Felicity.

But together…unstoppable. Take that, Tweedle-dwag!

And as if the display wasn’t enough, Oliver looked back over his shoulder and gave Felicity that panty-dropping wink she hadn’t seen in so long. It was a damn good thing Felicity was holding onto him, because her knees gave out.

“No way!” Rene grunted. “How the fuck…?”

The only response Oliver seemed to think necessary was a shrug.

Scowling, Rene stalked over to his coat and pulled out a beanie. Then, wordlessly, he handed the hat to Oliver.

Really? He’d been working with Oliver for almost a year and he didn’t believe he could make that shot without cheating? Maybe Rene wasn’t smart enough for Team Arrow.

Eyebrows up, Oliver asked, “Are you implying that I…we were cheating?”

Rene was smart enough not to admit that out loud, however. He did hold the hat out. Really, he should have quit while he was ahead. And, by ahead, Felicity meant before he induced Oliver to violence. Did Rene know about Roy and Barry and the arrows…?

“You’re walking a fine line, my friend,” Digg chuckled as he shook his head, nursing his beer.

Felicity would bet good money that John was thinking about Roy and Barry and the arrows. She’d also bet that he’d find Oliver putting a dart in Rene as entertaining as she would.

But Rene was braver than he was intelligent and Oliver didn’t seem the least bit insulted (which was good, because Felicity was having too good a time to have it ruined by a trip to the emergency room).

Oliver just shrugged good-naturedly, taking the hat. He really did love shooting things that weren’t trying to kill him.

“This better be clean, Ramirez.” Oliver pulled the hat on and down over his eyes.

And Felicity…she found herself feeling rather out of place, standing on top of that chair, drunk as frak, in four-inch heels. “Uh…am I still on human blindfold duty or can I get down now?”

“You’re still the human blindfold,” Rene insisted. Maybe he was just more stubborn than he was intelligent. But she had no desire to give up her job just yet so…

“Oky-doky.” Felicity knew none of it was going to make a dent in Oliver’s shooting ability, but touching was fun.
It didn’t affect Oliver in the slightest.

One. Two. Three.

Dead center.

“Dude,” Rene breathed and this time it was with reluctant admiration. The others whistled and clapped.

Oliver pulled off the hat and tossed it to Rene. Then, placing his hands-on Felicity’s waist, Oliver lifted her off the chair. It was wonderfully familiar.

“We done yet?” Oliver asked.

Felicity was done. So done. With the game. With the bar. Not with Oliver. Not by a long shot. She smiled up at him, hoping he was planning to walk her home and…

But Rene…Goddamn Rene…he answered, “Not quite.”

Apparently, the team wasn’t as done as Felicity was.

What followed was an hour and a half of the team trying to find the craziest scenarios they could dream up, all to see if they could make Oliver miss the target.

He hit the bullseye every time.

Every fraking time.

From across the room.

Backwards.

Left handed.

On one leg.

Upside down…yes, draped over a chair, upside down. (It was fricken adorable. Not to mention hot.)

The only time Oliver’s dart was even slightly off center (still a bullseye, just not dead-center) was when Rene spun him around like 30 times. With the stupid beanie on. After four more shots of bourbon.

Felicity was more surprised Oliver didn’t throw up, than that he made the shot. She couldn’t even watch that one. It made her queasy.

Then Rene took the board off the wall to create a moving target. He was seriously hammered at this point, having gone shot for shot with Oliver and the bourbon.

Digg didn’t look too thrilled with that one. He winced as Rene held the board in front of him. “I don’t know, man. If he misses the shot…”

“John!” Oliver was clearly insulted that Digg would suggest such a thing. Bourbon made him extra cocky.

Oliver’s eyes were glassy and, while his aim may still be on point, Felicity was pretty sure his
reflexes were shy of their usual perfection. She’d bet money he was really feeling the bourbon at this point. Which was saying something, because she rarely saw him affected by alcohol beyond being a little relaxed.

John held his hands up in surrender. “It’s not that I don’t have faith, Oliver—”

“It’s worth getting hit with a dart just to see him miss,” Rene cut in.

Because Rene was a moron.

And Oliver…he just grinned wider, lifting the dart.

But Rene stopped him with, “Don’t forget the hat.”

“No!”

Felicity knew she said it, but she wasn’t the only one. Curtis, though, was suspiciously silent. And she didn’t think it was out of faith in Oliver.

“Fine,” Rene conceded, sounding a lot like a petulant toddler.

None of it mattered. Rene couldn’t move the target fast enough for Oliver to miss.

It wasn’t until later, when Felicity was sitting on the bar, Oliver behind it with Rick, munching on pretzels and making shot after shot (darts, not bourbon. Thank goodness) over his shoulder that she asked in a whisper, “How are you doing this?”

Oliver shrugged, leaning back on the bar. Felicity couldn’t remember the last time he had looked so stress-free. It was an excellent look on him. He was facing the row of liquor bottles, but his eyes were on hers as he let another dart fly over his head, the cheers that followed telling her he had made the shot yet again.

“I remember where the target is.” Oliver said it as if it were simple. As if being able to keep in his brain the precise location of a tiny circle and make all the fine motor adjustments it took to make the shot every single time wasn’t extraordinary.

Shaking her head, Felicity sipped her drink (one that most definitely had alcohol in it, thank you very much, Rick). “How did you manage to fail out of four colleges?” It was something she often asked herself. Oliver really was smart enough to bumble through with at least a ‘C’ without even trying.

Another shrug. “It’s not hard if you never go to class. Or write papers. Or do any reading what-so-ever.”

“That would explain it.” As Felicity had expected, Oliver must have been actively working at not passing. She’d say it was a waste if she wasn’t so happy with the man he’d become.

Oliver leaned even further back to give her a smirk that really shouldn’t be as sexy as it was. Felicity would bet the remains of her severance that there was a part of him that had been proud of how cleanly he had thwarted his parents’ plans for him. He couldn’t get an MBA and become CEO if he failed out of college, could he?

“How about we turn off the lights?” Rene suggested.

Digg shook his head. He was seated with his feet propped up on the chair next to him, looking

“How about we let poor Rick, here,” Oliver clapped the old man on the shoulder, “close up and go home? Some of us need to work in the morning.” He turned back to the owner as he made his way back around the bar, “Pull up the final tab, will you?”

Then, with a confidence born as much from bourbon and a night of wins as the history between them (more so, probably), Oliver put his hands on Felicity’s waist to lift her off the bar. Smiling, she placed her hands on his shoulders and allowed him to…take his liberties. She had never had less of a desire to pop his bubble.

Oliver lifted Felicity down far slower than necessary. It was really too bad the team was still here.

“Walk you home?” Oliver’s voice was warm and thick and it rolled over Felicity like honey, leaving fuzzy bubbly contentment in its wake.

Felicity nodded happily. “Mmmhmm.”

She almost didn’t catch Rick say, “It’s on me. I hear the Green Arrow and his team brought in the Throwing Star Killer tonight. I’m feeling generous.”

Felicity could tell Oliver was trying not to grin like a fool. He failed. He kept his eyes on hers as…all the subtle ways he puffed up at the praise warmed her heart.

“Looks like I was wrong about that Green Arrow guy,” Oliver quipped, his eyes crinkling at Felicity as if they were sharing a private joke. Which they were, except there was no one in the room that didn’t get it.

“Not me,” Rick announced, clapping Oliver on the back (Felicity wondered exactly when, or if, Oliver was going to let her go). “Never lost faith.”

Digg threw an arm over Rick’s shoulder. “Enough to keep the mayor’s scary precision at darts on the down low?”

“Hey, what happens at Rick’s stays at Rick’s.” The bartender looked almost insulted at the implication it might not. But then he turned and sent Felicity a wink. “Though I might consider moving the dart board to the back wall.”

Laughing, Felicity gave up the warmth of Oliver’s hands (temporarily, if she had her way) to give Rick a peck on the cheek. “You are so getting a new pool table.” And, hopefully, she’d be getting lessons in that as well.

Rick’s weathered face split into a grin. “You have a fantastic rest of the night, Ms. Smoak.”

Digg laid a hand on Felicity’s back, his eyes warm and knowing. Supportive. “I’ll get the rest of these monkeys home safe—”

“Excuse me!”

“And Dinah,” Digg quickly corrected.

“Damn straight,” Dinah grunted, pulling on her leather coat and heading up the stairs to the street, leaving Tweedle-dee and Tweedle-dawg to follow her.

Curtis didn’t protest the insult, but he did whisper way too loudly as he passed Felicity, “Have fu-
“Enough,” John barked, bringing up the rear, but even he gave Felicity one last wink.

It was really hard to care. At least, in any negative way.

Oliver handed Felicity her purse, “Ready to go?”

Was she ever.

Chapter End Notes

So, if at the end of this chapter you were (internally) screaming, “Nooooo, I want to see the walk home!” have no fear, that’s the next chapter. Close to 10K words, all Oliver and Felicity. It’s Oliver’s pov and will depict the rest of their night together. It was supposed to all be one chapter but I hadn’t gotten a chance to write the team in a while, so I might have gone overboard.

Random thing, Felicity only giggling when drunk is my head cannon for her. It’s present in all my fics (except Found, I think), regardless of the universe.

Thank you, thank you, thank you, to my fabulous betas Fairytaleshearts, Imusuallyobsessed, and Ireland1733. And my endless gratitude to all of you who take a minute (or more) to leave a kudo or comment.

Visit me on Tumblr at http://emmlynestill.tumblr.com/ or Twitter, also Emmlynestill. I would love to chat!

Happy Reading,

Emmy
Walk Me Home (and Stay Awhile)

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

This chapter takes place toward the end of *Arrow 5x21: Honor Thy Father*, when the team goes out drinking after capturing Chase, and directly follows Chapter 2, but from Oliver’s point of view.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
He’d drank too much.

Oliver was well aware of this fact. Honestly, he wasn’t sure the last time he’d had this much to drink. He suspected it might have been before the island.

He hated being drunk. Feeling impaired. Having his reflexes dulled. Though…they hadn’t been dulled enough to affect his aim. But even that cocky attitude felt more like pre-island Ollie than himself.

Since Lian Yu, Oliver had been very careful to stop drinking as soon as he felt that first relaxing wave, those pre-intoxication effects, the easing of his muscles, the dulling of the constant worry. But before it affected his self-control in any way.
Well, it was affecting it now. Which was not okay and Oliver really didn’t know how he’d let it happen.

But he was certain his self-control had left the building. Because no matter how many times Oliver told himself to tone it down, to stop staring at her, to keep his Goddamn hands to himself… his body wouldn’t listen.

Oh, Oliver wasn’t completely gone. That was evident by the fact that he hadn’t dragged Felicity behind a building (or back to the Bunker. It really wasn’t far) and ravished her against the wall. And he also wasn’t so drunk that he wasn’t aware (very, very aware) of all the subtle (and not so subtle) ways Felicity was communicating that she would be open to just that.

The bourbon had quieted that voice in the back of Oliver’s head. The one that told him that he wasn’t worthy. The one that obsessed over ‘what ifs,’ over every little thing that could go wrong.

Without the voice holding him back, Oliver was left with nothing but a simmering flame in his blood whose name was Felicity. So every time his eyes fell to her lips (and they went there far more than they should) all he could see was his crashing to hers.

Oliver could actually taste her tongue. It was a phantom sensation in his mouth, like a missing limb, and he wanted to know…no, he craved the knowledge of how Felicity’s unique taste would mix with Rick’s Goddamn giggle juice.

His fingers constantly itched with the need to find the edge of that red skirt and…

Okay…refocusing.

Yup, Oliver was careening into very dangerous territory. He needed to readjust his trajectory before he went flying off a cliff and took Felicity with him.

How had he even gotten to this point? Oliver had intended one celebratory drink of bourbon, then to nurse a single bottle of beer for the rest of the night. That had been the plan and it was a good one. No harm. No foul.

But one glass of bourbon became two…because why not? It was a celebration. Team bonding and all that. How much could it even affect him? Oliver was a big guy with a fast metabolism. With his natural tolerance, two shots were still barely anything.

Besides, he was in a room full of people he trusted. Truly trusted. Even Rene, who was often a Grade A asshole, Oliver knew had his back.

It had been a long time since he’d let himself relax and be aware of this fact. He’d had a team he trusted for years now.

Intellectually, Oliver had known this. But Felicity was right, as she usually was, Oliver hadn’t allowed himself to let down his guard and feel that trust on a visceral level. Because he hadn’t trusted himself enough to let go and do so.

But tonight was different. Oliver was riding high on getting Chase behind bars (or glass), on having the suit back on, on Felicity…

Felicity…

It felt like he had his Felicity back for the first time since…well, it hadn’t felt this easy, this free since before she was shot. Maybe since before Oliver had found out about William.
Though maybe it was just the alcohol making Oliver feel that way.

No. It was…it was the way Felicity looked at him like he’d hung the moon. Nothing in the world had ever made Oliver feel as good. He had almost forgotten…or he’d tried not to think about it or…

Oliver knew he would never have found his way out of the darkness without her. He hadn’t exaggerated when he’d said that she was his light. That it was her that had guided him back. After Tommy. After Slade. After the League.

Then the light was gone and…somehow, Oliver had managed to keep going. Better than he’d imagined he’d be able to.

He’d done…okay. As mayor. As leader of this team. Eventually. Chase had thrown him, but…Oliver had been able to find his way back. Sure, he’d had help but, still, he’d managed it without his…light showing him the best path.

But now that they were on the other side (please, God, let this be the other side), Oliver could actually consider that maybe he’d needed this. To have the chance to prove, to himself more than anything, that he could make the right decisions without Felicity guiding him. To know he could be a (mostly) good man (if not a happy one) without her.

Yet here, now, on the other side…the light was back, at the end of the tunnel and so close and so bright and, wow, it made…everything so clear.

Oliver knew exactly who he was and who he wanted to be. All the pieces he had been struggling with…they just fell into place.

Even this stuff with Oliver’s dad. A year ago…a month ago, it would have really thrown him, but now it just gave him perspective.

This mission…this quest…it wasn’t about Robert Queen. Not anymore. Maybe it hadn’t been in a long time. It was about Oliver. It was about every single person on his team. It was about doing the right thing and helping this city. Helping his people. Keeping them safe.

This was no longer Robert Queen’s Legacy. It was Oliver Queen’s Legacy. Team Arrow’s legacy. Oliver and Felicity’s legacy. Together. And he really hoped it wasn’t the bourbon making him feel so confident in that.

But Oliver was a hundred percent certain that, from this day forward, what he wanted was to focus on their legacy. As a couple. As a family.

But it was important enough to take time and do it right.

At least that was what Oliver told himself at ARGUS after his surgery. And after he was discharged. And in the Bunker once they had taken down Chase. It was all very rational. Mature. A well thought out plan of action.

Then there was that second glass of bourbon and, suddenly, his hand was lingering on Felicity’s hip, dangerously close to the edge of that dress that had been fluttering around her thighs, temptingly, all day. Why would she wear skirts that short if it wasn’t to tempt him?

Okay, Oliver knew it wasn’t all about him, that Felicity picked clothing that fit her quirky personality and made her feel good.
But it really felt like her skirts were getting shorter and shorter ever since Oliver had left the ARGUS med bay and this sexy librarian thing...Felicity had to know what it was doing to him. She was too brilliant not to.

And, Jesus Christ, Oliver wanted to pull that string holding Felicity’s top together open with his teeth.

So Felicity was standing there...looking gorgeous and sexy and happy, leaning toward him and clapping whenever Oliver made one of those ridiculously easy shots and...

Oliver was flying high on life. He was having fun. It took him awhile to realize it because it was such a foreign concept, but surrounded by his friends and teammates, Oliver was actually having fun.

Then Rene was lining up shots, even more bourbon, and Oliver should have ended it right there. At that point, he hadn’t been too far gone. He was still in control of himself (mostly). He could (should) have taking the responsible road, been the ‘dad’, they accused him of being, and said ‘no.’

But then Felicity was next to him, her entire side pressed up against his as she leaned her elbow on the bar, her head on her hand, and smiled up at Oliver with those too red lips. Lips Oliver wanted to devour until every speck of lipstick was gone.

Felicity was having fun too. That much was obvious. More than she had had in a very long time. She deserved it and if she wanted Oliver to take those shots then...

Digg hadn’t drunk much. Let him be the dad for the night. He was better at it anyway.

So Oliver drank every shot they poured for him. Enjoyed every squeal and giggle from those red, red lips. It wasn’t like he was so drunk that he was going to stumble or slur. There would be no urinating in inappropriate places and he was very certain he would remember all of this in the morning. But...

The hum of alcohol in his blood was strong and the look in Felicity’s eyes was making him...reckless.

There was no way his judgement wasn’t impaired. Because when Oliver helped Felicity off the bar and murmured, “Walk you home?” it was in direct opposition to every rational plan he had for moving forward with this (please, God) reconciliation.

But Felicity just smiled and nodded. And...

Then it was too late to back out. Maybe Oliver should have let Digg take her home. Being alone with Felicity in the Loft...hell, just walking her the five blocks to the Loft was asking for trouble in his current state.

Oliver looked into her eyes and Felicity swayed toward him (Rick had definitely kept giving her alcohol, despite what Responsible Oliver of earlier in the evening had said). Her self-control didn’t seem to be any better than his.

He was in so much trouble.

Yet, there didn’t seem to be any part of him left that was willing to respond to that (small) piece of his brain that was still rational, because Oliver just ignored the all the too knowing looks from his teammates as he grabbed Felicity’s purse.
Not that Oliver cared what any of them thought. All he cared about was the future. And Felicity. More specifically, that they have one. Together.

In fact, Oliver didn’t even spare his team a glance as they left. He trusted Diggle to get them all home safe. Oliver just put a hand on the small of Felicity’s back and ushered her out. He followed her up the steps and out of the basement bar, his eyes glued to the hypnotizing sway of her skirt and those thighs and that ass…

Oliver bit back a groan. God, Felicity had the best ass. And those heels made her legs look so damn good. He had to clench his hands into fists to keep from touching.

Because a hand on her waist or guiding her arm to teach her to throw a dart was one thing, but they were not to the point where grabbing Felicity’s ass in a stairwell was a good idea.

Nope. No matter how delicious it looked. Or how much Felicity seemed to want…no. No. Felicity did not want to be groped. And, even if she did (which she didn’t), that was not part of the plan.

Oliver didn’t have much of a plan. Get Felicity home safe. Keep her smiling. Enjoy every second they got to spend together. That was really the sum total of his planning. Oliver’s brain was a happy hum of not-plans, of no-strategy. For once.

For once, Oliver was enjoying the moment.

But a cool breeze hit his face as soon as they emerged from the cellar bar, sobering Oliver up enough to allow caution in. And then that damn voice in the back of his head started up.

Don’t mess this up, it said. Take it slow. Don’t push. This was too important to fuck up.

Sometimes, the voice knew what it was talking about, so Oliver pushed his hands into his pockets (he didn’t have the self-control to guarantee they would stay respectful if they were left to their own devices) and sent Felicity an awkward smile.

Oliver felt like an idiot. God, what was it about Felicity that made him feel like a bashful adolescent. He hadn’t been bashful when he was an adolescent. He used to have social skills.

Now, he it felt like he had as much charm as a baked potato. When it actually mattered, anyway.

But Felicity smiled back (which was good), shyly crossing her arms over her chest, which was not as good, because the last thing in the world Oliver wanted was for this to turn uncomfortable. He needed to do something. Say something. Fast.

Oliver cleared his throat. Here went nothing. “Did you have fun tonight?”

God, that was lame. How come Oliver could charm a city, but could barely speak to the one person who knew him best in this world?

“Yeah. Yeah, I did.” Felicity gave him one of her luminous smiles and Oliver was able to relax again. Thank God.

“Me too. We have quite the team.” Because of her. If it had been up to Oliver, they would still be struggling to do this all on their own. Um…maybe he should say that out loud. Admitting Felicity
had been right...wasn’t that good boyfriend...or perspective boyfriend etiquette? He cleared his throat again. “You were right about that. Needing a team.”

Felicity’s smile just got bigger and, yeah, that concession was so worth it. She moved closer and bumped her shoulder against his. “Ooo, I do love it when you say that, Mr. Queen.”

And the tone of her voice…it sent all of Oliver’s blood straight to his dick and left him feeling light-headed. It took him a second to catch up. “’You mean...’you were right’?”

“Mmmm...” Felicity moaned dramatically and laid her hand on her chest, saying huskily, “Say it again.”

She was so fucking adorable. Laughing, Oliver leaned in and murmured into Felicity’s ear, trying to match her tone, “You were right. You usually are.”

Felicity’s breath hitched. “Oh my. You are trying to seduce me.”

Oliver froze.

Overload.


This was not a seduction. Not at all. Seductions were about sex and this was not about sex. Okay, not just about sex. Sex was just a small piece of....

Oliver needed to backtrack. He’d done something wrong. Taken a wrong turn. Implied something he hadn’t meant to imply. Where had he fucked up this time? How did he fix it?

Then Oliver realized that Felicity was staring up at him, her eyes wide, her smile fading.

And that was even worse.

It looked like...was she worried that Oliver didn’t want to seduce her? That would be...insane. Because, of course, he did. He wanted Felicity like...twenty-four/seven.

Should Oliver say that? Would that help? Would Felicity take it the right way? What was the right way? It might just make it worse. Then what?

Oliver gave Felicity what he hoped was a reassuring smile, because any words his stupid brain was coming up with were...just bad. But walking in silence was getting more and more awkward by the second.

Felicity’s lips trembled a little and it looked like she was trying to return his smile, but couldn’t quite manage it. Oliver needed to say something. And he couldn’t think of a fucking thing that wouldn’t dig the hole deeper. Felicity was the one with a way with words. Shit, she wrote half his speeches. Thea wrote the other half. Oliver was more of a man of action.

Should he kiss her? That was action. That Oliver was good at. Would that fix it? Or make it worse?

But the decision was taken from him as Felicity, still looking up at him and trying to walk in those devil heels, tripped and...thank God Oliver’s reflexes hadn’t been that affected by the damn bourbon, because he was able to catch her before she fell on her beautiful face.

Oliver’s heart did a double skip, which was absurd because he could usually handle
himself, and his team, falling from buildings and the worst-case scenario here was Felicity skinned her knee.

“Whoa! You okay?” Oliver asked, because…yeah…no. Felicity skinning her knee was a very upsetting prospect. It wasn’t logical, but it was fact. And she could have sprained her ankle. That would be worse and…”

“I’m fine,” Felicity answered, somewhat breathlessly. “I just got my heel stuck in the sidewalk.”

That was when Oliver realized she was clinging to him. In fact, her entire body was pressed up against his and…he was holding her there and it felt…really, really good. Which, of course, it did but…hey, it had been a while, so maybe he needed a moment to bask.

And…then, before Oliver knew it, he had already basked so long that it was passed the point where it was necessary to hold her…for balancing purposes anyway.

But now Oliver couldn’t let Felicity go too quickly because that might bring back the whole seducing/not seducing quick-sand thing. Maybe, just…keep her where she was? His body was very happy with that proposal and it wasn’t listening to anything his rational brain was telling him so…

“Um…” Oliver swallowed, deciding maybe talking would help distract Felicity from…everything awkward. “You know, you should keep tennis shoes or something in the Bunker for the walk home.” (The Bunker was only a fifteen-minute walk from the Loft, one of the reasons they had chosen it for their base of operations in the first place).

“Digg or Curtis usually drive me home.” Felicity sounded winded and she was making no effort to pull out of Oliver’s arms. That was good at least. “Besides, I thought you liked my heels.”

“I do,” was Oliver’s automatic and honest response. His brain-mouth filter was definitely not up to its usual standards. “They make…” Oliver had to bite his lip to keep the next words from tumbling out. Commenting on how sexy her shoes made her ass look was just not appropriate for this stage (the pre-first official date stage) of their potential relationship.

Taking a breath, Oliver tried to start over, “You look gorgeous in them.” Then he rushed to add, “But you look gorgeous in bare feet or chucks or panda flats…” Okay, now he was going too far. Again. “And you would look gorgeous in a Walking Boot if you broke your ankle but I would prefer to avoid that.”

Annnnd…how many times had Oliver just said ‘gorgeous’ in the last minute and a half?

Seriously? What was wrong with him?

But if the smile on Felicity’s face was any indication, she thought it was a pretty good answer. Or maybe she just thought it was cute when he was awkward as fuck. Either way maybe Oliver should turn his brain off more often. Things were going better than they had in months.

“Well…” Felicity leaned into him, her hands curled around Oliver’s biceps. “I’m not usually this clutzy. I’m used to walking in 4-inch heels now. I work with too many tall people.”

Oliver couldn’t say he hadn’t noticed (and appreciated) the height difference. “In fairness, you’ve had a little bit to drink.”

The words came out without thought, but it was Felicity’s quick response…
“I’ve had a lot to drink.”

Recognition came hard and fast, hitting Oliver like a sledge hammer and…

That was why Oliver couldn’t kiss her. How could he have forgotten? That was why pulling Felicity back to the Loft and throwing her down on the couch was…just not an option.

The reminder, in fact, was like a bucket of cold water thrown in his face and Oliver stepped back, out of Felicity’s arms.

Because they had done this before. They had gotten drunk (well, Felicity had) and had fallen into bed (or the work-out mat) and it really had not gone the way Oliver had hoped it would.

The summer had been going so well. Before. At least Oliver thought it had. Things between him and Felicity had been slowly going back to normal. He’d thought…maybe…they could just drift back together.

Oliver should have known how stupid that was. Or lazy. Nothing worthwhile ever came easy.

But there had been wine and flirtation and Felicity had seemed so happy. For the first time in months, she had seemed happy.

And Oliver had been happy. He’d had fun.

Like tonight.

And like tonight, Oliver had been so hopeful and in love and when Felicity kissed him, it felt like everything was right with the world again. He’d had some wine, just enough to relax him, but not nearly as much to drink as he’d had tonight. Maybe it had still been too much.

Oliver had certainly underestimated how drunk Felicity was. And that was just one of several bad calls he’d made that night. He’d assumed Felicity wouldn’t have kissed him if she didn’t want to get back together. He had certainly made an ass of himself with that one.

But perhaps that was what Felicity had been talking about when she said Oliver put her on a pedestal, assuming she would always make the right choice, that she would never give into a moment of weakness for a night of great sex.

Though maybe it had only been great for him. Felicity had said it was ‘nice’. Just ‘nice.’ She’d never said that before. Oliver hated that that bothered him, but it did.

He hated that he regretted a night that had been pretty incredible. Until it ended. Pretty damn abruptly.

But Oliver did. Regret it.

A lot.

After that night, there was a cautious distance between him and Felicity that just grew and grew. And, now, knowing that she must have started dating Malone not long after…Oliver wondered if he’d pushed her right into his arms.

By allowing that night to happen the way it did, by being broody and distant after, by withdrawing to lick his wounds…their friendship, their working relationship, all of it had suffered.

Was he willing to risk it all again?
Oliver took a deep breath and looked into Felicity’s eyes, she was still looking up at him and smiling and…

Yeah. He was willing to take the risk.

But not for some drunken hook-up. Oliver wanted it all. It was only worth it if they could have everything.

And Oliver really thought that they could have it all. He could make Felicity happy, be the partner she deserved. In every way. He knew he could do it. He just needed to prove it, needed one more chance to show her he could be her everything.

Oliver pressed a kiss to Felicity’s forehead, because it was so much safer than the alternative. He lingered far too long though, but her pleased hum only encouraged him.

It took all of Oliver’s willpower to pull even partially away from her. “Let’s get you home before you break something.” He wrapped his arm (just one this time) around Felicity’s waist. To help her walk, obviously. “Lean on me.”

He didn’t know what he was getting himself into when he told her that. Felicity’s arm curled around his hips and Oliver actually shivered it felt so good. She even leaned her head against his shoulder as they started walking again.

God, it would be so easy to forget this whole horrible year happened.

Felicity let out a giggle and Oliver smiled as she slapped a hand over her mouth. “Frak, I hate it when I do that.”

“What? Giggle?” Oliver asked, surprised. He knew it embarrassed her, but ‘hate’ was a strong word.

Felicity nodded. “I sound like a ditzy blond.”

Oliver had to laugh, it was so absurd. “You could never sound ditzy.” But Felicity just answered in a disbelieving huff, so Oliver added softly, “I kind of love the giggle.” He wondered if he could thank the bourbon for that particular confession.

Felicity tilted her head to the side so she could look up into his face. She eyed him suspiciously as they walked. “Because I sound silly and empty headed?”

“No.” Seriously? Ironically, that was possibly the dumbest thing Felicity had ever said. “Because you sound happy and carefree.”

Her confusion melted into a smile. “Maybe I need to get you to giggle then.” Felicity pinched Oliver’s side and it really shouldn’t have felt sexual, but it did.

Still Oliver let out a burst of laughter, as much from the idea of him being reduced to giggles as from the incredible burst of happiness her words triggered. “I don’t think that there is enough alcohol in the world for that. This is as carefree and happy as I get. Get used to it.”

Okay…

Oliver really had no idea where that came from. It had kind of spilled from his mouth. And that one, definitely the bourbon talking. Rick must carry some strong shit.
But Felicity…she looked…the phrase ‘shock and awe’ came to mind. And the way she looked up at him, eyes shining, her pony-tail messy and off center…

“I could definitely get used to it,” Felicity murmured and, God, if it wasn’t sex personified. And maybe something a whole lot better than sex.

Oliver felt it in his gut, a whole lot lower, and maybe even in his chest. Somehow, he managed to smile back before forcing himself to take a careful breath of the cool night air.

In through his nose, out through his mouth, trying to gain control of…something. Anything.

Felicity hummed happily, blissfully unaware of his struggle he and leaned her head back against Oliver’s shoulder as they walked. She started to babble on about some stupid thing Rene and Curtis had gotten into that night.

Half-listening, Oliver just enjoyed the rise and fall of Felicity’s voice.

He needed…a plan.

This no plan thing wasn’t working. It wasn’t going to end well. If he let things go naturally, Oliver was almost certain that they would end up in bed together (he wasn’t being arrogant, just realistic) and the last thing he wanted was a repeat of last summer. And, this time, he was actually drunk.

Putting everything else aside…the last thing Oliver needed was for reunion sex with the love of his life to be a drunken mess.

Look what happened last time. Oliver had been so caught up he hadn’t even realized Felicity wasn’t enjoying it as much as he was. He hadn’t thought he was intoxicated, but it had, apparently, been enough to affect his performance.

Oliver wasn’t one to be self-conscious or worried about his talent in the bedroom. It was one of the only things he had always been good at. From a young age. Even as a selfish adolescent, he had loved women (or girls, then) and loved making them feel good. It had led to a lot of trouble in his younger days but…

Felicity had never complained about their sex life. In fact, Oliver would have said their sex life had always been pretty damn spectacular. Even when Felicity was paralyzed, Oliver had devoted himself to making sure that she got as much pleasure as she possibly could from their love making. He knew it wasn’t the same, but with time and patience (and a lot of research) Oliver really thought she was satisfied. More than satisfied.

But then their first time together after so long and…it was nice.

Just nice.

Well, for Felicity. Oliver had thought that it was amazing, but…a part of him worried that the reason it was just nice for her was she wasn’t in love with him anymore. That the sex that had been a home-coming for him had been…closure for her.

Just the thought made Oliver nauseated, an empty hole expanding in his chest. Even with all the evidence that she still had feelings for him, even with Felicity tucked up against him and her arm around his waist, he…

“Oliver…hey, Oliver…”
Blinking, he turned his eyes down and focused on Felicity’s beautifully curious smile. “You haven’t heard a word I said, have you?”

Crap. “I…that’s not true.” Oliver had been listening. In the beginning.

“Really?” Felicity’s eyebrows flew up, her expression skeptical. “So…what was I talking about?”

“Rene and Curtis?” Oliver probably shouldn’t have made it a question. It showed his hand, practically admitted his mind had wandered, which was not what he wanted. Prospective boyfriends needed to, at the very least, be attentive.

Felicity just shook her head, cutting through Oliver’s bullshit as cleanly as ever. “You have worry face. No worry face allowed.”

“I don’t,” Oliver protested automatically, without even thinking about whether it was true or not.

Felicity just sighed. “Oliver, Chase is—”

“I wasn’t thinking about Chase.” At least Oliver could say that with absolute certainty and when Felicity opened her mouth to argue, he added, “Cross my heart.”

Frowning, Felicity reached up and tapped Oliver’s forehead. “So what’s with the crinkles, then?”

“I...”

How was Oliver supposed to answer that? Did he confess it was the idea that Felicity might not still be in love with him? Despite her saying ‘I love you’ multiple times? The possibility of him not being up to snuff in bed? How pathetic was that?

“I was thinking about the future,” Oliver finally settled on, then winced as Felicity’s face fell.

“What happened to making a better future?” Felicity asked gently, but Oliver felt like he was disappointing her again. It was the worst feeling.

He gave her a self-deprecating smile. “That’s the plan. I just…” Oliver took a deep breath. “I worry about my ability to make that happen.”

“I don’t.” And the look Felicity gave him was filled with so much confidence that it made Oliver dizzy. “And it’s not all on you. You have a team now.”

Smiling back, Oliver pressed a kiss to the top of her head. “I know that,” he whispered, not telling her that the only team he cared about (at the moment, anyway) was the two of them.

They were almost back to the Loft and....

Right, Oliver needed a plan. Because they were not going to fall back into bed tonight. But he also needed to make sure Felicity understood how not rejected she was.

The best course of action was to stay firmly outside the door to the Loft. He would get Felicity there safe and...he would ask her out to dinner...

Because that had gone so well in the past. Oliver hadn’t even been mayor then and they hadn’t had a stupid twitter nickname that was catnip to the paparazzi and…..no pressure there.

Maybe…he could ask if he could come back tomorrow…? Or this weekend…? And cook for her? They could talk. That would be nice and private and Oliver had missed cooking. He could
make some of Felicity’s favorites and limit the alcohol intake and…start over?

That sounded like a damn good plan. Oliver just needed to…convince Felicity.

By the time they reached the door to the Loft, Oliver had rehearsed exactly what he was going to say in his head, at least a half-dozen times. Felicity put her key in the lock and he held his breath, waiting for her to turn around so he could…

Felicity swung the door open, rather inelegantly, and stumbled…no hopped (on one foot) into the room, not bothering to invite Oliver in. Or even turn around and look at him. She was too busy trying to pry off her shoe.

Which wasn’t working.

Grunting in frustration, Felicity whined, “Ol-i-ver, it’s the strappy ones. I forgot. Oh, why did I put the strappy ones on today? I don’t even think my fingers can work these buckles!”

So much for Oliver’s plan.

Clearly, Felicity expected Oliver to follow and it wasn’t helping that she was acting so damn adorable. And familiar. Acting as if...as if they were still together.

Fuck him.

As he stepped into the Loft, his brain flashed the word ‘Danger.’ But Oliver’s feet weren’t listening, they were already following Felicity to the couch.

Oliver wondered if Felicity would feel better about him not listening to her if she knew he couldn’t even listen to himself.

At the moment, it didn’t even matter because she was oblivious to all of it. Felicity collapsed onto the sofa, muttering, “Goddamn it! I bet they use straps just like this for torture or BDSM. Did you know, it’s a scientific fact that the minute you step into your own home, high-heels become eight times more painful?”

Felicity didn’t even seem to pick up on the fact that she had just dropped a sex kink into casual conversation like it was nothing. She kept talking and Oliver...he tried not to swallow his tongue.

Sitting across from her on the coffee table (and trying to hide his internal panic), Oliver gently pried Felicity’s foot from her aggravated grasp. An action he was pretty sure he had not given his hands permission to preform.

But now that he had her foot, surrounded as it was by beautiful (but ridiculous) leather straps, there was nothing for Oliver to do but work the buckle free Felicity’s of the ‘torture’ bands (he was not contemplating the other description).

“You know, it’s very unfair that drunk you is still so much more coordinated than sober me,” Felicity pouted as Oliver slipped the shoe off and, good lord, the cuteness alone was going to break him.

It was on the tip of his tongue to deny being drunk, when he realized that was neither true, nor helpful to his cause, so Oliver let a smile be his only answer.

Pulling the shoe free, Oliver frowned down at the crisscross marks left by the straps and ran his thumbs over the red marks, trying to rub them away. Torture bands seemed a good description.
“Why do you wear these shoes again?”

Felicity giggled, which seemed an odd response, but when Oliver looked up at her questioningly, she only giggled more. “Are you aware you just growled...your Green Arrow growl...at my shoes? Pretty sure they don’t deserve an arrow through them.”

Oliver could only scowl at that. He wasn’t so sure. The red marks were not going away.

For some reason Felicity laughed even harder. “Really, Oliver, it’s not so bad. They barely hurt now. Just a tiny ache.”

Grunting, because he didn’t think Felicity would appreciate his opinion that her feet shouldn’t hurt at all, Oliver focused his attention on her foot, watching it flex and stretch and...a jolt of pure awe shot through him. A year ago, she couldn’t make these simple movements. Hell, a week ago.

Before Oliver realized what he was doing, he had pushed the pad of his thumb into her arch, running it along the tired tendons, and causing Felicity to let out a moan that went...well, straight to his cock.

And that should have clued him in it was time to stop. But of course Oliver continued the massage, hypnotized by Felicity’s purple tipped toes. Damn bourbon.

God, Oliver could develop a foot fetish for her. He wanted to run his cheek along the arch. Suck on each of her toes...

He put her foot down.

But before Oliver could stand up and get some distance between them, for his own fucking sanity...Felicity’s other foot still clad in the dominatrix straps (if dominatrix’ wore high fashion, extremely classy nude colored shoes) was presented to him.

Oliver caught her foot instinctively and when he glanced at her, Felicity was slumped down on the couch, eyes half-mast, smiling a lazy sort of smile. “Next, please.”

Well, shit.

Oliver was in so much fucking trouble.

But it wasn’t like he was even remotely capable of saying ‘no’ to her. Even if he wasn’t drunk as fuck. So he peeled off the other shoe, discarding it more violently than necessary and making Felicity giggle yet again. And...Oliver gave this foot the same treatment as the first.

Except maybe, this time, he let himself get as lost in this massage as Felicity did. Oliver just couldn’t help but enjoy the feel of her skin under his fingertips and the soft happy sounds she made.

But when Oliver felt Felicity’s other foot, the bare one, land on his knee...run up his thigh...her perfect toes curling...

“I’ll get you some water,” Oliver muttered, standing far too abruptly to look anything by...insane. “Water and ibuprofen. That’s what we need.”

Christ, he sounded like a tongue-tied fool, but Oliver needed to get away from Felicity right the fuck now. Or all his plans were going to go to shit.
Hell, his plans had *already* gone to shit. Oliver needed a *new* plan. ASAP. It would help if he had a working brain.

Oliver hurried to the kitchen, refusing to allow himself to even look back at Felicity, one mantra repeating in his head:

They were *not* going to have sex tonight.

They were not.

No.

No. No. *No* repeats of last summer. Just *no*.

Taking a deep breath, Oliver pulled two glasses and a bottle of ibuprofen from the same cabinet they had always been in, since the day they had unpacked from Ivytown. It kind of made his chest ache but...he forced himself to pull open the fridge, hoping that Felicity still had that Brita and…

“Felicity!”

“Hmm?” Felicity’s head popped up over the edge of the couch, an innocent look painted across her beautiful face. Which probably meant that she knew *exactly* what Oliver was horrified at. “What?”

What? Oliver threw her an incredulous look. “You have no *food*!”

For a brilliant woman...did Felicity have *any* ability to take care of herself? Because other than the Brita, the only thing in this refrigerator (the one Oliver had always kept so lovingly stocked) was an impressive collection of coffee creamers.

“Oh *that*.” Felicity waved a dismissive hand, turning back around to settle into the couch again. “There’s ice cream in the freezer.”

How does that make it okay? “Ice cream doesn’t count as food, Felicity!” How many times had Oliver said that phrase to her?

Shrugging, Felicity didn’t even turn back to look at him, just threw over her shoulder, “I eat most of my meals at the Bunker, anyway. I practically live there…which is where you live. Huh. It’s almost like we still live together.”

If someone told Oliver his heart had literally stopped at those words, he wouldn’t have been surprised. His hand flexed on the refrigerator door and his eyes flew to Felicity. But all he could see was a messy ponytail lying over the back of the couch. He waited for her to realize what she’d just said. To retreat. To babble and excuse her words.

But in her drunken state, Felicity just plowed forward, “Just without the sleeping together part.”

Just without the sleeping together part? Seriously?

Oliver sucked in a breath and hid his face in the refrigerator, wishing it was colder in there than it was. Maybe a blast of ice cold...*something* would help.

When he finally felt like he had enough self-control to face her, Oliver pulled out the Brita and poured. Then, gathering the glasses and the pills, he headed back to the sofa.

He needed to get out of here. Fast. Before he cracked.
Oliver had never been so close to cracking.

He set their water on the coffee table, planning to sit there as well. Minimum safe distance and all that. But, somehow, he found himself collapsing next to Felicity on the sofa instead. So yeah. Oliver wondered when he would regain voluntary muscle control.

“I’m glad to see that you got some for yourself. Is Oliver Queen actually concerned about getting a hangover?” Felicity sassed, her head lazily rolling over the back of the couch until she met his eyes.

Oliver Queen was actually pretty concerned about sobering up. “Felicity, hon…” Oliver tried not to wince as the endearment slipped out without being given permission to do so. “I haven’t been this drunk in a long time.” He hoped the confession would distract her from his slip up.

“Really?” Felicity smile and tone made it clear she was pretty delighted by the prospect. Which was dangerous. She sat up, tucking her feet under her. “You don’t seem that drunk.”

Felicity had no idea. He was more sober than he had been at the bar but still… “Trust me, I am.” Oliver rubbed his forehead, confessing, “I never should have given into Rene’s crap. That was a lot of bourbon in a short amount of time.”

Felicity nodded her agreement, though she didn’t seem to find it a bad thing. “You did empty the bottle.”

Oliver’s eyes flew to hers. “We did?” How did he not notice that? He usually noticed that stuff.

His question just made Felicity giggle again but when he handed her the ibuprofen she took it, so that was something. Oliver swallowed his own, wishing it would do more than prevent a headache. Being this drunk was completely unacceptable. What had he been thinking?

“I don’t think I’ve been this drunk since before Lian Yu.”

Had he said that out loud? He did. Oliver had said that out loud.

Not that it was something Oliver needed to keep from Felicity, but he hadn’t consciously decided to share either. God only knew what thought would pop out without permission next.

Felicity seemed pleased with the confession though. She pushed the water glass away and shifted closer, asking, “What about last summer?”

Oh…shit. Were they going to actually talk about Bunker sex? Also was it Oliver’s imagination or did her voice just go all husky? He was way too drunk to talk about last summer. Or to resist Felicity’s sexy voice. Dammit.

Swallowing, Oliver reminded himself to keep his hands and his endearments to himself. “Felicity, I was barely buzzed last summer.” Her, on the other hand…

Why that made Felicity grin wider, Oliver couldn’t guess, but she reached out and cupped his cheek, her fingers playing with his earlobe and…

Oh dear God…

Oliver closed his eyes and when he opened them again Felicity was staring at his lips and so close that he...
Goddamn it! Body, please, listen. For once. Pull away.

So, of course, Oliver’s hand reached out and rested gently on Felicity’s cheek, making her smile soften.

“Felicity?” Oliver’s voice was far gruffer than he would have liked. “We can’t do this.”

“Do what?” Felicity’s eyes were still on his lips. She was so close that Oliver could feel her breath. And she clearly wasn’t hearing him.

Suppressing a groan, Oliver forced himself to say, “We can’t have a repeat of last summer.”

Oliver could tell the exact moment his words sunk in, because Felicity went stiff. She sat back. Her hand fell away. Hurt clouded her eyes.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

“I want to kiss you,” Oliver blurted out in a rush, trying to make that look go away. This was worse than the seduction question on the street. “God, I want to kiss you.”

Felicity smiled, just a tiny bit, but her forehead crinkled in confusion. “Then…”

This might just kill him.

“Not like this,” Oliver managed to whisper, but she still looked confused. What was he thinking? Of course, she was confused. He was making zero sense. “Felicity, last summer I…I went into that night…” God fucking damn it! “I can’t do casual sex. Not with you. I can’t,” he confessed in a rush, feeling like a pathetic drunken fool.

This had to be his punishment for all those years of treating woman like shit. Oliver hoped, wherever she was, Laurel was enjoying the show.

But his confession did earn Oliver a small smile. “I realized that too. After,” Felicity murmured, guilt falling over her face like a shadow, which was the opposite of what Oliver wanted. But then she swallowed, leaning forward and whispering, “But this doesn’t have to be casual. I mean, it isn’t casual. That is, as long as you want…not casual.”

“Oh I want,” Oliver said far more vehemently than he would have liked, though the unrestricted honesty seemed to be working because Felicity beamed at him.

“Good. Me too.”

Oliver’s heart kinda stuttered. God, was this really happening? “I just want to do it right. One step at a time.”

“I’d like that very much,” she murmured and the look Felicity gave him…well, Oliver would gladly drown in it.

Felicity started to lean toward him again, but before she could kiss him, Oliver managed to get out, “Which means not starting anything without a clear sober mind.”

Oliver really couldn’t believe he was doing this. Saying ‘no’ to a kiss from Felicity. Was he insane? He wasn’t kidding when he said there was nothing he wanted more. And now he had to worry about Felicity being insulted or hurt or….

But when she pulled back, Felicity just looked sad and Oliver had no idea if that was worse or not.
“I really hurt you this summer, didn’t I?”

Crap. He wasn’t expecting the conversation to take that particular turn. Oliver opened his mouth to deny it. Or, at least, say he deserved it (which he did), but nothing came out.

Felicity sighed. “I’m sorry.”

“Hey. No. You did nothing wrong.” Oliver shook his head, regretting saying anything at all. Reaching out, he ran a finger down Felicity’s cheek. “Plus, I thought we were done with sorries.”

Felicity gave him the smallest of smiles. “Oliver, if this is going where I hope it’s going, we’re never going to be done with sorries. Sorries are a part of making a life together. Just like mistakes are part of living.”

God, Oliver loved this woman. “You are awfully wise for a drunk girl.”

“In Vino Veritas.” Felicity leaned into Oliver’s hand, which hadn’t strayed from her cheek, he noticed.

And Oliver was suddenly struck with the impulse to ask something he really shouldn’t.

“Felicity, can I ask you something?” Because apparently impulses were to be indulged that night. Even really stupid ones.

“Of course.”

Right. Of course. Had he thought Felicity would refuse? There was still a chance to back out before Oliver fucked this up. It wasn’t too late. He could let the conversation end here.

“That night, I…” Oliver just couldn’t keep his damn mouth shut. He must be a glutton for punishment. Self-destructive to the extreme. “It seemed pretty obvious to me…with the wine and the take-out…where things were going. Hell, even Curtis—”

Felicity sighed, her smile fading. “I knew.”

Of course, she had but that didn’t make anything clearer in Oliver’s mind. “Then why? I mean, why did you agree to it? Or…did something change during?” Like bad sex? “Because you seemed really happy.” And her orgasm didn’t seem bad. Unless…Felicity faked it. No. She couldn’t have. Why would she? “Or were you just looking for closure—?”

“Oh Oliver…” She groaned, pushing up her glasses to rub her eyes. Felicity looked like she was having about as much fun with this conversation as he was, but now it really was too late to back out. “Okay, so…you want the whole truth and nothing but the truth?”

Um…actually, Oliver probably not. There were things he didn’t want to know. Things he was happier having never confirmed.

“Yes.” Because Oliver loved self-flagellation.

Felicity threw back, so she was lying on the couch and tossed her legs onto Oliver’s lap and making him smile through his (admittedly blunted by alcohol) anxiety. God, imagine how awful this would have been without the bourbon? Then again they probably would have skipped the entire traumatic conversation without.

Her eyes focused on the ceiling, Felicity began, “I probably shouldn’t have…done the whole wine
and take-out thing. I did know what it implied and I...I knew nothing had really changed for me at that point. That I wasn’t ready to…talk. To face everything. To do all the hard work it would take to work through our issues.”

Felicity trailed off and Oliver...he just didn’t know what to make of her confession. “So why...?”

Shaking her head, Felicity shrugged, her eyes still searching the ceiling for unknown answers. “I guess I just...I missed you. I missed us. I just...I suppose I just decided not to overthink things for once and...” She was quiet for a moment, her face all scrunched up as if she were in pain. “So....this is going to sound selfish...”

Felicity turned her eyes to Oliver’s, looking for...encouragement, he guessed. His hands fell to her ankles and squeezed, hoping that was what she was looking for.

She gave him a grateful smile, so it seemed like it was. Than Felicity returned her gaze to the high ceiling and began even more quietly, “The last time we made love—or had sex or whatever—”

“Made love,” Oliver murmured, correcting her before he could stop himself.

It made Felicity stop and look at him, her face relaxing as she chuckled softly. “You are such a sap, Oliver Queen.” She reached out a hand and he took it, letting their combined hands fall loosely on her stomach as she continued, “So the last time we made love...before we broke...it was a quickie and I...I pretended to have an orgasm,” she confessed in a rush and Oliver winced, glad that she’d squeezed her eyes tightly shut and couldn’t see, “because I was paralyzed and it took so much time and effort to have an orgasm and I knew you wouldn’t finish until I did and we needed to get to Physical Therapy...”

Her voice cracked and Oliver... “It’s okay,” he murmured, squeezing her hand, though his own throat was closing as he remembered that morning. Not because Felicity had pretended, Oliver understood that, but because of the circumstances that led to it. His thumb started to caress her ankle bone and he decided just to let it.

Relaxing under his hands, Felicity continued, “I just kept thinking about how phenomenal our sex life used to be. Before.” That, at least, made Oliver smile. Yet, Felicity seemed to think better of her words and rushed to correct, “Not that it wasn’t after I was hurt—”

“I understand,” Oliver reassured. It wasn’t like he hadn’t thought at length about the difference in their sex lives before and after Felicity’s injury.

Sighing, Felicity squeezed his hand, though she still wouldn’t meet Oliver’s eyes. “I just wanted to feel that again. For my last memory of us together to be amazing.”

Oliver felt like she had kicked him. There were so many things buried in that one simple statement. “So it was about closure?”

Felicity’s eyes flew to his. “No! I mean...I didn’t mean the last ever. I couldn’t even make myself contemplate the idea of last ever, the idea was...is so awful.”

That made him feel better. It did but...swallowing, Oliver couldn’t stop himself from blurtng out, his voice horse, “I’m sorry, too. Sorry, it wasn’t amazing like you wanted.”

Felicity looked taken aback by that. And confused. Really, confused. “What are you talking about?”
And…yet another thing Oliver shouldn’t have brought up. “That night. I know it was ‘nice’, but you were looking for amazing…” Great, now he sounded like a sullen boy.

And what didn’t help… Felicity bursting out laughing.

Not a giggle. Not a chuckle. Or even regular laughter.

No, Felicity laughed so hard she convulsed with it, her feet jerking out of his lap as she rolled over into a fetal position with her uproarious laughter.

Oliver tried really hard not to be offended.

“Are you telling me,” Felicity finally forced out, through the gasps of laughter, “that Oliver Queen has been questioning his performance all this time? Insecure because I said it was ‘nice’?”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Oliver growled, feeling the blood rush to his face and fighting the urge to bolt.

“I sorry, I…” Felicity sat up and reached for him. When Oliver didn’t move, her hand settled on his knee. “No, you know what? I’m not sorry. It’s too funny. Since when do you question your prowess in bed?”

Okay, it was too much. This was already a sore subject and her reaction was like pouring salt in a wound. Oliver snapped. “Since my fiancé walked out on me and then couldn’t get away from me fast enough after we had drunken bunker sex.”

That stopped the laughter real quick. In fact, Felicity’s face fell so completely that Oliver was left feeling even worse. Fuck. “I’m sorry. That was uncalled for. I shouldn’t have—”

“No.” Felicity put up her hand and shook her head firmly, before very carefully scooting closer. “I’m sorry. That was…very insensitive of me. It’s just that…Oliver, the sex was spectacular. Beyond amazing. And it never even occurred to me that you didn’t realize that. I still can’t fathom how you could have thought otherwise.”

Okay…now, Oliver just felt like a moron. An insecure idiot. He was having trouble looking at her, in fact. “Well, I thought it was but then…I guess, I was just being foolish.”

“And then I thought maybe the sex…love making…was too good.” Felicity murmured, her voice gentle again, “I think maybe the sex…love making…was too good.”

“All right,” Oliver replied (again) instinctively, without taking a moment to think about what he was saying. Though, he stood by his statement. Even if he was now fighting the fact that Felicity’s words were having a distinct effect on his anatomy. Not too far from where her feet lie. At least, he knew the alcohol wasn’t affecting that.
Felicity gave him a sleepy grin. “It was so good…not just the sex. All of it. The laughing and the talking and the cuddling and the just being together. It felt so right and easy it…it terrified me.”

She had Oliver’s full attention now. Felicity’s words seemed to flow out into the room, over and around him. It was comforting and just another thing he had missed so fucking much.

“It would have been so easy to fall back into a relationship. To forget everything that went wrong or…to ignore it. To lose myself in you. Again. I got scared and I ran. Two days later, I accepted Billy’s invitation for coffee.” Felicity let out a self-deprecating huff, wrinkling her nose at the ceiling. “Not my finest moment.”

Oliver had no idea what to say, no idea how to…comfort her or…how he should take any of it. Funny how the thing that had scared her away was exactly what he had been hoping would happen. That they would just drift back together without having to do any work.

Felicity was right. If that had happened, without them working at anything, whose to say it all wouldn’t have fallen apart again? That was the old, lazy, Ollie way of handling relationship problems. Brush over his fuck-ups with charm and orgasms.

Felicity deserved better. Maybe they both did. They deserved the kind of relationship that only came from hard work.

So…this was a start, right? God, Oliver hoped so. He wanted to do it the right way. The hard way. Not that he had any idea of how to go about it.

The only thing Oliver could think to do, at the moment, was…give into the impulse he had been fighting since he stepped into the Loft.

Lifting Felicity’s foot to his cheek, Oliver pressed a kiss to the ball of her foot. He really was developing a foot fetish.

Smiling, Felicity held out her hand for him and, this time, when Oliver took it, she used his grip to leverage herself up. Then, half sitting in his lap, she reached out and cupped his cheek, so she could meet his eyes. “But now isn’t then, Oliver. Last summer, nothing had changed. Now everything has changed. You see that, right?”

Oliver nodded unsteadily. “I do.” Felicity beamed at his word choice (even though Oliver was a little embarrassed by it) and he chanced to add, “I’m willing to work as hard as I need to, Felicity. Whatever it takes.”

He didn’t think Felicity’s smile could get any wider, but it did. “Me too,” she whispered, leaning even closer. “We should kiss on it.”

God, she made him laugh.

“Felicity, as much as I really, really want to kiss you right now…if we’re going to do this right this time shouldn’t our first kiss of this new…thing we have going on, shouldn’t it be with both of us completely clear-headed.”

Felicity scrunched up her nose. “I guess.” Though she didn’t look (or sound) convinced. At all. “Anyone ever tell you that this new Mature Oliver is no fun?”

Oliver grinned. “No one that counts. Until now.” Actually, her opinion might be the only one that mattered in this particular matter.
“Fine.” Felicity swung her legs off of his lap and reached to take a drink of water.

Leaning over, Oliver kissed Felicity’s temple because, apparently, that was all he was allowed to do with these new rules. The ones he had set. Why did he do that again?

Taking Felicity’s hand, Oliver murmured, “Walk me out?” Because if he stayed, there was no way he was going to be able to follow them.

Felicity gave him a melty sort of smile and nodded.

Once they were at the door, Oliver turned to Felicity and…he really needed to go.

He really didn’t want to.

Taking both of Felicity’s hands in his, he sucked in a deep breath. Responsible Oliver might be no fun, but it was who he needed to be right then. “Finish your water and sleep in tomorrow. Text me at City Hall when you finally wake up.”

Felicity’s eyes widened and she opened her mouth as if she were going to say something, but then she just licked her lips and shook her head. “So…let me get this straight, we’re not kissing right now because drunken kisses don’t count?”

Okay. Not sure where Felicity was going with this. “Ummm…yeah?” Why did this feel like a trap?

“So…” Felicity popped up onto her toes, grabbing Oliver’s face and taking him off guard. Then her lips were pressed to his.

Oliver might have moaned. It felt that good. But before he could give in and kiss her back, Felicity pulled her lips from his.

“Since that doesn’t count,” Felicity argued, her voice low and smooth, “we can have our first ‘counting kiss, our first sober kiss of our new relationship later. Tonight—”

Fuck. Oliver cupped the back of Felicity’s head and yanked her lips back to his.

She let out a small, “Eep,” as Oliver gave into his body and let his brain shut the hell up. Tilting her head to the side, his mouth slanted over hers and…Felicity didn’t require much urging to open her lips and then their tongues touched and he moaned into her mouth or she moaned into his or maybe they were simultaneous...

God, it felt like coming home. Even more so than last summer. Perhaps because this time so much that had been between them had finally been cleared away. Oliver felt free. Light. They were barely together and yet they felt so much more connected than they had when they were engaged.

Tongues stroked, then tangled. One soft hand settled on his neck and another carded through his hair. Felicity’s ponytail holder was long gone and her hair overflowing his fist and…Oliver’s brain was overloading.

There was no control left to be had.

Oliver’s hands found the edge of that too short red skirt and this time he didn’t try to stop them when they slid underneath and cupped Felicity’s fabulous ass…God, he’d missed that ass. And that reminded him…
Pulling away from the kiss, panting, Oliver ignored Felicity’s moan of protest and caught the string at her neck with his teeth and pulled.

It fell apart easily.

By the time it did, Felicity had stopped protesting and was just moaning, cupping the back of Oliver’s head and pulling him closer as he buried his face between the parted fabric, brushing his lips back and forth along the flesh that had tormented him.

“Oliver…” Felicity whimpered, her head thrown back.

Okay.

What the fuck was he doing?

With great effort, Oliver pulled back. Placing a chaste kiss between her breasts, he set Felicity back on her feet (when had he lifted her off her feet?) and stepped away before it was too late.

“I, uhh…” Now who was talking in sentence fragments? “I look forward to that first kiss. The one that, uh…counts.” Oliver sounded breathless even to his own ears.

Felicity let out another giggle, muffled behind her tightly clasped lips. She straightened her glasses and smiled, her lipstick a whole lot lighter and just the tiniest bit smeared. “Yeah. Yeah. Me, too.”

Um, so Oliver was supposed to leave now, right?

“So…bye, then.”

Felicity’s smile was not helping matters. Neither was the come-hither look in her eyes. Or the way her mussed hair…hair mussed by Oliver’s hands…framed her beautiful face.

“Bye.”

Crap. He really needed to leave.

Nodding, Oliver was finally able to make his body turn away from her.

He made it exactly seven steps before Felicity called him back, “Oliver?”

When he looked over his shoulder, Felicity was leaning against the door jam, her toes drawing circles on the hard wood. “So your birthday is Tuesday…”

Oliver smiled, insanely pleased that she had remembered. Especially, since he hadn’t. “I guess it is.” He shoved his hands into his pockets and maybe he even shuffled his feet a little. He really hoped that Felicity didn’t notice.

“You should come over for dinner.”

Oliver tried really hard not to grin like a fool. He was pretty sure he failed. “I’d like that.”

Biting her lip, Felicity nodded. “I’ll, uh…go light on the champagne.”

Oh wow.

“Good idea.” Oliver wasn’t able to hold back his happy laugh.
With one last smile, Felicity murmured, “Good night,” and closed the door.

Oliver stared at the door, grinning like a maniac, for a full minute before he could make himself move. He didn’t think he had ever looked forward to a birthday more.

*chapter edited 6/10/2018*

Chapter End Notes

The next chapter with be Oliver’s birthday party (5x22), during and after. If the end of this chapter implies a very different sort of birthday celebration, that will be addressed in both chapter 4 and two-shot AU called Best Birthday Ever, where Felicity goes in a decidedly more “E” rated direction for the party she throws. :-)

My everlasting love and gratitude to Fairytalesharents, Imusuallyobsessed, and Ireland1733 for all their help and support!

Visit me on Tumblr at http://emmilynestill.tumblr.com/ or Twitter, also Emmilynestill.

Happy Reading!
Chapter Summary

This chapter takes place during and immediately after Oliver’s Birthday Party in 5x22. My intention is for nothing in here to contradict cannon through the end of season 5, even though there is quite a lot of additional Olicity goodness.

I do have a very non-cannon version of Oliver’s Birthday Party as a two shot A, so check it out if you are interested. :-)
Felicity wondered if this counted as chickening out or not.

When her drunken (and blissed out) mind had decided to ask Oliver over for a birthday celebration, Felicity had something significantly more…*intimate* in mind.

But in the cold, sober, hung-over light of day, Felicity had started to rethink the idea. Well, maybe it was more accurate to say she got nervous.

Fine. *Okay.* Felicity freaked the *frak* out. That’s what happened. She *panicked*.

Felicity wanted to get back together. Of *course*, she did. Oliver was the love of her life. She’d missed him terribly and she forgave him and she’d been absolutely miserable when they were apart and…

But…oh God, there were so many ‘but’s.

Was it the right time? Were they ready? What if it didn’t work out? Felicity didn’t know if she
could survive another break-up. And, what if this time, they couldn’t figure out how to be friends and partners after?

No Oliver. No Overwatch. No team. That was Felicity’s…everything.

Wow, Felicity really needed to get a job, because that was just a little bit sad. Thank God, the year on that No Compete Clause on her severance pay was up soon. Not having a job just gave her more time for these ridiculous, panicked head rambles and they were progressing to the point where there was a serious danger of dropping her, head first, in the loony bin.

Especially since, all these stupid endless ‘what if’s were a waste of time. There was only one question left to ask:

If Felicity put her heart on the line one more time, was it worth the possibility of failing? Was Oliver worth the risk?

The answer to that question came swiftly every time Felicity asked it of herself (and she asked it often). And with complete surety.

Yes.

Absolutely. Completely. Yes.

It was worth it. Oliver was worth it. They were worth it. So, so worth it.

And more importantly (or at least equally importantly), she was worth it. Felicity refused to be that person, the one who lived half a life because she was afraid of risking what she had for something greater (even though that had kinda, possibly been exactly what she’d been doing for the last year. Was it any wonder it had sucked?).

So if Felicity’s answer was so clear, then what the hell was her team doing loitering in her Loft at a birthday party both her and Oliver would prefer to be a heck of a lot smaller?

Okay. That wasn’t fair. It could be that Oliver was thrilled to spend his birthday with his sister and his best friend and…

Oliver had said that they should take this one step at a time and that was…really smart. It was. They’d already agreed to try again and, no, she wasn’t wussing out on that. Nope. No way. Backing out now was unthinkable (and it, kind of, made Felicity hyperventilate when she even tried). This was, clearly, what they both wanted.

The only thing unclear was the pacing.

One step at a time. Very wise. But…

But what the were these mysterious steps everyone kept talking about?

Was a private dinner at her apartment (the apartment they once shared as a soon-to-be married couple) too big of a step? Felicity didn’t think so. But what did she know?

Certainly, the very intimate birthday Felicity had fantasized about was. The one she had dreamed up in her drunken state after Oliver had walked her home the night they had caught Chase, the night they had flirted and kissed and she gone upstairs to the filthiest dreams…

Awake. Awake dreams. Daydreams. In the nighttime. One might even call them plans.
Plans for his birthday that may or may not have involved Felicity presenting herself to Oliver as his birthday cake and letting him eat frosting off every square inch of her.

Yeah...maybe, that wasn’t the next logical step.

Unfortunately.

Felicity sighed. Maybe next birthday. It was such a beautiful fantasy it would be a shame to waste.

But once she had discarded her original plan (candles, frosting, and satin sheets, how she missed thee), Felicity had really struggled to find some sort of...in between. Something first date-y.

What the hell did someone do on a first date with your partner in crime fighting/ex-fiancé/present soulmate/love of your life? All of which made the very idea of a 'first date' seem completely ludicrous. The idea of sitting at a restaurant with everyone staring at them...ugh. No.

But ordering in to Felicity’s place (God knew she wasn’t going to cook), was that too much? Was it too little? Was that still just an invitation to come over for sex? Was it special enough?

All the second guessing made it really easy to jump on board when Thea suggested a surprise party.

Even though it really felt like chickening out. Because the more Felicity stood there, surrounded by friends and family, the more she realized this wasn’t an in-between as much as a side-step.

And, frak, Felicity was seriously sick of side-steps. At least this showed how much she cared. How much all of them cared.

Oliver didn’t have enough people making a fuss over him, showing him how much they loved and appreciated him. The cake, the banners, the balloons, the presents...he deserved all that. He meant a lot to them, all of them. And this party made that clear.

Except, maybe, that was the problem. The ‘all of them’ part. Because Felicity needed to make it clear she loved and appreciated Oliver in a way that was very different than everyone else in this room. And when she looked around she realized that part was about as clear as mud.

It could have been that when Felicity realized her mistake she...panicked. Again. She might have started spewing random...hints. It was super suave. Yup, eloquence thy name was Felicity Smoak. And the worst of it...

The Pacific Crest Trail.

Felicity had all but invited Oliver on a romantic weekend, just the two of them. Which surely was the exact opposite of ‘one step at a time.’ And what made it was made soooo much better was the fact that she asked it in a totally messed up, backwards, passive way. Would Oliver even understand what Felicity had meant with her meandering word vomit?

What was she thinking? Of course, Oliver understood. There was like...a negative twelve percent chance that he didn’t get it. He had literally spent months trying to get Felicity to agree to go with him to the Pacific Crest Trail. Wheedling and cajoling. Promising all sorts of lovely things.

But, the thing was, Felicity kinda sorta...hated camping. And not just camping. All outdoorsy, roughing it, lack of technology type activities.
Oliver had managed to convince her to branch out and try hiking in the Andes (just hiking, no tents), which had granted been beautiful. Felicity would give him that, but her feet had gotten wet and blistered and, in the end, they were a peeling bloody painful disgusting mess and she had come to the conclusion…never again.

Of course her stubborn boyfriend had ignored the part he didn’t want to hear (an unfortunate habit of his), the part where she didn’t like the outdoors (roughing it, lack of technology, etc.) and had focused on her feet.

Oliver was certain that the right pair of socks would completely change the experience for her. Socks. It had become somewhat of a joke with them. He’d even promised to give her a mani/pedi himself (and implied that it would be the sexiest mani/pedi ever given) if he was wrong. Or if he was right. The sexy mani/pedi bribe was a given.

So…yeah, Oliver totally understood what Felicity was offering, bringing up the Pacific Crest Trail. Big time. And he’d been about as subtle as a freight train in letting Felicity know he got it. Their friends probably thought Oliver had some weird sock fixation but…

Felicity knew. She knew exactly what Oliver was saying in his sweet, painfully awkward way. He was saying he would go anywhere with her. He was saying that he’d take care of her. That he’d be prepared this time, make sure she never wore the wrong socks again.

Ugh. Could they just fast forward through the weird stuff and go straight to the happily ever after part?

This part was no longer delicious. In fact it was increasingly stressful. And, boy, Felicity must be feeling desperate to offer that stupid camping trip from hell (and by camping trip from hell, she meant any and all camping trips).

It would also help if Felicity had allowed herself more than a half-a-glass of champagne. Damn Oliver and his rule about starting off sober. Her only consolation was that he was as big of a nervous wreck as she was. The adorkable bastard.

Adorkable. It was the perfect word to describe Oliver tonight and, God, it was hot. This man could walk into a room of five-hundred strangers and charm the lot of them, exhibiting perfect grace. And, here he was, in a room with his nearest and dearest, and he was an adorkable mess.

But this was the real Oliver. The Oliver Felicity loved.

Except…

Felicity couldn’t help but worry that Oliver was just acting this way because she had gone too far, made him uncomfortable, gone way overboard with this whole surprise party thing. The balloons and the little kid’s cake (which she really loved and just couldn’t regret), the arrow decorations and the special rented cocktail tables…

Yup, it was the tables that put it over the top. They said, ‘trying too hard’. Especially since there were only like eight people at this party. Even if Dinah and Rene and Lyla had shown up, this wasn’t a party for fifty. It was friends and family. Fancy cocktail tables didn’t make up for the fact that Oliver had wanted this to be a date, not a…whatever this was.

And what if some of Oliver’s…discomfort was because he was feeling unsure of her. He’d been expecting a date and he had shown up to an event. Who wouldn’t be confused. Was he thinking that she had done this on purpose to put up roadblocks? Because she had changed her mind?
All of which...so, so not the case. But, the fact that Oliver had called their dating ‘hypothetical’ (even after the whole weird Pacific Crest Trail exchange) just showed how unsure he was. Felicity wasn’t sure if her response had been all that reassuring either. Why was she such a spaz? Maybe...

“Felicity?”

Oliver’s hand landed on her shoulder and Felicity really wished it didn’t make her jump. She could add that to the ever-growing list of regrets about this evening. Frak.

“You, okay?”

Great. She really must be acting weird if Oliver was asking her that. In the middle of what was supposed to be a happy event. Felicity had canceled their (probably) date for a surprise party and now she couldn’t even...properly party.

“Yeah. Yeah. Of course.” Great. That was reassuring. Felicity did her best to smile, but it probably came off as moronic. Or constipated. If only she could have finished that glass of champagne. Or five.

Oliver looked about as convinced as Felicity expected him to be. Which was not at all. “Do you —?”

“Are you disappointed?” Felicity blurted out, her words overlapping Oliver’s.

Awww crap.

Oliver’s brow furrowed. “What?”

Felicity considered lying. She really did. Oliver was giving her an out, intentional or otherwise. She should take it.

What good would backtracking do her? They had been dancing around things all night and look how far that had gotten them. Swallowing, Felicity pushed forward, “Are you disappointed? That this isn’t just the two of us?”

“No,” Oliver murmured, shaking his head, using the same tone he used when he said, ‘hypothetically dating his ex-fiancée.’ So, completely convincing. “No...” Then he paused and looked directly into Felicity’s eyes, letting out a little sigh. “Maybe a little.”

Points for honesty. Oliver may even be doing better than Felicity in that department which was beyond sad. But honesty when it came to feelings was so much harder than it looked.

“I just...” he murmured as Felicity stood chewing her on her lip and...dear lord, now he was shuffling his feet. Could he get any more lovable? “When you asked me to come over the other night, it seemed like...” Oliver looked up at her through his lashes and, seriously, it should be illegal, it was that unfair.

“That I was inviting you over for a very different kind of celebration?” Felicity finished, taking pity on him. And maybe herself a little too. This was painful enough without dragging it out.


“I did.” Felicity blurted. Because she might be disappointed too and she had no one to blame but herself. “I mean, I had something very different in mind but I was rather drunk and the next
morning it didn’t seem like the best idea.”

His eyes flashed disappointment. And hurt. Oliver’s face shuttered and…frak. “You changed you mind?”

Dammit! Felicity should have gone with the human birthday cake plan and to hell with the consequences!

“Noooo!” Felicity rushed to reassure, though was that the truth? “Yes. Sort of…I mean, what I had planned when I asked you over wasn’t so much taking things one step at a time as taking a flying leap forward. And that seemed less…wise in the harsh morning light.”

Oliver’s mouth convulsed in amusement and Felicity sagged in relief. Please, let him understand. A small grin peeked out but he was still doing that sinful, looking at Felicity through his eyelashes thing. How did he even manage to do that given he was like a foot taller than her?

“This was a lot easier with a little liquid courage,” Felicity found herself confessing and Oliver’s grin spread even more.

“I can get you some more champagne if you’d like?” Oliver offered, his eyes all soft and understanding.

“Oh no! Nuh uh!” Seriously? Felicity had not gone through all this to take the easy out now. “I have had exactly one-third a glass of Merlot and half a glass of champagne. I’m not even remotely drunk. I’m not even buzzed so…”

Okay, now she was babbling. She was nervous as hell, but…what Felicity wanted was so much clearer with Oliver smiling down at her with those soft, soft eyes. Perhaps it was less the alcohol and more his proximity that made it so much easier the other night.

Swallowing, Felicity pressed forward, “So if you want to…say linger after everyone else is gone…? Maybe have that very sober conversation that you mentioned the other night? Maybe we can tidy up and then…?”

Then they could have that very clear-headed first kiss, the one that counted and after…

Oliver let loose a blinding smile. “You know how much I enjoy housekeeping.”

The really bizarre thing was, Oliver did. Spoiled little rich boy, adored keeping house. And had been living in a Bunker for fourteen months. It was heartbreaking.

Almost as if on cue, Thea approached Oliver from behind. Standing up on her toes, she put her arms around her brother’s shoulders and leaned her cheek on his upper arm. “So birthday boy? Old Man Quentin is heading home and since I’m on the way, I’m going to hitch a ride with him.”

It was an obvious lie. Thea had driven there herself.

But Oliver didn’t know that. Felicity had to bite her lip and look away to keep from giving anything away. Far be it from her to contradict Thea. Especially since she was, clearly, trying to help. God knew Felicity needed all the help she could get.

Oliver turned to hug his sister. “Thank you, Speedy. For everything.” He whispered the words against Thea’s temple, but Felicity heard it and...
Maybe Felicity’s decision to have a family celebration wasn’t so misguided. Especially if Thea and the others headed out nice and early so they could still have their not-so-hypothetical date.

Oliver pressed a kiss to his sister’s forehead and Thea smiled up at him, saying, “After you get out of City Hall tomorrow, I’ll take you sock shopping.”

Felicity started to choke, which she managed to turn into a cough that left Thea looking at her with narrowed eyes and Oliver rubbing Felicity’s back soothingly (not that she minded the last part).

“It’s a date,” Oliver told his sister, pointedly ignoring Felicity’s convulsions, and smiling with (Felicity knew) fake enthusiasm at Thea.

As soon as she closed the door behind Thea and Quintin, Felicity turned to Oliver and whispered, “Are you going to tell her that you don’t really need new socks?” She swore, if he started getting an influx of gift socks she didn’t know what she would do.

Oliver’s eyes widened in mock innocence. “I always need new socks.”

Felicity smothered a semi-hysterical laugh. “Oliver, Thea’s going to think you have a weird sock…thing?”

“Sock...thing?” Oliver’s eyes crinkled at the corners and his voice dropped an octave and…finally, some good honest flirtation. Without alcohol. “What sort of sock thing?”

But now if Felicity wanted to continue this…she to actually had to continue it. And her nerves hadn’t calmed enough for the flirting to flow freely yet. Frak.

Tilting her head and batting her eyes, Felicity (God, hoped she didn’t look ridiculous) murmured, “Not sure. It’s your sock thing. Though, I have to wonder if it’s the sort of thing you want to share with your baby sister of all people?”

Her supposedly ‘brilliant’ mind should have been able to come up with something wittier, but Oliver’s dimples popped out and he leaned in close so Felicity was pretty pleased with the results, all things considered. They were both woefully out of practice with this flirting thing.

“Hey, man,” John interrupted with a hand clasp on Oliver’s shoulder, but Felicity forgave the interference because he quickly made an (again fake) excuse to leave so he could Skype with Lyla before she went to bed (because the director of ARGUS had a strict bedtime). And even better, he turned to Curtis with a firm, “Come on, Curtis, I’ll walk you out.”

Yeah…Digg really didn’t do subtle. But he was still Felicity’s favorite.

Curtis, the lovable clueless idiot, just shook his head. “Nah. I think I’ll stay and help Felicity clean up.”

Hands down. Digg was her favorite. Curtis on the other hand...it took everything Felicity had not to let out an audible sigh of frustration.

“Don’t you have to get that modulator thing to Dinah?” Digg prodded, this time with an even less subtle tone.

Except…still too subtle for Curtis. “Oh, I can drop it off later,” he told Digg in a cheerful tone, not even seeming to notice John’s annoyed look. And John’s annoyed look was pretty damn intimidating.
Wow maybe Curtis really did have a concussion.

“I can help Felicity clean up,” Oliver threw out, apparently deciding that Digg needed backup. Which he did, but it also drew all eyes to him and…

Oliver stuffed his hands in his pockets and looked away. Yup, that was pretty damn subtle as well. Was there ever a more socially inept group?

“Dude, it’s your birthday.” Curtis looked horrified by the idea. “You can’t clean up at your own party.” It would have been endearing if it didn’t make Felicity want to cry.

Digg didn’t even bother to hide his eye-roll this time. “Dude, maybe I should take you to the hospital and get your head checked out.”

Curtis stood there, confused, long enough for Felicity to think that the hospital was a good idea and that she needed to step in, but if she did, God only knew what would come out of her mouth.

Felicity was five seconds away from blurting out that she and Oliver needed alone time when finally…finally, Curtis’ eyes went comically wide and he babbled, “Oh…oooh…right! I should definitely bring this to Dinah. Tonight. Right now, in fact.”

Thank frak.

Huffing out a long-suffering sigh, Digg shook his head. “Say goodnight, Curtis.”

“Bye, guys!” Curtis said way too cheerfully. Had someone let him drink with a head injury? “Happy Birthday, Oliver!” Then he turned to Felicity and mouthed, “I’ll call you,” his hand up to his ear like a mock phone and it was all suddenly clear.

This entire ridiculous display was because Curtis wanted to stay behind and grill Felicity about Oliver. Awesome. It was like high school all over again. If she had actually dated in high school. Or had friends.

Felicity really, really wanted to tell Curtis she’d talk to him tomorrow and not to call unless someone was in mortal danger, but that might have been a little too much, especially with Oliver standing right next to her. Plus she didn’t trust Curtis not to make another scene and the last thing she wanted was something that would keep him here one minute longer.

“Goodnight, John. Night, Curtis,” Felicity ushered (and maybe kinda pushed) Curtis through the door, then paused (briefly) to give John a quick kiss on the cheek and a murmured, “Thank you.”

When Felicity finally…finally got the door closed, she turned to Oliver…

What…the…?

Felicity expected to find Oliver right where she had left him. Next to her. But…

Scanning the room…oh dear God.

Oliver was in the kitchen, pulling out storage containers Felicity honestly forgot they…she had. Already starting to ‘tidy up’.

“What are you doing?” Felicity gasped, watching in shock as Oliver brought them over to the cake and began to meticulously pack it up. “Oliver, you don’t actually have to clean up your own party.”
Wasn’t it obvious that was a ruse? An excuse for alone time? The mess could wait. Felicity’s nerves could not.

But Oliver was smiling softly, looking oddly content. He was such a strange man. “I don’t want your amazing cake going to waste.”

Well, at least the cake was a success. “You know, I didn’t invite you to stay, because I needed help cleaning up. I can do it later—”

Oliver paused and leveled her a serious (and very honest) look. “Felicity, there is truthfully no place I’d rather be. Nothing I’d rather be doing.”

“Really?”

Felicity was shocked at how much innuendo she had managed to pack into that one little word. Without even trying. Or giving herself permission to do so.

It was worth it though, because the look Oliver sent her was so hot, so…dear God, it made Felicity’s legs rubbery.

“Well, maybe not nothing I’d rather do.” And the sexy rumble in Oliver’s voice…this was what she was talking about. Flirting at its prime.

But Oliver went right back to packing up the cake, quickly falling into his bashful domestic routine. It was so…adorable and somehow equally hot, so not the Oliver Queen the public would expect that…it made Felicity giggle.

Oliver’s eyes flew to hers and Felicity’s eyes widened in mild panic. “That was not a giggle,” she defended. No way were they going down that path again. “I am not drunk. That was…a chuckle. A slightly high-pitched chuckle, but a chuckle all the same.” She almost believed it.

Thankfully, Oliver didn’t call her out on it. He just gave her a soft chuckle of his own and stacked the, now full, containers and carried them back to the kitchen. Felicity grabbed two half-empty champagne glasses and scurried behind him.

Once Oliver had placed the cake in the refrigerator, Felicity placed a hand on his arm to stop him from doing more, pleading softly, “Really, this can wait.”

Oliver froze, his frighteningly intelligent blue gaze looking her over as if it could see straight into her soul. Finally, he murmured, “Okay.” And…

Then his hands were back in his pockets and Oliver was doing that shuffling thing again…what a pair they made. At least, Felicity didn’t have to worry about him being able to read her mind. He wouldn’t be nearly this nervous if he had that particular ability.

“So we should talk…” Felicity said, trying to move things along but she was no better than he was, standing there wringing her hands.

It would help, of course, if Felicity knew what they were supposed to talk about. They’d hit her top twenty important topics while they were stuck in the tunnels under the Bunker and then after in the Med Bay at ARGUS. Now, she was mostly interested in…moving beyond the talking stuff.

Oliver nodded, but didn’t say anything. Great, now Felicity was getting really nervous again and…
Then Oliver lifted his head and Felicity met his eyes and...the anxiety just...drifted away.

Felicity just kind of got lost there for a while.

And it was good. A good kind of lost.

“You look really beautiful tonight,” Oliver whispered after who knew how long. But it was his tone, all velvety rough, that sent chills down Felicity’s spine, all the while turning her blood into liquid honey so her whole body felt...more.

This. If they could just do this all night, that would be great.

Felicity smiled, though she wouldn’t be surprised if it trembled just a bit on her lips, and placed a hand on Oliver’s lapel. It was amazing how touching him, even a touch as simple as this one, grounded her. “You don’t look too shabby yourself.”

There was more gazing and more smiling. It might have been several more minutes before either of them said anything.

Then, “I love your dress. It’s a fantastic color for you.”

Felicity chuckled (she was almost proud that she didn’t giggle. She was feeling oddly giddy). Oh, and look, her hands was still on his lapel. “We could just stand here all night exchanging compliments or we could...go over to the couch and...talk...”

And by ‘talk’ Felicity meant make out like bunnies but, well, one step at a time and all. She’d settle for holding hands at the moment.

“Oh...yeah.” Oliver seemed to wake up. He shook his head and blinked his eyes as if snapping out of a trance and...then he seemed to get nervous again. Greeeat. “Let’s...”

Oliver extended his hand, gesturing for Felicity to go ahead, ever the gentleman. Would it be weird if she just grabbed it?

She didn’t. Grab his hand, that was. She just barely managed to keep from wringing hers (more) as she walked ahead of him and settled on the couch. Oliver followed and they turned and looked at one another and...yeah, Felicity still didn’t have a freakin’ clue what to say.

“So...” Felicity tried prompting, praying Oliver would know where to begin.

“So...” Yeah, no. From the look on Oliver’s face he wasn’t feeling any more...directed than she was. “You look gorgeous.”

Okay, not that Felicity was complaining but...a smile spread across her face as she whispered, “You already said that.”

“It bared repeating,” Oliver murmured, shrugging.

They really needed to move on from compliments and gazing. And it looked like Felicity wasn’t getting off the hook for this one. Swallowing, she tried prompting, “The other night, you said that we needed to talk? As in have a sober talk...before we...?”

Move on to a really awesome make-out session that perhaps ended in bed? Cause Felicity was all for jumping to the end part. In fact, ending their misery now and jumping him sounded great.

Anxiety flared in Oliver’s eyes. (Yup, not a mind reader). “Oh...right...I did...”
Oh God, if Oliver didn’t know what to say, they were in trouble. Jumping him was sounding better and better. Felicity suppressed a groan and instead tried, “You must have had something in mind when you said that.”

Oliver’s eyes widened even more and Felicity could see the flare of panic. “No…I…maybe…” He stopped (thank God) and blew out a breath. He was clearly not happy with his inability to take control of this situation. Felicity wanted to help but…she had nothin’.

Finally, Oliver said with more surety, “Felicity,” and he held out a palm.

Gratefully, Felicity placed her hand in his and Oliver smiled, looking relieved (that made two of them) and began, “What I think I meant was that I want…I wanted…want to make sure that there isn’t anything left between us. That there are no more questions or...” He grunted in frustration. “I wanted to make sure we’re both on the same page.”

Felicity watched Oliver swallow, gathering his courage. Her big strong Green Arrow. Terrified of defining their relationship. Of being rejected. It just made her love him more.

But it didn’t stop Felicity from asking, softly and only half-teasing, “Well, what page are you on?”

That had Oliver taking an even shakier breath and Felicity almost felt bad. It was a loaded question. And she was making him take the risk by defining it first in his birthday of all days.

“Felicity, I love you.”

Wow. Okay.

Her heart might have skipped a beat.

Felicity knew that he loved her. Of course, she knew. But Oliver had said it so rarely since…well, since she’d broken up with him. It made sense that he hadn’t been throwing the words around willy nilly. She just wasn’t expecting it now. As his opening play.

Nor was she expecting Oliver to continue, saying, “Let me clarify that, so I’m absolutely clear. I’m in love with you.”

And Oliver’s eyes were so intense, so serious, that it brought tears to hers. Felicity shifted her hand to entwine their fingers and squeezed.

It seemed to encourage him and, taking a breath, Oliver continued, “I’ve been in love with you for so long…I don’t even know when it started, but I know it never stopped and I…want to be with you. I want to try and do it right this time. I want it to last…” His eyes fell closed and he squeezed them shut for a moment. “I understand if you’re not all the way there with me…yet… but I need to know that we’re at least on the same page with the destination—”

“We’re on the same page,” Felicity interrupted, because yes, yes, yes. To all of it. “All the way there. No reservations. Destination, journey, everything.” Because if Oliver was laying it all out there, it seemed only fair that she did the same.

Felicity was glad she did, because all the tension bled out of Oliver in one great whoosh, leaving his shoulders sagging and a smile spreading across his face. The big beautiful one with the dimples. “Okay. Good. That’s good.”

Good. Okay.
It was time for Oliver to kiss her now.

And…

Felicity really didn’t understand why he wasn’t.

But Oliver didn’t seem in any hurry. Actually, sitting there, holding hands, he was staring at Felicity as if this was all he wanted to do with his life. Which was rather sweet, except…

“Is there…something else you wanted to talk about?” Felicity asked, just to make sure.

Oliver shook his head, “Nope. I’m good.”

Felicity almost laughed. Wow, the love-sick look in Oliver’s eyes was something. Even with everything they had been through, it was sometimes hard to believe it was directed at her.

“But…” Oliver started again, seeming to finally sense Felicity was waiting for something more (even if she was hoping the ‘more’ would be more action-y). “I mean, if you have any questions, any lingering concerns about the breakup or getting back together, I’ll tell you anything you want to know.”

Wow…okay, wow. That might have been better than a kiss. Just when Felicity thought he couldn’t say anything more…right. It was almost weird, seeing Oliver so open and honest. She didn’t know what to say.

“I…I think…” Because it seemed like Felicity was going to have to say something. Though, she could just kiss him. There was an idea. A nice role reversal. Him with the words, her with the action. “Honestly, I’m feeling pretty…resolved. Between being stuck in the Bunker and the conversation in the Med Bay, even the other night, I feel like we got all the important stuff…out. Unless you…?”

“No. Nope. I totally agree.” Oliver’s eyes were wide and happy and open as he nodded.

“So,” breathe, Smoak, “we’re on the same page…?” Why was Felicity repeating herself?

“The same page,” Oliver agreed and, at least, he seemed to have the same articulation problem Felicity did, but again with the dimples…okay, that was her excuse. How was she supposed to think with dimples? “So we’re doing this then? One step at a time…”

And…that just left Felicity feeling frustrated. “Maybe I do have a question,” she blurted out.

Oliver’s face became more serious (and maybe a little nervous), but just as open. He nodded, encouraging her.

Okay, then. “So what are these steps everyone talks about?” The question burst out of Felicity in a rush and it was a relief, because it had been driving her crazy!

Huffing out an amused breath, Oliver looked as relieved as she felt and that made her feel even better so…

Frak, it then. Felicity opened her mouth and a veritable gust of words came out, ‘I’m kind of feeling lost as to where we’re supposed to start. I don’t think I’ve ever began any of my relationships…I dunno, traditionally? I mean, we were friends and partners. Then we were in love and when we finally slept together it was in the full understanding that the next day you would probably be lost to me forever but then, suddenly, you weren’t and we were running away
together…”

Wow. All those words she couldn’t find earlier? Felicity seemed to have found them.

“We didn’t really take the normal steps,” Oliver reiterated, softly and gently. He really seemed to be thinking about everything Felicity had said. “Do you think that was part of the reason things fell apart?”

She hadn’t considered that but…who knew? “I have no idea. I don’t know if it would have helped if we’d gone slower. Do you think we would have communicated better if we…?” Felicity trailed off, not even knowing what she was supposed to say. What would they have done differently?

Oliver shook his head, looking as unsure as Felicity felt. “Maybe? But I…nothing about our trip…or Ivytown felt rushed to me. It’s impossible for me to regret any of that but…I’m not the best frame of reference.”

Felicity had to laugh. “And I am?” Oliver couldn’t think that she knew any more than he did. “All my relationships…Ray, Cooper, they all just happened. No traditional dating. Friends to sex…then poof: relationship.” Wow, it didn’t really sound healthy when she put it like that. No wonder all of her relationships failed.

Thankfully, Oliver wasn’t looking at her like Felicity was a screw up. But he was biased and also as he said, not the best frame of reference.

“This whole ‘steps’ thing seems…” Silly? Weird? “Foreign.” That was a good word. Foreign.

But just when Felicity was feeling a tiny bit good about putting it into words, Oliver asked, “What about Billy?”

Whoa. Where did that come from? Oliver must be feeling more secure if he was willing to bring up Billy. Or really insecure.

Swallowing, Felicity managed to ask, “What about Billy?” She really didn’t know. The question threw her.

Oliver shrugged, but he was tense again, looking like he wanted Felicity to think this was a no-big-deal question, when it was clearly an insanely-big-deal question. “I meant…did you two take the…normal steps?”

His muscles were coiled tight by the time his question was out and Felicity could see that jealous tic Oliver got in his jaw.

“Billy…well…” Felicity tried to think of something reassuring to say (because tonight was supposed to be about a new beginning not past relationships) but when she thought about it…”Huh. I guess, we did go about things more traditionally. We started with coffee, then lunch, then dinner…” She really couldn’t see how any further details were going to help. “But that seemed more natural than this.”

Well, that sounded awful. Felicity rushed to add, “I mean, it made sense to go at that pace because we didn’t know each other. At all. So the ‘getting to know you’ steps were logical. But we…you and me…we already know each other. Does that make any sense?”

Oliver nodded, slowly. The tic eased a bit and he was…listening. It caused Felicity’s belly butterflies to go nuts. There was something…intoxicating about being the total focus of Oliver Queen’s attention.
Felicity swallowed and tried to put into words the thoughts that were racing through her head as connections…connected. “Then once Billy and I had gotten to know each other a little,” ‘A little,’ because compared to her and Oliver it still felt shallow and surface-y, “it was about seeing if we were going to fall in love…which, of course, was never gonna happen since I was still in love with you and…”

Okay…was that a good thing to say? It felt disrespectful to Billy’s memory, but it made Oliver’s tic go away completely and replaced it with a borderline worshipful look.

Wow, all right. Felicity still wasn’t sure if it was fair to Billy but the look in Oliver’s eyes…she could easily get addicted to it.

Oliver Queen, Felicity Smoak’s drug of choice.

Felicity took a deep breath, she needed to keep them on something resembling a path. “The point is, we’ve accomplished all those goals. We know each other. We’re already in love. We’re leaps and bounds ahead of where Billy and I were after six months of dating, so rewinding just seems…weird. Wrong, almost.”

Was ‘wrong’ too strong a word?

“Dishonest,” Oliver added with a small smile and Felicity was so relieved. He got it. She shouldn’t have doubted it. No one had ever gotten her like Oliver did.

“Yeah,” Felicity agreed with a sigh. It felt like going backwards, like following a poorly written script.

Oliver squeezed her hand, drawing her attention back to his eyes, “You know you had every right to try to move on Billy, right?”

Felicity opened and closed her mouth, feeling a little like she might cry. Those words meant a lot to her, not the least of which because she knew it was so hard for Oliver to say them.

“I…” Felicity tried to say she did. To nod at the very least. Instead, she asked, “What about Susan Williams?”

Why she brought the dreaded woman’s name up, Felicity had no idea? The transition barely made sense but…

God, the woman reminded Felicity of Isabel Rochev and she knew she had no right to hate her the way she did but…just like Isabel, Felicity really didn’t understand the attraction. Well, except the attractiveness. As in the physical attractiveness. But that was it. Nothing else. Oliver had absolutely nothing in common with that woman.

Why did it feel insulting for the man she loved to be drawn to a woman like her? Sara, Felicity got. Laurel, sure…but Susan Williams?

“What about her?” Oliver asked, sounding genuinely confused. But, then again, Felicity didn’t know what she was asking either.

“You two seemed to be taking things one step at a time.” It wasn’t what she really wanted to know, but at least it sort of made sense with the conversation they were having. And if there was a jealous edge to her voice, Felicity was going to ignore it.

Oliver’s lip quirked up and he gave a self-deprecating laugh. “That was less us taking it one step at
a time, as me dragging my feet.”

And if Oliver thought that would make Felicity feel better…well, he was so right.

“Felicity...” Oliver reached out and took her other hand as well. “I only...” He took a breath. “I only let things progress with Susan after I had given up all hope of there ever being an us again. And still...looking back, it feels like the wrong thing to do. But if I tell you any of the reasons I feel that way, I’m just going to sound like a hypocrite so...I think I’m just going to keep my mouth shut.”

That made Felicity laugh out loud. It was actually...delightful. And suddenly she didn’t care why Oliver chose the Dragon Lady (Thea’s name, not hers). because she just wasn’t important. Oliver never chose her over Felicity. He had just been lonely and Susan was there.

But she wasn’t there anymore. And Felicity was and...looking in Oliver’s eyes now, she knew, with absolute certainty, he wouldn’t want it any other way. And neither would she.

When her laughter finally faded, Oliver asked, the happy smile back on his face, “So what step feels honest to you? Right?”


“I think...” Okay, serious answer time (though there was a voice in the back of Felicity’s head telling her she was pretty serious about making love right here, right now). “Maybe the middle part?” Did that make sense? “The part between the awkward dating that feels so...”

Felicity was struggling to find the right word when Oliver supplied, “Awkward?”

She laughed. Oliver was playing with her fingers and that was feeling anything but awkward. “Yeah, but maybe not jump to...” Felicity trailed off, she was having trouble coming up with anything that would feel like too much right then.

“Running off to Vegas to get married?” Oliver offered with a playful grin. He was clearly enjoying this finishing her sentences thing. Now that she thought about it, she’d really missed it too.

“My mother would love that,” Felicity chuckled.

“I would love that.” Oliver’s tone was just as light as hers. It was even a tad self-deprecating but...

Well, Felicity still stopped breathing. And she had to ask, “Are you serious?” And the scariest part...how not scary the idea was.

Oliver’s expression immediately became sober. “No.” He scrunched up his face and shook his head. “Yes...I mean, I know that’s not what’s best for us in the long run. And, Felicity, I’m all about the long run.”

Felicity had forgotten or, maybe, she just hadn’t let herself think about...how goddamn perfect Oliver could be sometimes.

Smiling so hard she could feel the muscles in her face straining, Felicity took a deep breath and said, “So maybe we put aside the elopement...” Because it wasn’t off the table. At some future point. “And, say...plan a trip to the Pacific Crest Trail in the next couple weeks?”

Oliver beamed. “You would really do that for me?”
She shrugged. If Oliver kept looking at her like that, kept saying such wonderful things, there wasn’t a lot Felicity wouldn’t do for him. “If you promise to buy me the right socks.” Besides, being completely alone with him anywhere, sounded like heaven.

“Honey, I’ll buy you the best socks money can buy. Dozens of them,” Oliver pledged and it was the first time he had called her ‘honey’ since the break-up that he didn’t stop half-way through or wince after he’d said it.

“Deal.”

“But,” he let go of her hand to reach out and stroke Felicity’s cheek, “we don’t have to go camping. We should go somewhere we both like.” Oliver bit his lip and tipped his head down, doing that damn looking at her through his eyelashes thing again. “Somewhere with a big soft bed.”

Those last words were barely a whisper but, God, they made Felicity squirm. She felt the words like a physical touch.

Finally. Beds. They should talk more about the beds.

“Like Bali?” Felicity suggested, because she swore Bali had the best beds.

Oliver’s smile only grew. “Bali’s perfect.”

He was perfect. Just thinking about it made Felicity’s chest tight in the best possible way. “We don’t have to pick. We can go to the Pacific Crest Trail in a few weeks, then plan a trip to Bali in a few months. After the city is all cleaned up from our latest big bad, Mr. Mayor.” She hadn’t planned to say the last all husky and suggestive, but she was glad she had when she saw Oliver shudder.

It gave Felicity the courage to add, “And, Oliver, there’s a nice soft bed right upstairs.”

This time Felicity was pretty sure that it was Oliver who stopped breathing.

“Are you sure?” Oliver asked, but his eyes were pleading with Felicity to say it was. “It’s not too fast?”

He really was ridiculous sometimes. Also Felicity was so very tired of sleeping without him. “Oliver, I’m pretty sure that the middle of the relationship involves sleepovers at the very le—”

“Christ, Felicity!”

Then Oliver’s lips were on hers.

And it was about fricken time!

Also had Felicity mentioned that she loved how quickly Oliver could move? Frak, it was a turn on.

She let out a little moan of, ‘God, yes,’ as Oliver’s hands enveloped her face. They were gentle. So gentle. Felicity could easily pull away if she wanted to. Why the hell would she want to?

The kiss was soft, shallow, savoring. A perfect beginning.

This was what tonight was supposed to be. This.

After several long moments, Oliver pulled back, just far enough for his eyes to blink open and look
into hers. Then they darted over Felicity’s face, as if to make sure this was okay, to make sure this was real.

But maybe Felicity was just projecting that last part.

She smiled in encouragement, her tongue chasing his taste, lingering on her lower lip. Oliver smiled, his eyes following the path of Felicity’s tongue and then…

They met in the middle.

It was a beautiful metaphor. Even if they didn’t have very far to move.

Kissing Oliver was…unlike anything. They moved together seamlessly. Instinctively. It really had ruined Felicity for anyone else, because nothing else could possibly be thus flawless. No one else would ever match her so effortlessly. With lips and tongues and complete synchrony.

Oliver made Felicity feel adored and that made her desperate for him to feel the same. It made her want to worship him, because she felt worshipped.

When Oliver tipped his head to the side, angling his lips so he could deepen the kiss, Felicity was right there with him. In fact, she couldn’t say she wasn’t the one who initiated it. But then their lips were wide open, yet perfectly sealed, and their tongues stroked one another’s and, God, it felt so good.

Felicity had missed this. Missed it more than she had let herself contemplate. She curled her hand around his neck and the feel of his stubble...no, it wasn’t stubble any more. Oliver had a beard now. It was a short beard, but longer than it had been, softer, yet still so familiar.

Suddenly Felicity wasn’t close enough. Not nearly close enough.

Their lips didn’t have a fraction of a breath between them, their mouths were as close as they could physically get, but sitting next to him on the couch, even twisted toward each other as they were… it didn’t allow for the kind of contact Felicity wanted. Craved. Also as she slipped her hand into the collar of his shirt, it became abundantly clear that Oliver was wearing way too many clothes.

It was absurd how many layers of formal wear men wore, especially given women had so little. Felicity had plenty of skin showing, yet Oliver’s hands stayed respectfully above her neck and, even though she loved that gentle stroke of his thumb, she wished he would be less respectful and more...more.

Turning her body fully toward him, Felicity pulled her leg onto the couch and got up on her knees, trying to press closer.

And still not close enough. A little frustrated whimper escaped and…oh, frak it all.

Felicity swung her leg over Oliver’s and, not pausing to let either of them think about it (not that she needed to think about it), she settled onto his lap. She was pretty sure she could have done it without losing contact with his lips, but he pulled away with a soft groan.

“Fuck, Felicity,” and the way Oliver gasped it, Felicity got the feeling that the words didn’t emerge voluntarily. It kinda made her already damp places...dampener.

Smiling down at him, she settled her body against his, melting into him. Felicity was feeling rather delirious and it was amazing. This was why the idea of a first date was ridiculous, because no first date ever felt this. Familiar. Comfortable. So perfectly right. Even their first time….which had
been beautiful and exciting and explosive—even that hadn’t felt…

This felt like something missing was finally where it belonged, like…finally being home after not knowing if she’d ever get there again.

But still it was as beautiful and exciting and explosive as the first time.

“Felicity?” Oliver panted and he just looked…delicious. All disheveled. Blue eyes glassy and heavy lidded. Slumped and panting.

Simply delicious.

Yet, Oliver was still looking for reassurance. Didn’t he feel how…natural this all felt? How effortlessly honestly pure? Maybe he did, but his old confidence wasn’t there yet and his eyes were asking…no begging for permission. His hands fell to her knees, but his arms were tense and…as desperate as he looked he wouldn’t move them until she gave the okay.

It was heartbreaking and so sweet and…

“Just go with it, Oliver,” Felicity murmured, leaning forward and nipping at his lips, hoping that would cover a whole range of permissions. All the permission. Given with love.

Groaning, Oliver plunged back into the kiss as if he needed it to breathe, his hands finally slipping under the skirt of her dress as their heads tilted and tongues tangled, sucking…

Felicity pressed closer. Until her breasts were smooshed against the fine cut of Oliver’s suit jacket...yeah, that had to go.

Slipping her hands inside, Felicity pushed the offending garment off his shoulders. Oliver groaned, but leaned forward oh-so-helpfully and let his hands drop from her body just long enough for her to pull the jacket free.

All Felicity was able to accomplish was to push the jacket behind him before Oliver pulled her back, his arm banding around her waist as they sank back into the kiss, quickly regaining any ground lost during the maneuvering.

His hand made its way back under her skirt and slid up her thigh, slowly, but with confidence this time and Felicity shuddered and hummed her encouragement against his lips. But as Oliver’s large calloused hand settled on her satin clad ass (should she have gone with the thong after all?), his lips fell from hers and he gasped, “Is this okay?”

Frak. Really? Felicity rolled her eyes before she could tell herself not to. “Tell you what? If you go too far, I’ll use our safe word.”

Oliver’s face stretched into a delighted grin. They had often joked about safe words, though they had never done anything remotely kinky enough to need one.

Felicity reached for his lips with hers, but Oliver stopped her with a laugh. “I don’t remember what our safe word is.”

“Me neither.”

And Felicity dove back in, not letting him pull away this time. Because it really didn’t matter. There was nothing Oliver was going to do tonight that she wasn’t 100% on board with.
This time, Oliver didn’t pull back. As a matter of fact, he did the opposite and growled…which, lord, she looooved. It was just so…Oliver she could barely stand it. Plus, Felicity’s tongue was already in his mouth, so the sound reverberated through her in the most amazing and familiar way.

This time, both of his hands found her ass and squeezed, kneading the muscles. It wasn’t hard but it was enough that she wondered if Oliver could feel how drenched she was becoming. If he would just take a few more liberties and slip those little pinky fingers under the hem of her panties…the mystery would be solved.

But Oliver was taking it slow. So fraking slow.

That was fine. It was awesome, really. After all this time, Felicity could be patient and enjoy the slow build…

Crap. No, she couldn’t. It had been forever and Felicity was dyyyying here.

Oliver’s hands were magic. And also torture. The drag and pull as he molded her ass, encouraging the gentle rolling rhythm of her hips as they started moving out of pure instinct. Not that she had any desire to stop it. She had no vested interest in a slow build. Felicity had had enough anticipation to last a lifetime.

When Oliver’s hips started to follow hers, Felicity remembered what heaven felt like.

They weren’t at a full-on grind (yet), but any second now. And Oliver loose dress pants…they were doing absolutely nothing to hide how much he was enjoying himself.

When his lips fell away again, Felicity braced herself for more second guessing, but Oliver’s mouth attacked the line of her neck and she let her head fall back with a relieved sigh. And maybe, also, a very different kind of sigh.

“God, I love you,” Oliver murmured against Felicity’s skin as he dragged his lips down the column of her throat to her cleavage and—

Felicity’s phone went off.

Her goddamn, fraking phone.

And what was worse, Felicity would know that ring-tone anywhere. Goddamn it, Curtis!

She was ignoring him. So, so ignoring him.

But it was distracting and being a member of Team Arrow had them conditioned that ignoring a call from a teammate was just asking for trouble.

It only took a second for Oliver to whisper, between the kisses he was pressing along her collarbone, “Felicity, Honey?”

Frak. If Curtis got Mr. Worry-Wort going again, Felicity was never going to forgive him.

“It’s just Curtis. He’ll leave a message,” Felicity panted, hoping beyond hope that that would be the end of it. Really what were the chances it was a actual emergency and not Curtis just looking for dirt? With Chase locked up, not very high.

“Wasn’t he going to Dinah’s? Did she ever tell you why she didn’t make it?”

Double frak.
Felicity groaned. It was times like these, when being part of a vigilante crime-fighting team just sucked.

Very deliberately, Felicity leaned over Oliver to get the phone on the table behind the couch, which caused her to push her (albeit modest) cleavage right into his face, making him groan.

He totally deserved it for insisting she pick up the damn phone (even if he only implied it). Just when things were getting really good, too

“Hello.” It took a lot of effort to not sound as irritated as she felt. Even more not to sound out of breath,

“Hey, girl, is he still there?” Curtis immediately sang, innuendo dripping from his voice.

Goddamn, fraking Curtis.

Wrinkling her nose, Felicity pulled back enough to frown down at Oliver. She knew she shouldn’t have answered the damn phone. “If you thought Oliver was still here, why would you call me?”

Oliver smiled, so very cowed by her annoyed face. When had that stopped working? He leaned into her, his hands running up and down Felicity’s back in long, soothing strokes.

They weren’t soothing enough to deal with her now ex-best friend.

“I figured if there was anything hot and heavy going on, you wouldn’t pick up.”

Of course, he did.

Shooting Oliver another hard glare, Felicity mouthed, “I told you so,” which wasn’t completely true, but he looked far too amused for her taste. Shouldn’t he be annoyed at the interruption too?

But Oliver looked like he was too happy to be annoyed by anything and it was really hard for Felicity to be irritated with him when he looked at her like that.

Oliver motioned for her to lean closer so he could hear as well and Felicity was about to tilt the phone so he could when Curtis said, “I was actually hoping that you wouldn’t answer ‘cause you and Mayor Hottie were getting your sizzle on.”

Okay, no. This was embarrassing enough without Oliver listening into Curtis’ adolescent rambles.

Felicity let herself fall off Oliver’s lap (did she mention Curtis was now her ex-bestfriend) and onto the couch, away from prying ears. This was so not what she wanted to be doing right now.

And Curtis kept talking. And talking. And talking.

Felicity really needed to make more friends, ones that could take a hint.

Oliver gave her a sympathetic look before mouthing that he was going to run upstairs to the restroom and Felicity should wrap it up quickly (ya think?). But he used hand motions and it was kind of adorable, so she figured she’d forgive him.

Also Oliver dropped a kiss on her shoulder as he stood up and he didn’t seem to be leaving the Loft any time soon, both of which were good things. Very, very good things.

Felicity nodded and watched as Oliver made his way up the stairs. Those dress pants did incredible things for his ass. An ass she had every intention of getting her hands on.
Soon.

As soon as she got rid of Curtis.

Unfurling herself from the couch, Felicity kept her hands busy, gathering dishes from the party and praying her short, sarcastic answers would…who was she kidding? Curtis was being way too obtuse tonight to pick up on anything.

But he had gotten to Dinah’s by that point and hopefully as soon as she made an appearance, Felicity could get back to working on that sexual tension Curtis kept going on and on and on…

Except…

Frak.

Please, don’t tell her there was a more nefarious reason for Dinah not showing up at the party than work running late.

Please. Please, God. Please.

For once, couldn’t Felicity and Oliver have one night to—?

“Oh no!”

Okay, that was not a good ‘oh no.’ Not that ‘oh no’ was ever good…

“Oh no, what!!?”

This is what the big idiot got for going in without back up. She should have insisted he wait. Dammit. He probably already had a concussion. If he got hit again…

Guilt for all the mean thoughts she had about her friend mixed with concern as Felicity started to walk toward the stairs to get Oliver.

Then the line went dead.

And all she felt was fear.

Okay and maybe a little rage. One night. Why couldn’t they have one fucking night!

“Curtis…Curtis!”

Frak, frak, frak!

Oh God. Please, let him be okay. And Dinah too. This was so, so not good.

Letting the arm holding the phone fall to her side, Felicity screamed, “Oliver!!”

He was at the balcony of the upper level in an instant because, of course, he was. “Felicity?” Oliver looked ready to leap over the railing, which really was overkill, but she couldn’t say it wasn’t reassuring.

“We need to go!” Pushing down the fear churning in her belly, Felicity grabbed her keys and her bag. “Curtis and Dinah are in trouble.”

Oliver was downstairs and next to her by the time Felicity got the door open. She really hoped he
hadn’t leapt off the balcony. His knee didn’t need the unnecessary stress.

“What’s going on?”

Shaking her head because really she didn’t know, Felicity filled Oliver what little she did know as they stepped into the hall and she began to lock the door behind them.

“…then the line went dead and…”

By then Felicity’s voice had started to take on a hysterical edge. Poor Curtis. They never should have let him go out alone with that head injury. They should have sent Digg with him when they didn’t hear from Dinah. Thank God for Oliver’s instincts, because who knew what would have happened if Felicity hadn’t answered the phone and…

Why couldn’t things ever go right for them? Just for one night? This was why they didn’t take baby steps. With their lives, they didn’t have time for baby steps!

Oliver started to walk ahead. “I’ll get over—”

Felicity reached out and seized his arm, “No!” The last thing they needed was Oliver running off half-cocked and disappearing as well. “Curtis went in without back up and look what happened. We’re going to call John, then you’re going to drop me off at the Bunker and get the comms and weapons and—”

Oliver cut her off with a hard kiss, then grabbed her hand. “Fine. Let’s go.” He was already pulling her down the hallway.

Before Felicity could even process how quickly Oliver had actually listened to her. She hadn’t even had to argue. Wow. Okay then.

But unfortunately they didn’t have time for…anything. Their friends were in trouble. Felicity lifted her phone again. It was ringing before she got it to her ear, prayers for her friend’s safety humming in the back of her mind.

“John…”

revised 6/10/2018

Notes:

Chapter End Notes

When I was writing about Felicity’s drunken fantasy of how she wanted to celebrate Oliver’s birthday, it occurred to me that I really wanted to write that. So I did (even though I still have way too much on my writing plate) and I’m really glad I did because I really love it and hope you do too.

Best Birthday Ever is now up. It isn’t written as a fantasy, but as an alternate
Unfortunately, this chapter was a whole lot harder to write. It’s still far from my favorite but, I’m happier with this latest version. On reread Felicity just wasn’t coming out right. Hopefully, her kindness and compassion is more evident now.

*(Don’t) Let Me Go: Chapter 5* has missing moments from 5x23. So slightly more angsty. ;-)

Thank you, thank you, thank you, to my fabulous betas [Fairytalehearts](http://fairytalehearts.tumblr.com), [Imusuallyobsessed](http://imusuallyobsessed.tumblr.com), and [Ireland1733](http://ireland1733.tumblr.com). And my endless gratitude to all of you who take a minute (or more) to leave a kudo or comments. It makes me so happy to spread the feels around.

Visit me on Tumblr at [http://emmilynestill.tumblr.com](http://emmilynestill.tumblr.com/) or Twitter, also [Emmilynestill](https://twitter.com/Emmilynestill). I would love to chat!

Happy Reading,

Emmy
Chapter Summary

This chapter takes place during *Arrow 5x23: Lian Yu*. I tried to skip to the end, to limit the extraneous, non-Olicity stuff, but it didn’t feel right. Now this chapter encompasses most of the episode.

This chapter is also the first introduction to my William. I think you will find his characterization different from most (if not all) of the fanfiction written on him. It was also written and conceived *before* Season 6 William was a thing, so he really isn’t consistent with cannon William post season 5.

I have a lot of experience with kids this age and it was very important to me to write a very realistic, and *complicated*, reaction of a ten-year-old boy who had been through hell and back.

I chose ten for William before Stephen Amell came out saying he was twelve, thinking that I was actually aging him *up*, given the child shown in season 4 acted more like a six or seven-year-old. For the purposes of this story, William was born in November 2006.

Slade, Dinah, Curtis, and Rene character development all go in different directions than was chosen by the season 6 writers. Only Nyssa seems similar. (Almost too
When was he going to learn to trust his fucking instincts?

They had kept him alive for ten years and, still, Oliver let Chase rattle him until he was over-thinking and under-thinking and...just allowing the evil bastard fuck with his mind.

Oliver should have trusted himself when his gut said that Chase had gone after William while he and Felicity were trapped in the Bunker. He should have devoted all of his energy to finding his son then.

He should have trusted himself when he thought...no, knew capturing Chase was too easy. Oliver should have kept his guard up.

And when every cell in his body screamed to keep Felicity next to him, in the bunker,
in constant contact over the comms, Oliver should have listened.

Instead Oliver had gone with a stupid-ass plan to do the opposite of what his instincts told him to do. Thinking it would actually trick Adrian. That it wasn’t playing right into his hands.

It was even stupider than his Bratva plan.

All Oliver could hope for now was that his latest strategy to assemble his own dirty dozen (or half-dozen) wasn’t his worst mistake yet.

He could almost hear Felicity shrieking in his ear, protesting as he did it. He knew what she would say he should do. She’d tell him to call Lyla. And Oliver considered it, he did but…with John involved Lyla would take over. ARGUS would take over.

Then Oliver would have zero control over the mission and with William involved…this was too delicate an operation to trigger that particular nuke yet.

But that didn’t mean that Oliver didn’t leave a message for Lyla. Just in case. The nuke might still be necessary, but he needed to see if his surgical strike would work first.

At least that was what his instincts told him to do. And this time, Oliver was listening.

He’d tried to contact Barry. And Cisco…the whole fucking Team Flash. No one was picking up. Only Felicity could find Roy and Oliver had no clue how to reach Sara. The team he had with him now wasn’t his first choice. Hell, it wasn’t even his third but…the stakes had never been higher and he knew he couldn’t do this alone.

That being said, strange as it was, the ridiculous team of anti-heroes he was able to drudge up didn’t feel like a bad idea and that might be the only thing that kept Oliver going.

Nyssa, despite her annoying tendency to bring up their farce of a marriage (which was not legal. Oliver and Felicity had researched this extensively) and her ability to enrage Malcolm (which was often a plus), was beyond trustworthy. Oliver had no qualms about her. Nyssa’s word was unbreakable. She said she would help. She would help.

And as much as Oliver hated working with Malcolm Merlyn again, he knew that man would do anything for Thea. He had his own strange honor that Oliver felt he understood. So for the time being, he had confidence in their (temporary) alliance.

It was when Oliver had the insane idea to enlist the help of Slade Wilson that he realized he was probably losing his mind.

But more than insane, Oliver was desperate. Every single person he had left on this planet was under the control of a psychopath, a brilliant psychopath who had out-thought him every step of the way. And Chase had his people…his family on Oliver’s person hell of an island.

William, Felicity, Thea…everyone.

When Oliver put that into consideration, having a mass murder with an intimate knowledge of this very same island on Oliver’s side…suddenly, it didn’t seem so crazy. Really, was there anyone out there who could better understand the unhinged malevolence that was Adrian Chase’s mind than Slade Wilson?

As long as Slade stayed on Oliver’s side.
That was the catch. The gamble.

Slade’s greatest asset was his ability to think and act like a psychopath, but Oliver was banking on there being some humanity left, that after the Mirakuru cure and years of contemplating his sins, there was something left of the man Oliver once knew.

And if there was one thing that could motivate a man to show some character, some decency, it was their child. Look at Merlyn. Hell, look at Oliver.

So Oliver found the old Deathstroke gear, along with an RPG, and every other damn thing he could think of and headed back to Purgatory, praying it wasn’t going to turn into a one-way trip into hell.

Everyone Oliver cared about.

Every single person that Oliver never wanted to step foot on that God-awful place.

Imprisoned on Lian Yu.

Yet, Felicity had been there before. As had Thea. And John. It just showed how good Oliver was at keeping his loved ones’ safe.

Though, Oliver was glad that they…Felicity, Thea, John…had, at least, some familiarity with the lay of the land, knew to look out for the landmines.

And if Chase thought Lian Yu was going to fluster Oliver, he was way off.

If anything, it felt like the home court advantage. Oliver knew this island like the back of his bow, and while a few years ago the island itself may have triggered flashbacks and panic, that was one thing Oliver had tackled and conquered.

With Felicity. On Bali.

Why else would they choose to vacation on an island so similar to Lian Yu? The climate, the vegetation and the beaches…it even smelled the same. It was one of Felicity’s more brilliant plans, desensitize Oliver to the ocean and the beach by replacing bad memories with good ones.

Enough time with Felicity on a secluded beach on the Indian Ocean and the predominant memories triggered by sand and surf, by the roar of the wind and the smell of the ocean…they were all good ones now. It just reminded him of everything he was fighting for.

In this one thing, Oliver was one step ahead of Chase.

Because of Felicity.

With her, even his memories of Lian Yu were pleasant. Laughter and friendship. Loyalty and love. Sweaty vine swings and sun-kissed beaches.

Please, God, don’t let that change.

Oliver couldn’t lose Felicity now. Not after all they had been through, how incredibly far they had come. They were on the brink of something beautiful, possibly the purest thing that he’d ever known…

Well, except for William.
Felicity and William, the truest, brightest things in Oliver’s life.

And Chase had them.

But Oliver would get them back. He swore to God, he would. Whatever it took. That mad man would not win. He wouldn’t let Chase win.

Oliver had a list. Of his priorities.

It was horrible and Oliver hated that he had it. Not a single person here was expendable. There wasn’t one he was willing to lose. That he wouldn’t give his life for.

But still...Oliver had his priorities.

William.

Felicity.

Thea.

In that order. It made Oliver nauseous to think about it that way. Still, his brain… wouldn’t stop thinking it.

William, the youngest, the most innocent, the most vulnerable, had to come first. Oliver didn’t think anyone would disagree.

He could argue Felicity was the second most innocent and vulnerable. That way, Oliver didn’t have to define any other reasons, none of which would surprise anyone, but it felt less selfish to think of it in terms of vulnerability.

Thea was neither innocent nor vulnerable (though her lack of innocence also made Oliver sick) and she certainly wasn’t weak, but she made it to the number three slot purely because she was his baby sister and he had to protect her. It had been his job for as long as he could remember, even if he’d sucked at it for most of their lives.

But as logical as all those rationalizations were, they were also the reasons Chase had pulled those three names out to use against Oliver time and time again. Because just as Adrian had said, losing any of them would break Oliver in ways he didn’t think he could ever fully recover from.

And losing all three…it was inconceivable. It wasn’t something…

Oliver didn’t…

He didn’t think he could survive it. And if he did, there would be nothing left of the Oliver Queen they knew. Chase was right about that.

So was it any wonder that Oliver found himself standing in front of the man who had murdered his mother, who, until Chase, had been his greatest nemesis, ready to take the biggest gamble of his life to get the three of them back?


He would do just about anything for one of them. He had. But all three…

For all of them, apparently Oliver was willing to make a deal with the devil himself.
Yet, it didn’t take two minutes of looking into Slade’s eyes and hearing him speak that Oliver didn’t know…didn’t feel, in his bones, he’d made the right decision.

Because the man in front of him now wasn’t the man who had killed Oliver’s mother. Not anymore than Thea had murdered Sara or Roy that cop.

*This* was the man who had taught Oliver to fight, who’d kept him alive for two years on this very same island. Who stood aside and let Oliver be with the woman *he* loved, because it was what Shado wanted. Because he trusted Oliver to never hurt her, to keep her safe. Because he’d thought of Oliver as a brother.

Slade…Shado…they were Oliver’s *original* Team before there *was* a Team Arrow.

And…*God*, Oliver wanted his friend back. His *brother*. He hadn’t realized how much until he was standing there, looking into Slade’s eyes, talking about *their* sons.

Oliver couldn’t bring himself to contemplate what he could lose today. Not with everything that was on the line. Not just William, Felicity, and Thea. Though they were beyond enough. Oliver wouldn’t be able to function if he really thought about everything that was at stake if he allowed himself to even consider failure.

So…his eye stayed on the prize. But that left Oliver vulnerable to hope and that was almost as dangerous.

Because there was a *lot* to hope for, almost as much as there was to lose. If things went right today, Oliver could leave with so much more than he came with.

He could have Slade back.

He could have William back. In a way he’d never had him before.

Oliver could…he could hold his boy in his arms.

God, he…Oliver had never had a chance to hold his son in his arms. Not once. It wasn’t something almost nine-year old boys did with their mom’s ‘friends.’

But today, he might…no, Oliver *would* see his son again. And despite the circumstances, he couldn’t wait. He knew if he got the chance to hold William, he would lose his shit and that was so fucking dangerous and…

*Enough*. He didn’t have time for this. Right now, Oliver just needed to focus on finding William, getting him to safety. Then…

Oliver didn’t know if he would ever be able to let him go again. Didn’t know if he should. Felicity didn’t think so and she was the smartest person he knew. Sending William away had done absolutely no good. Everything he had hoped to prevent had come into play anyway.

Oliver wanted William in his life. Wanted it as much as anything. As much as he wanted to marry Felicity and start their own family.

Christ, he wanted…he wanted them *all* to be a family. But first Oliver had to find them and William and Felicity had to meet…if things went well today, William and Felicity *would* meet and…

*Shit*, he couldn’t afford to think about this. When he did, Oliver’s brain skipped the tracts and his
throat closed in.

Suffice it to say, Oliver was very motivated to have today go his way.

Now, Harkness was a completely different story. Oliver never had a good feeling about him. But he had too many balls in the air, Harkness had barely been a blip on his radar. There was just too much going on, too many choices, too many calculated risks, too much at stake. And he wasn’t used to doing things alone anymore, not having someone he really trusted (which he did with none of this current team) weighing in on his choices.

A lot was different now. Oliver wasn’t the man who had left this island five years ago. Not even close. In a thousand ways that was a good thing, something he was infinitely grateful for, but…

Five years ago, Oliver had had no trouble separating instinct from emotion. Instinct kept him sharp. Emotion got a man killed. And today, it could get everyone killed.

Oliver needed to find a way to lock away his emotions, the way he used to, so he could focus, so he could keep his eye on the prize.


The very reasons he hadn’t been able to keep his emotions buried for long after returning to Starling. The reasons Oliver had changed. Become a better man. His emotions, his love, made him better.

But right now, they needed to take a time out.

But, unfortunately, they were also willful little assholes. So when Felicity called Oliver’s name, his heart just about jump started. Seeing her alive and whole, even in the horrific cage…the relief had a potential to be dizzying. The love, the need…incapacitating. And the rage at seeing her, all of them, locked up like animals…blinding.

Then there was the fear. The fear Oliver felt when he saw Samantha in the cage mirroring Felicity’s, because that not only meant that William was definitely in Chase’s clutches, it meant he was out there, surrounded by psychopaths, alone.

But Oliver didn’t have time to feel any of those things. He needed to stay clear-headed. Focused. Eye on the prize.

Felicity and Thea were here and without any serious injuries. Curtis too. Now, Oliver just needed to get them off of this island and find William.

Then he could find the others and deal with Chase.

Samantha though…she was a complication, another person to be added to the list because she had no way to defend herself. She was as helpless as William. His team was strong and capable. They had been through the worst life could throw at them and had come out on top. They were far from defenseless and no one in their right mind would consider Felicity or Thea helpless.

But Samantha…shit. Another person on this island to worry about and it was his son’s mother on top of it all.

Oliver needed all of them out of these cages and off this island. Now.

So he could focus on his boy.
Oliver did a decent enough job keeping in the right mindset when they were ambushed (he was pretty much expecting it anyway) and glad that he could at least be between Talia al Ghul and the people he loved. Harkness turning allegiance, not even surprised. Even Slade’s supposed defection…

Actually, it never felt like a defection. To say Oliver trusted Slade was an over statement for sure but this was a dance they danced before, a script Oliver knew every word to. Slade wouldn’t have told Evelyn to put a gun to his head, the first move Slade had ever taught him, on accident. The man was too smart for that.

And, thank God, Oliver was right. In this, his gamble paid off.

Then Talia and Harkness were gone and Evelyn captured. The immediate threat was quelled and the tight control Oliver had on his emotions…slipped.

He felt the relief, the gratitude that Slade hadn’t taken the easy way out and…

Oliver’s eyes found Felicity’s and his breath left him in a whoosh. He needed her out of there. Now.

“Stand back,” he called out, then quickly shot the locks off the four cages in quick succession. They fell far too easily to Oliver’s arrows. Clearly, Adrian’s plan didn’t involve it being hard to get them out of their prison.

It also allowed Oliver to start with Samantha but end with Felicity and when he got to her…he dropped his bow far too quickly given the threat. But emotion was clouding his judgment and…he needed to get her out of there, he needed to touch her, to make sure she was okay. He needed…

“Are you, all right?” Oliver asked it in a whisper, so no one else could hear the sheer emotion in his voice. God, if he was the man he was five years ago, putting Felicity in there alone would have signed Chase’s death sentence.

Oliver’s hands fumbled with the broken lock. Hands that had quickly and easily knocked Talia’s arrow away from Samantha, trembled. It was just proof of how much he needed Felicity gone. Safe. She emotionally compromised him.

“Yeah. Yeah.” Felicity’s voice was heavy with unshed tears. With desperation and fear and need. She had never mastered containing her emotions. She had never even tried and, God, Oliver hoped she never did. He wanted her to stay exactly as she was. “Are you okay?”

Oliver could feel the weight of her eyes flying over him, checking for injuries. Making him warm. Making him feel loved and cared for and…that was dangerous too.

The standard ‘fine’ would probably have been best but, for some reason, it felt like they had come too far for that.

“Physically,” Oliver finally answered, giving Felicity a raised eyebrow and a half-smile as he released the damn lock and threw it away, rather violently. He wasn’t sure if it helped or hurt his bid for control.

But then Oliver yanked the door open and saw the blood at Felicity’s temple and the rage that he had barely been keeping at bay flared.

“They knocked you out?” Oliver growled it. God damn it!
“No.” Felicity looked confused, then her hand flew to her forehead. “Oh. This is from when Digg and I flipped the car, trying to run over Talia and her minions. It didn’t take. Unfortunately.”

As they always did, Felicity words calmed him, centered him, enough that Oliver almost laughed. There was something adorably endearing about a bloodthirsty Felicity.

Oliver reached out to help her out of the cage and Felicity launched herself into his arms, her arms around his neck and…ah…

“God!”

Just one second…

Just one. To bury his face in Felicity’s neck and breathe in her scent and hold her close and feel how alive she was. Oliver could surely spare a second. He had to send her away soon and it was just a second…

“By the way,” Felicity said against Oliver’s ear, still holding him close, “the whole leave and don’t tell you where we were going…stupid plan. Epically terrible. Never doing that again. Next time your instincts say to keep me close, that’s what we’re going to do.”

Oliver couldn’t agree more. But as much as he wanted to keep her close now…he gave himself one more second to close his eyes and feel Felicity’s heart pound against his chest…things had changed.

Taking a deep breath, Oliver said, “Well, right now, my instincts are telling me to get you off this fucking island.”

And, unfortunately, they didn’t have time to spare so Oliver forced himself to pull away.

“You mean we all need to get off this island,” Felicity corrected with her usual fierceness, her jaw tight as she clutched his arms and searched his eyes. She looked rumpled and exhausted and freaked out. And Oliver knew she was just as afraid of losing him as he was of losing her.

But he couldn’t afford to dwell on that. The last thing Oliver wanted was to argue with her but…

“Felicity, I need to find William.” And as much as he tried, Oliver knew he didn’t succeed in keeping the emotion out of his voice.

Felicity’s breath hissed and she nodded, her face contorting as if in pain. “William. I’m so sorry, Oliver. I should have found him first. I should have—”

“Shhh…” Oliver interrupted because, not only was this not her fault, he couldn’t stand the pain in her voice.

Though selfishly, it warmed him as well. Felicity was going to love William. Oliver just knew it. And, before this day was over, she would have the chance. So help him God.

“You did everything you could. Chase probably…” Oliver took a shaky breath. “He probably already had William when you started looking.”

God, how long had his boy been in captivity? It made Oliver sick to think about it.

“You’ll find him,” Felicity immediately swore, her voice firm and passionate, reminding him for the thousandth time of all the reasons he needed her. “And William will be fine. He’s strong. He’s your son, how could he not be?”
Oliver was going to lose it.

Taking two deep breaths and a step back, Oliver purposely turned his eyes away to survey the others. Keep his eye on the prize. “I brought comms. You and Curtis will have to figure out how to uplink them but…”

When Oliver looked back at her, Felicity was smiling, looking somehow confident and petrified at the same time. “I’ll be with you the whole time.”

See this was the problem. No one else could so easily reduce him to tears. But Oliver’s voice was only a little scratchy when he murmured, “You know I work best with you guiding me.”

“We make a great team. Always have.”

Incredibly, it was Slade who saved his sanity, calling out, “You have a working lock, kid? Seeing as how you shot off all the ones we had.” Slade was shoving Evelyn into one of the recently vacated cages and, strange as it seemed, Oliver really didn’t like seeing her in one of those either.

“Here.” Malcolm pulled a pair of heavy duty handcuffs from his suit and tossed them to Slade. “Figured we’d need them since this one,” he gestured to Oliver, “gets itchy about killing people.”

It wasn’t surprising Malcolm made it sound like a weakness and, try as Oliver might to keep it from irritating him, it still did.

Felicity, on the other hand, was not even attempting to manage her annoyance. “So can we talk about this new team—?”

Oliver let out a frustrated grunt. He didn’t have time for a debate. “I was desperate,” he hissed, for Felicity’s ears only, “and Team Flash was unavailable.”

“You couldn’t have tried, say…Lyla?” Felicity argued, her voice low.

It was almost reassuring that he knew her so well, had known exactly what Felicity’s objections and suggestions were going to be. “I need to find my son. Malcolm and Slade give me more control than an ARGUS army—”

“Ol-i-ver—”

“And, by my calculation, Lyla should get my message and have that army on their way in twelve hours at the most,” Oliver whispered. Again, for her ears only. Felicity would pass the information along to those they wanted to know.

Felicity clamped her mouth shut in a frown, her eyes searching Oliver’s face. He knew damn well she wasn’t done arguing but he needed to walk away. He needed to check on the rest of the team, to regroup, give orders, find the others…find William and get the fuck off this island.

If Oliver wanted a debate he would have called ARGUS first.

Besides, if Oliver didn’t walk away from her now, there was a good chance he was going to kiss her and they hadn’t talked about going public with trying again and…his focus was fucked up enough just with Felicity’s presence.

So he did. Oliver walked away, toward the rest of the team, Felicity following close behind. He promised Felicity he would discuss Slade and Malcolm later (off the damn island, if he had his way), talked to Evelyn (which was a fucking waste of time), and had an argument with Thea that
felt eerily similar to the conversation he’d had with Felicity.

Oliver wasn’t sure if it was comforting or disconcerting how the woman in his life seemed to so often united (frequently against him). At least with Thea he could play the protect Samantha and Felicity card.

He really did feel better with Felicity and Thea protecting each other. Throw in a genius and a former Ras al Ghul and they’d be okay. Oliver hoped. He also hoped Samantha would just follow their Goddamn directions. It was the only hope William’s mother had of surviving this place.

When he got back to the group with Thea, Felicity was picking a fight with Slade (who Oliver was pretty sure was enjoying every moment). But they needed to move on. There was no time.

Eye on the prize.

William, Felicity, Thea: Safe

Samantha: Safe

Rest of the team: Safe.

Chase and his allies: Neutralized.

Then…then Oliver wanted to hold his son and kiss his girl and take them both the fuck home.

That wasn’t too much to ask for, was it?

Oliver gave Curtis the comm links and Felicity the tablet he had brought for her. If anything could calm Felicity down, it was tech. But the look in her eyes…he really didn’t like the look in her eyes. Too much terror. Not enough hope.

But then…out of the blue…Felicity’s lips were on his and for a split-second Oliver didn’t think about anything.

Anything but her.

God, he loved her.

It wasn’t the kiss Oliver wanted to give her. It was just a simple press of her lips to his, one of the most chaste kisses they had ever exchanged. But they didn’t have time for the kiss Oliver wanted to give her. They didn’t have time for this. But he would take it. And hold it. And hope it gave Felicity the comfort it gave him.

Oliver closed his eyes and tried to memorize the moment, let it give him strength. He tried to return the favor, because he could feel Felicity’s desperation and this kiss…the look in her eyes, it was a little too much like that last kiss in Nanda Parbat.

“What was that for?” Oliver asked, hoping Felicity understood that he wasn’t asking why she would kiss him, but why now? Why like this? Why like it was goodbye?

“Just in case,” Felicity whispered and that was exactly what Oliver had been afraid of.

He shook his head because…no. No. They were not going down this road. This was…a well-worn road but…Oliver was done with this road. This was not a goodbye. That was…unacceptable.
“We’re going to make it through this.” Oliver tried to put all of his confidence into that simple statement. Because he was confident, Goddammit. And he was too stubborn to lose. Not today.

“You can’t know that for sure. I didn’t want to regret not kissing you,” Felicity murmured and the pain in her eyes was horrible. “When it comes to the two of us, I regret enough as it is.”

Felicity’s words were heartfelt and full of emotion and if Oliver let them, they could break him.

Oliver wanted to tell her he didn’t regret a moment they had spent together. He wanted to tell Felicity she was his heart. That she was the very best part of him. He wanted to kiss her again, kiss her properly but…

All that would do was make them both too emotionally compromised to do what they needed to do. Ninety percent of the time Felicity was his light, his hope. Maybe the other ten percent Oliver needed to be hers.

Forcing a smile, Oliver murmured, “Let’s talk about this when we’re off the island.”

Because, yes, they needed to discuss all of this. He needed to know what nonsense she was beating herself up over now. But more than that, Felicity needed to know that Oliver was confident they were going to have that conversation. No other option was acceptable.

The look in her eyes and her slight nod told him Felicity, at least, understood what Oliver was trying to say, even if she wasn’t as convinced as he would like.

And, again, he had the urge to kiss her. Really kiss her. Oliver almost did it. But the ferocity with which he craved it told him just how bad of an idea it was.

Later.

Oliver hugged Felicity to him. One last…no, not the last time. He just hugged her.

For luck. For fortitude.

Oliver took another deep breath, taking in Felicity’s scent and her strength, smiling to let her know he knew that this was the right course of action and it would bring them back together in the end.

Felicity gave his arm a final squeeze before she left to follow the others. Oliver knew how much it hurt her to leave, but he needed her safe. He would feel so much better once she was securely away.

Oliver watched her go, knowing he shouldn’t, but unable to tare his eyes away.

Felicity glanced behind and found him staring. She smiled sadly and mouthed, “I love you.”

His eyes burned and…a shot of terror impaled him. What if this was the last time? What if this was goodbye for good? What if something happened to Felicity and Oliver wasn’t there to stop it…?

Fuck. See, emotionally compromised. This was why Oliver needed Felicity off this God forsaken island. But…he again forced something resembling a smile and mouthed, “I love you,” back.

Felicity’s smile widened and she stumbled over a tree root (since she was walking backward in her stupid heeled boots. Oliver swore he was burning every last pair of them).
“Watch where you’re going,” Oliver yelled out, “and be careful.” The last thing they needed was for her to get a Goddamn broken ankle.

Shooting Oliver one last smile, Felicity turned and hurried to catch up to the others.

Oliver took a deep breath as they disappeared from sight. Thea would keep Felicity and Samantha safe. Malcolm would keep Thea safe. Oliver could focus on William and the rest of the team.

He turned to Nyssa and Slade.

Then they would take Chase out and get the fuck off this island.

* * * * * * * * * *

Regrets.

Felicity had a boat load of them.

Ha! What Felicity wouldn’t do for a boat load of…well, boats.

Okay, that didn’t even make sense. She needed to pull herself together and get her head in the game. If there was ever a time Felicity needed to be present with her team and focus on the mission, it was now. Otherwise, this fraking island would be their mass grave.

And wasn’t that a pleasant thought? But melodramatic as it was, it was also accurate. They needed every brain they had working on a way off Lian Yu. That was where Oliver (and everyone else) needed Felicity’s focus, not in her head drowning in regret.

Drowning. That was a much more appropriate metaphor.

Felicity wasn’t sure why she was so freaked out this time. Why this time felt so dire. Why she was so damn terrified she would never see Oliver again. It wasn’t her death that scared her…it was his. And the others and…God, his son.

This wasn’t Felicity’s first rodeo. They seemed to do this biannually. She was an old hat at life and death crises.


Though how someone got eviler than Damian Darhk, Felicity had no idea. At least, Chase only wanted to destroy Oliver and everyone in his circle, Darhk tried to wipe out 99.9% of the planet.

But Darhk had had a family he actually cared about (imagine that) and a motive (even if it was an evil one) and Chase had…a really fraked-up obsession with Oliver that dominated his entire existence. A sinister, ugly need to prove Oliver was as dark and twisted as Chase, himself, was.
Sometimes, Felicity thought this was less about revenge and more about… hero-worship. That Simon Morison had spent five years trying to become Oliver…or at least the Oliver Chase thought he was. The monster.

Adrian Chase became a monster to fight a monster and had loved every moment of it. What a disappointment the real Oliver Queen must have been. Now Chase was willing to do anything to prove that his perverse and distorted beliefs about Oliver were true. He was willing to die for it.

So, yeah, craziest villain yet.

Also, the fact that two of their previous Big Bads, and the daughter of a third, were their allies in this little adventure had to say something about Chase being on a whole nother level.

Well, one previous Big Bad now that Malcolm had… poor Thea.

Though Felicity couldn’t help but think that if Malcolm Merlyn was their only casualty today, that was them getting off easy. And she really had a sickening feeling that they weren’t going to get off easy. She just hoped that that wasn’t a premonition.

Great, now she was believing in premonitions and languishing in pessimism. Felicity’s head space really had gone to crap. And given eleven other people were counting on her to use the genius brain she had bragged about, including an innocent ten-year-old boy, who she had never met but somehow loved anyway…

And the idea of that boy, Oliver’s boy, not being able to grow up…it was too horrible to contemplate.

But this brain they were counting on…it couldn’t even correctly add up two IQ points. What the hell had Felicity been thinking? It wasn’t even possible for two people’s IQ to add up to 500. The scales didn’t go that high. Together, her and Curtis were 350-360 max.

And decreasing by the moment. Damn it all.

Felicity really hoped that Samantha wasn’t aware of how IQ points work and, frak, why did Oliver’s Baby Mama fluster her so damn much?

It wasn’t like Felicity was, actually, threatened by the woman. Okay maybe it had crossed her mind at first, but really Felicity knew Oliver didn’t have feelings for Samantha. He probably never had.

No, Oliver was hers. Felicity knew that. Body and soul.

Samantha even seemed to be rooting for them to get back together, which was weird, even if Felicity was pretty sure that was mostly a guilty conscious on her part.

And Samantha should feel guilty.

Maybe that was why Samantha had Felicity on-edge. Because there were about a thousand ways the woman had handled the Oliver/William situation that Felicity disagreed with, some of which rather vehemently. And, some of them, had exploded in Felicity’s face along with Oliver and William’s, ruining all their lives.

Okay, so maybe there was some unresolved resentment there. Great, that would be super fun to address once they got off this hell hole. Just what Oliver and Felicity’s fragile new relationship needed.
No, that wasn’t fair. It wasn’t fragile. This might be a new start, but it was strong, with an excellent foundation. And Felicity wasn’t going to let Samantha shake it this time.

Though this time Samantha wouldn’t be disappearing from their lives so easily because William wouldn’t be disappearing. Not if Felicity had anything to say about it. And she planned to have a say. A rather loud say, if necessary.

Except…this was so not helping Felicity disarm an island full of bombs that were threatening to kill every single one of them, rendering this entire mental ramble completely null and void.

Come on, Smoak, focus.

She needed to concentrate on simultaneously remotely deactivating 5000 bombs, while Digg tried to start a plane that she really didn’t want to get on without Oliver, as she listened to his breathing over the comms (it comforted her okay?), and counted her regrets. Felicity was all about the multitasking.

Maybe it was the regret that made this year harder. This time Felicity couldn’t help but look back on the last year and wish…she had done so much differently.

Every decision that had felt so right at the time, every one had been made for the wrong reasons, out of anger or hurt or fear. Or, often, all three.

Standing there, facing her own death, Oliver’s death, his son’s death…that poor boy…there were so many things Felicity would do differently. She wished…

Felicity wished she’d said frak it to one step at a time. She wished she had thrown Oliver that private birthday celebration with the lingerie and the candlelight. She wished they hadn’t wasted a week between the walk home from Rick’s Bar and Oliver’s birthday…

No. Felicity wasn’t going back far enough. She regretted this summer. But, for the first time, she didn’t regret letting it happen, she regretted the way it ended. She regretted not staying and talking. She regretted not at least trying, giving Oliver the chance to explain his side.

Maybe then she wouldn’t have involved poor sweet Billy in this. He’d deserved so much more than being a rebound, then loving a woman whose heart was already taken. And no matter what Oliver said, Felicity couldn’t help but believe if she had never gotten involved with Billy in the first place, he would be alive today.

She wished…she wished…that day, the day she had walked…well, rolled in on Oliver sending William away…Felicity wished she had stayed.

Stayed and screamed at him! Demanded Oliver explain himself! Told him how stupid he was being, how wrong he was to even consider sending William away. Felicity wished she had kept yelling until Oliver was convinced to get on his stupid bike and bring his son home.

Felicity had told herself that wasn’t her job. That it was Oliver’s responsibility and she was done fixing his mistakes. But if she had tried…if she hadn’t let pride and fear and resentment rule her…

Would things have been different if she had? Would they all still be fighting for their lives on this stupid island?

Felicity would never know but, at least, they would have had a year together. All of them.

And maybe that was what Felicity regretted most.
Digg called them over and Felicity clicked off the comm, pulling it out of her ear and shoving it deep inside her pocket. She needed to be present with her friends, not out in the ether with Oliver. If someone, any of them got hurt because she was over-focused on Oliver she would never forgive herself.

Felicity joined the group, having accomplished nothing (well, except the regret counting. She was excelling at that).

She couldn’t say that she was surprised Chase had sabotaged the plane. She couldn’t say she didn’t agree with Slade (though God knew that felt bizarre). Felicity didn’t want to leave without Oliver and William but having no way off the island…that was helping exactly no one.

As they stood on top of a literal ticking time bomb…well, maybe not literally ticking. But still…a literal bomb.

Felicity wasn’t sure what telling Oliver would help, but Digg seemed to think they should and hearing his voice always brought her panic down a couple notches…she just hoped it wouldn’t be the last time she heard it.

Frak, Felicity really needed to stop thinking that way.

She got Oliver on the comm and…well, he seemed more upset by the plane being incapacitated than Felicity was.

But somehow his urgency became Felicity’s urgency. Oliver’s, “Go now!” reverberated through her head.

Then she heard Oliver’s desperate gasp. If Felicity listened carefully enough, she could almost hear Chase in the background, but what was he saying?

“Felicity?”

She jerked around to see Digg looking at her expectantly, hands on his hips. “What did Oliver say?”

Felicity could hear Oliver’s breathing, made out a whimper and…she yanked the comm out of her ear. She was useless while she was listening to it. It was so much easier when she had just her computers and the comms to listen to. She hated being out in the field.

At least, she hated being out in the field without Oliver right there next to her.

“Felicity! What did he say?!” Digg repeated, louder this time, loud enough to make Felicity jump, she was just that on edge.

“He…um…he said…” Nothing good. Nothing at all. Turning, Felicity faced the group. Nine faces. All staring at her expectantly. Frak. “He said to go. To find the ARGUS supply ship on the east side of the island.”

Slade was shaking his head before Felicity could even finish her sentence, walking over to actually join their little circle (Well, not so little. Ten people wasn’t a small group, especially when one considered all their lives were at stake.) “That’s thirty minutes away. If we move quickly.” Slade looked pointedly at Samantha.

“There has to be another option,” Quentin interjected, looking around at those gathered. Felicity wondered if he was calculating who was likely to make it to the east side in time. Slade had clearly
already done so.

“Oh! The prison,” Thea gasped, grabbing onto Quentin’s arm, her eyes darting to Felicity, then Slade. “The ARGUS underground cells, they have to be strong enough to function as a bomb shelter.”

The muscle in Slade’s jaw jumped. “Twenty minutes away.”

“Fuck,” Rene muttered, turning away in frustration. Felicity didn’t disagree with the sentiment either.

But Digg was clearly considering it. He turned to Felicity and asked calmly, “Do you think we can make it?”

Felicity didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. Five minutes ago, she would have refused to leave without Oliver, now she was trying to figure out how to be not dead with her nearest and dearest five minutes from now.

“I don’t know if we have that much time.” Though, how much time were they wasting discussing this? Felicity sped up her words, “Chase sounded really trigger happy, losing his marbles by the second. Actually, I’m pretty sure there aren’t any marbles left.”

It suddenly felt like Felicity could feel the ticking of the bomb beneath her feet. Though that was probably just her heart pounding.

Rene turned to Curtis. “Can’t you just disarm the bombs over the patch we’re standing on?” He gestured to the ground around them.

Curtis looked at Felicity and she saw her own blank terror reflected back as he answered, “That will take more than twenty minutes.”

“We’re wasting time,” Nyssa interjected, looking like she wanted to be moving already, which was great, but where to?

“No kidding, genius—”

Rene started to argue, but Dinah put a hand on his arm and pointed to the plane. “You think that has a life raft? Maybe if we can get far enough from shore?”

Digg looked like he was considering it, “Maybe—”

“You know,” Curtis burst out, looking directly at Felicity, “these are all surface bombs, if we could get—”

“Underground we might be able to escape them,” Felicity finished Curtis’ thought, for the first time feeling hope. “Yes. There are tunnels. If we can travel to the east side underground—”

“I know of caves, not tunnels,” Slade interrupted, gently, looking at Felicity as if he were sorry he had to tell her this, which was more empathy than Felicity would have thought him capable of.

But she knew Oliver had said ‘tunnels’. Mentally, Felicity flipped through the hundreds of horrible stories she had gathered from him over the years. Shaking her head, Felicity insisted, “Oliver said…”

Then it came to her. Hub City. Darhk. Oliver was feeling chatty with the help of a few drinks and
the need to prove to her he could change and be open and...oh, why hadn’t she let him? So much wasted time.

“There are tunnels,” Felicity insisted, stepping toward Slade. She’d probably grab his arm if she didn’t hate him so much. “Old, old tunnels that lead to...” Her eyes popped open wide as she remembered. “A Nexus Chamber.”

“A Nexus Chamber?” Nyssa perked up, interest and maybe even hope lighting her eyes. “There is a Nexus Chamber on this island?” Felicity nodded, somewhat frantically. “Then we must go there.”

Really, where else could be safer? It existed on a different plane of reality. God knew, this plane wasn’t the place to be at the moment.

Actually...Felicity turned to Samantha, who had been shut down and silent through the entire debate. “It would be a perfect place to hide William.”

Samantha came alive at that, grabbing Felicity’s hand and it was weird but Felicity squeezed back. “What are we waiting for?”

Slade let out a deep sigh. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” He sounded like he wasn’t sure if any of them were even sane.

But Felicity didn’t know where it was so...wait, she did know. “The old Chinese Prison. Do you know where that is? The entrance to the tunnels is through—”

“Yes!” Slade drew up tall, his eyes brightening. “And it’s close.”

“Let’s move!” Digg called and no one had to be told twice.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

It was really hard to think clearly, to think at all with that Psychopath’s hands on his son.

And, of course, because the universe hated him, it had never been more important for Oliver to think clearly than it was at that particular moment.

But emotion kept leaking through. That was his son. Oliver’s son, who he hadn’t seen in over a year, who was bigger now, taller, and was...petrified.

And behind them, on Oliver’s own person hell of an island was everyone else he cared about. Every single person. His sister. His...his Felicity. God, Felicity. Her voice was still ringing in his ear and he wished he could still hear her. He wished she’d tell him what to do. How to get out of this.

Their lives were in his hands, all of them. Hands Oliver could barely keep from shaking. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck!
He needed to focus. He needed to keep Chase talking. He had to *stall*. Oliver trusted his team, trusted their intellect and their ingenuity, but they needed *time*. The only thing he could give them now was time for Felicity and Slade to get everyone to that boat.

How much had passed?

It was impossible to tell. Oliver felt like everything was going in slow motion.

Because Adrian fucking Chase had his filthy hands on *his son*.

And Oliver knew *exactly* what that hold was for. He knew how easy it was to snap a neck in that position. If Oliver could snap a grown man’s neck…a muscular, big boned *man’s* neck, how easy would it be to snap a ten-year-old boy’s?

And Chase was…so fucking crazy. One stray thought. A seconds’ impulse and William’s life would be snuffed out forever. Before Oliver even had a chance to know him.

Terror.

*That* was what Oliver was feeling. Felicity was right. In *so many* ways she’d been right. He should *never* have sent his son away.

So much wasted time.

But thinking about that now was counterproductive. Oliver needed to figure this out. He needed to find another way. He couldn’t lose either of them. *Any* of them.

Had enough time passed? Had any time at all passed? If he gave them enough time, Oliver just knew that they would find a way.

Adrian had anticipated Oliver’s every move, was ten steps ahead of him at every corner. But not Felicity. Not his team. *They* could outsmart this lunatic. Felicity could.

Just one more time, baby. *Only once* more.

And it had *better* be the last time because Oliver couldn’t do this again. This devil’s choice. Shado and Sara. Mom and Thea.

Each time, Oliver had tried to outsmart a crazy person. Had tried his *damnedest* not to choose. To offer himself instead.

It hadn’t worked. Not once. Shado. Mom. Gone forever because of these sick games.

What the *hell* was Oliver going to do? How did he make *this time* end differently?

Had enough time passed?

Chase was still taunting him. And William…he *still* looked terrified. His beautiful boy…

If Oliver let himself look in William’s eyes he was going to lose it.

Then heard Felicity’s voice in the back of his head.

*Find another way.*

Then Oliver couldn’t *not* look in his son’s eyes and when he did, he knew there was no way in hell
he was going to kill Chase in front of William. He wasn’t going to participate in the most elaborate and sick suicide plan in creation.

So Oliver lowered his bow and prayed. He saw Chase loosen his hold. Just enough. And then, he let an arrow fly.

And William was in Oliver’s arms. His boy was safe and in his arms and it was the first time and it felt so fucking incredible. And…only holding Felicity had ever felt this good, but it was different and still amazing and…

Oliver had known if this happened, if he got to hold his son, he would lose it. And he did. He lost all control over his emotions. Tears fell and he clutched William tightly and spouted nonsense at Chase and swore he would keep William safe and…

That was his downfall.

That was all of their downfalls.

Oliver realized far too late his mistake.

He had let himself get distracted. Let emotion over power instinct and intellect and…Oliver had gotten sloppy. He’d been overwhelmed. Selfish in his need to just hold his son.

If he had just taken a second to knock Chase unconscious…because even if Adrian hadn’t had a gun in his pocket, there were a million ways he could kill himself and…

Oliver had been distracted. If he hadn’t been, he would have realized immediately the only way to keep everyone safe was to knock…him…out.

If Oliver had, everything would have been different.

But he lost his edge and…

The gun shot rang out milliseconds after it had appeared and…

Too late to stop him…

There was a beat of silence.

A moment of hope.

Then…

The explosions rang out. Distant explosions. One after the other. Never ending.

It’s going to be so lonely…

Without Felicity….

It felt like his insides were being torn out.

No. No. No. This was not happening. It wasn’t.

Thea.

John.
Oh God, *Felicity*. No…no…no…

This wasn’t happening. It was a nightmare. That was it. This couldn’t be real.

Oliver couldn’t do this…*living thing* without Felicity.

That kiss. It couldn’t be their last. It just *couldn’t*.

“Was my mom on that island?”

“Yeah,” Oliver breathed…

Wait…no…

Ten seconds as a father and he had already fucked up. Oliver shook himself, took a deep breath, and turned his son…

His son. Oliver took William’s small face in his hands and told him, “*No.*”

William barely responded. He lifted an eyebrow questioningly, almost disbelievingly. His face was…*flat*. His eyes were distant. Numb. Empty, almost.

A lump rose in Oliver’s throat. “*Listen* to me, William,” he pleaded and he could hear the emotion in his voice. There was no controlling it now. Maybe it didn’t matter anymore. The damage was done. “Your mom *was* on that island, but she’s *fine*.”

This time, William’s look was definitely skeptical as his eyes returned to the island. It was in flames.

*Fuck.*

“I don’t think anything on that island is fine,” William whispered and it was his flat, even tone that was so terrifying. Oliver knew he was in shock but…

“Samantha…*your mom* was with my friends, my…*our* family and they are the smartest, most resourceful people on the planet. They had warning. They got to safety.”

Oliver *had* to believe that. He had to.

“Is Felicity one of those people?” William asked, his eyes still on the island, his body unnaturally still.

Oliver had no idea why hearing William say Felicity’s name felt like a punch to the gut, but it did. “Yeah. Yeah, she is. *Why—?*”

William pointed to Chase. To the cold, lifeless body slumped in the corner. Oliver had forgotten about…the body.

“*He* said her name like she was important,” William said and it was the first time Oliver heard inflection in his boy’s voice. It was filled with hatred and rage and Oliver didn’t know how to feel about that.

“Is he dead?” William asked and Oliver squeezed his eyes shut. This was something he had tried so hard to keep his boy from seeing.

“Yeah,” Oliver breathed, swallowing. What else could he say?
“Good,” William spat and he looked like he wanted to spit on Chase’s corpse. or kick him. Oliver had no idea what he would do if he tried. But thankfully, William turned away from the body, instead asking, “Who is she?”

“Felicity?” Oliver repeated, struggling to keep up. His brain wasn’t going as quickly as he needed it to. Was he in shock too?

William nodded and Oliver blinked, struggling to concentrate on the question, to come up with the words for what Felicity was to him. To explain her to his son.

Did he say Felicity was his partner? His friend? His girlfriend? All were true. But also woefully inadequate. Ex-fiancé seemed…so wrong. God, he hoped she would be fiancé again soon. Or wife. Wife would be good.

Oliver swore to God, if he had to go into the afterlife and drag Felicity back…

“She’s the woman I love,” Oliver finally said, before he made the decision to do so.

William turned to look up at him with too intelligent, and far too bitter, eyes. He was ten years-old now. His son had been alive a whole decade and Oliver had no idea what he was like. He had no idea what ten-year-old’s in general, were like. How much did they understand of the world around them?

Looking into William’s eyes, he seemed to understand a lot, and considering everything he had been through, that was a terrifying thought. This child, this person, had a whole complex personality Oliver knew almost nothing about and…

How the hell was Oliver going to do this? He didn’t know how to be a father. He was going to fuck it up. He was already fucking it up.

There was no way Oliver could do it alone. He needed Felicity. And John. And Thea. And...

He blew out a breath. Oliver didn’t have time for this. They didn’t have time for this.

Placing his hands on William’s shoulders, he crouched down to look in his eyes (he didn’t have to go nearly as far as he did just a year before). “This is what we are going to do, we’re going to see if the radio is working…” Wait. “Radio…” Comms. Why hadn’t he thought of it before? Oliver felt like a complete moron. “What the hell is wrong with me!” He jolted to his feet, his hand flying to his chest, jabbing at the comm button.

“Felicity! Felicity!”

Oliver yelled it. As if yelling would make a difference.

But all Oliver could make out was static. He closed his eyes and he took a deep breath, fighting the burn in his eyes and throat, the panic…

William needed him. They all needed him. Oliver couldn’t afford even a second to break down.

Then Oliver looked back at his boy and he realized he had managed to hide precisely nothing because William’s eyes looked panicky as well.

“What…?” William’s voice shook and Oliver wondered if it would be better if he stayed in shock. For a little longer anyway.
“It’s okay.” Oliver laid a hand on William’s shoulder again, struggling with himself. “I was just checking my comms but they’re down.” Shit.

William chewed on his lower lip. “That’s not good, is it?”

No, it wasn’t. “It doesn’t mean anything, except that the comms are down. So we’ll use this boat’s radio if it’s working—”

“It’s not. I tried it. I was stuck in that room for hours, you don’t think I tried to call for help? I’m not stupid.” William’s tone was snippy now and Oliver wasn’t sure what to do with a ten year-old’s mood swings.

Still, Oliver managed what he hoped passed for a reassuring smile, “I know that. I know.” He barely knew William at all, but it was already clear that the last thing he was was stupid.

Oliver pressed a kiss to William’s forehead before he thought about it, proving just how little emotional control he had left. But William didn’t pull away. That was good at least. They may be all each other had so…

No. Not thinking that way. No.

“Well, we know the engine works,” Oliver stated as calmly as he could. “We’ll drive the boat to the east side of the Island, where the ARGUS supply ship is docked—”

“ARGUS?” William gasped, his eyes wide. “They actually exist?”

This time, smiling was easier. “Very much so.”

“They’re like…they’re like SHIELD!” William breathed, like it was the most amazing thing he’d ever heard and it was nice to hear something in his voice other than fear and rage.

Only problem was… “Shield?”

“SHIELD.” William looked at Oliver like he was crazy…or completely out of touch. God, this was going to become a thing, wasn’t it? “The Avengers? Agents of SHIELD? Marvel Comics?”

“Right.” Yes. Oliver did know this. Thank God. And thank God for Felicity making him watch those movies two summers ago. “That’s exactly what ARGUS is like. And one of my friends on this Island is,” not was, is, “the husband of the ARGUS director. Lyla’s like…” Crap, what was his name? “Samuel Jackson?”

“Nick Fury?”

“Yes!” Nick Fury. Damn, why hadn’t Oliver remembered that?

And William’s expression…a combination of impressed Oliver knew this person and disgusted that he didn’t know Nick Fury’s name…

God, Oliver really, really couldn’t do this without Felicity.

And how the hell did a ten-year-old manage to say so much with a single expression? Was that normal?

“We’ll get to the ARGUS supply ship and, hopefully,” Oliver took another deep breath, “your mom and Felicity and everyone will already be on the boat. Safe and sound.”
William’s expression shut down so fast it was frightening. “And if they aren’t?”

“If they’re not…” Fuck. “Then we contact Layla, the director of ARGUS, who is probably already on her way.” Oliver hoped. He really had no idea how much time had passed. “And then we search every inch of that island until we find them.”

Fear flashed in William’s eyes and Oliver knew exactly how he thought they were going to find them.

“Alive,” Oliver clarified, fiercely, as if he could will it to be so. “We will find them alive.”

William looked far from convinced. But maybe he was just afraid to hope. Oliver understood that.

“You need to believe me, buddy,” Oliver pleaded, a child this young should never be without hope. But the look in William’s eyes didn’t look young at all. His eyes looked like they had seen too much. “I believe that you believe that.”

Great. It seemed Oliver’s son was an old soul. He crouched down again. “William, I will do everything in my power to keep you safe and bring your mother back to you.” And Felicity and the others to him.

And…William gave Oliver his first genuine smile. “That, I believe…Dad.”

Dad.

That was a shocker. It almost sent Oliver tumbling backward. It wasn’t something he had thought he’d hear…ever. Certainly not without a ton of time and conversation and so much…

Oliver was so thrown he was totally caught off-guard with the one-two punch that was his son’s next statement.

“Because you’re the Green Arrow.”

* * * * * * * * * * * *

The old Chinese prison was blessedly close and everyone one was feeling pretty damn motivated to get there right the hell now, so it wasn’t long before they entered the abandoned building…well, if it counted as a building given it was mostly underground.

Felicity was actually surprised no one broke a limb in their mad dash to get there. And by no one, she meant herself. Or Curtis. Or Samantha. Though thinking that felt petty for some odd reason.

But the speed they had to move did help Felicity’s sanity because it didn’t allow her much time to think about the fact that Oliver was out there.

Had he found shelter? Did he have a plan to keep himself from being blown up? The idiot always thought of himself last. And Oliver often forgot he was not unbreakable, that he wasn’t a
metahuman, that he couldn’t survive a blast like…

God, this was why Felicity wanted to be by Oliver’s side. To remind him that he was important too. That there were people who counted on him, who loved him, who needed him to stay alive. And if they were together then…

Being left behind was the worst fate. If the island was going to blow up, Felicity wanted to be beside Oliver when…

Felicity clicked the comm on for another five seconds. Just to hear Oliver’s voice. Yup, still alive. Okay, she could breathe.

She really wanted to demand to know what his plan was to survive the blast, but Oliver was screaming at Chase and it seemed like a really bad idea to distract him. So…off went the comm.

For another minute or two, at least.

Inside the mostly basement prison, right where Oliver said it was, was a gigantic hole in the wall, leading to a tunnel.

Slade turned and threw Felicity a half-smile that was surprisingly uncreepy. “Looks like you were right, Ms. Smoak. It’s a good thing for all of us that Oliver finally found someone to open up to.”

And, in what must be the oddest turn of events, Felicity actually found Slade Wilson’s compliment strangely touching. So clearly she was officially insane.

“Seconded,” Digg called out, gesturing toward the tunnel. “Fall out, people. We don’t have time to stand around and chat.”

Digg had a single flare and entered the tunnel first, the others following. Thea squeezed Felicity’s hand before disappearing inside, but it was Slade who insisted on bringing up the rear, which was either comforting or terrifying. Felicity couldn’t decide which. Her emotions were so muddled at the moment, it was hard to differentiate anything.

And it was fraking dark in that tunnel. The single flare was barely enough to keep them from running into one another. Felicity wasn’t afraid of the dark. Usually. Her and Oliver had been stuck in a dark Bunker pretty recently and…yeah, she would feel so much better if Oliver was here.

But, then again, Felicity wasn’t really afraid for herself at the moment. Any and all fear she was focused on Oliver and William’s survival. The sheer terror she felt for them…she didn’t think she had any left over for herself.

Though maybe Felicity was scared to death of living without Oliver.

Felicity turned on the comm, again, and listened until the terror in Oliver’s voice made her heart seize and tears fill her eyes so quickly the world blurred into a dark fog. It was too much and she had to turn it off again.

Rinse and repeat.

Felicity didn’t get a chance to repeat her ritual again, though. The tunnel soon ended in a huge chamber. The light from the room glowed and drew them all in like moths to the flame.

“Who left the candles lit?”
It was Quentin who asked and…poor Quentin. Metahumans, parallel Earths, Nexus Chambers, dead daughter doppelgangers…it was probably breaking his brain. Why couldn’t Chase have left the poor man out of it? Hadn’t he suffered enough?

Samantha pushed ahead into the chamber, her eyes wide and frantic. “Someone must be here. William! William!”

Clearly, she didn’t get this whole danger thing, because if William had been there, under-guard, Samantha would have gotten captured at best, shot dead at worst. That would have been a fabulous thing for her son to witness.

But William wasn’t there. No one was there. Damn it! Where the hell was he?

Surely, Chase hadn’t been telling the truth when he said he killed him (that was something they had not shared with Samantha).

Please, God, let him be with Oliver. Besides William’s safety, Oliver would make sure he was out of harm’s way if he was with William. Maybe on that damn ARGUS ship or…anywhere safe. Just let them both be safe.

“I don’t think anyone’s here,” Thea said softly, going to Samantha and putting an arm around her, which Felicity was grateful for because she really didn’t want to have to be the one to do it.

Instead, Felicity walked to the center of the large room and looked around. It was a lot like the Nexus in Hub City, not identical but…oh, it was hard to remember. Columns and stone and steps and hundreds…no, thousands of candles. A space larger than what should exist in the area it was confined to. It would be beautiful if it weren’t so damn freaky.

Slade entered last and walked the perimeter. Had he been a soldier? Felicity couldn’t remember. He came to another tunnel at the opposite end. “Oliver’s son could be up ahead,” he said, peering into the outgoing tunnel.

“We should stay here,” Nyssa announced, crossing her arms and leaning against a column, making it clear, she for one, intended to stay right there. “This is the safest place until we get word the threat has been neutralized.”

Automatically, Felicity’s hand went to her comm, but she stopped herself from turning it on. She needed to be present in the moment and this turning on and off the comms thing was driving her insane.

“Why is it the safest? This chamber could collapse,” Dinah argued, squinting up at the ceiling, perhaps trying to judge its stability. “I thought the plan was to try to get to the boat through the tunnels?”

“I agree,” Rene added, which might be the first time he’d ever said those words. “And who the hell left the candles burning? It’s creepy as fuck.”

Felicity didn’t disagree, but she cleared her throat and told him, “No one. I mean, I think they’re always lit. By magic.” It sounded ridiculous, even to her own ears.

“Indeed,” Nyssa agreed. And how come she didn’t sound stupid?

Samantha was shaking her head though, that wild frantic look in her eyes building and, honestly, Felicity felt for her. Felicity was about two seconds away from a full-on freak-out herself.
But then Samantha bolted for the outgoing tunnel. “I need to find my son. I have to—”

*Kaboom!*

Slade grabbed Samantha around the waist and swung her away from the tunnel just in time. It collapsed in a storm of rock and dirt.

Explosions echoed around them and through the chamber.

Stone crashed and fell as the tunnels collapsed.

Felicity felt Thea grab her hand and she squeezed back.

Her eyes fell closed as her heart started to roar and all Felicity could see was Oliver’s face. It was like a thousand snap shots of her life with him.

Was this her life flashing before her eyes? If it was, then clearly someone thought her life was Oliver because that was all Felicity could see.

But then all she saw on the inside of her eyelids were explosions. Endless explosions. A scream caught in her throat. She couldn’t breathe.

“She’s gone! Felicity!”

There were hands on her face. But they weren’t Oliver’s…they were too small, too soft…so Felicity didn’t care. She didn’t want them there.

“Felicity!”

“Slap her.”

It was Rene’s snarky command that pulled Felicity back to reality and she snapped open her eyes to see herself staring into Thea’s intense hazel gaze. “Hey, hey, it’s okay. We’re okay,” the younger girl was telling her. “Your crazy magic room saved us. Not a speck of dust fell.”

Felicity’s eyes flew around the room, her face still held in Thea’s hands. She was right, the tunnels had collapsed but the chamber was untouched.

“The floor didn’t even shake,” Dinah murmured in wonder.

But that didn’t seem right. Because Felicity was certain she’d felt the world shake. Had it really been just her?

“We’re okay,” Thea whispered again.

But Felicity felt a tear slip free. “Oliver.”

She didn’t think she had actually made a sound, but Thea’s face crumbled, her hands starting to shake and Felicity moved to clutch them to her, hold them as Thea’s head fell to her shoulder.

“Hey. Hey,” Digg called, his voice firm and soothing. Then he was there, embracing them both, murmuring, “You know Oliver has at least three more lives left. He’s safe.” John turned his head, leveling his stare across the room. “So is William.”

Felicity followed Digg’s gaze and found Samantha had collapsed into a ball, her eyes staring unseeingly, tears rolling down her face. Quentin was next to her, his arm around her. “Oliver’s too
stubborn to lose,” the older man was telling the stricken woman, but he looked up and met Felicity’s eyes and they were both thinking of Quentin’s child, who Oliver hadn’t been able to save, despite the power of his will.

Squeezing her eyes shut, Felicity clutched Thea’s hands and turned her face into Digg’s chest and prayed that this time it would be enough.

Because there wasn’t a lot they could do. There wasn’t anything they could so. The tunnels had collapsed. For the time being, they were trapped.

*Revised 6/11/2018*

Chapter End Notes

We’ve come to the end of our cannon journey, from here on out, it is all me.

I truly hope you enjoyed my William. I made him as sassy and observant and moody as all the ten year-olds I know (and considering I just spent 48 hours in the woods with no 4G with 10 & 11 year-olds this weekend, I’d say I know them better than I’d like). I also really wanted to show the Queen genetics shining through with aspects of both Oliver and Thea. And since we already know William’s into super heroes I’m running with that one.

In general I agree that it isn’t very realistic for William to call Oliver ‘Dad,’ but I have a very specific reason for him doing so and it will become clear as the story progresses.

If you haven’t read it yet and enjoy smut, check out *Best Birthday Ever*, up here on AO3.

The gorgeous new title page was made by the multitalented laurabelle2930 and it works perfectly for these next several chapters. My chapter art pales in comparison but I want you to see the images I have in my head while writing each chapter.

And, of course, the three lovely ladies who keep me going, Fairytaleshheads, Imusuallyobsessed, and Ireland1733, thank you from the bottom of my exhausted heart. ;-).

Please, take a minute to leave me your thoughts if you can. I would be very grateful. Also, kudos are awesome!

Visit me on Tumblr at http://emmilynestill.tumblr.com/ or Twitter, also, Emmilynestill. I would love to chat!

Happy Reading,

Emmy
Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

This is the first post-Episode 5x23 chapter, so as of October 12 this is AU from here on out. A reminder to leave season 6 (and beyond) characterizations at the door.
“It doesn’t look like they’re here either,” William muttered, his voice bitter, his foot playing with a burnt piece of…something. Whatever it once was, it was no longer recognizable.

Then before Oliver could say anything, William’s leg shot out with a violent kick and sent the lump flying. Oliver wasn’t sure whether he should be proud of his son’s obvious athletic ability or terrified of the next mood swing that was about to erupt.

Swallowing, Oliver squared his shoulders. He needed to stay positive for his son. If he let himself slip, even for a second, into believing he’d lost them…he wouldn’t be able to function.

“Well, that,” Oliver pointed to the wreckage of what must have been a small jet, “is Chase’s plane. This is the last place they were, so it’s a good place to start. We can trace their steps from here.”

William sent him a…very teenage look. He reminded Oliver so much of Thea when he first came home as he said, sarcasm dripping from every word, “I don’t think we’re going to find their steps. I think there is a good chance their steps have been…I dunno, blown to smithereens.”

After that, William avoided his eyes, allowing Oliver to wince without an audience as the boy went back to picking through the rubble with his feet. Maybe looking for the next thing to test his soccer skills with.

Damn it.

Oliver took a deep breath. He counted backwards from ten, like Felicity always did and…he, still he had no idea what to say. He was so out of his depth it wasn’t even funny.

When they’d gotten to the ARGUS supply ship and found it empty (which did make Oliver worry for the skeleton crew usually left behind on the island), he was disappointed but not surprised.
He’d known it was a long shot that his team had gotten to the east side of the island in time. And now that he saw where the plane was located…it was very likely impossible for them to get from here to there with the time they’d had.

He just prayed they hadn’t tried. Because if they had…

No. Slade at least knew better than to try. Plus they had two certified geniuses, two former Ra’s al Ghul’s of the League of Assassins, two military vets, and two of the SCPD’s finest. Between them, they would find a way. Oliver knew it. He knew them.

But William didn’t.

When they had found that boat empty, Oliver saw the last trace of hope evaporate from his son’s eyes. It broke Oliver’s heart.

But William didn’t panic, didn’t cry. Though as the minutes turned to hours, Oliver thought tears might help. But William shuttered up and shut down and now…with every passing moment the boy’s anger and bitterness grew. As did Oliver’s certainty that he had no fucking idea how to be a father.

“Be careful where you step. Some of the wood is still smoldering. And don’t step under anything.”

Keeping William safe Oliver could do. That wasn’t so different than dealing with Rene and Curtis really. Who knew avoiding danger would be the easiest part of parenthood? He’d laugh if he wasn’t afraid he’d end up sobbing.

William stood up straight, rubbing his soot darkened hands on his already filthy pants, his eyes taking in the wasteland that had once been Lian Yu. “Now what?”

Taking a deep breath, Oliver surveyed the area. The explosions had triggered fires that had burned hard and fast. Most of the active flames had already burnt out but almost nothing green remained of Lian Yu. He’d think it a shame if he didn’t hate this place so much. Instead, it almost felt appropriate that it had been reduced to blackened tree skeletons and rubble.

It was no longer hell masquerading as paradise. It was just hell.

“Well, there’s no sign of them here,” Oliver finally said. “And that’s good because this wasn’t the place we wanted them to be when the explosions went off.”

William scoffed. Ten year-olds scoff? “There’s no signs of anything. Who's to say the fire didn’t just…disintegrate all sign of them?”

Oliver wasn’t sure what worried him more, the anger in his son's eyes or the complete lack of anything else.

Then there were his own demons Oliver was barely keeping at bay, the fact that every time he turned his head he imagined seeing the broken remains of Felicity’s glasses, a shriveled piece of Thea’s red leather jacket…bodies.

If he found anything, Oliver didn’t know how he would hold it together. But maybe the only reason he was holding it together now was William.

No. There was no maybe about it. The only reason Oliver was holding it together was William.
Plain and simple.

Shaking his head, Oliver tried to at least appear calm and confident. “Human bones burn at a much higher temperature than a normal forest fire and they take longer to incinerate. The fire didn’t last long enough to destroy them completely.”

It took a decent amount of mental effort to keep the images of his family’s bones out of his head. Not to mention, Oliver kind of hated that he knew that particular fact.

No, that wasn’t true. At the moment, Oliver was grateful. Because if that knowledge comforted William even a little and kept him from freaking out, wondering if he was standing on the ash that was once…

No…no…he wasn’t going there. Oliver was not going there.

For a beat, William seemed to just be taking the information, but then his face screwed up and he argued, “That doesn’t mean their skeletons aren’t half-way between here and the boat.”

God, they say kids were brutally honest but…Oliver’s stomach felt like it was clamped in a vise as the image of eleven skeletons littering the ground in the middle of what used to be the forest refused to be dismissed. He had to swallow the bile that rose in his throat.

This couldn’t be the end, Felicity. It couldn’t.

For once, Oliver prayed to God they hadn’t listened to him, that they hadn’t tried to make it to that fucking boat. His team…Felicity was too smart to follow his instructions blindly. They found a way. They had to have.

Still it was hard to stay here. To not be out there frantically searching, scouring the island inch by inch. If William weren’t with him…Oliver wouldn’t have stopped moving, he would be running, screaming, searching and, for a moment, he wondered if it was a mistake that he wasn’t. If staying here and trying to keep William calm wasn’t wasting valuable time.

If Oliver let himself stop and think about it, the urge to tear this place apart looking for them all was overwhelming.

But Lyla was on her way. They had made contact on the boat and once ARGUS arrived, they would have heat sensors and helicopters and dozens of boots on the ground. They could cover the entire island a hundred times more efficiently.

So, logically, it made a lot of sense for Oliver to take a few minutes to comfort his son.

What didn’t help was the fact that every time Oliver closed his eyes, he saw his sister at William’s age, carefree and spoiled, staring up at him with misplaced hero-worship in her eyes. Or Felicity, smiling at him after his birthday party, her lips swollen and red from his kisses and…his need to see them was so strong. It seemed to be clawing at the inside of his skin.

William sent another rock flying, this time with a jump kick that sent it careening into the side of the scorched metal of the plane. His face was twisted with torment. His greatest worry should be losing a little league game or passing his next math test. This wasn’t fair. None of it.

Oliver needed to put aside his own needs to be a father. What would John do if this was JJ? What would Felicity do? God, he needed their strength. Their guidance.

Blowing out a breath, Oliver approached his son. “William, buddy, you have to have faith—”
“Faith?” William sneered, taking Oliver off guard with the ferocity of his words. “Faith in what? That life sucks? Life sucks and then you die. At least the lucky ones die. The rest of us are left behind.”

Well…fuck.

Oliver didn’t have the first clue what to say. He stumbled over to his son and crouched down in front of him, taking his thin shoulders in his hands. “William, listen to me.”

William’s jaw clenched and he wouldn’t meet Oliver’s eyes, but he didn’t pull out of his grip so that was something but…

Now what? What would Felicity say if she were here? She was the one with the gift for words, for inspirational speeches.

“William, there have been lots of times in my life I thought exactly that. That life was nothing but darkness and pain.”

Was this something Oliver should be saying to a kid? His kid?

Williams eyes finally met his and Oliver took a risk, “There have been times that I wanted to die. Times where the only thing that kept me going was a promise I made to my father before he sacrificed his life for mine. A promise to survive.”

Oliver had William’s full attention now. Why wouldn’t he, given the horrible and compelling story he was telling? God, Oliver hoped he could turn this around and make it something other than traumatizing.

William looked at him with wide eyes and whimpered, “But…it’s so hard.”

For the first time, Oliver heard tears in his son’s voice and, even though he was relieved, they made his own eyes burn.

“It is, but here is the thing. If you keep going, keep living, eventually something comes along…something or someone that makes it all worth it. It could be a sister or a friend or a woman,” Oliver took a shaky breath and cupped William’s cheek, “or a son.” Tears were thick in his own voice now and he wasn’t sure if it was something he could control. “That good thing, the one that makes it worthwhile, it’s just around the corner. You just need to have patience. And faith. And keep your eyes open.”

William’s face scrunched up and Oliver worried he’d said the wrong thing, made it even worse, but then William let out a sob and launched himself into Oliver’s arms.

All Oliver could do was catch him and hold him close and wish he was getting to hold his son under much different circumstances. “It’s okay. It’s going to be okay,” he murmured over and over, praying he wasn’t lying as he fought his own tears. He really didn’t think seeing his father cry would be all that comforting.

Then static sounded in Oliver’s ear and he jerked back, his heart picking up pace and racing ahead as he held his breath.

“Ol…Oli…ver…”

Static was interspersed with the syllables, but Oliver could hear it. He was almost too afraid to hope.
“Oliver!”

God, was that Felicity’s voice?

William’s head jerked back and he sniffled, running the back of his hand across his face. “What was that?” he demanded, his voice frantic.

“Shhh,” Oliver quieted, feeling bad for doing so but…he needed to listen and…

“Oliver?” It was clearer this time and Oliver almost laughed. Almost cried.

Thank God!

Looking into William’s anxious eyes, Oliver jammed the button on his chest and swallowed. “Felicity?”

“Oh God, Oliver? Is that you?”

Oliver heard the very distinctive sound of Felicity bursting into tears over the comm and he laughed. He laughed and he sobbed and he didn’t even care. “Yeah, yeah, it’s me. Christ, Felicity…” He blew out a shaky breath. “Are you okay?”

Relief had never been so palpable. And joy. The…God, he wanted to hold her but he couldn’t, so Oliver just smiled so wide it hurt and held his son.

“Is that them?” William demanded, his voice equally excited and desperate. “Is my mom with them?”

“Oh my God,” Felicity gasped. “Is that William?”

And the joy and the relief in her voice made Oliver laugh harder. Out of pure happiness. It was almost too much. He cupped Williams face and pressed his forehead to his son’s. “Yeah, that’s William.” He gave up his fight against the tears. He just didn’t care anymore.

“Oh wow,” Felicity breathed. Then there was a shifting sound over the line and a muffled, “Samantha! Oliver has William…I can hear his voice.”

William smiled, an actual genuine smile. Tears ran down his cheeks and Oliver wiped them away with his thumbs.

There was more rustling and then Felicity’s voice again, clearer this time, “Is he okay?” She was, clearly, relaying the question from William’s mother.

Smiling at William, Oliver let the relief sink in and finally he allowed himself to just look at his son. “Yeah. Yeah, he’s perfect.”

William jerked back, giving Oliver a skeptical look and an eye-roll. It only made Oliver laugh more.

“Is my mom okay?” William asked, leaning into Oliver’s ear to say it. Oliver didn’t have the heart to tell him the mic was actually sewn into his collar.

“You hear that?” Oliver asked Felicity. Though he couldn’t imagine she hadn’t, as close as William was.

“Yeah, I think so,” Felicity replied. She sounded frenzied and out of breath and so very familiar.
And wonderful. She sounded wonderful. “Everyone is fine. Samantha. Thea…” Oliver let out a
breath he hadn’t realized he was holding as Felicity anticipated his next question and he mentally
kicked himself for not asking earlier. “All of us. Even Slade and Nyssa. Some are a little more
banged up and freaked out than others. But, William, if you can hear me, I think your mom just got
about a thousand times better.”

Hearing Felicity address his son for the first time, so casually, filled Oliver with a rush of…
just emotion. He couldn’t believe it. It was going to be okay. Felicity and William would meet
and be in each other’s lives and…it was too much. But so incredibly…wonderful.

“You hear that, buddy?” Oliver asked, his voice was so raspy he barely recognized it.

William nodded, putting his chin on Oliver’s shoulder so he could press his ear to Oliver’s and
hear Felicity more clearly. It was the last straw. Tears slipped fell freely as Oliver threaded his
hand into his son’s hair and let the relief…just flow over him. He was pretty sure he felt William’s
tears as well.

“Where are you?” Oliver choked out. William needed his mom and Oliver really needed Felicity
back in his arms.

Felicity blew out an audible breath. “Well…that’s a long story.”

For some reason, that made Oliver laugh too. He was fully prepared to hear every little detail,
gladly, happily but for now, he just wanted to find them. “Just tell me how to get to you.”

“Ummm…yeah, that’s the same long story. I don’t think it will be easy.”

Oliver deflated a bit. So much for having her in his arms soon. But that was okay. He could wait.
As long as they were okay, he could wait…well, not forever, but a while. “Felicity,
where are you?” He asked more firmly this time, hoping to circumvent the babble he could hear
coming.

“So remember the Nexus Chamber you told me about?”

Oliver remembered all too well. “Underground?” His heart skipped a beat and his hands spasmed
on William’s shoulders because that really didn’t sound like they were out of danger. He couldn’t
help but imagine cave-ins and his friends being trapped beneath the rubble. “Is it secure?”

He wasn’t even sure how Felicity would know for sure but...please, God, let them be secure. His
heart couldn’t take much more.

“I’d say pretty secure,” Felicity told him but there was a note in her voice Oliver didn’t like.
“Apparently, Nexus Chambers that exist out of time and space are pretty impervious to things like
C4.”

William pulled back, confusion written across his face. They probably didn’t have a lot of Nexus
Chambers where he’d been living.

“What’s imper…?”

Oliver almost laughed. “No idea,” Oliver whispered with a half-smile. He was pretty sure
he did know what ‘impervious’ meant, especially in context, but he didn’t think he could define it.

Felicity didn’t seem to notice the exchange. She just continued to ramble on, “And can I say thank
God you were in a talkative mood when we were in Hub City, because I’m pretty sure this is
the only safe place on the island and Slade didn’t…wait, how did you survive? Where are you?”

“Where you just left,” Oliver told her, trying not to think about what might have happened if he hadn’t told her that particular story. When they got back, he was going to make sure Felicity knew every detail of that five years. Apparently, it could save lives. “Chase had William on a speedboat. We were there when the explosives went off. William and I drove the boat to the shore closest to the plane.” Or what was left of the plane.

“Thank God,” Felicity gasped and the profound relief in her voice made Oliver smile. William grinned too as he laid his head back on Oliver’s shoulder. “I assume Chase is dead, since the island…well, went kaboom?”

Flicking a glance to William, Oliver confirmed, “He’s dead.” He hoped the details could wait.

“Well, that’s one good thing that came from this.”

And while Oliver secretly found it endearing when Felicity was bloodthirsty (especially, since someone had to be particularly evil to bring that out in her), he wasn’t sure that was how he wanted William to see her right off.

But when he looked down, William was nodding. Yeeeah…Oliver really hoped that this son was as picky with his bloodthirstiness as Felicity was.

But for now, Oliver needed to find Felicity and Thea and the others. “I know where you are. It’s not far—”

“Yeah, except…” Felicity cut Oliver off and he really didn’t like how that sounded. “So that’s the not so good news. The Nexus Chamber wasn’t affected by the explosions…like not in the slightest, candles didn’t even flicker. It was kind of creepy, actually—”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” as much as Oliver loved to hear the rambles, there was a time and a place.

“Right. The tunnels leading to the Chamber, totally decimated. Complete cave-in.”

Fuck. Thank God they hadn't been in those tunnels. “But no one was injured?” Oliver couldn't help but ask again, even though…there wasn’t a damn thing he could do if they were. “Thea?”

“No. Nope,” Felicity rushed to confirm. “We were all safely in the Chamber. So long as you can figure out a way to get us out before dehydration hits, we’re all good. Nyssa says oxygen isn’t a problem because of the otherworldliness—”

Despite her words, Felicity was starting to sound a little freaked out so Oliver interrupted, “I was able to radio Lyla. She's close, real close, and she's bringing an aircraft carrier.”

Felicity laughed, as Oliver had known she would, her relief palpable. He heard more rumbling, then, “Digg, your wife is on her way with a small army. Or maybe a big one. How many people fit on an aircraft carrier?”

There was more rustling and Oliver just smiled. Then Felicity was back, saying, “Digg says ‘Just as long as she brings a big ass drill.’ Oh shoot, is William listening? Am I not supposed to say ‘ass’?”

Oliver had no friggin clue but William was laughing and he looked delighted so what was one minor swear word?
“Can I talk to my mom?” William asked but Oliver wasn’t sure if he was asking him or Felicity.

Either way, Oliver asked Felicity, “Did you hear that?”

“Uh, yeah, but…” Felicity raised her voice. “I’m sorry, William, but that’s not as easy as it sounds.”

“Why not?” Oliver’s forehead wrinkled as his hackles rose. What wasn’t Felicity telling him? William didn’t look happy with the answer either.

“Okay, so…” Felicity took a deep breath and Oliver really wished he could see her expressive face, so he could tell what she was thinking. “The thing about being in a chamber that exists out of space and time is that you don’t get reception on…anything. So no comm reception.”

And…Oliver’s heart sort of…had a seizure. “So how are you talking to me?” He really didn’t know if he wanted Felicity to answer that.

“Well, it took a while but we managed to dig out enough of a tunnel for me to slip inside and try to contact you. And, see, it worked!” It was very clear from Felicity’s voice that she expected him to be unhappy about it.

She was right.

“Fe-li-c-ty…tell me you didn’t crawl into an unstable tunnel,” Oliver pleaded, trying to keep the anger and panic out of his voice, for William’s sake. But so help him, if she was babbling on while about to be crushed by tumbling debris, he was going to…

“Wеееlll….”

God fucking damn it!

“Felicity!” Oliver snapped and William flinched, which was just great but, at least, he’d managed to keep the swearing inside his head. He took a deep breath and did his best to modulate his tone. For his son’s sake. “Why you? Slade has a helmet…” And a hard head and was not Felicity.

“Funny you should mention that…”

“What the…what does that mean?” And, yeah, not modulating well but if Felicity kept hedging Oliver might just implode.

“The helmet…”

Felicity trailed off and Oliver frowned in confusion. But then the pieces clicked together and he let out an involuntary bark of laughter. “Felicity are you lying in a tunnel wearing the Deathstroke mask?”

“Maaaybe…”

And then the laughter really came. William, who had no idea what was so funny, just frowned at Oliver like he had lost his mind. He wasn’t entirely wrong.

“It’s not funny,” Felicity huffed. “I don’t know how Slade breathes in this stupid thing, never mind fights. And even with the one eyehole I can’t see a thing, which makes sense since my glasses don’t exactly fit and before you ask, no, no one has a camera.”

Oliver laughed again and mouthed, “I’ll explain later,” to a confused and slightly irritated William.
For his part, Oliver was on too much of a high to be irritated at anything. Chase was dead and gone. Willian was here and in his arms. He knew Oliver was his father and accepted him (an actual miracle). Felicity, Thea, John, everyone... were all fine. Safe in an otherworldly magical panic room.

Dear God, had they actually won?

William rolled his eyes, but he placed his head back on Oliver’s shoulder. He knew it was just to hear better, but Oliver couldn’t say he didn’t love it all the same.

“Get out of there before something falls on you. Lyla will be here soon and we’ll get you all out,” Oliver voice cracked at the end, surprising him. He’d thought he’d moved beyond that, that the tears had all dried up but, God, he needed to see them. See her. See that they were healthy and whole with his own two eyes.

And as much as Oliver wanted Felicity out of that tunnel, he hated the idea of breaking of contact with the comms.

“Thank God! And can we never come back here? Ever. Now, I understand why you hate this place so much.”

Oliver peered out, over William’s head, at what once was at least a beautiful hell-hole. “Yeah, well, it now resembles a more literal version of hell so...”

Oh shit, was that something else Oliver shouldn’t say in front of William? This was hard. There were way too many things to remember with this parenting stuff.

And the fact that William was nodding his head against him... did that make it better or worse?

“I’d say that we should blow the place sky high, but I guess that’s redundant now. Or maybe it’s just an excellent example of ‘be careful what you wish for’.”

For some reason, Oliver found that incredibly funny but he might just be delirious at this point. He just hoped his adrenaline wasn’t dropping yet. He still needed to get Felicity and the others out of that damn hole. Though, he had to say, he had never been so glad for magic in his entire life.

Or for her.

“I love you.”

It just slipped out. As easy as breathing. With absolutely no care for who might be listening.

“I love you too.” Oliver could easily hear the tears in Felicity’s voice and because of the perversity of human emotions, they brought tears back to his eyes as well.

But then Oliver was yanked out of the moment by William pulling out of his arms and... it left him feeling unsettled. Was William just trying to give them privacy or was it something else...?

Taking a deep breath, Oliver lowered his voice. “I’ll see you soon. I can't wait to...” He didn't know how to finish that sentence. There was too much to say. Most of which shouldn’t be said in front of his boy.
But Felicity seemed to understand. She always did. “Me too…me too….”

Okay, Oliver was going to have to end this conversation now or he never would. “Now, get out of that tunnel. We’ll be there before you know it.”

“Aye aye, captain Green Arrow, sir! I mean, Overwatch out.”

Then before Oliver could say anything more, there was nothing in his ear but static.

He missed her voice already.

All right. Nothing to do now but wait.

And parent.

God help him.

“William? You okay, buddy?”

Oliver had no idea what he was expecting but it wasn't William rounding on him and demanding, “Did you love my mother?”

Well, fuck.

So, um, they were starting with the hard questions then?

And how the hell was Oliver supposed to answer that? What had Samantha told William? Was the truth even appropriate for a ten-year-old boy? He was pretty sure the answer to that one was, ‘no.’

Then, as if he could read Oliver's thoughts, William pleaded, “Please, don’t lie to me.” Only it was more of a demand than a plea. “I can tell you're trying to figure out what to say but the truth doesn't require thought. It’s the truth. All you need to do is say it!”

Oh, but it was so much more complicated than that. Oliver shook his head. “William…”

The boy let out a snort of pure disgust and turned away. “I don't know why I thought you'd be any different. All adults do is lie.”

“William!” The reprimand was instinctual but…there was so much more to this than a kid being disrespectful. Oliver softened his tone, trying again, "That's not true—"

“Then prove it!” William rounded on Oliver again, this time screaming, “Tell. Me. The. Truth!”

“William, I’ve never lied to you.” How could he? Oliver hadn’t been around him enough to have the chance.

But William was incredulous. “When I met you, last year, and you didn't tell me you were my father that was a lie.”

Oh, yeah, that. Oliver winced.

“Maybe it wasn’t a straight out lie but it was still a lie. A really big one.”

Oliver pressed his lips together. If he had learned anything from Felicity in the last year, it was not to argue that one. It was all semantics anyway. “That was…complicated.”
“Complicated!” William threw his hands up in the air. He was good and worked up now. “That's what adults say when they don't want to tell you something. It's too complicated,” he repeated the words in a mocking sing-song. “I'm expected to multiply fractions and write essays on the causes of the Civil War but my life is too complicated for me to understand.”

Well, shit.

Letting out a breath, Oliver…William was right. This kid had been through more than any ten year-old should. And that was before he had been kidnapped multiple times. The least he deserved was some answers.

“Okay.”

That took the wind out of Williams sails. He clearly wasn't expecting Oliver to agree. His, “Okay?” was guarded to say the least.

“Yeah.” Oliver thought this was what he should do. Actually, he'd really like to take a time out and consult Felicity and John because he had no idea what he was doing. “But maybe this isn't the time—"

William’s eyes flashed. As if he had been waiting for there to be a catch. “Actually, this is the perfect time. We're stuck here in this ‘literal representation of hell’,” Oliver winced as his words were parroted back at him. “And we have nothing to do until ARGUS arrives but talk.”

Okay, this kid was way too smart for a ten year-old. He must have gotten that from Samantha because Oliver really didn’t think he was anywhere near this sharp at this age.

Now what? Oliver wanted William to like him, to accept him. He wanted to be a good father. He just had no idea how.

And there was no one here to guide him.

Fuck.

He was going to have to go with his instincts. That was all Oliver had at the moment.

Oliver pulled up a log, making sure to check that it was done smoldering before gesturing to William to sit and doing the same with another piece of wood for himself.

William sat across from him, his eyes intense, both hopeful and wary, like he wanted more than anything for Oliver to be different from the other adults he'd met but wasn't sure he believed it was possible.

Palms suddenly damp, Oliver rubbed them again on his leather pants, which did nothing but streak them with soot. Look at him, the Green Arrow, Mayor of Star City…he'd faced metahumans and Mirakuru soldiers and…fucking aliens but an irate ten year-old boy left him terrified.

Swallowing, Oliver forced himself to speak, “First off, I should warn you…”

Williams face shuttered up tight, fast enough to leave Oliver dizzy. His son regained that awful blank expression but there was nothing for Oliver to do but press on.

But a disclaimer was always good, right? “I don't think I've said more than two words to a ten year-old since my sister was ten and she's a grown woman now so…uh, maybe keep that in mind when I say something stupid?”
And...now he was channeling Felicity's babbles. If Oliver had to channel something, couldn’t it be her insightfulness and not her awkward rambles?

But somehow, thankfully, it made William relax. Almost smile, even. “Well, you’re my first dad so...you don't have to say the right thing. Just tell me the truth.”

Oliver grinned. William might not be super happy with his mom's relationship with the truth but he was a pretty great kid, so Samantha must have done something right.

“That's good advice, thank you,” Oliver murmured and William seemed to puff up a little with the praise. “So what do you want to know?”

William looked like he couldn't believe his luck. He leaned forward eagerly. “Everything. How did you meet my mother? Where were you the first nine years of my life? Did you even know I existed?”

“Ahh...” So they were jumping right in then. God, Oliver could sure use backup right about now. If there was ever a time he needed Felicity in his ear, guiding him, it was now. “Okay...so,” might as well get this part over with, “you asked if I ever loved your mother and the answer is ‘no.’ Sorry, buddy, I didn’t.”

Oliver braced himself for anger and scorn, but William just nodded as if he had expected that and asked, “Did she love you?”

It was hard not to laugh, the idea was so ridiculous. “No,” Oliver answered rather decisively.

But still, William pressed, “Are you sure?”

Oliver was left wondering if there was more to that question than met the eye. He really didn’t want to be painted as the cold-hearted deserter, while Samantha was pining hopelessly for him.

But it didn’t matter, because that wasn’t the truth and William asked for the truth.

“I’m certain. We barely knew each other.” William looked somewhat surprised by that. Well, in for a penny...Oliver took a deep breath and launched in, “We met on Spring Break. It was your mother’s last year in college and I...well, let’s just say I was too immature and too stupid to take college seriously.”

William’s eyes widened and Oliver wondered if maybe that was too honest.

But there was no turning back now. Oliver had committed to this story, he was finishing it. “We met and hit it off and we had a...Spring Break fling.” Did that even make sense to kid William’s age? “Do you know what a fling is?”

“I know what sex is,” William said in an almost condescending tone and it was Oliver’s turn to be shocked. “I took Sex Ed. Though they call it something stupid like ‘Family Life Education’ now.”

“Yeah. Okay. Good to know.” At least that was one conversation that Oliver didn’t have to have on his first day of parenthood. “So, uh, I met your mom and we had fun and, yes, we had sex.” God, Oliver can’t believe he just said that to his grade schooler. Who he barely knew. “Then we went home.”

“And you never talked to each other again?”

Oliver didn’t know what to make of the tone of his voice. Whether William was just surprised or
if he didn’t believe it or…something else. “Well…we didn’t plan to—”

“Why didn’t you use birth control?” And that shocked the hell out of Oliver. “Even a fifth grader
knows you’re supposed to use birth control.”

Great. Lovely. Did all fifth graders know this? Or just his? Oliver ran a hand through his hair.
He didn’t even think Felicity could help him with this one.

“Well, we might not have used the smartest method every time.” Yeah, Oliver was not
volunteering that they ran out of condoms and used the pullout method that one time. “But you’re
right, never have sex without a condom.” Always throw in a teachable moment, right? That was
what good parents did? “Not that it worked out badly for us,” Oliver rushed to add. “I don’t think
either of us regret having you.”

That seemed like the right thing to say at least. William was clearly pleased, even if he was trying
to hide it. But it didn’t stop him from asking (demanding, really), “So did she tell you she was
pregnant or not?”

After he said it, William got a terrified look in his eye, like he was afraid of the answer. Oliver
couldn’t blame him, one answer damned him, the other damned his mother. There were no safe
answers.

So…the truth then. Blowing out another breath, Oliver said, “She did tell me but…this is where it
gets complicated—”

“Ugh!” William threw back his head with a groan.

Oliver almost laughed. “Relax, buddy. I’m going to tell you. I’m just warning—”

“That it’s complicated,” William repeated with an overdramatic and frustrated sigh, “I got it.”

Okay, then. So much for Oliver’s warning. “Your mom came to Star City…Starling then…and
told me she was pregnant and—”

“You didn’t want a baby,” William predicted. He was frowning but he looked resigned to that
particular answer.

Oliver wished the kid had put a little less time into thinking about this. Though really what did he
expect? “I…I didn’t feel ready. I was scared. I…” The truth was the only guide Oliver had, so he
had to go with it. “I…honestly, I didn’t know what to do but I had no intention of abandoning
you.” He hadn’t. Though he would have been relieved if Samantha wanted an abortion.
But that was a truth William never needed to know.

The boy relaxed somewhat, prompting, “So…?”

Apparently, Oliver wasn’t telling the story fast enough. “So I told my mother and…well, my
mother was…”

“Complicated?” William supplied and Oliver laughed. He was quick, he’d give the kid that.

“Oh yes, she was definitely complicated.” William had no idea. “She was also very rich and
thought that meant she should be able to…” Oliver shook his head. It still made him sick to think
about it. “That she should be able to…arrange the world the way she wanted it. And she was very
overprotective, so one of the things she would try to arrange was my life.” If he didn’t miss her so
much, Oliver would be furious just thinking about it. “So…my mother offered your mother a
million dollars to pretend she lost the baby.”

William’s eyes got wide and he gasped. “My mom took money to say I was dead?!”

Wow. That was…the worst possible way of looking at it. But as much as he tried, Oliver couldn’t think of a way to reframe it.

“We’re not even rich!” William exclaimed, bounding to his feet. “What did she do with all that money?”

“William, sit down and let me finish the story.” Oliver was surprised he was able to keep his voice so calm. And even more surprised when William did as he was told. “Your mom didn’t take the money, but it did make her decide that she didn’t want you around my family. Or me.” And the unfairness of that tasted bitter on his tongue. “So, yes, she did tell me she had a miscarriage.”

“So my mom lied to protect me?”

Oliver nodded. Okay, good, William was getting it. Now…

“Because your mom tried to bribe her to protect you.”

“Essentially.”

“Overprotective moms suck!”

And…alright then. Now what?

“William…in these circumstances I’m inclined to agree with you but…” But what? He couldn’t let the boy hate both their mothers. Yet, Oliver had no idea how to fix it. “The thing is, we forgive them because they are our mothers and they’re doing it out of love.” Was that okay to say? Oliver hoped that was okay.

“Weren’t you angry that your mom lied to you?” William’s tone made it clear that he would consider it a personal betrayal if Oliver said, ‘No.’

Oliver swallowed. “My mother died before I found out so I didn’t have a chance to be angry at her.” Oliver’s life might be a whole hell of a lot easier if he had the ability to stay angry with ghosts.

“Oh.” William seemed disappointed at that. Maybe he was hoping for someone corporeal to direct his rage at. Someone who wasn’t his parent. “Did she ever tell you about me?”

“My mom?” Oliver asked, confused now.

“No, mine,” William did another one of those eye-rolls. He was really good at them. Better than Thea even. “After I was born.”

“Ah…” And right back into the minefield. They were proving even harder to avoid than the ones the Chinese had planted.

“She didn’t, did she?” Again, William sounded disappointed.

“To be fair, William, I was shipwrecked and everyone thought I was dead for five years.” Oliver wished that would be enough of an excuse to stop there. That William would let it go, because Oliver had disappeared shortly after he was born.
That was when it hit him. Even if he had known about William, Oliver would have missed five years of his boy’s life.

Of course, there was the possibility that if Oliver knew he was a dad, he wouldn’t have gotten onto the Gambit with Sara in the first place. Maybe that would have been what he needed to motivate him to stay in school. Or get a job. How different would Oliver’s life have been if their mothers had never lied to them?

William gave Oliver a hard look. “You were shipwrecked in May 2007, right?” He asked pulling Oliver out of that…extremely counterproductive way of thinking.

But…how the hell did William know that!?

“Don’t look so shocked. It’s all over the internet.” William shook his head, as if he couldn’t believe how naïve adults were.

Oliver could barely believe how naïve he’d been either. But, more than that, he was still trying to wrap his head around the fact that William had not only researched, but memorized certain facts about him. “But—”

Again with the eye-roll. “Five year-olds know how to work Google, dad.”

Okay, this was too much. Oliver had been a dad (and it was still surreal to hear William call him that) for three hours and he was already out of touch. Not to mention…he really had a lot to learn about kids. This kid in particular.

So Oliver said the only thing he could come up with. “Yes, I was shipwrecked in May of 2007.”

“Well,” William announced as if he had just won. Maybe he had. Oliver didn’t even know what game they were playing. “I was born in November 2006. Plenty of time for my mom to come to her senses and tell you you had a son.”

So…William had thought about this. Had he done the math last year? Or was he just that sharp that he’d put it all together just now?

But really once Samantha had lied about the miscarriage, why would William think she would change her mind once she held her infant in her arms? A fragile defenseless beautiful baby boy. No, that made no sense and Oliver knew it, even if William didn’t.

“William, I’m sure your mom—”

“My mom is a liar!”

Oliver reeled back, feeling like he’d been hit. God, he hoped Samantha hadn’t ever been on the receiving end of that because he couldn’t imagine how awful it would feel. “William,” he tried to correct him. It wasn’t okay to talk about his mother like that, even if…

“She is!” William glared at him, daring Oliver to deny it. “She lied to you. She lied to me. She’s been lying to everyone since the day I was born.”

“That’s…”

Actually, Oliver had nothing. Everything William said was completely accurate. As far as Oliver knew, anyway.
“She told me you were in love and going to get married,” William yelled and, wow, it rivaled Felicity’s loud voice. Oliver winced but that was more from the words than the tone. “She said my dad was excited to have a son, but he had died in a boating accident before I was born. Do you want to count how many lies there were in there?”

Wow, William was sassy.

And Oliver actually didn’t think Samantha had done a bad job of coming up with a story for William. It was close to the truth, designed to make William feel safe and loved. “I’m sure the first time she told you that story, she thought I had died in a boating accident. The rest…she may have sugar-coated it but the real truth was too ugly for a kid—”

“I’m not a kid!” William screamed, jumping to his feet again.

Oliver put out his hands in surrender (or to catch William if he tried to bolt). “No, not now. But back then you were. You were just a little boy who deserved to believe he’d had a dad who died loving him.”

Tears were spilling over and running down William’s face. Oliver didn’t know what to do. Should he reach for him? Try to embrace him? William looked like he’d explode if someone tried to touch him but…

William was shaking, his fists clenched and his eyes focused off in the distance as he whispered, “Every kid deserves a dad who loves them.”

Ah crap. “They do. And you have one,” Oliver swore.

William’s eyes flew to Oliver’s and his face crumbled and Oliver wondered if he should tell the boy he loved him outright. Could William even handle that right then?

Before Oliver could decide, William collapsed back onto his log and said, “After I met you last year, I went straight to my mom and I asked her if you were my father. You know what she said? She said, ‘No, William, your father is dead.”

Oliver sucked in a breath, because while Williams tone may be mocking and rude…well, that made him angry. That William had suspected and Samantha had flat out lied to his face. When she knew Oliver would gladly claim him, that he wanted to claim him…

It set off so many emotions, Oliver didn’t know what to do with them all.

Had William been disappointed when Samantha denied it? Had he wanted Oliver to be his father? And, God, all the trouble that could have been avoided if Samantha had just allowed the truth to come out then. Everything with Felicity…

Oliver knew that he shouldn’t have lied to Felicity, but if Samantha had never put him in that position…

He was still reeling from that blow, when William threw out another, “Why didn’t you tell me?”

With everything going on in his head, was it any wonder all Oliver could get out was a choked, “What?”

“When you first met me, why didn’t you tell me that I was your son? Why did you lie and say you were my mom’s ‘friend’?” William flat out sneered the last word.
It felt like a trap. Oliver knew throwing the other parent under the bus was a terrible idea but, at that moment, he was just angry enough at Samantha and her lies not to care.

Plus, this was the first time William’s anger was fully directed at him and it felt horrible.

It might have been selfish but Oliver said, “Your mom asked me not to tell you.” That wasn’t that bad, was it? Simple. Truthful. Not a full-on toss under the bus…

“Asked?”

Okay, Oliver should have known that he wasn’t going to get off that easily. Also, when was he going to stop underestimating this kid? He only had two choices now. Tell the whole truth or save Samantha by bending it. And look at where bending the truth had gotten him?

Sighing, Oliver confessed, “Samantha told me she wouldn't let me see you if I told you or anyone you were my son.”

And that did sound bad. Yup, there you go, Samantha. Hope, there’s a nice view from under that bus.

This time, when William lurched to his feet, he couldn’t seem to stay still and he paced away from him.

Oliver let him. It was a lot to take in.

He half-expected William to declare he didn't believe him at all, that his mother wouldn't do such a thing. But the thing was Oliver thought William did believe him and he couldn’t help but think it was no one’s fault but Samantha’s that their son believed a virtual stranger over her.

But, at the same time, Oliver knew he should at least try to fix this. Samantha was his mother. She loved…she adored William. As far as Oliver could tell, William was her whole world and she had given up a lot to raise him and keep him safe.

Those were the reasons (and maybe, also, Oliver’s deep seated self-hatred) that he had never allowed himself to be angry at Samantha for asking him to keep the secret in the first place. He had taken it as his due for his past sins.

But Oliver hadn’t deserved that. William hadn’t deserved that. And the secret had left all their lives in tatters.

“She was just trying to keep you safe,” Oliver muttered. He didn’t think it sounded very convincing though. Apparently, William’s anger was contagious.

“She did a damn poor job of it!”

“Well!” Okay, that was enough. Anger was allowed, but that was just…really disrespectful. And also…swearing. Oliver had to figure out a way to contain this.

But William was on a roll. The last thing he seemed to want was to be contained. “I was kidnapped by not one, but two super villains.” He ticked them off on his hands, completely furious. “The second one, worse than the worst villain in any graphic novel ever!”

Well, at least William read. That was better than Oliver did at his age. Wait, were graphic novels or comic books or something in-between? Also, Oliver probably shouldn’t tell him that the first asshole who had kidnapped him tried to blow up the entire planet, not just one island so…
Oliver should have said *something*, because he lost his chance as William took off again.

“All my mother’s overprotectiveness ever got me was being called a Mama’s boy. And that was before she dragged me half-way across the country. She didn’t even let me say goodbye to my friends, never mind talk to them once we moved. We didn’t even stop to get my stuff. Then we were in New Hampshire. You know what’s in New Hampshire? Nothing. Nothing, except cold and snow and people I don’t know and I couldn’t even use my real name!”

William was panting at the end of his rant and Oliver…well, his anger had evaporated under the sheer weight of his guilt. “None of that was your mother’s fault, William. It was mine.” And that was the truth.

But the scoff William gave said that he disagreed. “The only thing that was your fault was sending me away where you couldn’t protect me.”

Oliver’s jaw dropped but before he could pick it back up again, William was back to yelling, “You know what I did in New Hampshire? By myself? Because it’s really hard to make friends when you’re the new kid who isn’t allowed to go anywhere and can’t have kids over because his mother works two jobs and is never home? I read graphic novels. Hundreds of them. I know all the reasons superheroes push their families away and you know what never, ever works…?”

“I…” Oliver was completely at a loss, his mind spinning. Was that really what William’s life had been like this last year?

“Pushing them away!” William announced as if it were the most obvious thing in the world and all Oliver could think was, at least William and Felicity would have a lot in common. “You know what would have helped?” Luckily for Oliver, he wasn’t given time to answer. “If I had a picture of that fraking psychopath out there,” he pointed toward the boat, “and known that I was supposed to run as soon as I saw him!”

The boy, apparently, had a lot to get off his chest. Oliver was completely shell-shocked and also…”Did you just say fraking?” Oliver didn’t know if that was the only thing he could grab ahold of or if it was just the most shocking thing William had said.

William’s eye widened, as if Oliver had just caught him doing something wrong. “It not a swear!” he defended. “It’s from—”

“Battlestar Galactica, I know,” Oliver breathed. Though he wouldn’t know if he wasn’t in love with a total nerd. Or was it geek?

That seemed to take the wind out of William’s sails and he looked not only impressed, but almost hopeful. “You know Battlestar Galactica?”

Great, now Oliver wished he’d watched the whole damn series. “Sorry, I only watched a couple of episodes.” It was a weird-ass show (and kind of triggering) and Felicity had sooo much tv she wanted him to watch. There was only so much sitting Oliver could handle. “It’s a favorite of Felicity’s. ‘Fraking’ is a pretty regular part of her vocabulary.”

William seemed impressed and…God, what if he liked Felicity better than Oliver? What if they couldn’t relate at all? What if William was a nerd/geek too?

Actually, that would probably be a good thing. Being a nerd was a whole lot better than…whatever the hell Oliver had been as a kid. Except he really didn’t want his son thinking he was lame and stupid.
Regardless, Oliver really hoped this would redirect the whole conversation to a more pleasant place (he was sure he could remember enough about Battlestar Galactica to hold a conversation. Evil clones. High tech robot people. Destroyed planets or…something)

But William was tenacious (and that he may have gotten from Oliver). He leveled Oliver with frighteningly intense eyes before quietly asking, “Who decided to send me to New Hampshire?”

Considering William made the place sound like hell on Earth? That certainly wasn’t a bomb Oliver wanted to jump on. Should he mention the robot-clones? Or would trying to redirect him only reignite the rage?

Oliver really thought the latter, so again he went with the truth. “After the first time you were kidnapped, your mother and I agreed, for your safety, you shouldn’t be around me. In fact, we both thought it best if I didn’t even know where you were.”

“Except, if I were with you in Star City, I would have known to stay away from…psycho dude,” William argued. This kid should be a lawyer. “And if I had say…a cellphone, I could have called you to tell you I saw him. And if I knew self-defense—”

“Okay, I get it.” Oliver really didn’t know if he could take anymore. He rubbed his hands over his face. He’d been completely emotionally beaten down by a ten year-old. Chase could have taken lessons. “Sending you away was a bad decision.”

Though the caveat to that was William should stay near Oliver from now on, to remain safe, and that made Oliver feel…wow, could he really have this incredible (if surly) kid in his life all the time?

“Damn straight!”

“We need to talk about all this swearing.” Because if William was staying in his life, then Oliver needed to act…parental. “And, yeah, Felicity would agree. She was pretty pi—angry when we made the call.”

“She sounds smart. You should listen to her more,” was William’s response. It came lightening quick as he stood, facing down his father with his arms crossed and a challenging expression painted across his face.

This was Oliver’s punishment for all those sleepless nights he gave his parents, wasn’t it? Karma or something.

“I should,” Oliver conceded, because this wasn’t a battle he could win. He realized right then and there if he was going to have a battle of wills with his son, he was going to have to make sure it was worth the fight.

But William didn’t seem to expect Oliver to agree with him. He deflated, slowly shuffling his way back to the log he’d been sitting on before, kicking rocks and twigs as he went.

When William finally sat, he asked, “So this woman you love…?” He appeared to be asking the soot on the ground, not Oliver. “She didn’t want to send me away?”

“No,” Oliver answered. It was an easy answer. Though looking at William, he felt like there was a lot more to the question than met the eye. “Actually, she was angry at me for a long time for that.” Not to mention lying about his existence in the first place.

William lifted his eyes to look at Oliver and there was a new vulnerability in his eyes. “Are you
Okay, now that just broke Oliver’s heart. And he knew Felicity, who had had more than her fair share of feeling unwanted as a child, would be horrified at the very idea.

Falling to his knees in front of William, Oliver took his shoulders. “I need you to trust me when I tell you, Felicity is not most people.” Understatement of the century. But he couldn’t quite explain why there was no doubt in his mind that Felicity would accept William. The other way around, however… “She loves with all her heart. And she will love you instantly. I can pretty much guarantee it.”

“You can’t know that,” William argued, his voice small and his eyes just a little bit lost.

“I can and I do. Because I know you and I know her and Felicity is the most loving person you will ever meet.” Was he babbling? Oliver felt like he was babbling. But he didn’t know how to convince William and it was so damn important. “And I can tell you already have a lot in common.”

That finally earned a small smile from William.

“There’s no way Felicity would have gotten that director of SHIELD question wrong.” That earned Oliver a full on smile. “And she hates lies.” If anything should earn her points it was that, right?

Respect flashed in William’s eyes and…thank fuck. Oliver wasn’t worried about Felicity being a good stepmom (he was certain she’d be better at parenting than he was) but he really needed William to like her.

Then William cleared his throat and sat up tall. “That’s good, because I am not going back to New Hampshire.”

Oh. Okay. Ummm…that wasn’t something they could decide (or that Oliver could promise) without Samantha.

Though…actually…maybe he was done letting Samantha make unilateral decisions on William’s behalf. Oliver had rights. Maybe he needed to trust his instincts and stop kowtowing to the woman.

“Will—”

“I want to live with you in Star City.”

Wow. Okay…just wow.

Tears pricked Oliver’s eyes. He blew out a long breath and went with his instincts, “I want that too. More than anything, but I won’t take you from your mother.” That wouldn’t be fair to any of them.

“We’ll both move to Star City!” William immediately assured and Oliver was insanely relieved he wasn’t rejecting his mother outright. “Neither of us are happy in New Hampshire. Her job sucks. Both of them. Neither of us have any friends. And in Star City you’re the mayor. You can keep us safe.”

In theory. Though Williams’ confidence felt kind of great. Overwhelming, but great. “I will do everything I can to keep you both safe, but we still have to talk to your mom—”
“Why? Her decisions suck! I think it’s my turn. Our turn.”

Oliver somehow managed not to laugh. Buried under that disrespect (which they really needed to get a handle on) William had an excellent point. “We’ll talk to your mom.”

He was repeating himself, but it was the best Oliver could do under the circumstances. Which was sitting with his son on a burnt out island while his mother and everyone else he cared about were buried underground in a magical chamber. Wow, this was quite the life he was bringing his son into.

William didn’t seem particularly happy with Oliver’s answer. His little forehead scrunched up as he thought it over. God, Oliver hoped he wasn’t plotting something.

Finally, William said, “And Felicity.”

Breathing a sigh of relief, Oliver nodded, “And Felicity.” Because William identifying her as a potential ally was awesome. And also Oliver had learned his lesson. No leaving Felicity out of decisions. Ever again. “Definitely, Felicity.”

William nodded. “She sounds smarter than both of you.”

There was absolutely no holding back his laugh this. “Well, she’s generally the smartest person in the room. Felicity is an actual genius.” If Oliver could brag just a bit.

Eyes widening again, William looked impressed…until a flash a fear clouded his eyes. “Are you sure she’s going to like me? I’m really not that smart.”

Ha! God help them if William was any smarter.

“Trust me, you can hold your own.” This kid was too bright for his (and most definitely Oliver’s) own good. “The two of you will be talking circles around me in no time.” Good Lord.

The roar of a helicopter in the distance pulled both their attentions and Oliver could not even comprehend how much of a relief it was. Not only because it meant they could finally rescue Felicity and the others, but because it meant this conversation was finally over.

Well, at least it was on hold. And Oliver had never been so grateful for a reprieve.

Three huge black helicopters circled and William jumped to his feet, awe written all over his face. Oliver pulled him out of the way and felt a little of that awe himself as William leaned back against his chest.

When a helicopter finally landed in the clearing in front of them, William gaped, “They’re real. They’re really real! And here!”

Oliver chuckled at his tone but maybe it was just because of the overwhelming relief he felt seeing Lyla emerging from the copter in full ARGUS gear.

“I told you. Faith.” Oliver had to raise his voice to be heard over the helicopter.

Lyla made a beeline for them, her face drawn and worried. Yeah, her and John were going to be fine. “Any news?”

The other two helicopters landed and operatives started to pour out as Oliver explained the situation to Lyla, who listened with surprisingly few snide comments about why she hadn’t been
called the moment John was taken.

“I think we have the equipment we need on the aircraft carrier,” Lyla told them, reaching for her communicator.

William, who had been watching the entire exchange with eyes wide as saucers, waited for her to be done radioing in before he gasped, “Are magical caves like normal for you?”

“Unfortunately,” Lyla drawled. Then she turned her full attention to William and immediately her entire demeanor softened. The ARGUS director persona fell away and she was just his best friend’s wife. A mom. For some reason, it made Oliver’s eyes burn. “Hello, young man. You must be the William I’ve heard…well, not nearly enough about.”

Oliver managed to refrain from rolling his eyes at the dig as William nodded eagerly, looking completely star-struck as he took Lyla’s offered hand.

“There are a lot of people down there very eager to meet you. How about we go get them out?”

Again, William just nodded, the very articulate boy of a few minutes ago seemingly speechless. Lyla gave him a smile before turning and going back to direct her troops.

“Dad?” William murmured as soon as Lyla was out of earshot.

And, God, how long would it be before that word stopped causing a shot of pure feeling straight to Oliver’s heart? “Yes, son?” His voice was way rougher than he would have liked.

“You know when you said I needed to have faith, because when things are really bad, something good comes along to make it worthwhile?”

“Yeah.” Though Oliver was kind of amazed that William did. It was humbling how closely he was listening and taking things in and also a little bit terrifying.

William turned and looked up at Oliver, the same hero-worship Oliver had seen when he looked at Lyla (and her helicopters with the huge ARGUS logo) still in his eyes.

Wow, that was a lot to live up to.

“Well, Dad, I think you’re my thing. You’re my thing.”

It took everything Oliver had in him not to cry.
Rest(less)

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
Logically, Felicity knew that Oliver wasn’t going to be able to rescue them right away. They were underground. Under God only knew how many feet of solid rock.

What did Felicity expect Oliver to do, dig to them with his bare hands? It wasn’t like he carried a drill arrow or a laser arrow or...that would be cool, actually. She needed to put that one (both of them, as a matter of fact) in her idea folder to chat with Cisco about later.

But for now, they would have to wait for Lyla and her team to arrive and find a safe way to extricate all of them.

They were coming. It was just going to take a while.

And that was okay. Fine. Good, even. No one was seriously hurt. They were hungry and thirsty and tired, but all things considered, they were in pretty good shape. Felicity should just relax and
get some rest like every other sane (and borderline sane) person in this room.

Initially, Felicity would have said didn’t mind waiting. She would have said that the sound of Oliver’s voice, the warmth she heard when he was talking to his son, the emotion that rang clear when he told her he loved her…those things were enough.

More than enough. They were…everything.

Before they were able to get the comms to work, Felicity would have said all she needed was to have Oliver and his son alive and unharmed. It was all she’d dared to hope for. And she still maintained that that was the most important thing. Absolutely. She was so grateful.

They had been so very lucky. The least Felicity could do was be patient. So what if it took a few more hours for her to be able to hold Oliver in her arms? She knew it was coming. She wasn’t a child. She could wait.

So why did Felicity feel, with every passing second, more and more like she was going to crawl out of her skin?

As soon as they’d made contact with Oliver, Rene had announced that he was getting some ‘shut-eye,’ since he couldn’t remember the last time he slept.

It was a good idea. Logical. An excellent plan, really. They had nothing better to do, why not sleep? They were all exhausted, from the trauma and the fighting and the digging a hole in a collapsed tunnel.

Rene fell asleep almost instantly. Must be the military training, because it was like he just shut off a light. Soon the others recognized the wisdom of the plan, the adrenaline crash and lack of sleep catching up to them. One by one the rest of the team joined him.

Even Samantha, who had sworn she couldn’t (or wouldn’t) sleep until she saw her son, was curled into a ball against the wall, snoring softly.

Though, Nyssa…Felicity wasn’t sure if Nyssa was sleeping or not. She was standing up against a pillar, arms crossed and eyes closed. Felicity found it hard to believe anyone could sleep like that, but it could be a weird league thing, who the hell knew?

Curtis tried valiantly to stay up with Felicity but eventually his games and methods of keeping them distracted had just gotten annoying and Felicity (and everyone else) had begged him to stop and try to sleep.

So here she was. The last woman standing (Nyssa’s weirdness excepted). Apparently, Felicity’s adrenal glands were malfunctioning because while everyone else’s adrenaline had crashed, hers just kept pump, pump, pumping.

Yup, still going strong. While they slept, Felicity paced, her brain racing, anxiety…no, anxiety wasn’t the right word. She wasn’t worried or afraid anymore. She had complete confidence in Oliver and Lyla and ARGUS and this magical panic room.

But Felicity was…restless. Her body absolutely refused to shut down until she saw Oliver.

Hearing his voice, knowing he was okay wasn’t enough. Not this time. She needed to see him with her own eyes. Touch him. Hold him. There was no way Felicity was going to be able to sleep without Oliver.
Which…Felicity didn’t mean the way it sounded.

Actually, you know what? She meant it exactly the way that sounded

Felicity didn’t want to sleep without Oliver next to her. In her bed. Or their bed, she wasn’t picky. With or without sex (preferably with). Tonight and every night.

Frak, all those stupid steps!

Felicity was so done with steps!

She was done with dragging her feet and building walls and protecting her heart. What good had any of that done her? All those precautions and pushing him away…Felicity still would have been devastated if Oliver hadn’t survived this. Completely, unrecoverably crushed.

All any of it had gotten her was wasted time.

And just as Felicity decided she was done wasting time…here she was. Stuck in a hole. In the ground. With no tech and nothing to do but waste fraking time.

“Making yourself dizzy isn’t going to get him down here any faster, girlie.”

The low accented voice made Felicity jump. Apparently, she wasn’t the only person awake after all.

But Felicity had no desire to justify herself to Slade fraking Wilson.

“No all of us can do a perfect impression of a statue,” Felicity hissed back, softly because everyone else was still asleep and it was just rude to wake them up. And, unlike Slade, she was not rude. Usually. She tried not to be.

Slade cracked his one eye open (which hopefully meant he hadn’t seen her startle like a frightened deer). “Are you referring to me or the amazon warrior over there?” He gestured his chin toward Nyssa, whose twitching lips proved she was awake as well.

“Nyssa isn’t the one irritating me at the moment,” Felicity snapped (again, quietly, ‘cause still not rude).

Shrugging and showing not even the slightest sign of being anything but amused, Slade drawled, “I’ve gotten pretty used to holes in the ground. When you don’t have a lot of room to move, you get pretty good at sitting still.”

Why that made Felicity come over and plop down next to him, she’d never know. It certainly wasn’t because she felt bad that Slade had been stuck in that hole for the last three years. As far as she was concerned it was 60 years too little.

Maybe it was because holding a conversation across the room was eventually going to wake someone up and just because Felicity was a neurotic who couldn’t sit still didn’t mean everyone else shouldn’t rest. Besides, interrogating Slade Wilson seemed like a better outlet for her pent-up energy than wearing a path in a centuries old solid rock floor.

Felicity rested her elbows on her folded knees and leaned toward him. Fixing Slade with her best glare, she hissed, “Why are you doing this?”

Slade’s eye slipped closed again. “Napping?”
Great, now he was trying to be irritating. “Helping us,” Felicity barked.

Shrugging, Slade answered without opening his eye, “Your Oliver’s a persuasive man.”

Felicity scoffed. “You swore to destroy him.”

Sighing, Slade frowned, whispering, “That was the Mirakuru.”

Now he was going with the Mirakuru defense? After three years? Felicity remembered, in technicolor, exactly how Slade had done his best to kill Oliver after Felicity had injected him with the cure. It wasn’t a night she’d ever forget. Not a second of it.

“You expect me to believe you’re suddenly over Oliver being responsible for the death of the love of your life? After everything?”

A cloud passed over Slade’s face, but his one eye remained closed. “Oliver loved Shado too. Maybe not like I did…” He swallowed, his jaw ticking before he finally opened his eye and met Felicity’s. “It was an impossible choice, as horrible as the one I gave him with his mother. I can’t even imagine how Oliver made it.”

“He didn’t.” Felicity stated it calmly, as a challenge. Then she waited, watching Slade to see what he would do. But he just looked at her, his eye trained to hers. So she continued, “Oliver refused to choose. Ivo went to shoot Sara and Oliver tried to take the bullet himself, so Ivo shot Shado instead.”

Slade’s stare grew harder with every word. His voice was barely a whisper as he asked, “Oliver tell you that?”

Slowly, Felicity shook her head, watching Slade’s every expression. She saw pain on his face. Guilt. But no rage. “Sara did.”

Slade stared for another full minute before nodding and letting out a breath, his eye finding the ceiling. “Kid did much the same with his mother and sister.”

Felicity frowned. Was she really supposed to be buying this? “You really do expect me to believe that you have forgiven Oliver for Shado’s death?”

Blowing out another breath, Slade’s eye fell closed once more. “I don’t expect you to believe anything, Ms. Smoak. But I can assure you, I am well aware of that fact that Oliver’s transgressions pale next to mine.”

He was remarkably convincing. Felicity wasn’t surprised Oliver believed him, not with their history. Oliver was an incredibly loyal man. He would want to give Slade another chance, to believe he had changed.

But Felicity owed it to Oliver, to all of them to be…more discerning. This couldn’t be another Black Siren.

“So eight…ten months after you were imprisoned, when Oliver and Thea traveled here to this island and Malcolm Merlyn let you out of your cell so you would try to kill them and you did…was that still the Mirakuru? Or did you have your sudden change of heart after that?” And if Felicity’s voice sounded accusatory…good.

Slade’s eye flew to hers and it was…it was wide and confused. “I have no idea what you are talking about, Ms. Smoak. The last time I saw Oliver was the day he imprisoned me.”
And…either Slade was an Oscar worthy actor or…he really had no idea what Felicity was talking about.

Felicity wasn’t ruling out that golden statue just yet.

Her face scrunching up, she made sure that Slade knew she didn’t believe him (even though she was kind of starting to).

“It was the winter after your rampage on Starling.” Slade winced as she said it. Hmmm. “And Malcolm Merlyn, you know the guy who…” Felicity lowered her voice further and glanced across the room at Thea, who was, thankfully, sound asleep on Digg’s shoulder. “The archer who just got himself,” she mimed an explosion, “ka-ploo…”

She could see the exact moment recognition dawned in Slade’s eyes. “The white man in the league clothing?” Felicity nodded. “Yes, he was there. Though he was dressed differently. Asked me a few questions about Oliver. Didn’t seem to like the answers and…the next thing I knew I was beaten and bloody on the floor of my cell. I figured ARGUS had designed a new experimental drug and I was their lab rat, but it never happened again.”

Well…frak.

Felicity blew out a breath and looked back at Thea. Frak a duck. It was impossible not to believe Slade now, not when that was exactly Malcolm’s MO. Mind control drugs and manipulation. It was so Malcolm Merlyn circa 2015.

Goddamn him! Malcolm made Robert Queen and Noah Cutter look like candidates for father of the year. Poor Thea. Felicity was glad he was dead. At least, he couldn’t do her friend any more damage. At least his last act had been a noble one.

Leaning toward Slade, Felicity whispered, “Thea can’t know.” Even as she said it, Felicity felt terrible. She knew how much the younger woman hated being lied to. “If...if it’s important we’ll tell her but...right now, her grief is complicated enough without adding another boulder of Malcolm’s mountain of sins.”

But when Felicity looked back at Slade, he had his one visible eyebrow up, still confused (and maybe a little amused).

“Malcolm just sacrificed himself for her.” When Slade still looked baffled, Felicity gestured to Thea, whispering in a hiss, “He’s her secret father, remember? Weren’t you the one who told Thea that?!” Because, seriously? What the hell?

Felicity was getting annoyed again. Now that she thought about it, she remembered a huge crap-storm resulting from Slade telling Thea Malcolm was her father. After kidnapping her.

Yeah, and it had pretty much resulted in them losing Queen Consolidated.

Finally, Slade’s eye widened in recognition. “That Merlyn?” Now he looked incredulous. “Her father sent me to kill her and Oliver?”

Felicity shook her head, not even able to believe the tangled web of insanity that was their lives. Her eyes instinctively went back to Thea. Irritation with Slade warred with anger at Malcolm…

No, know what? Malcolm won, hands down. That Asshat couldn’t blame Mirakuru and he was Thea’s father. He was one sick son of a bitch. It was easy to forget how sick with someone like Chase around.
“Yup. Though honestly I don’t think Malcolm expected you to win.” Felicity wasn’t sure if that made it any better.

Actually, she was sure. It didn’t.

“Ah.” Slade nodded. “I was a test. For Oliver.” It wasn’t a question.

“And Thea. Though a training exercise is probably more accurate.” Yup, sick son of a bitch.

Slade whistled, low. “That’s one sick son of a bitch.”

Felicity almost chuckled. She did smile. Though why it was amusing to find that Slade Wilson could read her mind, she’d never know. Looking back at him, Felicity realized…she believed him.

This was the man Oliver had described living with on Lian Yu.

It didn’t change the fact that Felicity also recalled, very clearly, the hell Slade put them through. Being held captive by him. His sword at her throat. Moira Queen’s funeral. Finding Oliver, broken and alone, when he couldn’t make himself attend.

“You were the first man to hold a sword to my throat.” Felicity wasn’t about to let Slade forget that.

But Slade’s lip just quirked up. “You were the first woman I’ve ever underestimated. And the last.”

Well, rational or not, that actually made Felicity feel better. “You weren’t the first man to underestimate me.” And maybe she was a tad smug. “And I doubt you’ll be the last.”

Slade raised his eyebrow, a full grin forming. “You’re Oliver’s secret weapon, aren’t you?”

Felicity shrugged. It might be petty, but it felt good to hear. Especially after all Slade’s dismissive comments about her three years earlier. She had never forgotten how he had said she wasn’t Oliver’s type, how he’d mocked her, saying he’d thought Oliver had better taste, liked stronger women.

She hated how Slade’s words had eaten at her.

It had been particularly painful so soon after Oliver’s fake confession of love. Even if Felicity now knew that it wasn’t fake after-all. At the time, it had been horrible.

All in all, it left Felicity with no need to be modest now. “Oliver has called me that.”

Chuckling, Slade shook his head. “And to think I didn’t think you were his type.”

That took Felicity off-guard. “I’m not.” She was very aware of that fact. Or at least she wasn’t Oliver’s old ‘type.’ His type now…well, that was her. Only her. Thank you very much!

But before…tall leggy sophisticated, just a little dangerous. Brunette. That was once Oliver’s type. Laurel. Helena. McKenna. (Even the Dragon Lady. That one did not escape her notice).

“My dear, you are exactly Oliver’s type.”

Felicity frowned, but it was mostly for show, because she was lapping up Slade’s words like honey, even if she didn’t particularly want to.
“Strong. Beautiful. Always ready to tell him when he’s being an idiot,” Slade smiled as he said it as if remembering something pleasant yet sad. “A bit too much on the self-righteous, overly heroic side.”

Felicity didn’t know if she was supposed to blush or be annoyed. It was really hard to be annoyed.

Slade’s eye found a distant point and he murmured, “My Shado was like that.”

So…definitely blush then. Felicity had a feeling that being compared to Shado was Slade’s highest compliment. But still she asked, “Is there a compliment buried in that insult or an insult buried in that compliment?” There was something about him that gave her the impulse to lay on the sass.

Slade seemed nothing but pleased with her deflection, unfortunately and he smiled until his eyes crinkled. “Neither. Just stating facts. Oliver chose well. Or…maybe not.” His eye again found Nyssa across the room. “Why is he married to her?”

Nyssa’s lips curved up in an amused smile. Undoubtedly, she’d been listening to the entire conversation.

Felicity rolled her eyes. “That,” she raised her voice just enough to make sure Nyssa heard her, “was Oliver playing nice with the former Ra’s Al Ghul to keep Starling from being destroyed. Again. As annoying as it is, it isn’t a real marriage. It’s not legal outside of the League. Which has been disbanded, by the way.”

Looking over at Nyssa, Slade considered this. “She seems to think it’s real.”

That earned him a sharp laugh. Felicity just wasn’t able to hold it in. “Nyssa has less interest in it being a real marriage than Oliver does. She finds it amusing.” Though God knew why.

Nyssa’s smile grew, though her eyes stayed closed. “It is a satisfactory business arrangement.”

Whatever. “I’m pretty sure she’s still in love with Sara,” Felicity told Slade, mostly to rib her boyfriend’s not-wife.

“Sara Lance?” Slade seemed surprised.

Felicity nodded as Nyssa decided to join the conversation, saying bitterly, “The League would not allow me to marry my beloved.”

“Will it allow you to divorce mine?” Felicity threw back, without stopping to think. Then she cringed since that was…admitting a lot. Especially since their new relationship was still measured in days, if not hours.

But Nyssa just shrugged. “It involves cutting off all my hair.”

“I can help,” Slade offered and Felicity was oddly touched by his loyalty. Though she was certain it was to Oliver and not her.

Nyssa ignored the jibe. “There is no need to worry. My marriage need not interfere with yours. The League allows for many wives. As long as you are a man.” She may have sneered the last part.

Wonderful. Now Felicity had been roped into Nyssa’s LGBTQ rebellion. Which would bother Felicity far less if there was anyone alive for Nyssa to be rebelling against. Her father was long dead. The League was disbanded for frak’s sake!
“Does Sara have anything to say about this?” Slade asked, still seeming rather bemused with the whole thing.

It was a good question and Felicity leveled her eyes on Nyssa. “Well, Sara was dead when the so-called wedding happened.”

“Was?”

Poor Slade, Felicity almost felt sorry for him.

Actually, naw…with great relish Felicity told him, “Yup. Buried for almost a year. Resurrected. And now Sara’s busy traveling through time. Last I saw her, we were battling aliens, so we didn’t have time to discuss the fake marriage between our respective exes.”

The look on Slade’s face was priceless. “You’re joking.”

“Not even a little,” Nyssa answered for her.

Felicity grinned and nodded. This was fun. Much better than pacing.

“I’ve missed—”

Before Slade could finish his sentence, there was a loud crash near one of the tunnels that grabbed everyone’s attention. Felicity wasn’t the only one to jump to their feet, but she was the only one Slade had to restrain from rushing toward the cascade of rock falling from the above.

“You’re supposed to be the smart one,” Slade snapped, his voice low. “We need to stay clear.”

Felicity glowered at Slade from over her shoulder and pulled from his grip but…she might not want to admit it but he was right and the rainstorm of rock and dirt falling from the ceiling proved it. The rest of the team (all awake and alert now) scrambled back.

Felicity held herself still, her muscles so tense she was pretty certain they were gonna shatter if this took too much longer. Her fingernails dug into her palms until they left marks. She tried counting backward from a hundred but kept losing count.

This was completely insane. Felicity was being ridiculous. She would be out of this hole any minute now, be with Oliver soon enough.

Was there such a thing as soon enough?

A final piece of rock fell from the ceiling in a large loud chunk, pieces scattering. Then Felicity could see a light from above and lurched forward and again Slade’s hands were there, restraining her easily.

“Let me go,” Felicity hissed, yanking at his grip.

“I’m not dealing with Oliver if he comes down here and finds you knocked out from fallen debris,” Slade muttered in her ear.

Felicity grunted but stayed back as Digg stepped forward, a hand up and over his head (did he really think that was going to save him from falling rock?)

When John finally got under the newly formed hole in the ceiling, he looked up and a smile stretched across his face as he called up, “Hey, man, what took you so long?”
John laughed at something Felicity couldn’t hear. Though, as it turned out, she couldn’t hear much of anything. White nose started to hum in her ears as her heart rate sped up and...

And then Oliver was falling from the sky, still in full Green Arrow gear, covered in soot and dirt and dried blood and looking fraking gorgeous as he slid down the heavy cable.

No one could hold Felicity back then. She wasn’t sure if Slade tried or not but…

“Oliver!”

Throwing herself into his arms felt like déjà vu all over again.

Felicity’s arms flew around his neck and she tried not to cry as his left arm wrapped around her back and his chin leaned forward to rest on her shoulder.

Just for a moment.

It was always only a moment. Before Oliver had to pull back and address the others. This was a dance they’d danced many times. Felicity got his first embrace, brief as it was. His right hand was always holding something, usually his bow, his left hand pressed over her back and...

Felicity knew she only had a few seconds to breathe in the leather and the sweat and the Oliver, to clutch at him to reassure herself that he had survived. Again. It was never enough time. To let the relief and love wash over her. Never enough but she always made do. Accepted it with grace, knowing she was lucky to have this time that was all hers. All theirs. Even if it only numbered in the seconds.

But this time…

This time was different.

It took Felicity almost a full minute to realize it. Time was hard to grab a hold of what with the pounding of her heart, and his heart, and the blood rushing in her ears. But this time…this time Oliver didn’t let go.

He dropped the rope and banded both arms around her waist, lifting her off the ground until only the tips of her toes grazed the floor, pulling her fully against him, making Felicity whimper and bury her face further into Oliver’s neck.

She reveled in the feeling of his short beard rubbing against her face and his lips pressed, hard, against her temple. Felicity curled her fingers into the straps of his quiver and pulled Oliver to her tighter, not letting herself think about whether it was fair or selfish of her to monopolize him like this.

Instead Felicity whispered against Oliver’s neck, her voice thick and heavy, “Can we not do this again? Ever?”

Oliver didn’t answer directly, just turned his face further into her neck until it was hidden completely by her hair and breathed into her ear, “Felicity, I…I have never been so terrified.”

And, of course, that started her crying. Which was unfair and probably silly but, God, it had been terrifying and she was so relieved and having him there felt like a fraking miracle.

Pressing one more hard kiss to her temple, just above her ear, Oliver pulled back, cupping her face in his gloved hands, and whispering so quietly Felicity could barely hear him, “Are you okay?”
It was a complicated question with a complicated answer, but Felicity’s throat closed up and all she could do was nod. He was there. Maybe that was the only ‘okay’ she needed.

Oliver nodded as well and Felicity could see that his eyes were red and she was pretty sure that it wasn’t just from smoke and exhaustion. He pressed one of those lingering kisses on her forehead, the kind that told her that wasn’t where he wanted to kiss her at all.

Felicity wondered why Oliver didn’t kiss her the way he so obviously wanted to. She could only imagine that it was because of their audience but that had been quite the display even without a kiss on the lips. And thinking about it…it warmed Felicity to insane degree that he had indulged in it.

When Oliver finally pulled back, Felicity let him go, still reeling (in a very pleasant way). It had already been *so much* more than she expected.

Oliver’s eyes locked with his sister and he breathed, “Thea…”

Felicity tried to step out of the way to allow Thea to rush into her brother’s arms, but Oliver’s left arm just banded tighter, not allowing her to leave his side.

Thea didn’t seem upset, though, that she’d have to share. She just flashed Felicity a warm smile as she approached. “Hey, big brother.” She cupped his face and kissed his cheek before Oliver enveloped her in a one-armed hug.

Even with one arm, Oliver’s hugs were pretty awesome. Felicity could attest to that.

But it was still a little odd. Oliver didn’t let Felicity go, effectively forcing them into a three-way hug…

Not that Felicity was complaining. At all. And Thea sent her another rather adorable, if knowing, smile as she laid her head on Oliver’s opposite shoulder.

Felicity turned her face into his chest and closed her eyes, letting the relief seep into her bones as Oliver exchanged quiet words with his sister, then he turned to check on every member of the team in turn. He was a good leader that way.

She became very grateful for the strong arm around her waist, because with the relief came a wave of exhaustion that left Felicity dizzy. She was left wondering how long her legs were going to hold out.

Then, in the middle of a conversation Felicity was barely paying attention to, two words rang out. “Where’s Malcolm?”

Felicity’s eyes jerked up, the exhaustion quickly taking a backseat as she met Thea’s wide and distressed gaze.

Across the expanse of Oliver’s wide chest, Thea hissed, “You didn’t tell him?”

“Where would I have done that?” Felicity asked rather defensively. Though to be honest she had completely forgotten about Malcolm when Oliver asked if they were all okay. Did that make her a bad person?

Oliver’s hand clenched at Felicity’s waist, but his concerned gaze was fixed on his sister.
But Thea had, instantaneously, closed down. Completely. She stepped out of Oliver’s arms. Arms crossed. Eyes pressed tightly shut.

Felicity really wished she’d found a minute to tell Oliver before. Leaning forward, she whispered, “Thea stepped on a landmine and Malcolm took her place.”

“Rather violently,” Curtis chose that moment to interject. Felicity’s eyes flew to him with a strong glare and Curtis’ face scrunched up with appropriate remorse.

Oliver tensed, his eyes flying from Felicity to his sister and questioning gently, “Thea?”

The younger woman put up a hand and turned away, stepping away to give herself space as she grunted a short, “He’s gone.”

Oliver turned to Felicity and met her eyes, murmuring, “Are we sure?”

Felicity winced, whispering back, desperately trying to keep her words too low for Thea to hear, “If by some miracle Malcolm survived that landmine, I can’t imagine he survived the other explosions.”

Nodding, Oliver turned his eyes back to his sister, more specifically the back of her head.

On impulse, Felicity popped up to her toes and said, softly, in Oliver’s ear, “She’s not okay.”

Jaw clenching, Oliver nodded again. He squeezed Felicity’s waist one more time and turned his face to whisper for her only, “Don’t go far,” before releasing his hold on her.

It filled Felicity with warmth (which she felt kind of guilty for given the pain her friend was in) as she watched Oliver approach his sister and pull her into his arms.

Thea gave a token protest, but Oliver persisted, murmuring, “Hey, hey, come here.” He tucked Thea under his chin and cupped the back of her head and maybe watching them filled Felicity with a different sort of warmth. One that said ‘family.’

For the first time, Felicity realized the entire time she had been having her reunion, the others hadn’t just been sitting and watching. John was holding on a whole conversation with his wife through the hole in the ceiling. And thankfully most of their audience was more concerned with that conversation than hers, which made sense since that one was the one that was going to get them the hell out of there.

It also made Felicity feel a lot better about monopolizing Oliver, if they were making progress without them.

John turned to Oliver, cord clutched in his hand, “Ready to get this show on the road?”

“More than,” was Oliver’s answer, still holding Thea gently.

“Rene, why don’t you go first? Then we’ll send up Samantha…”

John continued to call out instructions, but Felicity’s attention wandered back to Thea who sent Felicity another small smile as she stepped out of her brother’s arms.

Felicity was caught off guard by Oliver grabbing her hand and pulling her close again. He was being extra clingy. It was nice. She turned and smiled up—

“Hey! Whoa!” John’s loud yelp pulled all of their focus. Felicity’s eyes flew over as a shocked
John threw up his arms just in time to catch William as he flew down the cable. “What the…?!”

“William!” Lyla’s furious voice echoed down the makeshift tunnel and around the large chamber. “I told you to stay—!”

But Lyla was quickly overpowered by Oliver’s roar, “What do you think you’re doing!? William, I told you to stay up there!”

The boy ignored his father completely. Along with the director of the scary top-secret government agency. Both of which took gumption.

Pushing away from Digg, William’s eyes frantically searched the room.

“William!” Samantha stepped forward.

“Mom!” William yelled, running into her arms.

Samantha laughed, crying as she caught and clutched her son to her. “Don’t feel bad, Oliver,” she told him tearfully, her cheek pressed to William’s hair. “It’s not you. William turned ten and decided that when an adult tells you what to do, it’s just a suggestion.”

But despite her words, Samantha was smiling, rocking William back and forth like a child much younger than he was. Dear God, William was almost as tall as his mother.

This was not a little boy.

Wow. Oliver had a kid.

Not a baby. Or a little boy. He had a…young man, who took commands as suggestions and looked like he was going to be taller than his mother (and Felicity) like any time now. It was, eh…rather overwhelming.

Oliver stomped over to stand under the hole in the ceiling. He didn’t let go of Felicity’s hand, though so she was just kinda jerked along with him. Which was fine, cool even, but it was strange behavior for Oliver, especially in such a Green Arrowy situation. Quite a few people here had never seen them like this. All couple-y. Not the least of whom was his son and that maybe made it a little bit awkward.

That didn’t mean it kept Felicity from feeling all tingly inside though.

Turning his head up, Oliver yelled an incredulous, “Lyla!”

“He’s slippery, Oliver.” Felicity followed his gaze to see a very unhappy Lyla, shaking her head.

“Trust me, heads are going to roll up here, but…that’s definitely your kid.”

Oliver frowned but Felicity had to bite back a semi-hysterical laugh. Oliver’s kid. Wow. He wasn’t hypothetical anymore. Or hidden, on the other side of the country. He was real and he was here.

Felicity looked over her shoulder and found William looking back at them with a bright-blue intelligent stare…and, wow, he looked so much like Oliver it brought tears to her eyes.

“William?” Oliver called, turning back to his son, sounding so much like a father…that was even more wow.

“I didn’t agree to stay up there,” William defended, squaring his shoulders and meeting Oliver’s
eyes defiantly.

Uh oh. They were in so much trouble.

Thea stifled a laugh behind her hand and Oliver sent her a warning look. Then blowing out a breath, he again addressed his son, “I told you it wasn’t—”

“And I disagreed.”

“Oh my God, he really is a mini-you,” Felicity breathed. It took her a half-second to realize that she’d said it out-loud.

But it somehow (unfortunately) succeeded at drawing all eyes to her. Oliver shot Felicity a look that was two parts irritation, one-part pride. Or maybe it was the other way around.

“Scary,” Thea agreed, nodding, and earning her own glare from her brother. Which she ignored.

“Hey, sorry to interrupt the family reunions,” Rene cut in, his thumb gesturing above them, “but can we do this up there…?”

Frown still firmly in place, Oliver looked to Digg. “John, get these people out of here.”

Digg started to organize the rescue, but Felicity’s eyes kept being drawn back to Oliver’s son. She didn’t know what she had expected but…in her mind, William was a sweet little boy who liked baseball and had his father’s eyes.

Somehow, Felicity hadn’t realized until that moment they were dealing with a child. Oliver’s child, yes, but also a little person (well, not so little anymore) with more than just likes and dislikes, but a whole complex personality.

A personality that might not love the idea of a stepmom.

Not that Felicity was a stepmom, per se. She was more of a step…girlfriend? Was that a thing?

It would be hard enough for the pre-teen to get used to a new dad, but a socially awkward step-girlfriend with a tendency to babble and…oh God…panic…

Felicity could feel a real nice panic coming on.

Then, as if on cue, William turned and focused the entirety of that intense blue gaze on her. “You’re Felicity?”

Oh frak.

Now what? How come in all her ruminations and fantasies about Oliver and his son, Felicity had never really thought about what to say in this moment? She sucked in a breath and…crap. How was she caught so completely off-guard? Also…

Oliver had mentioned her? Felicity looked back at him, because, wow, the very first time he had gotten to speak to his son, as a father, and…William knew her name? Double wow.

Oliver smiled at her and Felicity smiled back because…that meant a lot.

It didn’t, however, help her figure out what the hell to say to William that would make him not hate her. She forced herself to make eye contact and smile. It had been a long time since Felicity had wanted this much to make a good impression, so, of course, she was going to frak it up big time.
“Yeah.  Yup.  I’m Felicity.” And…that was awesome.  Super articulate.  Way to make a first impression.

“Dad says…” William trailed off, glancing behind him at his mother.

And Felicity’s eyes flew to Oliver, because ‘Dad?’  Already, ‘Dad?’ That was…something.  Was it normal for that to happen so fast?  Because Felicity really didn’t think it was.  Not that anything that was going on here was normal but…

The look on Oliver’s face, it made Felicity’s heart flip over.  He looked thrilled and terrified and in shock all at once.  He squeezed her hand and she squeezed back, not sure who was more terrified.

But looking back at William, Samantha standing behind him, her hands on his shoulders…well, she looked the more shocked than anyone at William’s use of the familiar word.  And nothing in her expression said thrilled.

Lovely.  That was going to go well.

Then William recaptured Felicity’s attention.  “Dad says,” and this time he said the word almost defiantly, “that you hate lies.”

Samantha’s breath hissed but Felicity didn’t really have time to contemplate that, she was too busy giving a stunned laugh of her own.  Why did she feel like however she decided to respond, she was wandering into a whole other sort of minefield?

“Uh…yeah.  Does anyone like lies?” Felicity babbled and (maybe) tried to deflect.  It did not escape her notice that this child had been lied to a lot.  Most of which came from his mother, the only parent the boy had known.

Until now.  Felicity had to wonder if that was why William was so eager to embrace his new ‘dad’.

“It seems to me, that most adults love lies.” William’s eyes were hard as they fixed on Felicity.  He was one scary kid.

“William,” Samantha hissed.  It was a clear reprimand.  The boy’s eyes flashed and his jaw ticked but he refused to even acknowledge his mother in any other way.  He was stubbornly waiting for Felicity’s answer and, yeah…check one for nature over nurture because that was all Oliver.

And suddenly Felicity felt for William.  Like really felt for the boy.  She knew she would love him because he was a piece of Oliver and there was no part of Oliver that she didn’t love.  But this was different.  This had nothing at all to do with William being Oliver’s son.

William had been lied to and abandoned and kidnapped and uprooted.  Felicity hadn’t been through all of that as a child but a lot of it (and the rest she had experienced as an adult).  She knew how hard it was to trust someone after.  She also understood how desperately he wanted to find someone he could trust.

Felicity let go of Oliver’s hand and approached William (she would have crouched down but he wasn’t really much shorter than her) and met his eyes and…yup, they were in trouble because this kid was smart and stubborn and Oliver through and through.

But, thankfully, Felicity knew how to speak to Oliver.  “William, most adults…most people don’t like lies.  Well, super crazy people like Adrian Chase love lies.” Oh great, now
she was going off on a babble tangent. Shoot. “But that’s just the rare—”

“Super-villain?” William supplied helpfully, looking a little more at ease. That was good, right?

“I was going to say psychopath, but super-villain works.” What was she even saying?

“Sometimes, we call them the Big Bad.”

“No, we don’t,” Oliver corrected her.

“Well, I do,” Felicity told William, somewhat annoyed Oliver had contradicted her when she was trying to make a good impression on his son even if he had said it gently, like an often-repeated joke and not completely like a no-fun asshat.

But William smiled. At her, not Oliver, and said, “Cool!”

Felicity threw Oliver a triumphant look. Ha! Take that. Someone approved…but Oliver was looking at her with such love, it took the wind from her sails. Stole her breath as a matter of fact.

Swallowing, Felicity forced herself to look back at William and try to find something resembling a point here. “Besides the bad guys, whatever we call them…most people…good people, like your mom and dad,” and, wow, was that weird to say in relation to Oliver, “lie because they think it’s the right thing to do. To protect people. I don’t know your mom well…”

Out of the corner of her eye, Felicity saw Samantha stiffen, probably wondering if she was going to get thrown under the bus. And it was tempting. It really was.

“But I do know she loves you. More than anything.” It was the one good thing Felicity could say about Samantha without reservation. “And I know your father really well and he’s one of the best people…in the world. And he has loved you since the moment he found out about you.”

Felicity found herself, suddenly and completely, choked up. It was hard to finish actually. But, somehow, she resisted the urge to look at Oliver and kept eye contact with William. She had his rapt attention, so she knew she had to keep going. But she didn’t know what else to say. Or even how to make her voice work again.

Oliver slipped his hand back into hers and it helped. Especially since Felicity found herself in this bizarre staring contest with his son and…

“Well, I think lying to someone to protect them is just stupid,” William announced.

And Felicity couldn’t say she disagreed. In general, anyway. Clearing her throat, she added, “I’d say misguided. It’s less judgey.”

William took a step closer, his eyes still so intense. Felicity was feeling pretty judged right then. “Do you really like Battlestar Galactica?”

It was pretty clear that Felicity’s answer to this question was at least as important as the lie one. Luckily, it was a lot easier to answer. “Of course.”

“Who’s your favorite character?” William demanded and…

Okay, this conversation had taken a very strange turn.

“Starbuck…” Felicity answered, her eyes flicking from Samantha to Oliver, trying to figure out
what the hell was going on here. They looked as bemused as she did.

Then Felicity looked for Curtis because he, at least, had Battlestar Galactica knowledge, which was apparently essential to her relationship with her future stepson. But it looked as if Curtis had already been evacuated while her attention had been else where.

William nodded thoughtfully and Felicity was left wondering if he approved or not. Was she supposed to have a particular favorite? She waited for the next question in his interrogation, but when it didn’t come, she might have panicked and asked, “Do you like Dr. Who?”

“It’s okay,” William shrugged, not looking too excited. “I haven’t gotten through all the episodes.”

Damn. A fail.

“I like Star Wars better,” William offered and Felicity smiled.

Yes. She gave herself a mental fist pump. She could talk Star Wars for days. “What’s your favorite movie?” Felicity asked, hoping hers sounded more like a friendly question and less like a cross-examination.

William’s face became serious, thinking it over like the very important question it was. Finally, he answered, “Rogue One.”

“Yes!” Felicity didn’t even think, just held her fist out and William met it with a heart-melting smile on his face. This one was going to be a heart-breaker for sure.

And Samantha…well, she looked both impressed and terrified.

“But my real favorite,” William said, looking both eager and hopeful now, “is the Marvel stuff.”

Oh thank God. If William had been into nothing but sports, Felicity didn’t know what she would have done. “MCU?”

“Yeah, but what I really love is the graphic novels.” And the way William said ‘graphic novel’ instead of ‘comic book’ showed exactly how serious he was about the topic. This kid was no casual fan. “Well, until that Cap Nazi crap,” William added with an eye-roll.

“William,” Samantha reprimanded again but this time they both completely ignored her. It was probably not the best decision on Felicity’s part but, hey, they were bonding here. Having a moment. And ‘crap’ was just a minor swear…right?

“Yeah, what is that?” Felicity asked because while she might not have time to read graphic novels, she knew about the Cap/Nazi controversy.

William rolled his eyes. “I have no idea.”

“Have you seen the new Guardians of the Galaxy movie?” Felicity asked because if they could bond over a common love of little Groot that would be awe-some.

Casting an accusing look at his mother, William answered petulantly, “Not yet.”

“Well, I’m sure that’s something we can fix,” and Felicity might have said it a bit defiantly, earning a sigh and a (deeper) frown from William’s mother.

“Have you seen the Iron Fist?”
“I’m only halfway through *Luke Cage*… wait…” Felicity looked back at Oliver, then at Samantha and William. “Is that appropriate for a ten year-old?”

Oliver returned Felicity’s look with wide-eyed horror, clearly completely out of his depth because, of *course*, he would have no idea.

“What?” Samantha asked, directing a very *mom* look at her son, who was trying valiantly not to look guilty.

Though shouldn’t Samantha already know it wasn’t appropriate? Because the more Felicity thought about it…it was very much *not* for a ten-year-old. Shouldn’t Samantha be monitoring that sort of thing?

William rolled his eyes again, something the boy was rather good at it seemed and waved off his mother. “It’s *fine*, Mom.”

But he was defensive. William *knew* he wasn’t supposed to be watching that stuff and, as much as Felicity hated the idea of it, she had a feeling she was going to have to talk to Samantha about this.

Thankfully, Thea stepped up to interrupt any more immediate awkwardness, clearing her throat and saying, “I know it’s hard for the Queen men to notice anyone else when Felicity’s in the room but…”

Thea tone was teasing, she even winked at Felicity, but Samantha looked far from amused. Felicity doubted she liked her son being called a ‘Queen man’ after she’d spent so much time and effort trying to keep William away from his father’s family.

Oliver, on the other hand, focused on the rest of Thea’s sentence, becoming flustered and bursting out with, “Oh God, I’m sorry,” with a nervousness they so rarely saw in Oliver. He let go of Felicity and put a hand on Thea’s shoulder, ushering her forward. “William, this is my little sister, your aunt, Thea.”

“Little sister, huh?” Thea quirked a playful eyebrow at her brother. It was so nice to see her like this after what happened with Malcolm. Though Thea, ever her mother’s daughter, was a master at compartmentalization. “That’s how you are going to introduce me?”

Eyes flashing amusement, Oliver turned back to William and corrected, “This is my beautiful and brilliant *little* sister, who has difficulty not being the center of attention.”

“Hey!” Thea turned to whack Oliver on the shoulder and Felicity was quite certain her blows hurt a lot more than Felicity’s, even if they were roughly the same size. “I’m meeting my nephew for the first time. Do you have to insult me?”

Then Thea turned her full attention to William, giving him her hundred-watt smile and offering her hand to the wide-eyed boy, who looked rather in awe of his sophisticated aunt. The one who had somehow survived a kidnapping and an island wide explosion, yet barely looked rumpled.

“Hello, William. I’m so happy to finally meet you.”

And, wow, *that* was how one introduced herself. Felicity wished she had a *tenth* of Thea’s social graces. Though not if it meant growing up with Moira Queen…

“Hi… um… you’re my *aunt*…” William looked stunned, like it was the first time he had even considered such a thing. That finding his father might also mean a whole other set of family members. Too bad there weren’t many left.
Thea’s smile widened. “Kinda cool, huh?”

William nodded jerkily. “I never had an aunt before. Or an uncle. Or anything. It was always just me and my mom.”

Thea sent a cautious glance to Samantha, who looked so tense it seemed she might shatter if a breeze came through.

Yet Felicity couldn’t help but think that Samantha had made this particular bed, she was going to have to deal with lying in it.

“Well, you have *lots* of family now.” Thea smiled at William, pointedly ignoring Samantha. “Not a lot of *blood* relatives but lots of *family*.”

William smiled. He certainly seemed to like the idea, even if his mother didn’t.

John walked up next, addressing William, “And I’m John Diggle, your dad’s best friend. You can call me Uncle John or just Digg, since my son calls this one Uncle Ollie.” John gestured with his thumb to Oliver. “But right now, I’m the one that’s going to get you and your mom out of here. You’re up, little man.”

Felicity was surprised at how quickly William complied, just a quick glance at his father and he nodded, following John so he could hook him up to the cable.

Looking around, Felicity realized most of the team had already evacuated. William and Samantha quickly followed and Oliver turned to Thea, murmuring, “Can you watch out for him? I need a minute.”

Thea looked between Oliver and Felicity and gave them an approving smile, before nodding. Once she was topside, it was only John, Felicity, and Oliver.

And Slade.

Oliver turned to his old teammate. “Slade? You’re up.”

But Slade was lounging on the floor, in the same position he had been in when he’d called Felicity out for wearing a path in the floor. He tilted his head, seeming to consider. “ARGUS, huh?”

“Yeah…?” John answered, flashing Oliver and Felicity a questioning look. “They’re waiting, man.”

Slade didn’t budge. In fact, he crossed his arms and closed his eyes, his head falling casually back to land on the stone wall. “I’m thinking I’ll take my chances on the island. I know you promised me my freedom to look for my son, Oliver, but I don’t think Amanda Waller will feel an obligation —”

“Waller’s dead. My wife is in charge now,” Digg interrupted.

Slade opened his eye to look at John. He seemed to ponder that but after a minute he just shook his head. “I think it would be better if I just…died when the island blew up.”

Oliver sighed. “There’s nothing *left* on this island. You can’t stay here, Slade. There’s no food. No shelter—”

Felicity could see Slade wasn’t buying it. She stepped closer and crouched down next to him.
“Slade, you saved us today. Many times over. You’ve paid for the crimes you perpetrated under the influence of Mirakuru. We’ll vouch for you.”

Oliver flashed Felicity a surprised smile, but it was Slade who looked…completely stunned.

Then John took over, adding, “Look, Slade, Lyla’s not Amanda. She’s a reasonable woman with strong morals. I can’t guarantee you’ll walk out of there a free man, but we’ll get you a fair trial. A chance to be really free.”

Again, Slade seemed to be mulling this over but this time with something resembling optimism. Finally, he asked, “And if they don’t? If they decide to throw me in another hole in the ground?”

“Then,” Felicity smiled, shrugging, “it turns out we’re really good at breaking people out of secure government facilities.” Because Oliver’s promise might not be ARGUS’ promise, but it was Team Arrow’s promise.

Slade gave a bark of laughter and Oliver’s hand fell on her shoulder and squeezed. Felicity looked up him and almost melted at the warmth in Oliver’s eyes. She placed a hand over his and he took it, pulling her back to her feet.

They all turned to look at John…and, yeah, Felicity wondered if she should have said that in front of him. Was she putting Digg in a weird position? Making him choose between Team Arrow and his wife? But John just shrugged, his face impassive. “That is a true statement.”

Then Digg turned his eyes to Felicity and sent her a private wink that had her biting back a smile.

Oliver held out a hand to Slade. “What do you say? Willing to take your chances?”

Slapping his hand into Oliver’s, Slade finally grinned. “I always was a gambling man.”

Once he was on his feet, Slade was quickly evacuated. Then Digg turned to Felicity, but Oliver pulled her back. “Can we have a few minutes?”

Felicity shot Oliver a surprised look, but Digg just grinned. “Sure, man. Just don’t take too long. I’m ready to get off this hell-hole.”

Watching as Digg disappeared into the opening in the ceiling, Felicity laughed. “I can’t believe that you just asked ‘for the room’ in an underground Nex—mmmph.”

Oliver cut Felicity off with his lips, spinning her and threading his hands into her hair, crashing his lips to hers.

And, God, it was good.

Felicity grabbed the straps of Oliver’s quiver and yanked him closer. If closer was even possible, given their…incredible closeness. Eagerly, she opened her lips beneath his and, yeah, this was the kiss she’d wanted back in the forest. Except that was a goodbye and this was very much a hello.

And quite the hello it was. Oliver’s desperation and joy were obvious, poured into every stroke of his lips and tongue, every tiny movement of his mouth.

*This* was what Felicity wanted from life. A lifetime of *hellos* like this one. With Oliver. Only Oliver.

Felicity dragged one hand over his shoulder and up to cup the nape of his neck, tilting her head and
opening her mouth wide, knowing Oliver would follow and...he did. Completely. Easily. Seamlessly. And then there were tongues tangling and warmth and pleasure and the taste of him...

Oliver groaned, deep and low, his hand falling to her ass, yanking her closer, plastering Felicity against his leather clad body. Would that ever stop being a turn on?

Ummm…Green Arrow Sex. Felicity’s favorite. Of course, she had a lot of favorites when it came to Oliver. And she missed every one of them. She was so ready to re-explore every single one. It had been far too long.

Frak, Felicity wanted to peel this suit from Oliver’s body, piece by piece. To lick every inch of salty sweaty skin revealed…

But just as Felicity was about to find those hidden fastenings, the ones she would remember until the day she died, Oliver tore his lips from hers.

Panting, Oliver’s forehead fell to her shoulder. And Felicity realized, oh yeah, they were in an underground chamber while their friends and family waited for them, so they could all leave a burnt-out hell of an island. Frak.

Didn’t exactly give them time for the type of reunion sex they deserved.

Oliver lifted his head, moving to rest his forehead against hers, instead of her shoulder. He cupped her face, his fingers tracing her ears, sighing, “Fe-li-ci-ty,” and there was so much emotion in that one breath of a word, it brought tears to her eyes.

Felicity knew it was time for her to say something, though she really wasn’t sure what. Nothing felt quite profound enough for that moment.

“So. We survived. Again.”

She wasn’t exactly sure what possessed her to say that. Profound it was not, but Oliver huffed out an emotion filled laugh and Felicity breathed it in, letting it fill her.

“For a minute there…” Oliver licked his lips and shook his head, his forehead rolling over hers. “I was so fucking terrified.”

A tear slipped free as Felicity nodded. “Me too. I didn’t want to leave you. We didn’t know where you were. If you found William or…”

Felicity didn’t realize that her voice had taken on a frantic edge until Oliver was murmuring, “Shhh. Shh. It’s okay. I’m okay…” His thumbs caught her tears as they fell before she even realized they were there. “We made it.”

This time.

But Felicity refused to give that thought the legitimacy of putting it to words. Instead, she wrapped her arms more fully around him, hugging him tightly. Thankfully, Oliver seemed to know exactly what she needed and his hands spread over her back, tucking her head under his and rubbing his cheek against her hair, enveloping her completely with his strength.

“When I saw the island explode…” Oliver’s voice was thick with emotion and Felicity could feel him shaking his head against the top of her head. Maybe this was what he needed as well. Felicity closed her eyes, fighting the burn, trying not to break down in sobs. “If I hadn’t needed to hold it
together for William, I think I would have lost it.”

Felicity could imagine it. She wished she couldn’t though, because now her mind refused to unsee it. Oliver watching the explosions and imagining the worst, then realizing that his son needed him. Needed him to stay positive, strong, hopeful. She could see Oliver pull himself together, being the father she always knew he could be.

Okay maybe it wasn’t such a bad image after all. Smiling against him, Felicity tipped her head up and murmured, “You are such a good dad.”

Oliver’s laugh was disbelieving to the point of incredulous. He pulled back just enough to look into her eyes. “I have no idea what I’m doing. William is…” He shook his head, an overwhelmed look Felicity could very much relate to written across his every feature. “So much more than I expected.”

Felicity had to laugh. Because… “Yeah. I can see…yeah. Yup. William is…”

“A handful?” Oliver supplied, a different sort of terror lighting his eyes.

Chuckling (only a tiny bit hysterically), Felicity smiled. “I was going to say ‘amazing’ but that too. And so much like you, I can’t even wrap my head around it.” It pulled on her heartstrings how much like Oliver William was.

“Really?” Oliver asked as if he hadn’t even considered it. He sounded…disbelieving. Hopeful. Proud. So very proud.

Felicity nodded and Oliver broke out in a grin. “I can’t believe how much like you he is.”

She really laughed at that one. “I’m just relieved we have something to talk about.”

Oliver’s grin was getting progressively more and more giddy. “William was afraid you wouldn’t like him.”

Okay, that was just…Felicity scrunched up her face, a new wave of emotion threatening to choke her. “That makes two of us. But…but you know I love him already, right?”

“I do.” Oliver nodded, tears filling his eyes. “I know you do. You’re the most loving…” He broke off with an almost whimper and pressed his lips, har, against hers. “And that’s really good, because William wants to come and live in Star City.”

Her smiled widened. Felicity was just so proud of him. “The perfect answer. See, you’re already an incredible father.”

Oliver huffed, blushing from the praise. “I’m not so sure about that. Samantha is going to be furious. Felicity, he…William asked me all sorts of questions. Really hard questions and I…I couldn’t put him off.”

Felicity bit her lip. She could only imagine the sorts of questions the poor kid had. “What did you tell him?”
Again with the overwhelmed look. Oliver shook his head. “The truth. William seems to have a real sore spot for honesty and I can’t blame him. What else could I do?”

“Nothing,” Felicity assured. Because seriously? Of course, he had a sore spot for the truth. His mother was a compulsive liar. Another thing William had in common with his father. “You had to tell him the truth. How could that be wrong?”

His nose scrunched up and guilt clouded Oliver’s eyes. “I tried not to but…it felt a lot like I was throwing Samantha under the bus.”

Well, that’s what the woman got for all her stupid secrets.

Mentally shaking her head, Felicity purposely pushed those unkind thoughts away. Maybe she was being too hard on Samantha. Felicity hadn’t walked in her shoes, didn’t know all the reasons she’d made the choices she’d made.

Except…it was really hard for Felicity not to feel like she could have made much better ones.

“Co-parenting is going to be…hard.” And, yeah, that was the understatement of the century. “But you’re his father. William deserves to have you in his life and you…” She took a deep, fortifying breath. “You deserve a chance to know him, to be the father I know you can be.” It made Felicity want to weep thinking about the love Oliver had inside him to give.

Oliver’s lip trembled as he traced her cheekbone. “I don’t know if I deserve you but I…I couldn’t do this without you.”

He was going to make Felicity cry all over again. “Oliver…”

Again he cut her off with his lips.

But they only had a moment before Digg’s voice echoed through the chamber. “Time’s up, you two. Lyla says she has a nice clean cabin ready in the aircraft carrier but, right now, the copter is waiting on you.”

“One more minute,” Oliver called, smiling down at Felicity.

Digg grunted loud enough for them to hear it down in the chamber. “Time’s up, you two. Lyla says she has a nice clean cabin ready in the aircraft carrier but, right now, the copter is waiting on you.”

“One more minute,” Oliver called, smiling down at Felicity.

Digg grunted loud enough for them to hear it down in the chamber. “It had better be exactly one minute….”

Oliver’s grin widened and he murmured, his voice like molten honey, “I love you.”

Felicity chuckled, a very tearful chuckle. “I love you too, but you really need to quit it with the making me cry thing.”

Giving her one last quick (hard) kiss, Oliver pulled her over to the dangling cable, “Let’s get the hell out of this hole.” He attached the cord to Felicity’s belt and stood back. “I’ll be right behind you.”

“You’d better be.” And with one last, too brief kiss, Felicity grabbed the cord and tugged.

Once she was outside, Felicity…

Dear God, Felicity thought was she prepared. For the devastation. But…wow. It looked like the set of a live-action Nightmare Before Christmas. If they hadn’t found that chamber…

But for the Grace of God. They were so lucky to be alive.
It seemed like a lot less than a minute before Oliver was topside as well, wrapping an arm around her waist and leading her to the helicopter. After that, Felicity couldn’t leave the island fast enough.

Oliver was right. It really had become the literal representation of hell on earth and the image was only intensified by the smoldering red embers that stood out against the night sky.

On the helicopter, everyone was already strapped in. William’s head rested on his mother’s shoulder. He was already fast asleep. Just looking at him…Felicity yawned, exhaustion crashing into her like a Mack truck.

“Ready to blow this popsicle stand?” Rene asked, grinning.

Felicity snapped herself in, too tired to even chuckle. “So ready.”

Dinah had her head back and her eyes closed as she muttered, “Ready yesterday, ready.”

“We’re good to go,” Oliver called out as he settled in next to Felicity. The helicopter’s propellers started up as Oliver’s arm fell comfortably around her shoulders.

That was Felicity’s last thought before sleep claimed her.

Chapter End Notes

“When I tell you to do something, it’s not a suggestion,” was something I said to one of my Girl Scouts this spring and have repeated it often since. I feel like it says so much about this age group.

I didn’t get a chance to thank my wonderful betas last week, so a double thanks this week to Fairytaleshearts, Imusuallyobsessed, and Ireland1733.

Also, thank you to all the wonderful commenters on Chapter 6, you really did revive the muse. And an extra special thank you to anyone who has signed up for an AO3 account to leave a comment, when I had to turn off anon.

Happy reading!

Emmy

Emmilynestill (Twitter/Tumblr)
Reverberations (and Repercussions)

Chapter Summary
Oliver didn’t have the heart to wake her up.

Felicity fell asleep the moment her head hit Oliver’s shoulder, before the helicopter had even left the ground. She stayed asleep for the entire short, if choppy, flight to the aircraft carrier, didn’t even stir at the less than smooth landing.

Then Slade had leaned in and whispered that Felicity had been the only one who hadn’t rested at all while they were stuck in the Nexus Chamber. So…yeah, no way Oliver was waking her. Even though it meant letting Digg carry his son, who was equally fast asleep, to his own cabin.

As much as Oliver would have relished the chance to carry his boy, he wasn’t willing to wake Felicity for the privilege. She would, undoubtedly, not only wake if someone else touched her but be terribly embarrassed. She hated being carried around like ‘a damsel in distress’ as she put it, so Oliver really hoped she wouldn’t wake until he had her safely tucked into bed.
Felicity whimpered a bit as he lifted her but Oliver remembered exactly how to hold her. His body remembered. Instinctively. And hers seemed to as well. Soon, she was curled against his chest, her head safely tucked under his chin, her hand clutching the straps of his quiver as he carried her bridal style.

Oliver kept a close eye on John and Samantha until they were directed to their own compartment, down the hall from the one Oliver was shown to.

Still he foolishly didn’t realize, until after he had laid Felicity down in the bunk, that this cabin had been assigned to the both of them.

One cabin one with one bunk and one chair and barely enough room on the floor for a child (never mind a grown man) to stretch out on.

Oliver tried to argue about the arrangement with the ensign who had escorted him there, but the kid just kept repeating that these were his orders. And with Director Michaels nowhere in sight… Oliver let it go. For now.

It wasn’t like this wasn’t exactly where Oliver wanted to be anyway.

The problem was, as much as Oliver wanted to strip down, climb into bed next to Felicity, and sleep for a week, it felt…

Presumptuous. Disrespectful, even, to climb into bed next to Felicity while she was sleeping, when they hadn’t slept together…well, during this particular relationship. It was weird though, because they had slept together more times than Oliver could count, so now it simultaneously felt incredibly right and natural and…

What if Felicity wasn’t ready yet? She had said she wanted to skip to the ‘middle’ but was this the ‘middle’? Oliver had no idea if she would consider this, sleeping together purely for sleep (which somehow felt more intimate than passing out after sex) the middle. Or even if, after the last traumatic 48 hours, she…just needed some time to herself. To process it all.

What if Felicity didn’t want to wake up in a strange place with Oliver pressed up next to her? And, let’s face it, with a bunk that small and the way he was feeling, if he was only up pressed against her by morning it would be a miracle.

Though Felicity waking up in a strange place, all by herself, with no idea how she got there… would that be worse?

Oliver ran his hand down his face. His sweaty dirty soot darkened face.

He needed to stop being neurotic and at least get himself cleaned up. But knowing that was the right thing to do didn’t make Oliver feel any less awkward as he peeled off the Green Arrow suit, feeling like it was a violation to undress in front of Felicity without her being aware. Not when they hadn’t been intimate.

Yet.

Again.

But the ‘bathroom’ was a narrow shower and a toilet with barely enough room to stand between them and this suit required a little more maneuverability to remove. Oliver was certain he would wake Felicity if he even attempted it.
And then there was the fact that Felicity was lying on the bunk fully clothed and it couldn’t be comfortable. But undressing her was way over the line so…waking her would solve all of Oliver’s problems.

Felicity let out a soft sleepy noise and rolled over onto her side, toward Oliver, snuggling into the pillow.


But, Christ, he hadn’t even removed Felicity’s glasses. Oliver should have done that right away.

He eased her glasses off her face, frowning at the marks that were left behind and smoothing a gentle thumb over the red indentations. When Felicity didn’t wake at that, Oliver eased off her ridiculous boots as well.

Again, Felicity didn’t even stir so Oliver figured he could safely remove the rest of his clothes, since it seemed like she was out for the count. He took a quick shower to remove the layer of caked on grime from his skin and drank probably a half-gallon of water before slipping into the matching ARGUS issued t-shirt and sweats that had been left for them.

Then it was just a cleaner, less smelly Oliver staring down at a sleeping Felicity and trying to figure out what to do next. He fell into the chair and watched her, which might be considered creepy but even if it was, he found it incredibly comforting.

Still…now what? Should Oliver wake Felicity up and ask her what she wanted him to do? Should he just say fuck it and climb into bed with her? Or should he try to sleep on the floor or even this chair?

That was when Oliver realized, even with the exhaustion settling into his bones, he was far too restless to actually sleep. Even with Felicity. His thoughts drifted to William and not knowing exactly where he was caused Oliver’s anxiety to rise. Maybe if he checked in on his son, made sure he was sleeping, safe and sound, Oliver could finally relax and get some rest. Wherever.

Chancing a soft kiss to Felicity’s temple, Oliver took a moment to breathe in her scent. Even mixed with the smell of smoke, it gave him a sense of peace. It allowed him to remember…because of an incredible turn of events, Felicity was safe and healthy and in his bed. A fucking miracle.

Then Oliver left to reassure himself that William was just as safe. And only a few doors away. That they really had connected. He was an actual father now. With an amazing boy who wanted him in his life.

It turned out William wasn’t all that hard to find.

It also turned out that he was not sleeping soundly. And while William appeared to be safe, he sure as hell didn’t sound happy.

In fact, Oliver could hear the screaming from the other end of the corridor. Mostly it was William he heard, but Samantha’s raised voice was mixed in there as well.

It was at that point Oliver seriously considered turning around and retreating right back into the cabin with Felicity. It was embarrassing how close he came to turning tail and running from this particular fight.
A fight Oliver could admit he found as terrifying as anything Chase had thrown at him.

But Oliver wasn’t so pathetic he didn’t realize how absurd that was. Besides, what if something was really wrong? He needed to at least check. To offer his help.

Taking a deep breath and this time fighting the instincts that told him to run in the opposite direction (but was that instinct or terror?), Oliver walked toward the yelling.

Oliver thought maybe he walked down that corridor very much like a man on death row would.

Rene popped his head out, his eyes flying down the hall to the door the yelling was emanating from, then back to Oliver. Shaking his head, Rene’s lip tipped up in an amused smirk. “And they say girls at this age are difficult.”

If Oliver didn’t know the hell Rene was going through over Zoe, he’d probably pop him one.

But then another door opened and Quintin appeared. He listened for approximately ten seconds, took in Oliver’s expression, laughed uproariously, before muttering, “Karma,” and disappearing behind his door again.

Well, fuck.

Oliver groaned, rubbing the heels of his hands over his eyes as the yelling got louder the closer he got.

“Good luck, man.” Rene sounded genuinely sympathetic, which didn’t even allow Oliver to direct any of his frustration at his teammate.

Instead, Oliver nodded and swallowed and continued his death march.

By the time he got to the door of the room William and Samantha were very clearly staying in, Oliver was desperate enough to go back and ask even Rene for advice, but unfortunately, he had already disappeared back into his cabin.

As Oliver listened on the other side of the door (the safe side), it became crystal clear the only thing wrong in there was the mother-son relationship. Which Oliver couldn’t say he was shocked about considering everything William had said to him on Lian Yu.

Maybe it would be best if Oliver didn’t interfere. Samantha and William had been handling this sort of thing for ten years. Who was Oliver to step in now? Was it even any of his business? Would he just make it worse?

“You’re a liar and you never cared about me and I hate you!”

When Oliver heard William scream those words, he had his hands on the door handle before he had time to blink. Luckily, he remembered at the last moment to knock but the door was already open by then and he went in without being invited.

That was probably mistake #1.

Oliver’s plan…well, his hope was to play mediator. All he wanted to do was calm the situation down. Reassure William his mom loved him, that they both loved him. Reassure Samantha that Oliver had no intention of stealing her son. And maybe in the middle of it all that, have a stern talk with William about being respectful to his mother.
Yup, that was Oliver’s plan. Be a father. A good one. Or at least an…adequate one.

Ha. Mistake #2.

Though Oliver wasn’t sure if the mistake was thinking he could pull it off or thinking it was that easy.

Maybe both.

No, definitely both.

Oliver was not a natural mediator. That was something he was reminded of pretty quickly. He quickly found himself in the middle of a pretty ugly show down between mother and son.

And the middle, he meant the middle. Not as a neutral party. Nope, not at all. Because it rapidly became clear, from the moment he arrived, that while William was angry at his mother, Samantha was furious at Oliver.

For so so many reasons. More reasons than Oliver could even wrap his head around. Some fair. Some really really not.

Then there were the reasons…no, the accusations that played straight into all of Oliver’s insecurities.

It didn’t help that any time Oliver even hinted at agreeing with Samantha, William took it as the ultimate betrayal. So Oliver really couldn’t win. Every step toward Samantha was, apparently, a step away from William. And wasn’t it obvious who Oliver would choose?

Between that and the bile Samantha was spewing at him...suddenly, an hour had passed and Oliver was just as angry as William. He couldn’t even say how exactly it happened but suddenly Oliver wasn’t in the middle any more.

Suddenly, it was Oliver and William against Samantha and that was not what Oliver had intended. At all.

But by then Oliver wasn’t even thinking straight. And in the end…

“We’ll talk about this in the morning when you are more reasonable! Or we can talk about this with our lawyers but you sure as hell aren’t keeping my son from me again!”

Yeah, mistake number...Oliver didn’t even know. But the number was pretty large by that point.

His exit was dramatic. For good or for evil, Oliver got the last word in.

Fuck.

Once Oliver was back in the corridor the anger drained away so quickly it left him dizzy. Then he was just left feeling…like a complete ass.

And maybe even a failure.

Shit.

Fuck.

Oliver stood there, in an empty corridor, in the dead of night, feeling nothing but regret and shame
and…exhaustion. He dropped his head into his hands and waited to see if William (or Samantha) would start crying again. Or yelling (yelling would be better than crying). Though Oliver had no fucking clue what he was going to do if it did.

But thankfully there was only silence from the inside of that cabin. Maybe with his exit, Oliver had at least succeeded in calling a cease fire until they’d all had some sleep. It wasn’t much, but maybe he had accomplished something. Even if that something was exhausting William until he passed out.

As he trudged back up the hallway, Oliver felt at least ten years older than he had walking down. And that hadn’t been a walk in the park either.

The restless feeling was gone at any rate. Now, Oliver felt like he could sleep for a decade. He just wanted to climb into bed next to Felicity and…

No, he couldn’t do that either. Double fuck. Nothing had changed. Oliver still couldn’t do that without her permission. Maybe he would just sit and watch her sleep for a while. It had been a long time since he’d had that particular pleasure.

Oliver opened the door slowly, trying to stay as quiet as possible as to not disturb Felicity but was surprised to see the light on and—

“Eep.”

Felicity jumped and turned, her hand flying to her chest. She was awake and showered, dressed in similar, if smaller, ARGUS issue sweats.

“Oh. Sorry,” Oliver blurted out, his complicated emotions spinning and flipping on their head when confronted with Felicity’s bright shining face and…the burst of love and relief he felt left him lightheaded.

On top of everything else, it was all a strange mix of thoughts and emotions and it, oddly, left Oliver feeling awkward and shy (which he really did hate). “If I had known you were awake, I would have knocked…”

A slow smile spread over Felicity’s face, her eyes twinkling as he closed the door behind him. Oliver leaned back against it and she bit her lip…but it wasn’t a nervous gesture. It was a teasing one.

Oliver might be in trouble here.

Thank God.

This was exactly the sort of trouble Oliver was in dire need of.

“So…you were sneaking into my room thinking I was asleep, Mr. Queen?”

If Felicity’s tone wasn’t so playful and so…well, sultry, Oliver would have been nervous but considering…

“Well, this is my room too.” Oliver shrugged, unable to fully shake the bashfulness, no amount of will-power seemed to be able to extinguish it completely. “Lyla seemed to think…well, she assigned us to the same bunk but if you’d like, I’ll talk to—”

“No,” Felicity was quick to interrupt and her smile…it was contagious. Oliver hadn’t really
thought that she wanted separate rooms any more than he did but…thank God. “It’s fine. But if this is our bunk,” she patted the mattress, “then why weren’t you here with me when I woke up?”

Oliver felt his skin warm and he thought maybe half of it was this stupid bashful adolescent routine his body seemed stuck on. But, no, it was less than that because warmth and love and arousal was, thankfully, starting to edge out ahead.

Though Oliver was back to shuffling his feet, which was really embarrassing for a grown man of 32. How did Felicity do this to him?

He looked at her through his lashes (partially because of the stupid bashfulness but mostly because Oliver knew it always made Felicity melt and he needed all the help he could get). “I didn’t want to climb into bed with you without your permission. It seemed…I dunno presumptuous or—”

“Good God, Oliver,” Felicity sighed, her voice equal parts amused and exasperated. “How many times do we need to agree that we’re back together before you realize that you have all the permission you need to touch an—? Umph—”

Oliver couldn’t stand it one more minute. A few short steps and Felicity was in his arms. He wrapped himself around her, lifting her up so he could bury his face in her neck and breathe in the clean smell of her skin, feel her damp curls against his cheeks. Her arms wound around his neck tight, her cheek pressed to his hair…And Oliver just held her.

All he wanted to do was keep holding her.

“I didn’t like waking up without you,” Felicity murmured against his temple and Oliver…Warmth spread through every cell of his body and he groaned. It was always so hard to believe Felicity felt this way about him, that someone so good and beautiful and brilliant and wonderful…After everything Oliver had done, all that he was, all the mistakes he’d made…it blew his mind that Felicity still wanted him.

Felicity’s forgiveness was a blessing Oliver didn’t know if he would ever feel like he deserved, a gift he would spend a lifetime trying to repay. Gladly.

Oliver pressed his lips to the delicate skin under Felicity’s ear and swore, “You never have to again. Not if you don’t want to.”

Felicity laughed, hugging him tightly, and it was a sound Oliver wanted to hear every day for the rest of his life. “I don’t think that’s a promise you can make but I certainly appreciate the sentiment.”

She was right and Oliver shouldn’t have said it, the least of which because it was really too much for the step they were on. Whatever the hell step that was.

But it felt real. It was real. Oliver meant it. So he refused to take it back or even regret it.

Oliver tipped his chin to look at up her and Felicity met him halfway, dropping a lingering kiss onto his lips. He should put her down. It was silly to stand there with her lifted off the floor like this, his muscles were exhausted, but he really didn’t want to, so he nuzzled her cheek with his nose instead.
Leaning into the caress, Felicity hummed, “How did I even get here? The last thing I remember was the helicopter.”

“I carried you,” Oliver muttered, though it was muffled against her skin and, maybe even, slurred with exhaustion.

Felicity let out a mock-annoyed grunt. “And I missed it? No fair.”

Oliver chuckled. He was loving Felicity’s playful mood. It was exactly what he needed right then. She always knew exactly what he needed. “What are you talking about? You hate being carried.”

Resting her elbows on his shoulders so she could meet his eyes, Felicity gave no sign that she had any issue with Oliver holding her off the ground like a rag doll. She did, however, scrunch up her face and roll her eyes. “I hated that I had to be carried when I couldn’t walk on my own. Necessary carrying is no fun and irritating. Unnecessary carrying…that is sexy and romantic. Obviously.”

There was no way Oliver could not laugh at that. She was too much. “Obviously. Though I don’t think it was very sexy given the circumstances.” Thinking back to him, filthy and battle worn, carrying an equally grimy and exhausted Felicity. Nope, not sexy. Then he gave her a small half-smile, “Romantic? Possibly.” Though, he wasn’t sure he had a normal definition of romantic.

Felicity gave him another exaggerated sigh, rubbing her nose against Oliver’s, “And I missed it.”

This felt pretty romantic. Oliver could do this for…a year or two. He thought for a moment, then made the very conscious decision to say, “I promise plenty of romantic and sexy carrying in your future.”

Felicity beamed down at him, poking him gently in the shoulder as she said, “That I will hold you to, mister.”

So it seemed like Oliver had made a good choice referencing the future this time. He really hoped there would come a time where he could talk about their future together without having to measure every word.

But…as light as Felicity was, Oliver muscles really were starting to protest. It had been one long ass day. Sexy and romantic carrying would have to wait. Glancing behind them, his eyes found that one chair in the room.

Oliver reached his foot out to turn it toward him and he sat, pulling Felicity onto his lap, straddling him, keeping her as close as he possibly could as his (older than they should be) joints gave way to relief and his muscles relaxed.

Felicity smiled at him, seemingly happy with the change in position, and Oliver couldn’t resist a soft kiss, making her hum in contentment against his lips. He loved that sound. Could they just do this for…like a week?

“You showered without me,” Felicity pouted, running her fingers through his hair and if she kept doing that Oliver couldn’t see how he could possibly be sorry about it.

“So did you,” Oliver reminded her with a grin, pushing back her damp hair. It was starting to curl every which way, as it usually did without all the product and effort she put into straightening it. He loved it like this. Natural and wild and free. This was his own private Felicity. The real woman behind the perfect veneer.
“Hmph, you have no one to blame but yourself for that one. Where were you?” Felicity tilted her head to the side, searching Oliver’s face. Her tone wasn’t accusing, just curious.

Oliver took a deep breath because…the light tone was unlikely to survive his answering that particular question and he really didn’t want it to end. “I wanted to make sure William was settled in okay.”

Intelligent eyes searched Oliver’s and Felicity said softly, “You were gone a long time.”

Blowing out the breath he just took, Oliver swallowed. “He wasn’t settled in okay.”

Immediately, Felicity pulled up straight, going from playful to serious in a millisecond. “What happened? Is William hurt?”

Oliver shook his head, running a soothing hand over Felicity’s back, hoping she would relax back into him. He really needed the comfort. “Not physically.”

Felicity sighed, worry dissolving into…just sadness and Oliver couldn’t help but feel the same. “What happened?” she repeated, even gentler this time.

Oliver knew he was going to have to talk about it, even if he didn’t want to. Even though all he really wanted was to surround himself with Felicity and forget…everything.

At least, for a little while.

“I…when I got to their room, William was screaming at Samantha about her being a liar.” Oliver rubbed a hand over his eyes. He hated even thinking about it. “He said…rather, he yelled he hated her.”

Felicity winced. Which was the appropriate reaction. Wasn’t that the worst possible thing a kid could say to a parent?

“Yup and I…” Oliver wasn’t even sure what to say. “I should have walked away. I shouldn’t have interfered.” He really really shouldn’t have.

Felicity cupped his chin, making Oliver look at her. “You had to. Your son was in pain. You could never walk away from that.”

As grateful as he was for Felicity’s words…Oliver shook his head. “I made it worse. A lot worse.”

Nails began to massage his scalp and…dear God, Oliver had missed that. He leaned into Felicity’s magical fingers as she said, “I’m sure that’s not true.” Her faith in him felt even better than the caress, even if it was misplaced.

“All I wanted to do was act as a mediator,” Oliver confessed, realizing as he said it how naïve it sounded. “To help calm William down. To reassure Samantha that I wasn’t trying to take her son from her…” Which was pretty much exactly what he had threatened to do in the end. Goddammit. “Yeah…did you know I’m really not a good negotiator?”

Felicity stifled a little laugh. “Well, you do an awesome bad cop. Good cop…ehhh. At least, you left your arrows here. You did leave your arrows here, right?”

Rolling his eyes, Oliver just…he wasn’t even going to answer that. “Apparently, the fight started when William told Samantha...no decreed that they were moving to Star City. ASAP.”
This time, it was Felicity who rolled her eyes, though her lips tipped up in an amused smile (which not the appropriate reaction). “He’s a Queen all right.”

Oliver narrowed his eyes at her because this wasn’t funny. “But the best part…William told Samantha that if she didn’t come that was okay because, he’d just move in with me.” Felicity gasped and Oliver nodded. “Oh, it gets better. He told her that I said he could.”

Felicity sucked in a breath. “You didn’t—?”

“Of course not!” Oliver said, feeling defensive again, just as he had in that small room with his irate son and his even more irate mother. “I told you what I said. And I tried to explain that to Samantha. How I told William we needed to talk to his mother but then William acted like I had just betrayed him and Samantha…” Oliver just shook his head, thinking about everything she had said...

“Oh, honey,” Felicity whispered, rubbing the crease in his forehead with her thumb. It felt good, so good. It gave Oliver the strength to keep going.

Though Oliver had to close his eyes for the next part. “While I’m trying to, at the same time, reassure Samantha that I’m not trying to steal her son and make sure William knows I do want him, she accuses me of trying to play the ‘good guy’, the ‘hero’ and make her out to be the ‘villain’ and…” Oliver’s eyes snapped open and searched hers. “Felicity, of course, I want my son to think I’m the good guy. Is that so bad?” He shook his head helplessly. He really had no idea how to deal with all this.

“Of course, you do. You are a good guy. You are a hero,” Felicity assured and he knew she wasn’t just placating him but it was still hard for Oliver to accept, especially right then. “It’s not your fault Samantha has been lying to both of you since the day William was born.”

“Yeah, well, according to Samantha the fact I informed William of that was me trying to turn him against her.” But hadn’t Oliver known she would feel that way? He’d known. And he’d done it anyway.

“What were you supposed to do? Tell William more lies just to keep her secrets?” Felicity sounded as outraged as William. At least, those two seemed to be on the same wave length.

“That’s what William said,” Oliver told her with a soft chuckle, shaking his head. Two peas in a pod. He wondered if it was because both of them grew up without a father…God, that was a depressing thought.

But Felicity smiled proudly. “He’s a smart kid.”

Oliver couldn’t believe either of them. How was he supposed to fight both of them? He didn’t even want to. In fact, all he wanted was for all of them to stop fighting.

“Too smart.” This time, Oliver’s laugh had a helpless, delirious edge. “God, the things he came up with. I couldn’t keep up. Samantha couldn’t keep up. He kept tying our arguments up in knots. And then Samantha said…”

Oliver squeezed his eyes shut. Because this one really stung. But more than that, it terrified him.

Pressing her lips to Oliver’s temple, Felicity murmured, “Tell me.”

And he swore, her words, her support…it almost made him cry. Oliver contained his tears, but the words had to be torn from his throat. “She said…she said the only reason William had accepted
me so easily, the only reason he _wanted_ to live with me and was ‘pretending’ I was his dad even though I’d never been a _real_ dad—”

“As if that’s _your_ fault,” Felicity muttered and Oliver didn’t even… “Sorry, keep going.”

“She said it was because I’m the Green Arrow and William was obsessed with superheroes and he thinks I’m straight out of his comic books and that…and that…” this was the part that terrified him, “and that as soon as he realizes that I’m not a comic book hero, as soon as he realized the man _I really am_ William will…”

Oliver trailed off, his voice cracking. He couldn’t finish that sentence. All the different scenarios, all the terrible ways things could turn out…they flooded his mind threatening to drown him.

Felicity muttered something under her breath that sounded a lot like, “That bitch.”

It shocked Oliver enough for his eyes to fly to hers. He hadn’t heard Felicity use that word… _ever_. Well, maybe with Isabel Rochev.

But when Oliver met her gaze, Felicity’s eyes were nothing but warmth and sympathy, making him wonder if he had imagined the uncharacteristic slur falling from her lips.

“Hey, what Samantha doesn’t understand is that you really _are_ that ‘comic book hero.’ You aren’t going to let William down, because you _are_ that guy.”

Okay, he was going to have to start blaming it on the exhaustion, because his eyes were blurring now. “I love you,” he blurted out because it... he just _had_ to. “But Felicity, what if she’s _right_? What if William thinks I’m some fantasy of a man? I’m no Captain America. I’m not even that asshole in the iron suit—”

Felicity stifled a laugh. “Tony Stark. And you are _so_ much better than Tony Stark,” she insisted.

And, Christ, it looked like Oliver was going to have to bone up on his superheroes now. Because he realized he didn’t know enough about any of them to argue with Felicity, never mind keep up with William. “I’m going to disappoint him.”

That seemed to be a certainty.

Sighing, Felicity’s face became more serious. “Oliver, _sweetheart_, you _will_ disappoint him. Eventually. Aren’t we all disappointed by our parents _eventually_? It’s part of growing up and realizing are parents are _people_ and not superheroes…well, except you are kinda both.”

Now, Oliver wasn’t sure if he should laugh or cry. “I’m not a superhero, Felicity. _Barry’s_ a superhero, I’m just—”

“You most certainly are superhero!” Felicity interrupted, practically indignant on his behalf. “You don’t need superpowers to be a superhero. You deserve that title more than Barry _because_ you don’t have powers. You save your city…a city, by the way, that has a lot worse crime than Central City…with nothing but your intelligence and your strength and your skills, all of which you worked so _damn_ hard—”

“Okay. Wow. _Felicity…”_ Oliver actually couldn’t…he didn’t even know what to say to that passionate speech.

Normally, Felicity saying something like _that_ would have Oliver floating on a high for days, but… he kept imagining William yelling ’I hate you’ at him like he did with his mom and it was
devastating. Oliver would be *devastated*.

“Fe-li-ci-ty…God, I wish…” He wished that he could just leave it like that. He wished her faith in him was enough. The way it always had been. But now he was a parent and…now Oliver had to be so much more. “Sweetheart, I am *not* perfect.”

“Well, *obviously,*” Felicity laughed but there was no reproach in her voice. Just love.

Oliver almost found himself laughing too. Because, really, the idea was laughable. No one was less perfect than him. “But if William thinks I’m…some ten year-old version of perfect. It’s a really long fall from that and…he called me ‘dad’ awfully fast.”

Felicity sucked in a breath, bitting her lip and murmuring, “Yeah, I noticed that.”

“It’s weird, right?” Oliver had thought it was weird from the beginning. He’d loved it so much that he had accepted it but…

“I thought so at first…”

“And now?” Oliver could see the wheels turning in that beautiful mind of hers. Somehow, he didn’t think this path was going to be quite as confidence boosting as her last speech.

“Well…” Licking her lips, Felicity ran a gentle hand over Oliver’s crown and said softly, “Now that I think about it…every fatherless child, and trust me I *know* fatherless kids, has this *fantasy.* That their dad is really out there, somewhere, and has a really good reason for not being there. That he’s a spy, or a *superhero,* or a secret prince, and one day he’ll drive up in a fancy car or plane or *aircraft carrier* and…tell them that he had wanted to be there all along, but he couldn’t. He’d tell the kid they’re *special* in some way. And then their whole world changes. It’s *Harry Potter.* Or *Percy Jackson* or *Hercules* or *Rapunzel* or…even *Star Wars*—”

His eyes just got wider and wider as Felicity kept talking and all he could say was, “Okay. Okay. I get it.” Because Oliver realized she was right. Of course, she was right. But what the hell was he supposed to do with it. “Oh *God.*”

“Yup,” Felicity sighed, chuckling. “You’re every kid’s dream come true.”

“But I’m *not,*” Oliver argued. He was *no one’s* dream come true. That was the problem. “And what happens when William realizes that?”

Her eyes were soft and her smile…Felicity didn’t look nearly as worried as Oliver was. Didn’t she realize that this was a disaster.

Then Felicity said, “You *are* the dream come true. You might not be a Disney Prince—”

“Or a *god,*” Oliver scoffed as he thought of the list of stories Felicity had given. Fuck. It would be easier to compete with Captain America.

Still Felicity chuckled. How she thought this was amusing Oliver couldn’t understand. “And William might not be a wizard, but you *are* a superhero and the mayor and Oliver freaken *Queen*…”

Yeah, screw up extraordinaire. “As if that’s a good thing…”

“*Make* it a good thing,” Felicity insisted and, again, her confidence in him was stunning. “You don’t have to be perfect. You just have to be *there* for William. To *try.* It may be bumpy but…”
you didn’t expect it to be smooth, did you?”

“No,” Oliver sighed, frowning. That was the last thing he expected. And being there Oliver could do but…. “I still think you are over-estimating me. I’m already messing up this parent thing.”

Felicity was looking at him as if he was being ridiculous, her gaze warm and confident and adoring…it was addictive. “Oliver, I really don’t think there is any such thing as the perfect parent.”

Yeah, well, what if William was expecting perfect? Oliver…at this point he would settle for adequate. “I threatened Samantha with lawyers,” he confessed in a shamed whisper.

God, he was a fuck up. William had no idea.

“Good!”

Oliver’s eyes snapped up. He expected Felicity to be supportive, but…he didn’t think she’d agree with that, well, pretty empty threat. At least, he thought it was empty. The look on Felicity’s face made him rethink that. It was…fierce. She looked like a woman ready to wage war. “Felicity, I just threatened the mother of my child with an ugly custody battle!”

“Yeah and it’s about time!” And, wow, Felicity seemed to feel pretty strongly about this. “William needs to know that his father is willing to fight for him. Samantha needs to understand you have rights too. She can’t continue to call all the shots.”

God, Oliver wished it was that easy. “Felicity, I can’t take Samantha to court. She knows I’m the Green Arrow.”

That took the wind out of Felicity’s sails. “Well, there is that.”

“And who are these fictional lawyers I have? I’m not a billionaire with an army of attorneys on retainer anymore. The last lawyer I trusted just tried to murder all of us and the one before that is dead.” And Oliver’s breath hissed as the last part flew out of his mouth. When he realized what he’d said, a wave a grief…fuck.

“Don’t you dare blame yourself for Laurel’s death,” Felicity whispered, that fierceness still in her tone, if a little softer around the edges.

Oliver clamped his mouth shut. Though that wasn’t exactly where the self-blame train was headed this time. “I don’t. Not really. But I can’t help thinking…if I had made different choices when I found out about William in the first place, if I had come to you with the truth and we’d gone to Laurel then…”

He shook his head. Would everything be different now if he had? How much had Oliver messed up with that one bad decision? One epically bad decision. They always talked about finding a third option. Why hadn’t he done so then?

Then Felicity shocked him with a self-deprecating chuckle. “Be careful. You’re starting to sound like me.”

“You? What does that mean?” Oliver couldn’t even fathom what she was talking about. And he wasn’t sure he liked the implication. “What do you have to regret?”

“Ha! So much,” Felicity burst out, making Oliver frown. “But I think I’ll start with regretting how I ended things. How I walked out without…”
Oliver didn’t know why that gave him a little thrill, but it did. Even though he knew Felicity had every right to walk away like she had. That he had been in the wrong. “I regret not going after you,” he admitted. “I regret not trying harder to explain, to get you to talk to me…”

“In my version, there’s less talking and more yelling,” Felicity confessed with a cute little wrinkle in her nose. “Well, me yelling at you. I like the versions where I’m yelling and you’re apologizing.”

A bark of a laugh emerged from Oliver’s throat. “I deserved it. I deserved…deserve all the yelling. I deserved to be left. I—”

“Shh…” Felicity put her fingers over Oliver’s lips. “Enough of that. We’re past all of that. Though I do wonder if I had fought you on sending William away, would things be different today?”

Oliver could only shake his head. Because there was a possibility everything would be different, but that implied that Felicity should have done something different when it was really him who made all the missteps.

Finally, Felicity just sighed. Looking into Oliver’s eyes, she stroked his cheeks. “Regret is worthless if it doesn’t inform the future, right?”

There was his genius. Lighting his way. Again. Oliver smiled at her. “Right.”

“So in the future, we do things differently…no, now,” Felicity’s voice was passionate and sure and Oliver adored it when she was like this. She should always be like this. She shouldn’t regret anything. “We’re already doing things differently. Aren’t we?”

“Trying,” Oliver agreed, giving Felicity a small smile, because he wasn’t sure if he was succeeding, but he was trying.

“Oliver…you’re already doing so much more. You’re being open and I…” Felicity’s voice cracked.

And, of course, it made Oliver choke up. There had already been too much praise for him to handle. He cupped Felicity’s cheeks and pressed his lips to hers. “I want to be better,” he rasped. “For you. For William. For us.”

“Oliver, I…I said that you didn’t need to change for me. That I love you for who you are but…” Oliver held his breath as he waited for Felicity to find the words she wanted. “Your willingness, your drive to try to be better, it’s one of the things that I love most about you.”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” It came out as a sob and Oliver pulled her in for a kiss. It was the last straw. He could take no more. He tasted tears and he really had no idea whose they were.

Oliver kissed her desperately. This wasn’t a sexy kiss. It was…it was a kiss to show, with everything he had inside of him. How much he loved and cherished her. How he adored her. How she was everything to him.

They kissed and kissed, drinking of each other, until Oliver couldn’t take the intensity anymore and broke away, panting, struggling to pull himself back together. His forehead pressed to Felicity’s as all the emotions of the last twenty-four hours broke apart and reformed, channeling into everything he felt for this amazing, unparalleled woman.

Felicity sucked in a deep gasping breath, her eyes still closed and her hand curled around Oliver’s
nape, holding him close.

“We’ll get your son for you, Oliver. You deserve the chance to be the father I know you can be. And William deserves to have you in his life. We’ll do our best to negotiate with Samantha and make this as civilized as possible but...if Samantha plays hardball and threatens to reveal that you’re the Green Arrow, well…” Felicity’s eyes were open now. And hard. “You’ve been exonerated twice. Once for being the Hood and once for the Arrow. She tries to do it again, she’ll look paranoid. She’ll seem flat out crazy, going up against the city’s most popular mayor since—”

“Felicity…” As much as Oliver loved it when she went all Mama Bear, he was overwhelmed enough as it was.

“And if all else fails, there are always…online options.” Felicity shrugged, that innocent look that wasn’t at all innocent written all over her face.

Oliver laughed, incredulous. “Felicity, you are not suggesting you digitally ruin Samantha, so we can get custody of William?” The ‘we’ just slipped out and Oliver held his breath, waiting to see if she noticed.

Shrugging, Felicity pouted (just a little), “Only partial custody. And only if Samantha makes it absolutely necessary.”

“I really don’t want this to turn ugly,” Oliver sighed. He didn’t think Felicity did either but, God, a bitter custody battle was the last thing any of them needed.

Felicity nodded, her face serious. “Of course. But Samantha and, more importantly, William need to know we’re willing to do whatever it takes.”

Oliver may have used the word ‘we’ but it was Felicity’s casual use of the same word that broke him and he pulled her face back in for a hard kiss. “Do you have any idea how much I love you?”

Her smile was…stunning. “I think I have some idea,” Felicity whispered back, her tone lightening.

He did. Oliver loved her so much…but, God, before they got any deeper he needed…he needed to be certain…

“Felicity, honey, are you sure?” Oliver’s throat closed, as if his body didn’t want the words to come out, didn’t want to give her this out. Seriously, what was he doing? Felicity was the best thing that had ever happened to him? He needed her.

And, right then, she looked pretty damn confused. Felicity shook her head. “Oliver what are you...?”

Oliver swallowed, forcing himself to continue. It was the right thing to do. “Are you sure you’re ready for this? William...he’s a lot. So much more than I had anticipated and...you’re only 27 and a ten year-old stepson might not be in your plans—”

Felicity slapped a hand over his mouth, effectively stopping the flow of words. “Stop right there, mister. You are in my plans. We’re partners. In everything. So that means we’re in this together, right?”

The last part came out so unsure that it broke Oliver’s heart a little and he hated himself for letting Felicity question it, even for a moment.

Oliver nodded, somewhat frantically. Kissing Felicity’s palm, he pulled her hand away from his
mouth and breathed, “Thank God!”

He yanked her into his arms, making her chuckle (in relief, Oliver thought) as he buried his face in her hair. “You’re not getting rid of me that easily,” Felicity whispered against his ear.

Oliver chuckled, the idea was so ludicrous. “Not trying to. So not trying to. I have no idea how I would do this without you.”

“Ha!” Felicity let out an incredulous laugh, “Because I know how to parent a ten year-old boy?”

“You’re a natural,” Oliver assured, pulling Felicity’s face back so she could see his eyes as he said it, because he meant it and he wanted to make sure she knew that. He couldn’t come close to the beautiful words she’d given him, but he needed her to know. “You’re just so empathetic and loving and smart. William is way too smart for me. Are ten year-olds supposed to be this smart?”

“Like I know!” And Felicity looked just as overwhelmed as Oliver did. Why that made him feel better, he’d never know.

Oliver shook his head, bemused. “He must get it from Samantha.”

“Please! William is a mini-you.”

That made Oliver catch his breath. He had no words for what that made him feel. Even though…

“I was not that smart at his age.” Or ever.

The adoring smile Felicity gave him made Oliver dizzy. “I bet you were.”

Who is this man she keeps talking about? “Felicity, everyone knows I’m not the brains—”

“Oliver, you really need to stop with that. Do you really think I would fall in love with you if you weren’t an extremely intelligent man? Sure, it’s a different kind of intelligence than me. And Curtis and Cisco and Ray—”

“Got it.” Oliver frowned. Goddamn Ray…

But Felicity kept going, “Just because you didn’t build a super suit or design ground breaking technology doesn’t mean you aren’t intelligent. Your brain works differently but just as quickly. It’s why we work well together.”

Oliver really wished he could believe that. It was easier to believe he deserved the title ‘superhero’. “The deans of four different colleges would disagree with you.”

Felicity raised her eyebrows and gave Oliver a pointed look. “I thought we established that you tried to fail out.”

“We did?” Oliver didn’t remember that.

“Didn’t we?” Felicity made a twisty, scrunch face. “Well, I did.”

And Oliver had to laugh as he realized she’d had one of those conversations in her head she’d forgotten to tell him about it again. Maybe it was a good thing he wasn’t as smart as her. Sometimes, her brain worked too fast. One of them needed to be more grounded in reality.

“You did admit to doing absolutely nothing. Not going to class, not studying, nothing,” Felicity defended. “We might have been drunk when you said it, but you did say it.”
Laughing, Oliver shook his head. “Maybe but I didn’t plan to fail out.” Though now that he thought about it, “I didn’t really have much of a plan at all. I just knew I had no interest in taking over QC and I resented that everyone expected me to.”

Felicity nodded as if Oliver had proven her point. How, he did that he had no idea. “What did you major in?”

“Business.” As was expected. Actually, he hadn’t felt there was a choice. Oliver shuddered just thinking about it. “God, I hated it.”

Felicity fought a smile, surely remembering how bad he was at being CEO, and she asked, “So why didn’t you major in something you enjoyed?”

It was an excellent question. So Oliver wasn’t sure why he deflected, “Women?”

Felicity laughed.

And she kept laughing. For far longer than the joke deserved.

Oliver tilting his head, not sure how to react. “What?”

“I was just imagining Moira’s face when you told her that you’d changed your major to Women’s Studies,” Felicity got out, hiccuping a little in her mirth.

Oliver grinned. Now that would have been something. The things he could have done if he met Felicity ten years earlier. William was damn lucky to have her in his life.

He could see it, actually. Felicity helping William with his homework, something that was probably way above Oliver’s head. He’d be making dinner, reminding them that they needed to take a break and eat, relax. Then one day…

“Oh God, I just had the scariest thought.” Oliver shook his head, blinking up at Felicity, “If William is this smart, what will our kids be like? With your genes…there’s no way I’ll be able to keep up. I…”

Felicity went completely still, her eyes widening and…Oliver realized what he’d had said…like fully comprehended it and…shit. Talk about presuming.

“Oh…I, um…” Fuck. Things had been going so well. Then Oliver had to go and push the envelope. Again. Why did he always do that? “That was too much—”

“Oliver!” Felicity interrupted, her voice high and…

He snapped his mouth shut, his eyes searching hers as Oliver tried to quell the rising anxiety—

“Shut up.”

Felicity crushed her lips to his.

Revised 6/14/2018
Chapter Summary

This chapter directly follows the last, is still Oliver’s point of view, and is most definitely rated “E”. If you don’t care for smut, you can probably just skip it, but you’ll miss some mushy romantic stuff too.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
Felicity crushed her lips to Oliver’s and…

This kiss was different from the others. So different.

This kiss was…carnal.

It took Oliver off guard the way Felicity swooped in, pulling his head toward hers as she invaded his mouth. Without pausing or asking for permission. Thrusting her tongue…sucking…

Fuck.

Oliver was instantly hard. Exhaustion be damned. He was responding before his brain had time to even begin to process what was going on. Moaning into her mouth, one hand threaded into the drying blond curls at the back of her head and the other fell to her hips, trying to guide them…to encourage them…as they ground into his…

Then…Felicity pulled back as abruptly as she had lunged forward, leaving Oliver dizzy…leaving him chasing after her lips blindly.

But, Christ, she was gorgeous, all flushed and short of breath, her lips red and wet…

“Just so we’re clear,” Felicity panted, “you can’t be too presumptuous about us. I’m in. All in.
Forever. Stepkids. Babies—"

“Fuck, Felicity!” Oliver couldn’t stand it. He surged forward, his lips again slanting over hers so he could explore…no, *ravage* her mouth with his tongue. He wanted to taste, to *claim* every inch.

For a minute, Felicity just let him, giving in. But she pulled her lips away again, turning her head so that Oliver’s lips dragged across her cheek. She arched her head back but, pushed her neck toward him, so his lips could suck…*God*, she tasted good. So beautiful. He’d missed her so fucking much.

“No more asking permission to touch,” Felicity gasped. “*Full* permission given. *Total* rights to touch.”

Oliver laughed against her neck. He could live with that. Oh, yes, he could. It would be…it *was* glorious. “Yes, Ma’am.”

His hands found the edge of her shirt and slid inside, over her smooth warm skin, as he basked in being able to feel this…*her* again. God, he felt like an adolescent boy, touching a girl for the first time. Each soft stroke felt like heaven.

Felicity laughed, swooping back in to meet Oliver in tongue-tangling teeth-mashing wild kisses that quickly spiraled out of control.

And her hips, her incredible, talented, *wicked* hips…they were starting to get serious. No more teasing little circles. Felicity was pushing and grinding, moving in a way that made Oliver’s eyes roll back into his head.

Okay, Oliver was getting a little *too* excited, too quick and…*but*, damn, it felt good.

Oliver’s hands fell to Felicity’s hips, trying to put out on the brakes just enough to gather some self-control. He tore his mouth from hers, fighting himself even more than her. “Felicity, baby, we need to slow down. I’m not going to be able to hold on.”

“No,” Felicity whimpered, somewhat delirious and, damn, if the word didn’t go straight to Oliver’s cock. *Christ*, she was exquisite. “I don’t *wanna* slow down.”

Oliver laughed and he was pretty sure that sounded delirious as well. “Baby, unless you want me to come in my pants like a thirteen year-old…”

Felicity’s eyes widened and she licked her lips. Beard burn was already starting to show and it was an amazing look on her. It was Oliver’s *favorite* look on her. Rosy cheeks and finger ruffled hair and heavy-lidded eyes, dark as midnight…

“No…no…I want…” Felicity gasped, shaking her head. “I want you to come *inside* me.”

“Fuck!” *Again*, Oliver’s eyes rolled back from the pleasure and sheer *lust* those words triggered. His hips involuntarily pushed up into her. “*God*, yes.”

He was all for that plan and, for a moment he forgot what he was arguing about and lunged toward Felicity’s lips. She smiled but then…her head jerked back, her mouth leaving Oliver’s as her eyes got wide and, well, just a little bit clearer.

Felicity pulled herself up straight, her hands settling on Oliver’s shoulders. “Just to be clear… the whole I want to have your babies and I want you to come inside me—”
“God, you’re going to kill me,” Oliver muttered, his hips pushing up into her core. He wanted to touch her, to fill her. So damn bad…

Felicity’s eyelids fluttered, a small moan falling from her lips.

“No, wait! What I meant to say was…is…” Felicity seemed to be struggling as much as Oliver was with this thinking thing and, lord, it made him grin. “What I meant to say was…those two things are not connected. Just to be clear, I still have that IUD and I’m not ready to take it out. Not yet, so I wasn’t…”

Oh wow.

Oliver couldn’t even…he hadn’t even begun to think of the idea of them getting pregnant. Not any time soon anyway. But the idea…it was overwhelming.

In the best possible way.

Then looking at Felicity, unsure yet hopeful. Nervous but excited. God, she was adorable.

“Got it! One kid at a time,” Oliver panted, smiling like an idiot because that was as articulate as he was gonna get at the moment. And yeah, they needed to get used to this new family before adding more members. There was skipping steps and there was skipping steps.

Felicity laughed and it was dangerously close to a giggle (which she absolutely did do when she completely lost herself in sex, even if she denied it). “Exactly. One kid at a time. Babies are for future Oliver and Felicity to worry about.”

Oliver smiled. Actually, he couldn’t remember the last time he had smiled so wide. The rush of love he felt…wow.

“Future Oliver and Felicity. I really like the sound of that.”

Her smile matched his. “Me. too.”

Then Felicity leaned forward and captured his bottom lip in between her teeth, sucking until Oliver moaned and grabbed for her. But she pulled back, letting his lip go with a wet pop. “But for now…”

Felicity leaned back, crossing her arms so she could capture the edge of her t-shirt and Oliver’s breath hitched as he watched in wide-eyed anticipation…that completely conflicted with the amount of experience he had had.

But if watching Felicity slowly pull off her shirt and toss it aside wasn’t one of life’s highlights Oliver didn’t know what was. Especially, since she wasn’t wearing a bra.

“God…fuckin’…”

That was about as coherent as Oliver was going to get before he…he had to taste her.

He half expected himself to fall on her like a starving man and…maybe he did but years of deprivation had taught him appreciation and he pressed slow worshipful kisses across Felicity’s collar bone. His hands spread wide across her delicate back, holding her to him as his tongue peeked out to taste, to savor salt and skin and Felicity. He breathed her in and swore to himself he would never, ever take this for granted.
But Felicity didn’t seem to be interested in Oliver’s slow pace. Not for long anyway. Soon she was bucking and whimpering, making her frustration obvious as she arched her back and threaded her hands into his hair, urging his lips downward.

Glancing up at Felicity, his lips still in contact with her skin, Oliver grinned at her impatience, entranced by the passion written all over her face, in awe of the blessing she was…

He must have lost focus, because Oliver made the mistake of loosening his grip, letting his mouth leave her skin…and the next thing he knew, Felicity had arched her back even further and…then her nipple was right there, not an inch from his lips, puckered and pink, crowning her perfect breast, all plumped up from arousal, begging for him…

Well, fuck…

Really, Oliver had planned to take his time but…if Felicity insisted.

Oliver’s tongue reached out. Just for the tiniest taste. Her nipple bounced under the pressure. It was hypnotizing, really it was.

“Oliver, please…” Felicity groaned.

He couldn’t stand it another second. Couldn’t think. Oliver’s brain just…stopped.

After that, Oliver really did fall on her like a starving man. Yanking Felicity close, his mouth enveloped as much of her breast as he could fit into his mouth. He sucked and tasted and…it was heaven. His whimpers and her moans and the quick little jerks of her hips….

Luckily, when Felicity had arched back it forced her hips to give his poor cock room to breathe, so Oliver was confident he wouldn’t embarrass himself at least. Because he might not be young anymore but right then…he felt it. And it had been so damn long.

“Oh God…Oliver….”

He heard her as if through water. He felt like his brain had gone into hibernation. Oliver’s tongue swirled and tasted. Every patch of skin he could reach, inching closer and closer to her nipple, until he was finally pressing it to the roof of his mouth and sucking…sucking in a rhythmic pull until her nails dug into his scalp and her moans were almost continuous. Felicity always did have the most fabulously sensitive breasts.

Oliver pulled back just far enough that he could admire his hard work, Felicity’s rosy skin, glistening wet. Her chest heaving as she gasped for breath, her puckered flesh tight with arousal.

“Oliver?”

He threw Felicity another giddy grin before diving in for her other breast. It needed equal treatment. It was only fair.

But it was only a few moments later that Felicity took Oliver off guard with one abrupt shove, dislodging him and…

What the…?

“That’s,” Felicity got out through gasping breaths, “enough.” She pushed off Oliver’s lap and onto unsteady feet.
Unsteady enough that Oliver had to grab Felicity’s hips to steady her. “Whoa!”

She really was adorable. Oliver could just watch her. For weeks.

Felicity’s hands fell to Oliver’s shoulders and she smiled as she attempted to catch her breath. “I’m fine…I mean…I’m…uh… just ready to move this along.”

Then she took two steps back (which was as much as the small cabin would allow. Thank God), her back almost hitting the door as she hooked her thumbs into her sweat pants and pushed them to the ground and…Christ…no underwear either.

“Fuuuck!” Oliver almost swallowed his tongue as he reached for her. Though he really should have been prepared. There hadn’t been any underwear in the pile they had been given. He wasn’t wearing any either.

Felicity let out a delighted breathless laugh, putting her hand up to keep him at bay. “Nope. Not yet. You’re still,” she flicked her wrist as her tongue peeked out to ghost over her lips, gesturing to Oliver’s body, “way over dressed.”

Oliver grinned, his eyes flashing as he stood. Because of the small room, standing brought them so only inches separated them. He looked down at Felicity, hoping she could read the promise he was trying to convey with his eyes, enjoying on a primal level the way she had to tip her head back to look him in the eye.

He was close to eight inches taller than Felicity like this, but she never seemed the slightest bit intimidated by the height difference. Oliver couldn’t even express how hot he found that. He really did have a thing for strong women.

And Felicity was the strongest he’d ever known.

Grabbing the hem of his own t-shirt, Oliver pulled it off, slow and with promise. But he shouldn’t have trusted that teasing glint in Felicity’s eyes. Her soft hands flew out and yanked his sweats down. They hit the floor before his shirt.

And as he’d said, Oliver wasn’t wearing underwear either.

Felicity grinned wolfishly (a new and damn good look on her), her eyes flying over his body. Oliver had been worried about her reaction to the burned off Bratva tattoo, but she seemed to be a lot more interested in his cock, which was just fine with him. It bounced had free of the offending clothing and was now hitting her soft belly and…

Wow.

This was really happening. Oliver almost couldn’t believe it. He’d given up hope and now…

Here they were.

Here Felicity was, naked as the day she was born, smiling up at him…

“God, you are so fucking beautiful.”

Felicity’s laugh was husky and low and sexier than…well, almost sexier than Oliver’s poor brain could handle. Her hands reached out, flattening over his skin over his pelvis, her fingers spreading wide, low on his abs, before she dragged them up…
“And you,” Felicity licked her lips, her breath catching, “are the hottest man to ever…”

She broke off with a whimper that might have made Oliver a tad smug. Though he may have been glad Felicity didn’t see it. Her eyes were totally focused on the progress of her hands.

But then Felicity managed to shock Oliver again, teasing, “So, uh, you gonna stand there and stare all day?”

Oliver gave a bark of a laugh. Considering Felicity was just as guilty of standing and staring as he was, it was a tad hypocritical. Not that he cared enough to point that out. “I’m savoring the moment,” he said instead and his hands found her waist, his thumbs lightly tracing her hip bone.

Her eyes met his and Felicity licked her lips as her hands made their way up, over Oliver’s chest and shoulders, curling around his nape. “Savor later.”

And Felicity jumped.

As in…off the ground. In the air. Into his arms.

Oliver caught her. He would always catch her. And he loved that she knew it.

Her legs curled around Oliver’s waist and her wet core dragged against his abs, briefly catching his cock before it sprang free and nestled, happily, against her slit, pressing up against Felicity’s ass… which Oliver was now cupping in his hands.

Felicity grinned at Oliver triumphantly, and grabbing his face in both her hands, she tipped it in the opposite direction to hers and crashed their lips together again.

Oliver moaned. What the hell else could he do? Except moan and suck on her tongue and knead her delectable ass and stumble…?

That’s right stumble, Oliver Queen, The Green Arrow stumbled the half dozen steps it took to press Felicity against the door and get his bearings so that he could properly enjoy the way she wrapped herself around his body as they did their very best to devour one another.

Her moans were getting progressively more intent, her kiss more wild and less coordinated. Felicity’s hand left Oliver’s nape and traveled down his back to clutch his ass, pulling him closer…as if there were a closer to get but his cock jumped and throbbed, reaching toward the warm haven it’s length was pressed against as her fingertips ghosted over his hip and brushed his cock, pressing him more firmly up, against her wetness.

Finally, the kiss seemed too much for her and Felicity’s lips fell away, sucking air desperately into her lungs. Her fingers though, they kept up their torturous pressure.

And Oliver, well, he just moved on to the next patch of skin. Tasting, biting, nipping, and sucking her chin, her ear, her neck…

“Oliver…Oliver…” Felicity gasped, her head rolling against the cool metal of the door. “Enough. I need you. Inside me. Now.”

Fuck. Oliver’s cock and heart jumped simultaneously with that one desperate word, a bolt of pure pleasure shooting down his spine. He didn’t think he’d ever hear her say anything like that ever again and now it just might break him.

Felicity’s hips reached for his as her hands clutched at him and she panted, “I’m ready. Inside.”
Inside. Did Felicity know there was no sexier word? Did she have any idea?

“Fuck, baby, you can’t say those things.” One hand flat against the door, Oliver leaned into it (and her). He needed it to keep them upright and he wasn’t feeling the steadiest at the moment.

But with his other hand, Oliver managed to trace her lips with his fingertips and Felicity’s tongue shot out to draw his fingers into her mouth.

Felicity sucked them in with two long pulls before demanding, “Why not?”

Why not? Felicity asked him ‘why not’ while she made him mindless with lust. “Because I’m going to lose it.”

“So?”

Felicity asked it so plainly. So simply. As if what Oliver said made no sense.

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Oliver dragged his now damp fingers over her neck, trailing down her chest, over her nipple…

“Let go, Oliver,” Felicity moaned, her head back, her eyes closed. “Take me. Fuck me. I need you inside me.”

Oliver would think she was trying to kill him, if it wasn’t so obvious that the words emerging from Felicity’s throat were involuntary…mindless…she looked as lost in passion as he felt.

Regardless, Oliver’s whole body convulsed when Felicity said them and he started to question why he was fighting her. Why was he trying to prolong this again?

“Please.”

Oliver shook his head. There was a reason. He knew there was a reason. “Not yet.”

“Why?” Felicity whined, her lower lip popping out to form an adorable pout.

It was an excellent question but…God, Oliver wanted…no, needed this to be perfect for her. He didn’t want to rush. He wanted Felicity to remember tonight as an endless haze of pleasure. A fitting beginning to their lives together. Their brand new start.

Oliver’s fingers dipped down and slid between their bodies, testing her wetness and, God, she was so fucking wet. He was panting. He couldn’t think straight. He could barely suck in enough air. His finger sank inside her and…

“I need to taste you,” Oliver groaned, desperate. “It’s been too long.”

“No…no…inside,” Felicity demanded, shaking her head back and forth with little to no coordination.

Oliver’s breathless chuckle turned into a groan as his finger pulled back to circle her clit and her hips buckled.

“It’s too much…too much…” Felicity whimpered.

But Oliver just grinned. “You can take it.”

Unlike his 32 year-old male body, extra orgasms for Felicity were a bonus. No, a must.
Still shaking her head, Felicity grabbed the hand between her legs, stilling it. The message was clear and Oliver gave in…*for now…*

Pulling back his hand, Oliver brought his fingers to his lips and sucked…God, how he’d missed her taste. He found himself pleading, “*Let me…*”

“No. You’ve had your taste.” Then Felicity grabbed Oliver’s face and forced him to look her in the eyes. “Oliver…Oliver, you can spend all day tomorrow with your head between my thighs. I don’t care. Hell, I’ll *love* it but *now…now…*” Her voice was suddenly heavy with emotion and her eyes teared over. “Right *now* is a really big moment for us and I want to come *with* you. With you *inside* me. The Orgasm Olympics can wait.”

Oliver laughed. And cried. He actually cried, emotion choking him as he nodded and kissed her and whimpered, “God, I love you.” And kissed her again.

“Inside now?” Felicity asked hopefully, brightening.

Laughing, Oliver nodded. “Yes. Yup. You win. You always win but…” He was *not* fucking Felicity against a Goddamn door. Not this time. This time was too important for that.

Plus, Oliver couldn’t guarantee his legs would hold out.

Wrapping one arm under Felicity’s ass, pulling her closer, Oliver slid the other hand between her and the door, to span her back, and looked around the small cabin. The bunk wasn’t much but it was going to have to do.

Spinning them, with far less coordination than he was usually known for, Oliver laid Felicity back onto the bunk. It wasn’t wide, but it was broad enough for Felicity’s torso to fit crosswise (barely) and it was tall enough (thank *fuck*) for Oliver not to have to crouch (damn knee).

As soon as she settled on her back, Felicity smiled up at him.

And immediately reached for Oliver’s cock…

Oliver caught Felicity’s hands, entwining his fingers with hers and leaning over her to rest them next to her head.

“*Oliver,*” Felicity whined, “*come on.*” She wasn’t fighting him though. She was squeezing his fingers and looking up at him with anticipation that made his mouth water.

“Patience,” Oliver chuckled, breathlessly, as he moved his hips against her. The head of his cock dragged over her pussy and Felicity moaned. When his cock found the place it longed to go, he notched himself there and smiled down at her. “Ready?”

Felicity looked at him like Oliver was insane. Maybe he was.

“Uh…*obviously!*”

Laughing, Oliver pressed a soft kiss to Felicity’s bee-stung lips. “I love you.”

“Me—”

Felicity broke off with a groan, her eyes rolling back and her neck arching as Oliver pressed forward. Slowly. So *so* slowly. He wanted to savor…to *feel* every inch as she enveloped him. It felt…*so fucking* perfect.
It was a struggle to keep his eyes open, to keep them on Felicity’s as her face contorted in pleasure and her lashes fluttered and Oliver watched her undergo the same struggle to keep her eyes open as he was.

When he bottomed out, Felicity breathed out a happy little sigh, an almost relieved smile spreading across her face. “Mmm…welcome home, Oliver.”

Okay, that was the sappiest thing Felicity had ever said and Oliver was, honest to God, going to start crying.

Taking a shaky breath, Oliver managed to say, “Do you have any idea how much I love you?”

A slow, happy smile spread across Felicity’s face. “I think I do. Do you have any idea how much I missed you?”

Oliver grinned. “Pretty sure not as much as I missed you.”

Felicity giggled. (Oliver would swear on his life it was a giggle). “Are we going to have a who loves who, who missed who more, contest or are you going to make love to me?”

Well, if she put it that way…

Oliver pulled back and gave a sharp thrust, making Felicity moan and gasp. But that was really just to get her attention. He immediately changed the rhythm to shallow circles, making sure the angle allowed his pelvis to graze her clit with every single pass.

It was guaranteed to drive Felicity wild. Slowly.

There were some things that were impossible to forget. Thank God.

“Good…good answer,” Felicity gasped, between panting breaths.

Oliver couldn’t help the smug grin that he just knew had settled on his face as he leaned down to say against her lips, “Good, because if there’s going to be a contest, I’d win.”

Then before Felicity could protest, Oliver captured her lips again, coaxing them open and sweeping his tongue inside.

Felicity bit his lip. In retribution, Oliver supposed. Not that he minded. If anything, it just made him kiss her harder. God, he loved her.

She wasn’t able to keep kissing him for long. Oliver knew she wouldn’t be able to. Pleasure made her uncoordinated, far more than usual, and he adored that about her. The way Felicity totally lost herself in making love, gave of herself so completely…it was humbling.

Her lips fell away as Felicity arched her back and moaned. Beautiful. Every syllable that fell from her lips, loud or soft, incoherent or eloquent, had a harmony that soothed his soul.

Reaching under her, Oliver tilted her hips, changing the angle and earning a, “God, yesss. Right there…” and a, “Ah ah…Oliverr…”

And, yeah, that just made Oliver grin even wider.

Felicity blinked open her eyes. “So smug…why is everything,” she broke off to lick her lips, “a competition with you?”
As breathless as it was, there was still a playfulness in Felicity’s tone that warmed Oliver in ways he couldn’t describe. “Well, you wouldn’t let me have the Orgasm Olympics…”

Felicity huffed out a laugh. “Postponed. I postponed the Orgasm Olympics.” Her eyelids fluttered again as her breath stuttered and when her eyes were able to focus again, she accused, “You…too…coherent!”

Well, no one could accuse Felicity of that. But then, before Oliver could protest, her eyes lit up with a challenge all her own and her legs circled Oliver’s hips, pulling him in tight and squeezing. Inside and out.

“Fuck, Felicity,” Oliver groaned, losing his rhythm for a second. “Do you want me to lose it?”

“Yes.”

Then Felicity did it again. That squeezing thing.

There was nothing Oliver could do to stop Felicity from gripping him with those (surprisingly strong) internal muscles, so he just…

Oliver let his forehead fall to hers and he picked up the pace. He couldn’t come first. That was completely unacceptable. So…one hand gripped Felicity’s thigh, holding her legs tightly around his hips, the other clasped her hand as he piston her hips…

Goddamn, he was losing it. Pleasure and pressure…exquisite pressure. Oliver’s eyelids slipped closed and he saw lights…

Letting go of her hand, Oliver brought his hand to Felicity’s breast. He needed to just…give her one final push. His fingers found her nipple and rolled it between his thumb and forefinger and…

Felicity’s back arched sharply, her mouth falling open in a scream…

Shit! There was no way that these walls were sound proof. Why hadn’t he thought of that before?

Oliver clamped a hand over her mouth. “Sh…sh…sh…” he murmured, trying to come up with something more intelligible but not really able to. His hips had taken on a life of their own, thrusting and circling and his skin was tingling and his body couldn’t get close enough to hers.

Felicity’s teeth sank into the meaty part of his palm and Oliver thought she bit him pretty hard but in his present state it felt like heaven.

She whimpered. Then gave a muffled groan and her body went rigid.

Thank God!

Oliver let go. Fully. Thrusting in earnest, he let his body take over, hoping, praying that it wasn’t too hard, that he wasn’t hurting her as he chased…

Fuck…

God…

Latching his mouth onto Felicity’s shoulder, Oliver muffled his own groans of pleasure as a light show went off behind his eyelids and pleasure rippled through his muscles. He flooded her insides…
It really did feel like coming home. And Oliver couldn’t care less how fucking cheesy that sounded.

For a moment, Oliver imagined what it might be like if…when they finally chose to make a baby. To know this incredible connection could create a child…their child.

Christ. It was too much.

A minute later (or maybe many minutes later, Oliver had no idea), when he finally had some control over his muscles again, he leveraged his weight off of her and met Felicity’s eyes. Her mouth spread into this smile…had he mentioned that she was his light?

“Hi,” she whispered and it almost sounded a little shy. Felicity bit her lip and…

Oliver found himself laughing. Out of pure joy. “Hi, yourself.”

Felicity gave this happy little sigh, stretching out beneath him. “That was…lovely.” Then she paused, her eyes dancing. “Wait, is ‘lovely’ effusive enough. It’s better than ‘nice’ but—”

“You…” Oliver fell back onto her, rubbing his stubble along her neck and his fingers along her ribs until she convulsed with giggles. And, yeah, tickling was another sure-fire way to make Felicity giggle.

“Stop. Stop…” Felicity gasped. Far louder than she should, given their circumstances.

Oliver’s hands froze and he winced, the full implications of their…loudness occurring to him now that his brain was a little more functional. “Shhh…”

“Ooops.” Felicity’s eyes popped open wide and the expression on her face…yeah, she was just now realizing the same thing he was. She bit her lip but amusement flashed in her eyes, a smile that couldn’t be contained bursting through. “So how thick do you think these walls are?”

Considering how clearly Oliver had heard William and Samantha yelling in the hall… “Not very.”

A laugh managed to escape from her closely pressed lips, trickling out and surrounding him. Felicity slapped a hand over her mouth in a valiant attempt to try to keep it in but it did little good.

Finally, Felicity whispered from, between her fingers (and between her giggles), “Guess the team knows we’re back together, huh?”

“Is that a problem?” Oliver asked gently, holding his breath as he waited for the answer. He was happy to take out a full-page ad himself, but it was Felicity’s wishes that really mattered to him.

Felicity just shook her head, her eyes still dancing with mirth. Her amusement was contagious but just as Oliver started to chuckle as well, she gasped. “Oh no! William—”

“On the other end of the hall,” Oliver reassured quickly. He would have been a whole hell of a lot more careful if he wasn’t.

“Oh, thank God.”

Chuckling, Oliver pushed back and started to stand but Felicity pulled him back on top of her, wrapping herself around him, monkey-like. “No. Don’t go.”

Again, Oliver laughed. He honestly didn’t know if he had ever been this happy. Even on their five-month vacation from reality, he had never felt this…good in his own skin.
“You’re ridiculous and I love you.” Oliver pressed a hard kiss to her lips. “Now let me up before my legs cramp.”

“Spoil sport,” Felicity pouted, but her limbs loosened and the smile in her eyes didn’t dim.

With one last kiss to her breast (right over her heart, because he really was a sap) Oliver stood and went to the bathroom for a washcloth to clean them both up. Then seeing cups, he realized that Felicity hadn’t drank anything since she had gotten out of that hole and filled it with water.

When Oliver returned, Felicity’s eyes were closed. She was still sprawled out on her back, looking like she hadn’t moved so much as a muscle.

Smiling, Oliver ran the wet cloth over her thighs. “Sit up and drink something, hon, before you fall asleep. You’ve got to be dehydrated.”

Felicity nodded and yawned as she let Oliver pull her up. “You?” she mumbled as she took the cup.

Oliver shook his head. “I probably drank a gallon while we were digging you out of that damn cave.” Felicity just smiled as she finished the water and handed him the empty cup. “Hungry?” he asked.

Letting out another wide yawn, Felicity shook her head and reached for Oliver as he set the cup on the desk. “More tired.”

Reaching to turn off the light before climbing in next to her, Oliver couldn’t help but ask one last time, “You sure you don’t want me to find you something to eat?”

“Sleep first. Then more sex. Then eat.”

Oliver chuckled as he settled on the narrow bunk. But narrow was just fine, since as soon as his back hit the mattress, Felicity was rolling toward him, fitting her head below his chin and her leg between his. All as if it hadn’t been fourteen months since the last time they had slept together.

Fourteen long fucking months.

Never again.

Smiling to himself, Oliver pulled the blanket over them. “Goodnight, Felicity.”

Her soft snore was the only response he got.

Chapter End Notes

Notes:

I hope you guys enjoyed that! :-D There’s plenty of smut still left for this story so stay tuned.

A very special thank you to Laurabelle2930 for the incredible new art. You don’t
even know how perfect it is!

Thanks all,

Emmy
Chapter Ten: (Dis)Belief

Chapter Summary

A FIC BY:
@EMMILYNSTILL
DON'T LET ME GO
Felicity woke up to an unusually growly stomach and a very usual craving for coffee. But both things were completely overpowered by an overwhelming...coziness.

In fact, Felicity couldn’t remember the last time she had felt so warm and content. She just wanted to stay in bed and...

Except...

This wasn’t her bed. The scratchy sheets were not Felicity’s thousand thread-count ones and the blanket was certainly not the down comforter she adored. The mattress itself was kinda hard. Yet...

Oh.

Wow.

Oh wow.

Oh wow oh wow oh wow.
That was Oliver wrapped around her, surrounding her with warmth and comfort and... something so much better than any down comforter. Something that brought tears to Felicity’s eyes.

How long had it been since they had slept (and woken) so completely entangled together?

This wasn’t just a spoon. Even in his sleep, Oliver was clutching Felicity as if she could (and would) disappear at any moment.

Okay maybe that was an exaggeration. Oliver really only had one arm holding her to him. The other was stretched out in front of him, allowing Felicity to use it as a pillow. And while his bicep really did make the best pillow ever...poor Oliver. That arm was gonna be numb when he woke up.

Felicity should probably move, for his sake but it just felt sooo good. Her back was pressed full-length against his front and Oliver’s face was buried in her neck, his breath puffing rhythmically over her collar bone, reminding her of how very alive he was.

It was a very welcome reminder after a day like the last few hundred or so.

One of Oliver’s long legs curved along the length of Felicity’s and the other had slipped between her knees, effectively pinning her to the bed.

And that one arm that curled around her, it seemed to cover Felicity’s entire torso. Bent at the elbow, the length of Oliver’s forearm was pressed tightly against her from her hip to chest, his hand gently cupping the underside of her breast.

So...while it might, essentially, be only be that one arm clutching her like a well-loved Teddy bear, no one was taking Felicity from Oliver without a fight. Including her.

It made Felicity smile.

It really had been a long time since she had been held like this. And not just the fourteen months they had been apart. Felicity had forgotten how safe it made her feel. How loved.

When they had first run away together they had slept like this, well, always. But as their relationship had progressed and as they (Oliver) had become more confident Felicity would still be there when he woke up in the morning, it had happened less and less.

It wasn’t a bad thing. It had felt completely normal, just a natural progression brought on by familiarity and security. How could that possibly be bad? They had started to sleep close, but not entwined. Maybe with just one hooked ankle or a single arm thrown over a back or belly or chest.

There would still be days...nights...when something happened. And maybe that something was just a nightmare but...Felicity always knew it was bad when they woke up tangled so closely together it was hard to tell whose limbs were whose...well, except her limbs didn’t quite resemble tree trunks but that wasn’t exactly the point.

It had helped. The octopus routine. Helped both of them. Through the tough days and the worst dreams. It was just another thing Felicity had missed in the dead of night these last few awful months.

After Felicity had gotten shot and her lower body...well, the snuggling options were more limited. What was worse, though, was that Oliver had decided she was made of glass. He had started to tip-toe around her with a very obvious fear that he could break her by breathing the wrong way.
God, Felicity had hated it. But maybe Oliver hadn’t been all that wrong. Maybe she had been a mere breath away from shattering the entire time. Because she had. Shattered. It had taken more than a breath, but she had splintered in a thousand pieces and it had taken her a long time to put them all back together.

The chip in her back hadn’t fixed that. It had allowed Felicity to walk but it was just the first step in a long, painful process of fitting the pieces together, reforming them into something new. Something that had had jagged edges, raw and tender for a long, long time.

But maybe those edges were finally healing. Felicity felt whole in a way she hadn’t in a very long time. She felt loved. She felt...happy. Once upon a time, she had teased and critiqued Oliver’s ability to feel that emotion and now...she hadn’t even realized how long it had been since she had felt the same.

Felicity snuggled back against Oliver and pulled his arm more securely around her. Closing her eyes, she wiggled her ass and, oh wow, that was an...even more comfortable position. Well then.

Oliver might be more ready to wake up than he seemed. A bolt of arousal shot through her as his length settled into the crack of her ass.

The cozy warmth of being in Oliver’s arms slowly turned into a very different sort of heat. Felicity’s skin tingled and she pushed further back into him, her breasts rounding, her nipples tightening, as her body became acutely aware of every place Oliver’s skin touched hers. Which really was quite a lot of places.

This...this Felicity had never forgotten. Not for one single solitary day.

Oliver didn’t wake up right away, which was a testament to a) exactly how exhausted he was and b) his level of trust in Felicity and their current safety.

It was the later thought that made Felicity smile. Lying here now, it seemed so strange that she had ever questioned Oliver’s trust in her. It was things like this that proved it so much more than any words. In retrospect, all the evidence of his inability to let her in felt so flimsy next to...this.

Felicity smiled and waited for Oliver to wake, imaging how his lips would brush her cheek, how he would pull her even closer and whisper sappy things no one else ever got to hear. Things she never would have imagined herself loving as much as she did.

But when Oliver did wake up, it wasn’t with soft kisses and sighs. It wasn’t gently, the way Felicity wished for him.

No, Felicity knew immediately when Oliver regained awareness because his whole body went stiff.

And not the good kind of stiff. No fun sexy-times stiffness here.

Oliver’s whole body coiled tight. He seemed to stop breathing.

Holding her breath, Felicity waited. Long before they had gotten together she’d learned to be wary of panic attacks and nightmares, of Oliver waking confused and ready to defend himself. She really didn’t think that was what this was but...he’d never forgive himself if he hurt her.

Felicity listened as Oliver’s heart started to pound behind her back, trying to keep her own heart from matching it. She wasn’t really afraid he was going to hurt her, not physically, but she couldn’t help but fear that waking up next to her he’d...realize he didn’t want to.
But that was stupid. There was no reason to worry. It was a completely irrational fear. Right?

Still it was long moments before Oliver finally started to settle, his muscles loosening and his heart rate returning to a less alarming rate. Though his hold on her, somehow, tightened.

O…kay. That was…not new, per se, but…

Felicity took a deep breath (subtly, she hoped) and murmured softly, “Good morning.”

She traced her finger lightly down the length of his forearm, in an attempt to soothe (both of them) and Oliver snuggled his face deeper into her neck, his short beard tickling her sensitive skin. Felicity’s own anxiety started to fade. Mostly.

Oliver couldn’t possibly be having second thoughts, but…dear God she would kill him. She really, really would.

“Morning,” Oliver murmured and Felicity could feel his lips move along her skin as he said it. But as comforting and arousing as it was…

“You okay?” she whispered and the arm muscle serving as her pillow jumped. Felicity turned her head to press a kiss on the bicep as an apology for any discomfort she had caused, trying to act normal. Like she wasn’t secretly freaking out that he was freckling out. “Other than a nasty case of pins and needles.” She wasn’t sure if a joke was the best call, but it was her instinctual go-to.

But a soft rumble of a sleepy laugh helped Felicity breathe again. It was going to be okay. No need to overreact. He’d probably just woke up a little disoriented. Besides, Oliver’s sleep had never been…event free and for all she knew it could have gotten worse in their time apart.

Oliver’s arm flexed and the hand attached to Felicity’s pillow uncurled, stretching his fingers. “It was well worth any pins or needles.”

Oliver leaned in to kiss Felicity’s cheek (which was definitely more of what she had been hoping for). Then he reached out to grab an (actual) pillow and scrunch it under her head so he could remove his arm. Then, before she could start overthinking again, he laid his now free arm on the pillow above her head and snuggled the rest of his body closer. Thank goodness.

“You take such good care of me,” Felicity hummed, tenderness threatening to overwhelm her. All the subtle ways he cared for her, they left her breathless. They made her want to forget her fears, rational and otherwise and just allow herself to sink back into the blissful comfort she had so missed.

But it wasn’t going to last, not without communication. “But you didn’t answer my question.”

“Am I okay?” Oliver repeated, chuckling. He was trying to sound lighthearted but, really, he was fooling precisely no one. “Honey, I’m so much more than okay.”

His suggestive tone wasn’t fooling Felicity either. Or distracting her. Well, much. Oliver’s hand had started drawing slow circles on her belly and when it began to move up to the underside of her breasts…

“Oliver,” Felicity pressed, before she really did get distracted.

Swallowing, Oliver’s hand paused, seriousness creeping back into his voice as he said, “I was…it took me a minute is all. To remember. To believe this is happening. That we’re…back.” He hugged her tighter, his lips dragging back and forth over her shoulder.
Understanding washed over Felicity and she took a deep breath (a relieved breath), pulling air in through her nose. While Oliver was certainly taking longer than she would have expected to feel confident in their coupl-ness, she…she understood. She really did.

“Sometimes, I think…it’s almost easier to accept the bad things, than to believe the good ones are real,” Felicity whispered. “Less scary, almost. Less to lose.” Did that make sense?

Oliver paused, pulling her even more tightly back against him, his touch more soothing than arousing in that moment. “Yeah.” His voice was thick with emotion. “Yeah. I…I hate that you feel that way.”

Felicity rolled her eyes (though it was of wasted effort since Oliver couldn’t see). “And I wish you didn’t feel that way. But I need you to realize that, to accept that this started for me long before I met you, that bad things were happening to me before I met you…” Her throat was starting to close and she had to force out, “But you…you are the best thing that has ever happened to me.”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Oliver sounded as choked up as she felt and, perversely, it only made the urge to cry stronger. It always had.

Oliver pushed himself up as if he wanted to look in Felicity’s eyes, but then seemed to change his mind and he curled over her instead, pressing his closed eyes to her cheekbone.

“Felicity, sometimes…sometimes I have no idea who this person you keep talking about is.” Oliver huffed out a soft chuckle against her cheek. “I just keep thinking it couldn’t possibly be me and—”

Shifting just enough to meet his eyes, Felicity dragged a hand over his face, turning it to hers. “I see you, Oliver Queen. I know you. Faults…numerous as they are…and all. Do you doubt that?” The man really knew how to make her heart ache for him.

Oliver shook his head, eyebrows creased. “No. No one has ever known me, understood me the way you do.”

It was what Felicity had wanted him to say and she had no doubt that he meant it but…Oliver really was such a strange, contrary man.

Smiling softly, Felicity stroked his cheek with her thumb. Sometimes she really had such a hard time understanding how he got so stuck on things. “Then…Oliver, why do you have such a hard time believing…?”

Capturing her hand and holding it to his mouth, Oliver pressed a kiss hard against her palm. When he spoke, it was muffled so that Felicity had to strain to hear even in the perfect silence. “I just can’t understand how someone so smart, so good, could know me and still forgive me, could give me another chance. Not just after I lied about William but after…everything I’ve done—”

“Oliver, stop this…” There was nothing more painful to witness than his self-hatred. Would it ever fully go away? “When are you going to forgive yourself? Because I…I forgive you. Completely.”

His eyes closed. A full body shutter vibrating through his large frame. Oliver took a shaky breath, lowering himself so he was once again behind her and Felicity couldn’t help but think it was, so he could hide his face. He pushed it deep into her shoulder until she could feel his his scruff and his lips and the flutter of his eyelashes.
“I thought I had,” Oliver finally confessed. “Or at least that I was starting to forgive myself. It’s just that…I want everything for you. I want you to have the best life can offer.”

Felicity’s fingers gently stroked the tense arm banded around her middle. “And you’re not the best?”

“No, even close,” Oliver huffed, that familiar note of self-deprecation in his almost chuckle.

“Then we will have to agree to disagree. For now, at least because I am quite certain you are the best.” But then Felicity took a deep breath and gave voice to the niggle worry that had again started to build again in her belly. “Are you going to leave me because you think I deserve better?”

Because if Oliver’s default was to always fall back on guilt and self-recrimination, Felicity’s was to believe he’d leave her. That everyone would leave her. And she really did worry that the two of them would be fighting those particular demons to the day they died.

“No,” Oliver answered decisively, immediately, before Felicity could even finish her thought. Still, it felt like forever. She let out a breath she hadn’t realized she was holding as his palm moved to rest over her heart and he swore, fiercely, in a deep voice that reminded her of the one he used in the field, “Never.”

Thank fraking God. It brought tears to Felicity’s eyes and her throat burned. It was insane that she felt as relieved as she did but…it turned her muscles to jelly the relief was so intense. “So…”

“As long as you choose me, Felicity, I’m here,” Oliver murmured into her ear. “You have that right. You get to choose me, even if I think that it’s a stupid choice.”

The last part Oliver said in a light tone. It was clearly his attempt at a joke. Felicity thought he even expected her to laugh. She didn’t.

“What would it take?” Felicity whispered back, completely serious. “To make you believe I made the right choice?”

Felicity could feel Oliver swallow behind her, his whole body pressed as tightly against her as it was. “Fifty years?”

In this too, it was clear Oliver was trying to insert humor but the raspy tone and…well, every aspect of his body language told her something very different. Maybe Felicity knew him too well. Maybe she understood bone deep insecurities too well.

But even so, it made Felicity smile. Because Oliver was serious.

And because fifty years sounded so damn wonderful.

Felicity hugged the arm around her middle tighter and reached up to entwine her fingers with the hand above her head. “I can agree to fifty years. Though I might need sixty. Sixty years of waking up just like this…”

It slipped out before she knew what she was saying and Felicity’s mouth went dry. She’d slipped right back into where they had been before their relationship had gone to hell. When the goal of spending their lives together had been a forgone conclusion.

But this relationship, the one they were in now was new and…Oliver froze. Again.

Goddamn it. Felicity was getting tired of this. She didn’t know how to pretend she could think of
being with Oliver in a way that didn’t involve forever.

Then Oliver cleared his throat and murmured softly, “What about taking things one step at a
time?”

Well, Felicity could at least take comfort in the fact that Oliver wasn’t going to avoid the hard
conversations, right? But…fraking ‘one step at a time.’ She was so Goddamn sick of that phrase.

“You know what?” Felicity’s voice was stronger and steadier this time. “You and I have taken a
lot of steps these last two days. Hundreds… thousands of steps. From one side of that damn island
to the other. Over mountains, around landmines, underground…I took so many damn steps in that
stupid underground chamber I probably left a path in the gazillion year-old magic rock.”

Oliver chuckled against her back and it sounded a little lighter, a bit more relaxed and...not at all
forced.

So Felicity kept going, her thoughts tumbling out in a metaphorical mess, “I’m tired of steps. I’m
ready for non-steps. For lots of horizontal, off the ground, non-stepping.”

Felicity wasn’t sure if that made any kind of sense to anyone but her. She probably needed to stop
hiding behind the metaphor and just tell Oliver what she wanted. But then she would have to make
a decision.

Commit to a path, one that involved a whole lot fewer steps and a whole lot more forever. And
was she…were they ready for that?

But then Oliver made a decision. One that involved his nose pushing away the hair on the back of
her neck and lavishing slow, open-mouthed kisses along the top of her spine. It was enough to
make Felicity shiver, tension draining from her limbs as Oliver whispered against her, “I think I
can get on board with that horizontal non-stepping.”

And, yeah, maybe Oliver knew her better than Felicity knew herself. Sometimes it was a two-way
street and he knew exactly what she needed before she did.

Felicity huffed out a laugh. Oliver was probably deflecting, putting off another conversation about
how they wanted to proceed with this new relationship. Or maybe it was her who had done the
deflecting.

Or maybe Felicity was tired of talking. She wanted to do. To feel. To connect. To move forward.

Maybe there was such a thing as over-communication. Or maybe they just needed a little
more non-verbal communication. That was something Oliver and Felicity had always excelled at.

“Mmm…” Felicity hummed as Oliver’s palm skinned over the sensitive skin just under her
breast and his kisses made their way up her neck to find her ear.

Yup, she was definitely ready to connect in more pleasurable ways. Felicity pressed herself back
against him, again feeling Oliver’s hard cock push eagerly against her ass.

Oliver gave the tip of her earlobe a soft nip, which Felicity knew was supposed to be a sort of
punishment. The sort that discouraged her not at all. Especially, when his full lips pulled that very
same lobe into his very talented mouth and sucked. And his tongue…God, his tongue…there
was nothing discouraging about that.

Those lips, that tongue, Felicity totally forgot what Oliver had been trying to discourage. Or was
it encourage? His tongue started to play with her industrial piercing and, frak, the things that did to her. Her thoughts were drifting. Drifting right into the realm of…non-thoughts.

The only problem was Oliver had her almost trapped in this position. There was little Felicity could do but enjoy what he was doing to her. Except …

Oh yeah, that was what Felicity had been doing, pushing her ass back, pressing against that lovely cock in those slow little circles that she knew would surely drive Oliver mad. How had she forgotten that?

Oliver really was melting her brain.

His cock fell into the cleft of her ass and Felicity clenched around him, making Oliver moan.

The least Felicity could do was return the favor.

Reaching back, Felicity threaded a hand into Oliver’s hair…it was slightly longer, just like his beard and that…that was awesome. The perfect tugging length. She’d have to talk to him about keeping it this length. The beard she was on the fence about but the hair…mmm…

Felicity put that tugging to the test as his teeth and his tongue tormented her insanely sensitive ear. By that point, she no longer had to put any thought at all into the movements of her hips and ass because when Oliver’s hand dragged over her breast, skimming over the hard nipple and plump curve to curl over her neck, instinct took over. No further brain input required.

Oliver’s fingers continued their journey over her chin until they made their way up to trace her lips and Felicity eagerly opened them to take the two fingers inside and suck them deep, swirling her tongue around them until…

He growled and bit the sensitive skin below her ear. Then, almost instantly, Oliver was moving to lave and soothe the affected skin with his tongue and lips, repentant. Such a contrary man. There was a good chance it would still leave a mark but, at the moment, Felicity couldn’t bring herself to care.

Wow. Another thing they hadn’t done in forever. The whole leaving hickeys here there and everywhere. It had been... since the early days of their around-the-world sexcation, Felicity supposed.

Back when passion was so much more important than whether some random stranger in a hotel guest or flight attendant or whoever saw their second-adolescence hickey body art. When it had been fun and exciting and gave them both a little thrill that people could guess what they had been up to. And knew who they belonged to.

But it wasn’t something Felicity felt the need to advertise to say…Digg or Rene or Curtis… God, Curtis wouldn’t be able to shut up about it and…

Oh God, Samantha! Frak! And…what would William even think of it? Would he know what it meant? Felicity hoped not.

Felicity started to say something, to push Oliver away and tell him to be more careful. But…

Oh yeah, his fingers were inside her mouth, which kind of made it hard to talk. Plus, they were rough and delicious and it made Felicity remember how good they felt inside her and plucking at her nipples and rubbing her clit and…
What had she been thinking again?

Felicity opened her mouth to say…she wasn’t sure what, but when she did, Oliver dragged his fingers over her lips and down her throat, all damp and slow and sexy and then, before any coherent thought could form, those fingers were circling her areola and whatever protest she was going to make came out something like, “Oliver, hon…ahhh…ohhh…mph…”

So, yeah, super coherent. Also, Felicity had completely forgotten what she was trying to be coherent about anyway.

God, it was amazing what this man could do with a single hand. And, well, his mouth. His teeth scrapped the length of Felicity’s neck. And then Oliver was pulling her nipple, rolling gently but with enough…something. *Something* that caused pulses and shockwaves of sensation to shoot from Felicity’s nipple to her core.

Felicity bit her lip and arched her neck and tried not to cry out, but it was so, *so* hard. Soft, incoherent moans fell from her lips almost continuously. And just when she thought that she couldn’t handle the torture any longer, Oliver switched breasts and started all over again.

“What, baby?” Oliver murmured and it was clear that he wasn’t taking *any* of this as discouragement. “Tell me what you want?”

But, see, the thing was…

It was kind of Oliver to ask and all and the question would be perfectly lovely *if*…a) Felicity had any idea what she wanted in that moment or b) she could form coherent sentences.

So Felicity pushed her ass back and clung to the hand above her head and hoped Oliver would figure it out. He always did.

“Mmm emm. Gotta tell me, hon,” Oliver persisted, in full-on tormenting sex god mode. *Damn* his delectable ass.

The bastard wasn’t going to give in. He was going to make her come up with *something*.

Whimpering in frustration, Felicity managed to gasp out, “I dunno…*more*. Just *more*. Okay?” The last came out as more of a demand then a question and she had to say she was rather pleased about that.

Oliver chuckled, his face rubbing against her neck (she was certain that she already had a pretty impressive beard burn at this point) and his chest vibrating against her back. But while Felicity absolutely adored his laugh, she wasn’t sure that was the response she wanted.

“I think I need more hands,” Oliver murmured, genuine humor in his tone (a sharp contrast from the forced levity he’d tried for earlier) as he gently tried to pry his other hand from Felicity’s grip. To torment her even more she was sure.

But Felicity was giving that hand up when hell froze over. It was her *anchor*. Besides…

“No. *No* more hands. Can’t take any more.” Felicity even shook her head for emphasis, delirious and frantic. Oliver’s *hand* wasn’t what she wanted.

“But I thought you wanted ‘*more*’?”
The ass.

Felicity should say that out loud. Oliver deserved it.

“Ass!” she panted.

She earned a burst of a laugh in response and had no idea if she was insulted or not. The problem was…Felicity was feeling too damn wonderful to feel insulted by anything at the moment.

“Just tell me what you want, honey,” and Oliver’s voice was just that, warm and thick as fresh honey. All while he started to flick the tip of her nipple with rapid movements that he knew were going to leave Felicity a quivering heap of goo, completely incapable of intelligent speech.

So maybe ‘ass’ was too kind of a word. Or not kind enough. It was hard to tell, really.

In frustration, Felicity shoved her ass back against Olive’s cock, hard, and when that still didn’t seem to get her point across, she threw her upper leg open, up and over Oliver’s.

“See,” Oliver chuckled, far too calm for Felicity’s tastes, “was that so difficult?”

Felicity might have argued with him if his hand wasn’t sliding between her legs, testing her wetness, which Felicity was certain was considerable, and the dragging that fluid up over her clit, just giving her the slightest taste of the pleasure he could give before repeating the motion, teasing her entrance with soft circles and then back to her clit again…

“Goddamn it, Oliver!”

Oliver full out laughed that time. “Yes, dear?”

‘Yes, dear,’ her round behind.

“Stop teasing!” It was just too much. “Please.

His face pressed even further into Felicity’s neck and Oliver murmured against her cheek, “I think you promised me the Orgasm Olympics.”

That forced hysterical giddy laughter to bubble up from Felicity’s belly. “If we’re going to have Orgasm Olympics then there needs to be more orgasms.”

Felicity earned a full rumbling laugh. “That is an excellent point.” Oliver plunged two fingers deep and without warning, making her gasp. His thumb fell on her clitoris with a firm sure pressure. “See, that’s why you’re the genius.”

Ha. She didn’t feel like a genius at the moment. In fact, Felicity felt like her brains were melting out of her ears. It felt like…like her entire body was a pulsing ball of light, getting ready to explode and fragment into a thousand pieces.

That was probably why the only response Felicity was able to give as Oliver began to pump and swirl and press with an almost superhuman dexterity was a muffled scream.

“Shhh,” Oliver immediately hushed.

And Felicity tried. She swore she did. She pressed her lips together in a desperate attempt to keep a moan from slipping out. But it was so hard. Pun, well, maybe a little intended. God, now she was going to give herself the crazy-giggles.
Pressing his lips to Felicity’s cheek, Oliver murmured, “You need to be quiet, baby.” But his tone was pleased and it completely contradicted his words.

Also, it was a hell of a lot easier said than fraking done.

“You say this after spending our entire relationship telling me you want to hear me scream.” Which was not even slightly an exaggeration.

Oliver’s chuckle was warm and he leaned in for a nipping kiss at the edge of her lips. “I love hearing you, but I don’t think I’m the only one who can hear you at the moment.” Felicity knew he was right but all she could do, at that moment, was whimper in frustration. “I’m sorry, honey, but we need to get used to this if William’s going to be staying with us.”

Felicity would really rather not talk about Oliver’s son…his pre-adolescent son while Oliver’s hand was buried between her thighs. But, unfortunately, he made a very valid point. She was going to have to figure out how to control her screams, because she sure as hell didn’t plan on curbing their sex life because their family was expanding. They had way too much time to make up for.

So, instead, Felicity dragged Oliver’s other hand down, the one she was already holding tightly, and latched onto the back of it, gasping her sounds of pleasure into his skin.

“That’s my girl.” Oliver’s voice was heavy with approval as he started to move his other hand, the active one, with more purpose. Felicity had thought he was moving with purpose before but guess not.

His fingers curled and thrust, his thumb moving all the while in perfect circles with building pressure. Oliver’s coordination was a thing of beauty.

Felicity’s head fell back onto Oliver’s shoulder as she gasped for air and she let her legs fall open just the tiniest bit more as she gave herself over to the pulsing blinding pleasure.

“God, you’re gorgeous.”

At Oliver’s husky words, Felicity forced herself to blink open her eyes. She looked up to see Oliver was curled half over her and was watching her intently, staring down at her with a look of intense adoration. It would take her breath away if she had any breath left to lose.

A half-whimper half-moan fell from Felicity’s lips, muffled but unable to be contained completely. Oliver dropped a kiss to those lips. “Shhh…hold on, baby.”

He gripped her hand tighter, until they formed a combined fist and he pressed it against her lips. As soon as Felicity latched her lips around it, Oliver doubled his efforts, quickly and efficiently pushing her right over the cliff.

Felicity pulled their combined hands even closer, holding on for dear life, as her mouth fell open in a (mostly) silent scream as she rode out wave after wave of pleasure.

Just as the pulses started to fade, Oliver shifted, lifting Felicity’s leg, pulling her hips back and…

“Yessss….”

Her eyes rolled back as Oliver sank deep inside her, smooth and easy, the stretch so incredibly delicious. And thank God. There was a part of Felicity that was genuinely worried that he would insist on holding out for more of Olympic nonsense, bringing her to peak after peak, trying to break
some ridiculous record known only to him, before allowing himself any pleasure.

And that might be fun. At some point. But now…this…**this was perfect.**

It took substantial effort to convince her muscles to work but Felicity managed to turn her face enough to look up at his. Oliver’s eyes were closed, his lip caught between straight white teeth, his face contorted with pleasure as his hips rocked in that slow exquisite rhythm, filling her with those oh-so-perfect strokes.

Felicity reached her free hand back to run over his flank. She was certain it was with far less coordination than Oliver exhibited on his worst day, but he seemed to enjoy it.

Oliver’s eyes opened and met hers, his face quickly turning towards her to press a kiss to her cheek, managing to brush just the corner of her mouth. But the angle was awkward and the pleasure too much.

His head fell back onto the bed, his neck arching as he whimpered, “**Felicity…**”

She smiled, or at least, she **tried** to. It was difficult. There were so many muscles involved in smiling and all of hers were so very **relaxed.**

Felicity hadn’t fully come down from that first orgasm, her body still humming with bliss, unable to feel anything but pleasure. She let their combined hands fall from her mouth. She just couldn’t hold them there any longer.

Immediately, Oliver was lurching forward, stretching his neck to reach for her lips.

Felicity strained upward to meet him, grabbing his neck and arching hers in a suddenly desperate need to connect in this way as well. She captured Oliver’s lips in a a kiss made up of a mess of lips and tongues. She wasn’t able to get as deep as she wanted to, not nearly, but it was too delicious to not try.

It wasn’t until Felicity’s neck muscles completely gave out that her head fell back onto her pillow, her hand still curled over Oliver’s nape, her nails digging into his skin as she drove herself back onto his cock.

Oliver’s hand slid down her thigh, curving under her knee, lifting and maneuvering her so that he...”

“**Mmmmh,**” the sound emerged before she could stop it and Felicity bit her lip before anything else could burst out as Oliver reached a deeper spot inside her, thrusting harder, **faster.**

Oliver growled his approval of the new angle. Again, increasing the pace and depth and…oh **God,** the power….

Felicity squeezed his hand in a way she might worry would be painful if it wasn’t, well, **Oliver** and latched her open mouth onto his forearm, in an attempt to keep the screams inside.

And the **feel** of Oliver moving inside her. She wanted it to go on and on. God, she’d missed it so much. Felicity wondered how long it would be before she stopped thinking that.

Grunting, Oliver’s forehead fell to Felicity’s shoulder as he pulled in grasping lung-fulls of air. “**Fe-li-ci-ty….**”

She wasn’t sure if she was supposed to respond or not, but all Felicity was capable of was a
whimper anyway so that would have to do.

Oliver hand grasped Felicity’s upper leg and he hooked her knee into his elbow, holding her open as he, somehow, pressed his palm to her core and his hips…God, his hips really started to pound into her in a rhythm Felicity didn’t have a prayer of keeping up with.

Any focus Felicity had, she put into not screaming as the pleasure started to crash over her.

Again.

And again.

And, this time, it was to the sound of Oliver’s gasps and grunts as his legs started to shake and he pressed deeper and his face buried further into her neck and…

He flooded into her. And, lord, the whole thing was glorious. Simply glorious. It was so much better together.

Felicity had once thought the simultaneous orgasm a myth, but not with Oliver. The man was just that talented.

“I love you,” Oliver murmured, soft and low, his words almost slurred. He fell back to their previous position, spooning Felicity, enveloping her in warmth, but heavier than before as they relaxed against her.

And Felicity smiled. An intense contentment permeated her bones as she closed her eyes and enjoyed just being.

Fifty years? Yes, that would be a good start. Every morning. Every night. This was how Felicity wanted to spend them.

18,250. That was how many nights and mornings would await them. It may just be enough.

She thought that she should probably reply to Oliver, tell him everything he made her feel. At a minimum, she should say she loved him too. But as she snuggled back into him, Felicity found herself drifting off in the haze that was this perfect moment.

Thoughts of thousands more just like this tickled her dreams and Felicity fell asleep smiling.

revised 6/15/18
Chapter Summary
When Oliver woke up the second time that morning…afternoon…actually, he had no idea what time it was or even what day it was. And he couldn’t care less.

This time, when he woke, Felicity was still sleeping. And Oliver was glad. Besides the chance to watch her as she slept (a pleasure he had sorely missed), it gave him the chance to let the waves of emotion just come, to adjust to them without having to temper himself.

Not that Oliver had tempered them before. He’d been too caught off guard to try and he knew that an essential part of doing things right this time around was complete emotional honesty, which meant not hiding the difficult stuff from Felicity or himself.

Oliver was well aware, even if no one else was, what had led to their downfall the first time around. If he’d been able to face and open up with what he was feeling the first time he had seen William, everything would have been different. He’d sworn to himself (an oath he repeated now) that he wouldn’t make that mistake again, even if it was one of the hardest things he had ever done.
But…Oliver was starting to feel like a broken record. He was starting to feel Felicity’s frustration (as loving as it was) with his constant need for reassurance, his need to be told over and over that, yes, this was happening, and, no, she wasn’t having doubts. That he wasn’t imagining the whole thing.

Neediness was never an attractive feature. Plus, Oliver was starting to worry it wasn’t helping Felicity’s fear of abandonment and the last thing he wanted was for her to feel insecure or question his commitment.

Pushing himself up on his elbow, Oliver gently brushed the hair from Felicity’s face, so he could really look at her. She was in the same position she had flopped into after their latest romp. She’d fallen bonelessly onto her stomach, immediately passing out, one hand and one leg tangled with his.

Oliver had just smiled and shifted closer until Felicity’s side was pressed to his front, ridiculously proud of tiring her out. He’d planned to only rest his eyes for a moment but, well, here he was.

He was still in absolute awe and borderline disbelief that Felicity was here, mussed and beautiful, signs of their lovemaking all over her gorgeous body.

This was actually happening.

God. Had Oliver said she was beautiful? Because, dear lord, Felicity was beautiful.

Last night seemed to perfect too be real. Too perfect for his life, at least. This wasn’t something that happened to Oliver Queen. He didn’t get things this perfect and, if he did, they weren’t his to keep.

He’d had it before and…was it crazy how every perfect moment in Oliver’s life somehow seemed to involve this woman?

But it had always felt too good to be real. Oliver hadn’t been surprised when it ended.

And now…how did Oliver fight for forever when a part of him was always expecting it to end?

Except maybe he had just answered his own question. If Oliver couldn’t change his own expectations, then…they might be doomed.

So…he needed to change his fucking expectations.

Oliver might always fear Felicity would be taken from him, but he needed to have faith that it could and would last. That they were endgame. That forever was in reach.

Faith.

It was what Oliver had told William he needed.

Taking his own advice was never one of Oliver’s strong-suits, but it looked like that was something he was going to need to change as well.

Felicity had said that she loved Oliver’s drive to change. He just wished he had a better history of success. This time he had to make it work. This was beyond worth fighting for.

And fighting was something Oliver was good at. It had been a long time since he had been opposed to hard work. Fight hard and work hard. He could do that. Because he knew that was
what a *real* relationship…the relationship Felicity deserved was going to take. And he’d do anything it took.

At the moment, however, *this* didn’t feel like work. It didn’t *feel* difficult. It felt like the only thing in Oliver’s life that was easy. Natural.

Well maybe it took a *little* self-control to keep himself from kissing Felicity awake. But even that was well worth it. Oliver’s eyes drank in her face, soft and relaxed in sleep. She was smiling and that…

The idea that Oliver could have put that smile there…it gave him more pleasure, more *pride* than he knew what to do with.

But he couldn’t forget that as perfect as life *felt*, curled up on this bunk with Felicity, their lives were far from perfect.

It was messy. They had an insane number of responsibilities and those seemed to grow by the day. The people counting on them alone…including a (not so) little boy down the hall, one who had been through more trauma than any child should ever experience.

And mustn’t forget about the boy’s furious mother. Nope, couldn’t forget her.

The urge to barricade himself in this cabin with Felicity and avoid the entire situation was strong. Oliver knew that would only make things worse. Yet

It would be *really nice* if they could just…*stay*. If not forever a…month. Or two. Hadn’t they earned that?

But Oliver knew he couldn’t even linger in this bunk much longer. His bladder was calling, an annoying reminder that reality was waiting for them.

Carefully, Oliver slipped out of bed and, after he relieved himself and drained a glass of water, tried to slip back into bed as quietly as possible.

He should have known that nothing this perfect lasts.

Felicity’s eyes blinked open as soon as Oliver settled back next to her. She smiled that sleepy smile…the one that made his heart melt in the cheesiest of ways. Maybe *this* moment was even better than the one before last.

Only Felicity seemed to be able to top perfection on a regular basis.

“Good morning,” Felicity murmured, her voice thick and rough from sleep. “Again.”

And the best part about her waking up…now Oliver could kiss her.

“Good morning,” he whispered against her lips, leaning in to press his lips to hers, morning-breath be damned.

Mmmm…*definitely* better.

Her hand came up to cup his undoubtedly scratchy cheek and Oliver lingered, enjoying the slow slide of his lips against hers. Felicity didn’t so much pull back as let her head fall back onto the mattress with a happy sigh. Then she scooted closer, fitting herself more snugly against him, her head finding a place on his chest, her hand sliding over his side.
Embracing her gently, Oliver took a deep breath and closed his eyes, letting the morning scent of pure Felicity fill his lungs and soothe the sheer volume of emotions accosting him.

“What time is it?” was Felicity’s next sleepy question, coming many peaceful minutes later.

Wow. Peace. Talk about something to be savored.

Oliver smiled and pressed his lips to the top of her head. “I have no idea. I don’t even know what day it is.” And strangely that felt good too. Freeing.

Felicity chuckled softly and pressed a kiss to the center of his chest, nuzzling her face against him and squeezing him tightly.

It got Oliver every time. As amazing as loving this woman was, being loved by her…it took his breath away. It was also the thing he never felt like he deserved. But Felicity seemed to disagree and that was something he didn’t think he would ever be able to fully wrap his head around.

Felicity had told him he was the best thing to ever happen to her and…it seemed like a dream. It blew Oliver’s mind. It didn’t even seem possible. But he realized now that he had been so shocked that he hadn’t returned the sentiment. It should be obvious but…

“Felicity,” Oliver murmured, smoothing back her sex mussed hair (fuck, was there anything more intoxicating?) to peer down at her. “I forgot to tell you something.”

“Hmmm?” Felicity sounded cozy and confident and content. And she should. He wanted that for her. Always. But Oliver couldn’t say he didn’t envy the easy confidence a little.

Oliver opened his mouth to tell Felicity she was the best thing that ever happened to but…the words stuck in his throat.

He had a son now. It felt…wrong to try to…to even use the word ‘best’ now. How did someone quantify such things? Ranking them…not something Oliver could ever do.

“I told William…” Oliver licked his suddenly dry lips as he realized what he needed to say. “I told him that just when everything seems darkest, when it feels like life is too awful to go on, something comes along that makes it all worth it.” His throat convulsed and it was hard to finish, but he forced himself to, “You are my thing. Over and over. When life was too much, you make everything…past, present, everything worth it. All of it.”

Felicity’s arms tightened around him and she buried her face in his chest and he would swear he felt the wet tickle of her lashed against his skin. When she finally looked up at him, her eyes were shining.

“Oliver?” she murmured, her voice choked with emotion. “I love you too.”

And the way Felicity said it…

It held so much.

Too much.

He didn’t…

Oliver dipped his head and met her lips in a slow kiss. He tried to pour all the love he was feeling into that kiss because he couldn’t begin to put what he was feeling into words. But the most
amazing thing was the way Felicity met him stroke for stroke, emotion for emotion.

He was never going to take for granted how lucky he was.

Lifting her lips from his, Felicity’s tongue seemed to chase Oliver’s taste, before biting softly on her lower lip and smiling up at him. It was her happy, contented smile. Oliver knew all her smiles, though he was always searching for new ones.

“I’d like to stay here forever but…”

Oliver grinned. It really felt like Felicity could read his mind sometimes. “We need to face reality?” he supplied regretfully.

Felicity wrinkled her nose. “Well, right now, my reality is the strong urge to pee.”

Laughing out right, Oliver loosened his hold and laid back, enjoying the view as Felicity scrambled over him. He supposed he could have gotten up and out of the way, but that would have involved a lot less of her skin dragging against his and…what fun would that be?

Watching Felicity’s delectable backside as she rushed to the bathroom…it was one of Oliver’s favorite sights. Her ass was a piece of art. She didn’t close the door behind her and the intimacy, the trust that spoke to, made his chest clench. The months apart seemed to just drift away, like they were just a bad dream.

And that little sigh of relief Felicity gave as she emptied her bladder, it made Oliver grin ear to ear. Add that to the list of a million tiny things he had missed.

Folding his hands behind his head, Oliver debated whether they could fit in another quick romp before they had to head back into the breach.

Then Felicity appeared in the doorway, pushing her wild hair out of her eyes…wow, he fucking adored that look on her. Her glasses completed it, for the perfect Felicity-look.

Just the sight of her sex rumpled appearance, was enough to get the blood flowing back to Oliver’s cock. Apparently, she was also a miracle to his thirty-two year-old libido. He’d barely been able to get it up with Susan (but maybe his body had been trying to tell him something).

But, just as Oliver decided they absolutely had time for one more quick romp (they had a lot to make up for), Felicity said, “Wow. I’m starving. How long do you think it’s been since we ate?”

So much for a quickie.

But as he thought about her question, Oliver’s jaw clenched. A wave of fresh rage flowed over him. How long had it been since Felicity had eaten? “Unless Chase fed you, far too long.”

Possibly since the cake at Oliver’s birthday party and, God, that felt like an eternity ago.

Oliver should have insisted Felicity eat earlier before they went to bed. Just because he could go days without feeling hungry didn’t mean that she could or should go anywhere near that long.

“I’ll go find us something,” Oliver told her, pushing up off the bunk.

Felicity just laughed, putting out a hand to stop him. “Oliver, I can wait until we both get cleaned up and dressed.”

He didn’t miss the way Felicity’s eyes ran, appreciatively, over his body. Neither did Oliver’s
cock, though he really needed to settle himself down.

Or…not.

Oliver looked down at his very naked body and then over at her equally naked body, along with the extremely interested look in Felicity’s eyes.

Maybe a real quick quickie? In the shower? Possibly? It would be good to be as relaxed as possible before dealing with…whatever the hell was waiting for them on the other side of that door. And what would a few more minutes hurt?

Then a slip of folded paper on the floor caught Oliver’s eye.

“What’s that?” Felicity asked as he scooped it, stepping closer and giving Oliver an affectionate slap on the ass. It quickly turned into a grope that…made him very eager to try his shower plan.

Oliver sent her a look (a rather heated look) and Felicity blinked up at him innocently. That quickie was becoming more and more of an inevitability. Slipping his arm around her shoulders, he opened the paper. “Looks like Lyla has food set up food in the VIP lounge.”

“And look, she even drew a cute little map.”

Shaking his head at the things that entertained her, Oliver threw the paper on the bunk. He was just happy they wouldn’t be wasting time hunting for food.

It left more time for…alone time.

Turning, Oliver pulled Felicity more fully into his arms, enjoying the simple pleasure of skin on skin, and dropped a light kiss onto her lips. “Do you want to throw on clothes and go eat or…do you want to shower first?”

Please, shower. Please, shower.

“Shower,” Felicity said definitively and without any innuendo (unfortunately). “No way I’m facing…anyone looking and smelling like this.”

“I like the way you smell.” And there was most definitely a suggestive hint to Oliver’s tone. He buried his nose in her neck, burrowing it in the wild curls.

God, she smelled good. Like sex and Felicity. Nothing better.

Laughing, Felicity pushed at him (though not hard enough to actually move him). “I know you like it. It doesn’t even matter if it smells good. It is not how I want to face Curtis and Rene and, good lord, Samantha.”

Okay. Yeah. Felicity had a point there. A good one.

“Case made,” Oliver muttered, wincing at the unwelcome image her words brought to mind. But it only made him want to delay their leaving this room for as long as possible. When he met Felicity’s eyes again he couldn’t help but grin. “So…shower?”

“Not together!” Felicity gasped, laughing. As if that it the first time she had thought of the idea. Which Oliver doubted. “You insatiable…”

Felicity trailed off as Oliver grinned wider, pulling her closer so that she could see just how insatiable he was. It felt amazing to feel this way again. It had been too damn long. It made him
feel young again. Alive.

Besides, Oliver had been called a lot of things in his life and insatiable for this woman, one of his favorites.

“You insatiable…what?” Oliver prompted, looking forward to whatever ridiculous turn of phrase Felicity came up with.

But Felicity just frowned, scrunching her nose up at him. “I can’t think of anything.” And that was even better. Oliver laughed and got an even firmer push for the offense. “Clearly, you’ve scrambled my brain, you smug bastard.”

Oliver still couldn’t find it in him to be insulted. Actually, he always found it completely adorable and inescapably sexy when Felicity called him names.

Didn’t hurt that, most often, Felicity did it in response to Oliver’s teasing in the bedroom. And there was almost never any real malice behind it.

“You’re just hungry. Let’s get you something to eat.” Oliver grabbed Felicity’s hand and pulled her toward the bathroom. Though calling that space a ‘room’ was being awfully generous. Would they both even be able to fit in there? They would have to stand awfully close together.

The possibilities…

“Oh no,” Felicity yanked her hand from Oliver’s grip. “No no no. If you come in there with me, we’re never getting out of here.”

Oliver played dumb, something he was rather good at. It was the one act he had perfected. “What? It’s more efficient if we shower together.” He skimmed his hands over Felicity’s waist, pulling her back into his arms.

“Yeah, right,” Felicity laughed, trying to push away Oliver’s wandering hands. She wasn’t very effective at it.

“We can be quick,” Oliver insisted. He even threw in the puppy-dog eyes. Go big or go home, right?

But this time, Felicity refused to even look him in the eye. She just gave one last hard shove and, groaning, he let her go. “Oliver! I’m just going to take a really fast shower…don’t you pout at me.” He really hadn’t been. Much. “Just give me five.”

And then Felicity disappeared into the small room, closing the door behind her.

Well, damn.

Blowing out a breath, Oliver grunted and flopped back onto the bunk. Now what? He honestly couldn’t think of a thing to do in this stupid tiny room without Felicity.

Oliver settled for counting down those five minutes.

And when done counting, all 300 seconds…well, Oliver felt fully justified in joining Felicity in the bathroom.

Or the shower. To…check on her. Or hurry her up.

Or whatever.
Felicity was finger-combing her soaking wet hair as the shower rained down on her upturned face when Oliver slipped inside the tiny room. He took a minute to admire her (which got her up to 6 minutes so...more than fair) before opening the door to the shower and stepping inside.

Her eyes cracked open…

“Oliver!”

Felicity jumped when she saw him and Oliver had to grab her waist so she didn’t slip (not that there was far to slip to).

Giving her his most flirtatious smile, Oliver closed the door behind him and (very purposely) crowded Felicity into the small space. “Your five minutes are up.”

“Uchh,” Felicity grunted as he pulled her body to him. “We’re never going to get food at this rate.”

Oliver would have felt guilty (he really needed to get her food) but the way she arched into him and presented her neck for his lips was in direct opposition to her words. Besides, he had every intention of being efficient.

“Sure, we will. I can be fast.”

“Ol-i-ver,” Felicity whined as he sucked on her collarbone and she threaded her hands into his quickly dampening hair. “I’m hungry.”

That was too good to pass up.

“Me too,” Oliver drawled, sinking to his knees.

This time, Felicity’s laugh was incredulous. “Oliver!” She seemed to really like saying his name. Worked for him. “That is so not quick!”

“You doubt me?” he teased, pulling Felicity’s leg over his shoulder and pressing her against the wall. “Besides, you promised I could spend all day buried between your thighs.” And, unfortunately, Oliver was well aware that he wasn’t getting that any time soon. Goddamn responsibilities. “All I’m asking for is a taste.”

Then before Felicity could protest further, Oliver dived in and…well, no one was protesting then.

Oliver had to say, he was rather glad that he had decided to press the issue. He had seriously missed this. He loved the way Felicity tasted, the way her legs trembled beneath his hands, the noises that escaped, even though…especially since she was clearly trying her damnedest to muffle them.

He didn’t wait and tease and try to build the slow, perfect orgasm. Though that really did go against all of Oliver’s instincts. But he promised quick, so quick Felicity would get. She needed to eat. So a fast, hard orgasm it was.

After a quick taste, Oliver settled his lips over her clit for a soft, rhythmic suckle as his fingers slipped inside to press against that spongy tissue he just knew would drive her crazy.

It did.

And it really didn’t take long. Oliver was going to have to do this again after they got her fed.
Soon. And next time he was going to take his time. Savor her. Relearn every nook and cranny.

But, for now, at least Oliver succeeded in making Felicity come hard. He thought she hit her head on the wall, which he was sorry about, but his arm reach just wasn’t long enough that he could do anything about it. He also wasn’t able to help her muffle her scream so...

Well, Oliver just hoped that whoever was next to them was already at breakfast…or lunch…or whatever.

When Felicity pushed Oliver’s face away, he knew it was because she was too sensitive for any more stimulation and he gently eased her shaky leg off his shoulder and climbed to his feet. His knee ached like hell, but it was worth it. In fact, he was sure that he was grinning like a madman.

Felicity’s eyes were glassy and unfocused and she just looked…wrecked. It made Oliver grin harder.

“Come ‘mere.” Felicity mumbled, grabbing Oliver by his hips, pulling him close as she came up on her toes and stretched toward his lips.

Even on her toes, Felicity wasn’t tall enough to reach and would never make it if Oliver didn’t meet her halfway. Why on Earth wouldn’t he meet her half-way?

But her kiss…it was more than Oliver had expected. Felicity met him with a passion that was dizzying.

Tongue and teeth and…Felicity tried to fling a leg around his waist, but Oliver caught it. Tearing his mouth from hers, he panted (regretfully), “Honey, we don’t have time for anymore.” He needed to get her fed.

Felicity looked adorably confused. “But…but…what about you?”

She was so fricken cute.

“I’m fine.”

Eyes flying down to where his very hard cock was sandwiched between their bodies, Felicity arched an eyebrow at him. “Really? I’m pretty sure you walking in with that would be worse than me showing up with sex hair.”

Felicity was hysterical. A comedian, really.

Oliver barely restrained himself from rolling his eyes. As if he didn’t have complete control over his body. Please. “I’ll just—”

Oliver didn’t have a chance to finish that sentence…that thought even before Felicity’s hand closed around his cock.

Then before Oliver could get used to the soft pressure. Or offer up a protest, Felicity was pouring on liquid soap directly over his cock and…pumping and twisting and…he had no words.

Literally. Oliver could not form words.

But apparently Felicity could. “I’ll be quick,” she told him, all sass and vinegar now as she grinned up at him, her eyes shining. “And it’s efficient, since you need to get washed up anyway.”

Her left hand wandered over Oliver’s body to demonstrate, spreading the soapy bubbles, ending on
his ass as Felicity squeezed and pressed against him and sped up the rhythm.

It really didn’t take long.

Oliver would have been embarrassed how quick it was actually, if it was under any other circumstances. But today, it made Felicity grin happily and took care of his (not so) little problem faster and a hell of a lot more pleasurably than a cold shower.

After, they helped each other rinse off and Felicity stepped out of the shower as Oliver hurriedly soaped up his hair.

It was probably only minutes before they were walking down the hall in their ARGUS-issue sweats and slipper socks (which Oliver thought were absolutely ridiculous, but Felicity was horrified by the thought of either bare feet or him wearing his filthy combat boots, so here he was).

The lounge was larger than Oliver expected, with clusters of chairs and sofas and two large round tables set up to eat at. Though the only one sitting to eat was Samantha, who was less eating and more scowling down at her food as she pushed it around her plate.

Looked like her mood hadn’t improved. Fantastic.

Oliver scanned the room for...he found William sitting on the floor, leaning against one of the couches on the other side of the room. He had a tray of food on a coffee table next to him, but he seemed to be paying absolutely no attention to what looked like a nutritious breakfast and instead stared down at a tablet he held. Despite having apparently found something to distract him, William looked about as happy as his mother.

Fuck.

Into the breach then.

Oliver must have been rather easy to read because Felicity squeezed his fingers and whispered, “Come get something to eat first. This will be easier to manage on a full stomach.”

He really doubted that. In fact, Oliver thought it might just make him feel like vomiting. But it was a reprieve at the very least and this wasn’t a problem that was going away anytime soon, so he allowed Felicity to pull him over to where the food was set up in a large buffet.

Felicity made a bee-line for the coffee, which was where Thea, Curtis, Rene, and Dinah had congregated with...a woman Oliver didn’t recognize.

Letting go of his hand, Felicity all but lunged at the coffee machine with a moan of, “Come to mama.”

Oliver would have laughed if he wasn’t feeling tense enough that smiling might snap him in two.

But standing there brooding wasn’t going to do him any good either so he turned to his sister and put an arm around her shoulder, placing a kiss on her freshly washed hair.

Thea slipped into his arms easily, laying her head on his chest with an exhausted sag, yawning. She seemed a whole lot more tired than Oliver would have expected given—

Oliver did a double take. “Nyssa?”

Dressed in her own matching ARGUS sweats, free of make-up, and with her hair up in a messy bun, the woman looked nothing like the assassin Oliver knew.
Except then she looked up at Oliver, over her coffee cup and smirked and, ok, yeah, *that* was Nyssa.

“Husband,” Nyssa acknowledged with a nod, then before Oliver could argue, nodded to Felicity. “Future sister wife.”

Okay…what the…“*What*?”

Turning to him as she stirred her coffee, Felicity rolled her eyes and grunted, “Nyssa’s embracing the League’s tradition of polyamory. Or is it polygamy?” She shrugged, shaking her head as she focused on her coffee which she seemed to feel was far more important. Oliver wanted to tell her not to drink so fast, but thought it might get him slapped and *more importantly*…

Oliver narrowed his eyes at Nyssa because…what the *fuck*? “No. *Just no.*”

Thea chuckled against his t-shirt, pulling back to look up at him and tease, “It’s cute that you think you have a say.”

Oliver sure as *hell* had a say. It was his…*non*-marriage and he had no intention of sharing it with any…*future* marriage. *So, no.*

But maybe they could deal with that later. The bags under his sister’s eyes needed his attention now. “You sleep okay?” he whispered.

The smirk that had formed on Thea’s lips fell away…

*Fuck.* Oliver’s stomach sank. Uh oh.

But then…

“No thanks to *you,*” Thea sing-songed, her eyes dancing. It was a diversion. *But a damn good one.* Oliver knew that look in her eye. It was terrifying.

“Oh *God,*” Felicity whimpered, her eyes squeezing shut. “You were in the room next to ours?”

“Nope,” Dinah piped up, popping the ‘p’ in a dry drawl as she raised her hand. “That would be *me.*”

“And *me,*” Curtis added, “on the other side.” He had a big stupid grin on his face and Oliver would have ignored, except for a roll of his eyes, but poor Felicity blushed to her roots, so he kind of wanted to pop Curtis one.

Oliver couldn’t even comfort her, having his arms full of exhausted ready-to-torment sister.

“I was two doors down and I *still* heard you. And let me tell *you,* I’m scarred for life,” Thea added, though she actually seemed totally delighted and was clearly enjoying every second of both of their discomfort.

“You’ll get over it.” Oliver sent his sister a frown and reached out to run a soothing hand over Felicity’s shoulder as she let out another embarrassed whimper, letting her head fall forward so her hair fell over her glasses and hid her face.

“Yeah and, *wow,* blondie…” Rene started in and Oliver immediately tensed because while Rene’s cabin had been on the other end of the hallway, *his* teasing always put the others to shame. It could be brutal. “Did you get hit with debris or something in that hole? I thought you were clear
of the rock shower?"

Oliver’s eyes snapped to Felicity, his eyes flying over her, looking for injuries…

 Fuck. He really was an idiot. He really was, because he should have known, Oliver should have guessed the next words out of Rene’s mouth.

“All those bruises on your neck, you really must have gotten it bad.”

And…Rene was going to get his ass kicked.

Felicity slapped a hand over her neck to a chorus of chuckles and guffaws.

Yeah, so…maybe Oliver had been a tad too enthusiastic last night. And this morning. “I’m sorry,” he mouthed as soon as Felicity looked up and he was able to catch her eye.

But then Felicity let out a long-suffering sigh and sent Oliver an ironic smile, flicking her wrist dismissively at their friends. “Whatever. I’m too hungry to deal with any of you.”

Grabbing a plate and what was left of the coffee she had just gulped, Felicity held her head high and headed over to the food. Left behind, Oliver decided that he was going to deal with this by sending the assholes a smug/proud look, giving his sister one more forehead kiss, and following his girl.

Sidling up next to Felicity as she spooned out some sort of egg bake, Oliver whispered, “Are you okay?” She looked pretty okay to him, but it was his fault. If he hadn’t been so into the nibbling and the sucking and…

Felicity sent Oliver a small smile and directed an eye-roll at their friends. “It’s fine. The team’s just being…the team.”

Taking a relieved breath, Oliver nodded. Honestly, he really couldn’t care less about the teasing as long as it didn’t bother Felicity. He had a hell of a lot more important things to worry about than the team ribbing them over a night of fantastic sex.

Actually, there was nothing about his night with Felicity that didn’t put an enormous smile on Oliver’s face. Tease away.

But unfortunately, life outside their cabin was a hell of a lot more complicated.

“Now them…” Felicity whispered, gesturing subtly to Samantha and William (and once again proving she could read his mind), “I don’t…” She sighed. “What’s the plan to deal with them?”

Fuck. It would be better if they had a plan, wouldn’t it? Maybe Oliver should have considered that while he was…trying really hard not to think about that.

Instinctively, Oliver wanted to go to William to see if he was okay but…

“I’ll try to talk to Samantha,” Oliver finally said. He would rather eat nails, but it had to be done. “Maybe if I can convince her that I’m not planning to steal William from her she’ll be more willing to compromise.” He glanced behind him at his son’s sullen form and then back at Felicity. “Can you try and talk to William? The only time he perks up and acts like a normal kid is when he’s talking that sci-fi shit.”

Felicity gave him a disgruntled look and it took Oliver a second to realize what he’d said wrong.
Then he winced.

Rolling her eyes, Felicity poked Oliver in the chest. “We’re going to have a talk about that later. It’s a good thing you didn’t say it to William.” Then she grabbed her plate and coffee and started toward the corner where William was sitting and brooding.

Huh. Now Oliver saw the resemblance.

Oliver made his way to Samantha with considerably less enthusiasm. It didn’t help that when she looked up at him there was a deep scowl on her face. The bags under her eyes were worse than Thea’s. Then Samantha’s eyes flicked to Felicity and…

“Great,” Samantha muttered, shaking her head and rolling her eyes (and now Oliver saw where William got that). “Sending your perfect girlfriend over to play the ‘cool’ mom, because you aren’t winning enough.”

Felicity must have heard her, because she stiffened. Then, turning slowly, Felicity fixed Samantha with the kind of look that made CEOs squirm. Before Oliver knew what was happening, Felicity was walking back toward them, shouldering him out of the way to place her plate down next to Samantha’s.

Without looking at him, Felicity instructed, “Go spend time with your son, Oliver. Samantha and I need to have a talk.”

Ho…ly Christ.

Okay. Um…this was scary as fuck but…swallowing, Oliver did as he was told. He, uh, trusted Felicity. She could handle this, right? Better than he could probably. Sooo…he was going to…do that then.

Swallowing, Oliver joined the person he actually wanted to spend time with and placed his plate next to William’s untouched one on the coffee table. He nodded to Slade, who Oliver now noticed was reclining on the adjacent couch, bootied feet up, reading Time Magazine. Slade sent back a nod and a cracked smile.

William’s eyes, however, were on Felicity and Samantha. “Are you sure Felicity will be okay with my mom?” he whispered.

“It’s not Felicity I’m worried about,” Oliver muttered as he settled on the floor next to William.

His son smiled as Oliver sat, his eyes bright. Whatever was going on William, at least he didn’t seem to be holding anything that happened last night against Oliver. A small victory but he’d take it.

Leaning toward him, William asked in a whisper, “What do you think Felicity will do? Do you think she’ll chew mom out for lying to us?” He seemed completely delighted by the idea.

But…umm, Oliver sure the hell hoped not. “Well…Felicity will try and have a rational conversation,” ‘try’ being the operative word, “and attempt to negotiate a compromise.”

The look William sent him was skeptical to say the least and maybe even a little disappointed. “And when that doesn’t work?”

And there was the snark.
“Then,” swallowing, Oliver lowered his voice, “you’ll probably get to hear Felicity’s loud voice.” That made William smile, even though it wasn’t at all funny. He was a bloodthirsty kid, his son. “She might even threaten your mom with lawyers and identity theft.”

Oliver probably shouldn’t have said the last part.

But his son of course just looked impressed. William was kinda scary.

“Felicity can do that?”

“Ohhh yeah.” Oliver dragged his eyes away from the terrifying women on the other side of the room and picked up a piece of bacon. Turning to his son, he attempted to take some control of this horse and pony show, “So, what are you doing on your tablet?”

Revised 6/16/2018
(Worth the) Risk

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
The last thing in the world Felicity wanted to do was have a conversation with a pissed-off, defensive, and (by the looks of it) exhausted Samantha Clayton. Actually, she was right on the top of the list of people Felicity would rather avoid talking to for the rest of her life.

So, of course, it looked like they were going to be stuck with each other for…oh, several decades. At least. Fan-fricken-tastic.

Well, Oliver was worth it. William was worth it. So…Felicity would just have to deal. Frak.

Of course, Felicity could just…not deal with it. Make Oliver handle Samantha. It was his mess.

But that really wasn’t the sort of partner Felicity wanted to be. And besides, Oliver might be good at a lot of things. Like scarily inhumanly good at some of them but dealing with his Baby Mama happened to be something he was spectacularly bad at.

And the mood Samantha was obviously in…she would eat the Big Bad Green Arrow for breakfast.

Well, until Samantha managed to get Oliver good and growly and then…Felicity suppressed a shudder. This just wasn’t a situation that could be solved by putting an arrow in it. Unfortunately.

So, Felicity got to deal with Samantha. Yay! She was so looking forward to this conversation. Especially given how calm and reasonable the woman had proven to be in the past.
Taking a long, fortifying drink of her very sweet and very creamy (but not nearly full enough) coffee, Felicity settled herself and her brunch next to the woman who had (indirectly) caused her a hell of a lot of pain.

When Felicity looked at her, Samantha was glaring at her, arms crossed, jaw hard…

It was ridiculous! What the hell had Felicity ever done to her?

Nothing, that’s what. She hadn’t stolen Oliver. Or her son, for that matter. She’d never lied or cheated or anything to Samantha that would warrant any sort of anger that was being directed at her.

Vis versa on the other hand…

Fraking hell.

Felicity wanted to turn her back on Samantha and walk away but…that just brought her back to the beginning. For Oliver and William’s sake, she was going to have to do her best to work with the situation.

“You know we have to deal with each other, right? All of us?” Felicity gestured to where Oliver and William were engaged in conversation (God, how she wished she was there, instead of here). “They know each other now. They want to be in each other’s lives. They deserve to be in each other’s lives. So we can figure out how to do that in a way that works for all of us or we can continue to fight each other every step of the way for the next eight years until William decides he’s had enough and kicks us all out of his life.”

Okay.

Wow.

As an opening gambit that was…strongly worded. Maybe Felicity should have eaten first. Or thought a little longer before she spoke. She couldn’t bring herself to regret a word she said though.

She did turn her eyes away to allow Samantha to process. Besides, Felicity was fraking hungry. She shoveled a huge mouthful of cheesy eggs into her mouth and…God, that was good. She wondered if these really were the second-best eggs she had ever eaten (Oliver and his damn slow cooker eggs were damn near impossible to beat) or if she was just that hungry.

Felicity only had a minute to get lost in the joy that was actual food before Samantha pulled her back to reality, saying (or maybe accusing), “I know you judge me for lying to them for all these years.”

Well, crap. Taking a minute to swallow, Felicity tried to figure out what the hell she was supposed to say to that.

“Judge is such a…strong word,” she finally settled on. Not an inaccurate word, though it certainly didn’t make Felicity feel that great about how she was handling this. Should she at least try to be more sympathetic?

Samantha huffed, almost chuckling, in an extremely bitter way. “It’s okay, my son certainly judges me.” The pain in her voice was difficult to ignore. “And, from what I understand, the two of you have soooo much in common.”
Okay, now Felicity was feeling guilty but…

Dammit! This was how Samantha got Oliver to do what she wanted back in Central City. Guilt and manipulation. Playing the Mommy Card.

Stealing her jaw, Felicity said quietly but firmly, “You were the one who chose this path with William. It’s not Oliver’s fault, and it certainly isn’t mine, that they thought each other was dead his entire life.”

Was that too harsh? Not harsh enough? Felicity didn’t know anymore.

Samantha’s eyes darted away and Felicity thought maybe she saw the first hint of guilt in the other woman’s eyes. There was definitely a glint of tears. But then Samantha leveled Felicity with a hard stare. “Do you know why I took Moira Queen’s check, or pretended to since I never actually cashed the damn thing, all those years ago?”

Um…okay. That was an interesting place for Samantha to start her argument. Felicity really couldn’t see what she hoped to gain from it.

Felicity shrugged. “I assumed you didn’t want William to grow up to be a spoiled rich kid. You know, the kind who dropped out of college, partied too much, and got a girl pregnant while dating someone else.” Blunt but why else would Samantha keep her son from his father?

Though it was not, in Felicity’s opinion, justification for what Samantha had done. The Oliver of old was a player, a douche sure, but he wasn’t a criminal. There was no reason to believe Oliver would have been a danger to William or Samantha.

Samantha gave a bark of a laugh and after seemed to be shocked that she had done so. “That was certainly part of it. Well, a large part of it.” Samantha shook her head, but at least she seemed to have some respect in her eyes now. “But more than that…well, frankly, Mrs. Queen terrified me. The way she manipulated Oliver’s life, supposedly out of love? The way she threw money at me like she had the right to arrange my life, my child’s life, just because she was…who she was.” Samantha shuddered, clearly disgusted.

And Felicity couldn’t say she didn’t share that emotion. Because, yup, that was Moira Queen. To a T.

“She wasn’t my favorite person either.” Felicity kept her voice quiet, so Oliver and William couldn’t overhear. Or Thea for that matter. Since Moira’s death, Felicity had tried to keep her opinion of Oliver’s mother to herself. What good would sharing it do? Moira was gone and Oliver and Thea needed to hold on to whatever good memories they had.

Samantha sat forward, her eyes lighting up. “So you understand—?”

“No.” Felicity wasn’t ready to give Samantha this out. Not yet. Even if…maybe she did understand. A little. It didn’t mean she was okay with what Samantha had done. “You didn’t lie to Moira. You lied to your son and his father.”

Samantha grunted in frustration. “If I had ignored Moira’s ‘request,’ if I’d gone to Oliver, who as far as I knew would totally take his mother’s side, and told him the truth…” She let out a long sigh. “Let’s say I hadn’t told Oliver I miscarried? Who’s to say Mama!Queen wouldn’t have decided a year after William was born, five years after he was born…that my son was now a ‘Queen’ and that meant she had the right to control him too. And if I tried to stand in her way, what was to keep her from sending in an army of lawyers to take William away from me?”
Squeezing her eyes shut, Samantha turned her face away. Then, angrily brushing away a tear that dared to escape, she whispered in a choked voice, “He’s all I have. I couldn’t let that woman have him.”

Okay. Wow.

Felicity let out a sharp breath. “I understand that. I do.” And she could. She could absolutely empathize with Samantha’s fear, her need to protect her child. And maybe she even felt a little bad for all the horrible things she had thought about the woman without knowing the full story. But… “Oliver’s not Moira. Moira is dead and gone and he is nothing like her.”

Actually, that was an oversimplification. Moira was a complex person. As were her children. Felicity could think of a dozen positive traits Oliver had gotten from his mother. But in this way, Oliver truly was nothing like his mother.

“And how was I to know that?” Samantha demanded in a hiss. “I barely knew Oliver!”

What was Samantha trying to get at here? Was she actually looking for absolution for that insane ultimatum she gave Oliver almost two years ago? The one that sent Felicity’s world crumbling around her? Well, if she was, Samantha certainly wasn’t going to get it. Not from her.

Or did she want forgiveness for the choice she’d made more than ten years ago? The one where Samantha had done as Moira Queen, the woman she claimed to hate, asked? Well, Felicity might understand how she had come to that decision and maybe that one wasn’t hers to judge but it certainly wasn’t hers to absolve.

“We can’t change the past,” Felicity finally said, gentling her tone. It was the best she could do. “And you may not have known Oliver ten years ago, or even two, but you should know now he is nothing like the boy you knew. He doesn’t live in a mansion and throw around money. He spends all his time, day and night, doing everything he can to help people. At great risk to himself. He doesn’t party. He doesn’t sleep around.” Hell, he barely slept. “He doesn’t—”

“Wow. He sounds like quite the catch. I wonder why you broke up with him,” Samantha challenged and…

Felicity had a hard time analyzing her tone. Was Samantha questioning her defense of Oliver? Which, now that Felicity thought about it, did sound like it was coming from a woman head over heels (and she was). Or was she pointing out Felicity’s foolishness in not being with him?

Either way, it made Felicity bristle. “We are together,” she told Samantha firmly. Not defensively. Nope. Not at all.

Also, Samantha really didn’t need the details of her love life. It was none of her business. All she needed to know was the breakup was most assuredly behind them.

Samantha didn’t seem surprised. She almost seemed pleased actually, in a bitter world-hardened sort of way and Felicity realized she had probably lessened some of Samantha’s guilt for her part in the break-up.

But that was really not what Felicity was putting herself through this conversation to say. “It doesn’t matter what I think of Oliver. What matters is that he hasn’t given you any reason to believe he would do anything but be a good father to William. The fact that he didn’t send an army of lawyers after you when you gave him your ridiculous ultimatum…”

Samantha flinched and it gave Felicity a little too much satisfaction.
…should prove exactly how much respect Oliver has for you as William’s mother and for how you raised him. It also shows very clearly what Oliver is willing to do to keep from negatively impacting his son.” Felicity didn’t agree with how Oliver originally handled the situation (at all) but it should, at the very least, gain him points with the woman who made the stupid demands in the first place.

And Samantha was back to looking guilty. Good. She should feel guilty. But she also radiated tension, her arms tightly crossed and her posture stiff. At least Felicity had her full attention.

Maybe it was time to go in for the kill. “Oliver wants to continue to respect your wishes about William. He’d do just about anything for his son but if you push him too far, try to cut him out again, you will get the fight of your life.” Felicity didn’t add that she would be the one leading the charge. She thought that rather implicit anyway.

Samantha stared at Felicity for long minutes. When Felicity didn’t back down she finally said, “I don’t know if that was an olive branch or a threat.”

It was both really. “I’m just stating facts.”

And with that Felicity turned her attention back to her eggs, which were now getting cold and not nearly as good. Sigh.

“And if I don’t want to move to Star City? Your home? Our third city in three years?” Samantha finally asked, after Felicity had taken several bites of her lukewarm breakfast. “Am I going to get the fight of my life?” Her voice was soft though. Not confrontational. It was a challenge but also an opening.

So now they moved onto where they all went next and…it felt weird to be negotiating this without Oliver. Felicity was just the girlfriend, not a parent. Yet, she really couldn’t see Oliver forcing Samantha to move. Actually, she had a feeling Oliver would fold like a deck of cards for a handful of crumbs and Felicity couldn’t let that happen.

“I think that depends on what Oliver feels is best for William,” Felicity said, praying it was the right thing. “If Oliver thought his life...wherever you are living now was what was best for him —”

“New Hampshire.” Samantha finished in a disgusted tone, scoffing. “And Oliver certainly isn’t going to think that. It’s...did you know disappearing without a trace, with a child, isn’t as easy or as glamorous as it sounds?”

It probably would have gone a lot better if Felicity had helped. But no one asked her.

Swallowing her bitterness, Felicity simply stated, “I can’t imagine it is.”

“You leave with the clothes on your back and the cash in your pocket and that’s it. Your degree, your references, your credit report...you have nothing.” Samantha closed her eyes, her face a mask of pain and...Felicity hadn’t really thought about what it would be like for them. How hard disappearing would be. “We found this tiny town, where they still use paper records so they believed us when we said we’d lost all of ours in a fire. Or...maybe they didn’t, maybe they thought I was running from an abusive husband or something. Point is, at least, I was able to enroll William in school.”

Samantha wasn’t meeting Felicity’s eyes and Felicity was glad for it because even though the decision to run wasn’t what she would have chosen, or even something she endorsed, the story was
still difficult to hear.

“I couldn’t get a job in accounting without my resume, so I worked the registers at Walmart during the day and waited tables at night just to make ends meet. William hated it. Hell, I hated it. It’s really hard to be positive for your son when you’re miserable and exhausted and completely alone.” Samantha sucked in a breath and Felicity could feel her hopelessness. “So, yeah…” Samantha seemed to shake herself, turning to look at Felicity again. “When William says there’s nothing for us in New Hampshire, he’s right.”

Felicity was speechless. If Oliver had known…he would have been horrified. Felicity was horrified. And for the first time, she felt a genuine respect for Samantha and how she had managed to support her and her son under these circumstances. It reminded her a lot of her own mother. “So why fight moving to Star City?” Felicity asked, much more gently this time.

“Honestly?” Samantha shook her head. “If it were entirely up to me, I would move back to Central City. I still own the house there outright. It was my grandmother’s. I have friends. A support system. I know the city.” She sighed. “But…”

“But?” Felicity wasn’t expecting a ‘but’. Samantha was presenting a very good case for Central City.

Samantha sighed. “But is it safe there? Is it safe anywhere? It certainly wasn’t safe in New Hampshire. Would it be any safer in Star City? Or would it be worse because everyone there knows Oliver Queen and would know William was his son and he’s got so many enemies and—”

“Samantha.” Felicity reached out and touched her hand before she thought better of it. “I won’t lie. William is always going to be in danger because of who his father is. It won’t matter where he is. Chase proved that. But in Star City, Oliver and I can fortify wherever you decided to live with the latest security system and you would have your own Superhero Team watching over you. We could even get you a bodyguard.”

Wrinkling her nose, Samantha looked appalled at the idea and Felicity could certainly empathize with that.

“I know. But it might be necessary where ever you are. But since I’m being honest…” Forgive her, Oliver. “You could have the same thing in Central City.” As Felicity said it, it felt like she was betraying Oliver and William, but it was the truth. And someone had to be faithful to that.

Hope flashed in Samantha’s eyes, even as she said doubtfully, “Have a Superhero Team watching over us? What are you going to do, put us on the Flash’s routine patrol?”

“Well…yeah.” That was exactly what they would do.

“Seriously?” Samantha’s eyes widened and she looked as if she couldn’t believe she was having this conversation.

Felicity was sure this was pretty surreal experience for her.

She shrugged. Felicity didn’t want to brag but… “We kind of know him. The Flash. All of Team Flash. Well, actually. We’re friends. Good friends.” Yeah, sounded like bragging but again it was the truth. In fact, Felicity thought she was rather understating it. “I even dated the Flash, briefly, before Oliver—”

“How many Superheroes have you dated?” From the shock in Samantha’s voice it was clear she couldn’t wrap her head around any of this.
Eek. Samantha just had to ask *that* question. Felicity wrinkled up her nose and confessed, “Three.” It hadn’t escaped her notice that she might have a type. And, what was worse, it *definitely* sounded like she was bragging.

“*Three!*” Samantha gasped and Felicity couldn’t do anything but give another shrug. Because…it was what it was. Falling back in her chair, Samantha stared at her for a long moment, wide-eyed and unblinking. “You *know* you don’t live a normal life, right?”

Understatement of the century. “I’m aware.”

Then Samantha let out another long breath, closing her eyes briefly. “Our lives aren’t normal anymore either, are they?”

“I’m sorry.” And Felicity was. She had chosen this life, but Samantha and William hadn’t. They were thrust into it. Felicity had a strong feeling William would *still* choose it, if given a chance, but Samantha…

Well, Samantha had no choice. It was just a fact of her life now. There was no place to hide.

Samantha considered Felicity for long moments but she no longer looked like she wanted Felicity to spontaneously combust so that was something. Finally, Samantha shook her head, muttering, “*Three* Superheroes. No wonder my son adores you.”

Well, *that* shocked the hell out of her. Though it gave Felicity a warm fuzzy feeling in her stomach too. “I barely had the chance to speak to William,” Felicity protested.

Samantha rolled her eyes. “It was enough. If I could count the number of times I’ve heard yours and Oliver’s names since we were rescued. Actually…” She let out a choked sound. “William calls him ‘Dad’. I can’t believe he calls him ‘Dad’.”

Felicity knew smiling wasn’t the appropriate response, but it was hard to contain. Samantha’s words gave her *such* a wave of affection for that sweet boy.

But even so, Felicity could imagine how it hurt Samantha.

Leaning forward again, Felicity told her with complete and genuine honesty, “I don’t want to take your place. You’re William’s *mother*. I couldn’t take your place if I wanted to. And *I don’t* want to. I was raised by a single mother.” Samantha’s eyes flicked to hers. If she only knew the whole story, how similar they were. Someday maybe. “I *know* what the bond is like between a single parent and their child…”

Guilt washed over her and Felicity fought the burn in the back of her throat, vowing to call her mother the first chance she got. She had taken her for granted for far too long.

Taking a shaky breath, Felicity pushed forward, “I do want a relationship with your son. A good one, I hope. But I *don’t* want to be his mother. *You’re* his mother.”

Samantha nodded, discreetly wiping her face, and Felicity knew she had finally gotten through to her.

She pretended not to notice Samantha’s tears as she debated her next words. Did Felicity let this go? Maybe even advocate to Oliver and William for Samantha’s desire to move back to Central City.

In some ways, it would be so much easier. Cisco could trick out their house. Barry or Wally could
run William back to Star City two weekends a month (which Felicity was certain William would love). She could get William the best very cell-phone on the market and tablet to skype or text his dad daily.

And Oliver and Felicity’s lives wouldn’t have to change that much. They could stay nice and separate from Samantha’s.

It was tempting. It really was. But it wasn’t what Oliver and William wanted.

“But if you do decide to move to Star City,” Felicity began carefully. “To start over. You would probably have your pick of accounting jobs. We’re always looking for young professionals there.” What with the mass exodus over the last few years. Not that Felicity was mentioning that.

“Between Oliver and I, we could get you…”

Samantha eyes flashed, opening her mouth to protest. Damn, this woman was prideful. Felicity could respect that.

“We could get you interviews. Getting the job would be up to you.”

Samantha relaxed and when she said her next words, they were calm and measured, “My savings are drained. The moving costs—”

“How much do you think Oliver owes you in back child support?” Felicity couldn’t believe how quickly those words left her mouth. It was amazing how, over the last few years, she’d taken on some of the Queen’s casual attitude about money.

Eyebrows up, Samantha questioned, “I thought Oliver wasn’t a billionaire anymore.”

“She’s not.” Poor, though, he wasn’t. Even if he could live more spartan than, well, Spartan. “But he is paranoid. And he set up several offshore emergency accounts while he still was a billionaire. He refuses to touch them unless it’s to shore up the Bunker but…I’m certain he would make an exception for his son. Plus, he makes a good salary now.”

“I won’t be bought—”

As if that wasn’t obvious. “Back child support,” Felicity repeated.

“If I agree to this. If…” Samantha said fiercely and Felicity was very aware of how much it took for her to give even this much. “I still want primary physical custody. William lives with me. I won’t have this 50/50 stuff with him going back and forth in the middle of the school week.”

Oh, God, the school week. They would have to find a safe school for William. Wherever he lived. Schools were so big. And accessible. The idea was overwhelming.

“Oliver can have one night a week and every other weekend,” Samantha was saying, while Felicity was panicking. “And I want yours…and Oliver’s promise that there will be no running to your place whenever he’s mad at me.”

Okay, Felicity’s brain was on overload now, spinning out of control as she tried to imagine how all of this would fit into hers and Oliver’s life. City Hall, Team Arrow…and Felicity really did want to start that business her and Curtis had been low-key planning all year. The non-compete clause in her severance package would be up soon.

“Look, the last part, I completely agree with,” Felicity managed to say. “We need to figure out a way so that William doesn’t play us off one another.” Wow, another overwhelming thought. She
took a deep breath. “Samantha, I…okay, you are suggesting a very traditional arrangement and… our lives are anything but traditional…”

Samantha stiffened immediately. “I won’t—”

“I’m not asking for more than that, I’m asking for flexibility.” And Felicity really hoped Oliver would be okay with this. “Do you have any idea how crazy our lives are? How busy Oliver is with being the mayor and the Green Arrow.”

Sitting up straight, Samantha blinked at her. “Are you saying Oliver doesn’t have time to be a father?”

Actually…

“He doesn’t. But he’ll make time. But it would really help…all of this,” Felicity gestured with her hand. “work if you let us fit in Oliver’s time with his son when we can. If he is supposed to have dinner with William on Wednesday and there’s a crisis—”

Samantha lifted her eyebrows. “You don’t want me to be a rigid bitch and not let Oliver see his son for a week?”

Felicity’s lip quirked. It would really help if Samantha had a sense of humor too. “That would be nice, yes. Look, we don’t need to be friends.” Felicity couldn’t even imagine. “But this will work so much better if we have each other’s backs and not only with discipline and whatever. But with working our schedules and lack thereof. It would go both ways. If you have to travel for work or stay late or have a last-minute date, I’d like you to be able to call us for back-up. We’re really good with last minute. We kind of live our lives on the fly.”

Samantha actually smiled, a small but real smile. “I want to say kids need structure and they shouldn’t live ‘on the fly’ but…the older William gets the more that goes out the window and I…” She sucked in a breath, sitting back in her chair. “It’s been a long time since I’ve had any kind of back-up with William. Since my parents died when he was three, actually. And now that he’s approaching…God, help me…puberty sometimes we just need a break from each other.”

Smiling back, tears came to Felicity’s eyes. She was just so damn relieved. And seriously she couldn’t believe how much she empathized with Samantha. “We could help with that.”

“God…” Samantha almost sounded wistful. “I can’t even remember the last time I went on a date. There was a man once…years ago but I…”

As weird as it was that Samantha was talking about her (apparently nonexistent) love life with Felicity…there was a regret in Samantha’s voice, a grief over opportunities missed that she related with.

It brought Felicity back to months ago, when Oliver was dating the dragon lady (again, Thea’s word not hers) and Felicity was still upset with him for not trusting her but still missed him so so much.

And now Felicity knew…knew that Oliver had always trusted her, just hadn’t trusted himself. He…he had made mistakes, yes. Absolutely, yes. But everything that felt so unfixable had been fixable and…

What if…what if Felicity and Oliver hadn’t been locked in the Bunker together and forced to deal with their issues? Would they still have found their way back? Would Felicity have been talking about him wistfully a decade from now the way Samantha was talking about…whoever it was she
Samantha’s eyes were far away as she said, “I was worried about getting hurt.” And that resonated. Felicity had to close her eyes it resonated _that_ much. “I was worried about William getting hurt so I… I told myself it was smart to go slow. That was the way you built a good foundation, made absolutely _certain_ it was right. I was just taking it one step at a time.”

Felicity just barely kept herself from flinching at Samantha’s choice of words. God, she was starting to hate _one step at a fraking time_.

“Then he was offered a job at Monument Point. It was an amazing opportunity. He wasn’t going to turn it down for…” Blowing out a breath, Samantha swallowed. “We’d only been on a few dates. I’d wanted to spread them out, make _sure_ it would work. But now… I’ve always wondered, what if I hadn’t? What if I’d taken the risk?” Samantha shook her head, turning her head to meet Felicity’s eyes and whisper, “Life is _t_”

“Yes, it is,” Felicity whispered back.

Over and over Felicity was reminded of that fact and… yet, she allowed herself to get stuck in her own fears and insecurities. Time and time again. To forget. To go on as if time was infinite. With her mother. With starting her business. With Oliver….

Felicity’s heart had started to accelerate and now she could feel it beating in her throat, because… because… _life was short_. There was no time to waste.

“It feels like I’ve been living my life on the defensive,” Samantha confessed and Felicity didn’t know what to do with the fact that she was now becoming her confidant.

Or that she could relate to this on a visceral level.

“Always running. Trying to protect myself and William. First from Momma Queen, then a broken heart, then… a million unknown dangers. I’m so _tired_ of running.”

“So stop,” Felicity said it softly.

Not sure if she was telling Samantha or… herself. Because _Felicity_ had been living on the defensive too. For so long after her father died, after Cooper, and then, last year, she’d fallen into the same old pattern. It had taken a… _Supervillain_ locking them in an underground death trap to shake her out of it.

But maybe Felicity hadn’t come out of it. Not fully.

“I have to do something different,” Samantha said and…

Oh yeah, they were talking about _her_ life. Not Felicity’s. Though she certainly agreed. Different was good. Necessary even. For both of them maybe.

“It’s not like living like this has gotten me anywhere.”

It had never gotten Felicity anywhere either. The best things in her life happened when she had held her breath and jumped in feet first, going with her gut. Not thinking too hard.

“Does that mean you’re moving to Star City?” Felicity asked quietly because, thankfully, some part of her brain was still on the problem in front of her.
Samantha gave Felicity a weak smile. “It means I’ll consider it. I need to carefully weigh the pros and cons of Central City versus Star City. Sleep on it, I think. I haven’t had nearly enough sleep to make this kind of decision.” Her smile turned wry, tipping up more on one end. 

Felicity found herself returning it. “That sounds wise.” Because *objectively* it did. From Samantha’s perspective both cities were good options and needed to be considered carefully. She had a child to consider.

“But I won’t fight the two of them.” Samantha gestured to where Oliver and William sat. “I won’t try to keep them apart. William…” she took in a deep breath, seeming to steel herself, “he’s of an age now that he really needs his father. I just hope Oliver can be the father he deserves.”

“He will be.” If there was one thing Felicity was sure of, it was *that*. Plus, she planned on making certain of it.

Samantha smiled and it wasn’t ironic or skeptical. Not this time. “Maybe I need to talk to him now. Oliver, I mean. Without the screaming or threats.”

Oh. Samantha meant *now.*

Thank *God.*

This conversation may have gone a whole *hell* of lot better than Felicity anticipated, but it had…it had brought up a lot of emotions she hadn’t been prepared for and…*wow,* she was glad it was over.

“I’ll get him for you.” Felicity tried not to appear too eager to escape as she stood and went (as slowly as she could make herself) to Oliver, dropping onto the couch behind him.

Placing her hands on Oliver’s shoulders, Felicity resisted the urge to lay her head there and just be. Instead, she leaned down and whispered into his ear, “You’re up.”

Oliver smiled (a nervous smile, but excited, Felicity thought). He stood, dropping a kiss on her lips and whispering, “Thank you.”

She almost whispered back, ‘don’t thank me yet,’ but thought better of it. Oliver was anxious enough. Felicity watched him go, trying to push back the intrusive thoughts about how close she had come to *not* being here, to not having Oliver back and…

Nothing in the world felt so right as being with Oliver. Even now, working separately, but as a team. It felt effortless. Right.

But for the grace of *God.*

Swallowing, Felicity forced herself to turn to William to see he was watching *her* rather than his parents. Rather intently too.

Okay, then. *Round two.*

God, this was hard.

Felicity scooted down to sit next to her boyfriend’s (Oliver was right. That word was woefully inadequate) son, in the place Oliver had just vacated.

“So what are you playing?” Felicity asked, pointing to the tablet William was holding. It seemed a
safe enough question.

But William frowned and shrugged. So…maybe not?

“Nothing good,” William grunted. “Everything is restricted on this thing. It says it has wifi but it won’t let me get anywhere I want to go or download any good apps.”

Well, that was something Felicity could do something about. Tech. A problem she could solve. Thank God.

Felicity gestured for William to hand her the tablet. “What do you want to play?”

William shrugged again but he handed over the tablet and this shrug seemed more interested than despondent at least. “I dunno. Roblox, maybe?”

He was watching her closely, eyes alternating between Felicity’s face and her fingers as they flew over the screen. She flicked a look at William as she systematically began dismantling the tablet’s straight jacket. It hurt her to see it. The poor baby.

“What’s Roblox?” Felicity asked absently, wondering if it was something she should know.

But it only earned Felicity her third shrug. “It’s like Minecraft…only nothing like Minecraft.”

O…kay…

Felicity quirked an eyebrow at William.

Luckily it was enough to prompt William to explain, “I mean, it looks like Minecraft, kinda, but instead of just building stuff, you can make games and other people can play them on-line.”

“That’s cool.” They hadn’t had anything that cool when Felicity was William’s age. Which might have been a good thing. She’d barely got off the computer as it was. “So you need to download the app?”

William nodded. “And access the internet to get to my account.”

“That shouldn’t be hard.” Felicity’s fingers worked their magic. It was relaxing actually. And it seemed to impress William, so that was a bonus. “How do you spell it?”

“R-O-B-L-O-X. Are you going to marry my dad?”

R-O-B…what the…?

What?

Felicity’s head snapped over, her wide eyes settling on William’s frighteningly intense, and alarmingly intelligent, stare. “Excuse me?” It might have come out in an embarrassing squeak.

“Are you and my dad going to get married?” William repeated, pronouncing it more carefully…as if that would keep the question from making Felicity’s brain explode.

Because it wasn’t like they hadn’t…set a date and had a venue and a rabbi and…

Dear God, they would have already had their one-year anniversary by now. If things had things been different.
And the boy sitting in front of her was indirectly the reason they hadn’t.

Now William wanted to know if they were getting married and Felicity had no idea if it was something the boy wanted or not. She had no idea if it was something she wanted.

No, it was something she wanted. Definitely. Eventually. In future.

How near a future wasn’t something Felicity had really let herself contemplate. Forever, sure, but engagement? Marriage? That had been a no-fly zone for her brain for the last, oh…year or so.

But now, here Felicity was, sitting with Oliver’s son, who she had met less than 24 hours ago and…

And apparently Felicity was taking too long to answer because William frowned and followed up with, “Are you going to be my step-mom?”

Lovely. This kid and his one-two punches. “Um…it’s com—”

William groaned. Loudly. “Please don’t say it’s complicated.

And that, incredibly, made Felicity laugh. Okay then.

“Oliver and I haven’t talked about it. This time,” Felicity told him as honestly as she could. Because what else could she say? That their last engagement had ended so traumatically she hadn’t let herself think about it? And was she really supposed to discuss this with William before she discussed it with Oliver?

Apparently, William thought so. Narrowing his eyes at her, he gave Felicity a look that was both skeptical and confrontational. Wow, William was quite the little interrogator. That look alone.

Fine. Felicity blew out a breath. “Your father and I were engaged but we…we broke up and are just recently back in a relationship. We haven’t discussed marriage since getting back together.”

Being together forever, yes. Marriage, no. Which, now that she thought about it, seemed like a very weird distinction, but William didn’t know that and didn’t need to so she met his frightening serious gaze and said plainly, “That’s the whole truth.”

Just…please don’t ask why they broke up. Please don’t ask why they broke up…

“Why’d you break up?”

Frak.

Felicity wasn’t going to catch a break, was she?

Okay. Felicity was gonna try brief, but honest. “He lied to me.”

And amazingly William just nodded, accepting the answer. Thank God. “Why did you get back together then?”

“He stopped lying.” Which was also accurate, if the over simplification of the century. But it did seem to satisfy William and he nodded sagely. This kid was an old soul.

William even gave Felicity two whole minutes to relax and work on finding his app.

Then, “So you’re probably going to get married soon then?”
Felicity couldn’t help but laugh. God, this kid was tenacious. Wonder where he got that from?

Lowering her voice, she confessed, “I would like to marry your father. One day.” Felicity tried to keep her voice soft enough to not be overheard (again, really would prefer to discuss this with Oliver first).

Unfortunately, Slade just happened to be five feet away…

*Crap.*

Slade’s face turned and he fixed her with a *look*, half-smile, one eyebrow up (which did look extra roguish with the eye patch).

Scrunching up her face, Felicity sent Slade a ‘don’t give me that look’ look, resisting the urge to stick out her tongue at him (she was the adult here). Because, seriously, this was hard enough, she didn’t need crap from Slade of all people.

Chuckling to himself, Slade just shook his head and turned back to his magazine (thankfully). Though if he thought Felicity didn’t notice his eye (singular, *one* eye, which was still weird) dancing with amusement…yeah, she did.

“One day? What does *that* mean?” William demanded, pulling Felicity’s attention back to him. An amused ex-villain *and* an irate ten year-old. Lovely.

Seriously, Felicity wasn’t sure how she was going to handle this. Like *emotionally*. She wanted to go back to bed. Preferably with Oliver. Lock the rest of the world away.

Because right now, Felicity’s brain was tripping over the fact that she had just had a conversation with William’s mother about how short life was and now all Felicity could think about was how sick she was of wasting it.

Yeah, what *did* ‘one day’ mean? What the hell were they…was she waiting for?

And what was Felicity supposed to tell William? ‘Look, kid, I’m as confused and frustrated by this as you are. I wish it were less complicated. I wish the answers were clearer. But I’m fraking clueless.’

*That* would go over well.

Maybe telling the truth was harder than it looked.

But she needed to say *something*. William’s annoyance at her delay was palpable. And growing. “It means that…” Felicity had no fricken clue.

So William finished for her, “That you don’t want to tell me.”

Felicity was the one grunting in frustration now. “*No*. It means, *I don’t know*. Sometimes, when adults don’t give you the answer you want, it doesn’t mean they’re holding back, it just means they *don’t know*.”

William frowned. Maybe he even pouted a little. He pulled his leg to his chest and rested his chin on it, grunting, “Sometimes, I think adults make things complicated on purpose. Things that *could* be really simple.”

Out of the mouth of babes.
Having no idea what to say to that, Felicity focused on the tablet. It was much less stressful than this conversation…which was starting the rival the one with Samantha.

And, of course, now all Felicity could think about was marriage. And the life her and Oliver had planned. Before it all went to crap. Everything they had dreamed of. And now…

Marriage was a huge step. Wasn’t it? Was it strange that it really didn’t feel huge at all?

“What are you waiting for?” William asked in a whisper and Felicity had to do a double-take. For a moment she thought it came from her own mouth, not his.

This kid was insightful and straightforward. A dangerous combination. But still Felicity didn’t have answer for William, especially since it was becoming clear platitudes would not only be dismissed but treated with the utmost disdain.

At least William seemed to want them to get married. That was something. God, how awful would it be if he was against it? Or if he held some sort of fantasy Oliver would get together with his mother? It made Felicity shudder just thinking about it.

Before Felicity could come up with an answer…an answer other than ‘I don’t know,’ William blurted out, “My dad said you were the love of his life.”

Felicity’s eyes flew to William, warmth flooding her. It was really hard not to grin like a loon. “He did?”

“Yes. Is he yours?”

Wow. Wow and wow. This kid…

“Yes.” At least that was a question Felicity knew the answer to. She glanced up and saw Slade’s lip quirking again and had the urge to chuck a cold piece of toast at him.

William seemed to relax. It was clear that this, at least, was the answer he wanted. Thank goodness. “So what are you waiting for?”

Fine. Felicity gave up. “You know what, William, that is an excellent question and I promise I will give it some serious thought, even talk to your dad about it but right now…I need your Roblox username.”

Williams’ face shuttered up so fast that it made Felicity dizzy. Was he really that upset that she had put off the question…?

Biting his lip, William asked, “You promise you won’t tell anyone?”

Blowing out a relieved breath, Felicity gave her first truly easy answer of the conversation, “Of course not.” It was funny what things kids found important.

“Even to my dad?”

“Cross my heart.” Felicity demonstrated, smiling at him. “We don’t keep secrets from each other but I’m sure he’ll understand under the circumstances.” It was a kid’s username, why would Oliver care?

Swallowing, William glanced at the screen, then at Slade, before coming up onto his knees to whisper in Felicity’s ear, “CaptainGreenArrow06.”
And…Felicity swore to God, it brought tears to her eyes. It was the sweetest thing she had ever heard…ever and, wow, it was going to be a lot harder to keep that a secret than she thought.

But she would. Because it was important to William. And it was his secret to tell.

Nodding, because she didn’t trust her voice, Felicity typed the name into the tablet. The screen changed as it loaded and she handed the tablet back to William.

As soon as his game came up, William’s hands flew over the screen and a square looking character dressed in green, with a bow in one hand and a Captain America type shield (but with green circles and an arrow head in the center) appeared. In small print, above the character, was ‘CaptainGreenArrow06.’

“Is that you?” Felicity asked in a whisper.

Blushing and gnawing on his lip, William nodded.

“He is sooo cool.”

Because, OMG, it was so fraking cool.

William shot Felicity a wide grin. “I modified him myself.”

Her eyebrows flew up. “Like…in the code?” William nodded and before Felicity could even think about it she held out her fist and William bumped it. “That is impressive.” He was her kinda kid.

William blushed again and did that shrug thing he seemed to like to do. Felicity realized she was going to have to learn the different William shrugs. It was like a secret William language.

“I just combined a Green Arrow mod with a Captain America mod. It isn’t that big a deal.”

Humble too. Felicity really liked this kid. “Well, if you like coding Curtis and I could show you some things.”

“Cool!” William beamed at her.

Felicity watched William play for a few minutes and reached for her coffee, realizing she had left it behind at the table with Samantha. Was it worth going back for? Ugh.

Then Felicity noticed Williams full plate. How long had it been since he had a meal? “Did you eat?”

William shrugged. That damn shrug.

Rolling her eyes, Felicity pushed the plate toward him. “Eat something.” Did she sound parental? She should sound parental, right? Just not too parental. Step-parental…but in a good way.

Without looking up, William reached out and touched his bacon. “It’s cold,” he announced with disgust, shoving it away. A complete and absolute dismissal.

Okay then.

Maybe Felicity needed to give Samantha more slack. This parenting thing…especially, the little things like answering questions and getting a kid to eat…so much harder than it looked.

Felicity pushed the coffee table away and William looked up as it caused his tablet to fall to his
knees. “Hey.”

“Come on,” Felicity climbed to her feet. “You need to get something warm to eat and I need more coffee.”

William frowned but he got to his feet and followed Felicity back to the buffet. Win for her?

At the buffet, Felicity’s focus was on preparing her coffee (and her obsessive thoughts of marriage. Ugh) when William asked, “Hey, can I have a chocolate muffin?”

“Sure,” Felicity answered without thinking, because why couldn’t he have a chocolate muffin? It was breakfast. But then…

William looked positively gleeful at Felicity’s answer. Oh frak. Something wasn’t right here, but the oversized muffin was already in his hand.

“Did your mom say you couldn’t have a chocolate muffin?” Felicity asked, narrowing her eyes.

William shot her such an innocent look. A full-on Queen-style puppy-dog look and damn if it wasn’t even more powerful on his young face. Dammit!

Felicity rolled her eyes (that was the only defense she had against the puppy-dog eyes, weak though it was) and sighing, she muttered, “Just…have some fruit with it or something.”

“Okay,” William agreed. A little too quickly and a little too cheerfully. It made Felicity certain she had done something wrong.

What did she miss? Protein! William needed protein. “And…drink some milk.” That had protein, right?

“Can it be chocolate?” asked the master negotiator.

Why not? “Sure.” It still had protein in it, didn’t it? The chocolate didn’t deplete the protein content or anything? Plus chocolate has antioxidants. Besides, the kid had just survived his second kidnapping by a psychopath in just over a year, his life had been turned upside down, let him have some chocolate in his damn milk.

Felicity practiced saying it in her head just in case Samantha called her out. Without the ‘damn’ part.

William didn’t even wait to get the massive muffin on his plate before shoving half of it in his mouth, which really seemed improbable given its size. Yet, somehow, he managed it.

“Mmm. Thank you, Felicity.” At least, that’s what she thought William said. It was hard to tell with his mouth full of muffin.

It just intensified the feeling she had done something wrong. But luckily for Felicity the door opened, drawing both of their attentions as Digg walked in, JJ sitting high on his arm, Lyla and a man Felicity didn’t recognize behind them.

So that’s where Digg had been. Felicity hadn’t known that JJ was on the ship but it made sense that the boy and his mother were John’s focus.

“JJ here,” the toddler announced, waving enthusiastically.

And now everyone was aware that he was on board. Smiling, Felicity leaned toward William and
whispered, “That’s Lyla and John’s son, JJ.”

“Let me guess, John Jr?” William drawled dryly. He was a sarcastic one. Felicity liked it.

She shook her head. “Jacob Jamison.” William’s eyes flew to Felicity and she just smiled. “Naw, you were right. It’s John Jr.”

William rolled his eyes, giving her an all-adults-are-so-lame look, but he smiled as he polished off his muffin. Felicity shoved a banana at him out of pure guilt.

“Unca Owie!”

JJ’s loud declaration again pulled Felicity’s eyes across the room and she met Lyla’s. “He’s still in his loud phase, huh?”

Lyla grimaced. “Yup. Hoping for an end to that one anytime now.”

JJ paid zero attention to his mom. Instead he lunged for Oliver, who appeared out of nowhere to catch him. Felicity watched like the besotted love-sick fool she was as Oliver greeted his godson.

Until her eye caught William, who was also giving Oliver and JJ his full attention, but with a thoughtful sad look on his face. Felicity moved closer and placed her hand gently on his back.

William glanced up at Felicity for a moment, but his eyes were immediately drawn back to Oliver and JJ. As if he couldn’t stop watching if he wanted to. “He would have been a great dad, wouldn’t he?” he whispered.

It was a bit of a gut punch and it was on the tip of Felicity’s tongue to say Oliver was and still will be a good dad to him but…but that wasn’t what William meant. Crap. “You mean when you were little?”

William nodded, the look in his eyes heartbreaking and maybe even a little lost.

Felicity took a deep breath and… really thought about it. This might be the hardest question she’d been asked yet. Right now, this Oliver, her Oliver, the one she was in love with…she had no doubt he would be an amazing father, baby on up, but ten years ago…

“Maybe. I didn’t know your dad back then but…” William turned to give Felicity his full focus, head tilted as he considered her words. Frak, guess she would have to choose them wisely. “By all accounts, that Oliver was a big jerk,” she told him softly.

“Maybe having me would have helped him grow up,” William argued in a whisper.

He really was a smart kid and Felicity couldn’t say she hadn’t thought of that herself. “Maybe but…William, Oliver isn’t the same man your mom met. The island he was stranded on changed him. He would say for the worse, but I would very much disagree.”

William turned his eyes back to Oliver, who was now holding JJ, saying something in his ear that made the toddler laugh loudly. “It made him a hero,” William murmured.

“Yes, it did.” Felicity followed William’s eyes as they moved from Oliver to Samantha, who was also looking at Oliver with an almost wistful look. “And honestly, William, if Oliver was the man he is today, ten years ago I’m sure your mom wouldn’t have kept you two separated.”

At least Felicity hoped not. She was trying to give Samantha more credit, give her the benefit of
the doubt. But, of course, the Oliver he was today wouldn’t have gotten some girl he barely knew pregnant…

William sagged a bit, worrying his lip. “But that doesn’t mean my mom—”

Again, Felicity was saved by JJ as he screamed out, “An Wicity!”

Oliver placed the boy on his feet and JJ barreled toward her. Felicity was grateful for the reprieve but…she leaned down to catch and scoop JJ up before he tackled her knees, very possibly knocking her to the floor. JJ may only be two and a half, but this kid was a mini-linebacker.

“Hey there, Little John,” Felicity said, kissing his cheek and trying to get the very solid little boy settled in her arms. “Wow, you’re getting big.” And heavy.

JJ threw his arms out in a muscle-man pose, lowering his voice and announcing, “Big John!”

“No!” Felicity threw a hand out to try and steady the toddler before he flipped backward on her much-smaller-than-daddy’s arm and William stepped forward to do the same. Felicity smiled at him gratefully as she told JJ, “Careful, I’m not as strong and dexterous as daddy and Uncle Oliver.”

JJ frowned at her. “Dex…?”

William laughed. “She sure likes fancy words, doesn’t she?”

JJ turned bright eyes to the older boy, seeming to notice him for the first time and looking him over with considerable interest. “Who you?”

The manners on this kid. Chuckling, Felicity hushed him, “Give me a chance, Little John. This is William.”

A wide smile spread over JJ’s face and he waved. “Hi, Willm.”

William grinned back, “Hey, little dude.”

Well, this was going quite nicely. It made Felicity feel rather warm and mushy inside. “JJ, William is Uncle Oliver’s son,” she told him, imagining that would endear him to the toddler even more.

But for some reason JJ frowned, a tiny V forming between his eyes. “No.”

No? Felicity laughed, though a tiny niggle of anxiety started up in her belly. “Yes. William is Oliver’s son, like you are John’s son.”

JJ looked at William suspiciously now. Then he turned skeptical eyes to Felicity. “Unca Owie no son.”

Oh crap. This had a potential to go bad really quickly.

Thankfully, William just smiled at JJ and said, “It’s confusing, isn’t it, little dude?” JJ nodded, his eyes wide. “My mom and dad aren’t married and my mom and I live in a different city.”

Tipping his head to the side, JJ seemed to be considering this, but he still had a this-doesn’t-compute look on his face.

Why were kids so hard? Why couldn’t they just accept what they were told? Felicity really needed to find a manual somewhere, because she was feeling way over her head.
Then William sent Felicity an anxious look, like he was completely out of ideas as how to explain this to JJ and Felicity…zero clue. She was actually considering sending the toddler back to his parents because she was just that out of her depth when William grabbed a second chocolate mega-muffin.

“Hey, JJ, you want a chocolate muffin?”

Apparently chocolate muffins were the answer to all of life’s dilemmas because JJ yelled, “Yeah!” and lunged toward William and the muffin. This kid was way too used to being around strong, coordinated people.

Luckily, William was very much Oliver’s son and caught the (not so small) toddler just as JJ’s small hands closed around the huge muffin.

Uh oh. Not again. “JJ are you allowed…?”

And…too late. JJ shoved as much of the muffin as could physically fit into his small mouth. And then some.

Okay then. Maybe Lyla was distracted. Maybe she wouldn’t notice that Felicity was feeding the children what may or may not be semi-forbidden breakfast foods.

“Mamma! Choclit Muffn!” JJ announced, holding up a fist full of muffin remains.

And, damn, these kids! Felicity was starting to believe they were too honest.

Lyla’s eyes found them from across the room and she shook her head with a rueful little smile. “I see. Who said you could have a muffin?”

“Willm!” JJ immediately announced, pointing to his new friend. And Felicity was just glad she hadn’t been thrown under the bus. Lyla couldn’t be angry at William. He was just a kid.

But William…he looked semi-panicked at the accusation and blurted out, “Felicity said we could.”

And…hello, bus her old friend.

It wasn’t even accurate. No one asked Felicity if JJ could have a muffin, just William. And then…

Samantha leaned over in her chair to get a good look at William. Giving him a very mom-look, she gestured to her cheek, right where William had a huge smear of chocolate from where he had just devoured his own massive muffin. “I see JJ isn’t the only one having dessert for breakfast.”

Frak! No one told Felicity chocolate muffins were dessert. They’re muffins. Muffins equaled breakfast! Not dessert!

If possible, Samantha’s mom eyes speared even more intently into her son. “I don’t suppose you ate your eggs first?”

Well…Samantha’s tone wasn’t that angry. That was something, at least? Maybe?

“Well…” William’s guilty eyes found Felicity and…

She panicked, okay? Felicity full on, outright freaked-out panicked.

Which of course meant the babble to end all babbles.
“I thought muffins were muffins and they were breakfast. Is that in a manual somewhere that says kids can’t have chocolate muffins for breakfast? I have chocolate muffins for breakfast all the time. When I have something with my coffee. Most of the time it’s just coffee. I didn’t give them coffee. I swear. And William promised he’d have fruit and milk too…”

William nodded, holding up the banana as evidence. It would have helped if it had been opened.

Crap. Felicity’s mouth kept going. “And William hadn’t eaten anything. No eggs, nothing. It’s been like days. Isn’t a chocolate muffin better than not eating anything? And—”

“Breathe, Felicity. It’s okay,” Samantha finally interrupted and she didn’t even look mad. She was even smiling (a little). “I’m not upset. Though William knows better. He was just taking advantage of the newbie.” She turned to William, who now had an irritated almost-teenager look firmly on his face. “Don’t get used to it. Felicity won’t be a newbie for long.”

The irritation fled from William’s face with lightning speed and his eyes widened. “Does that mean we’re moving to Star City?”

JJ, realizing he was no longer the center of attention, wriggled out of William’s arms and scampered away. Felicity didn’t notice where to, she was too busy holding her breath as she watched William and his mother.

When Samantha didn’t immediately deny it, William let out a whoop and threw himself at her. “Thank you, Mom!”

But Samantha sighed, putting up a hand and stopping him. “Sweetheart…”

William grunted, frowning as he drew back. “Mo-om…”

Taking his hands, Samantha drew the boy between her knees, “William, sweetie. I’m considering moving to Star City.”

Looking skeptical, like he wasn’t sure if this was a win or not, William narrowed his eyes and asked, “Are you just saying that to—?”

“I’m saying that,” Samantha said firmly, “because that’s what I mean. I’m thinking it over very carefully. Look, you keep telling me to treat you like a big kid—”

“I’m not a kid!” William didn’t stomp his foot, but Felicity would swear he wanted to.

Immediately, Samantha backtracked. “Sorry. Sorry. I meant tween. You want me to stop treating you like a little kid and treat you like the young man you are, right?”

William nodded, though he looked sullen and more like that little kid than Felicity had seen so far.

“Well then, you are going to have to accept that I need time to think about where we are going to live. I don’t want to make a promise I can’t keep and I can’t make this kind of decision overnight.”

Scoffing, William rolled his eyes. He was almost as good at that as he was at shrugging. “That’s how you decided about New Hampshire.” He managed to sound both accusing and like a lost little boy at the same time, but he never let go of his mother’s hands.

This time, it was Samantha who scoffed. “Yeah and look where that got us.” Now her tone was wheedling and she wiggled William’s arms as she smiled up at him. “Am I right?”
William finally gave her the smallest of smiles. “I hate New Hampshire.”

“So do I,” Samantha agreed, rather passionately, and that earned her an even bigger smile. “Which is why we won’t be going back there.”

Hope flashed in William’s too blue eyes. “So…”?

“I’m considering both Star City and Central City,” Samantha told him firmly. In a tone that brooked no further arguments.

Felicity really doubted that was going to stop William, though. Not Mr. The-Queen-Stubbornness-Is-In-My-Blood.

But Felicity was rather shocked when William just slumped, pouting a little, almost whining when he said, “I’d rather live in Star City.” He really did sound so much younger when he was talking to his mother.

“That is one of the things I’m considering.” The way Samantha said it would satisfy Felicity but, then again, she wasn’t a traumatized 10 year-old.

“But Dad’s in Star City.”

Felicity almost winced because she wasn’t sure that was a selling point for Samantha.

“You will get to see your father either way,” Samantha promised gently and it brightened William considerably and made Felicity smile. Then Samantha lowered her voice and cajoled, “And we just might have to get you a phone. Even though ten is way too young for a cell-phone.”

William seemed conflicted, which didn’t seem to be the response Samantha was hoping for. Or expecting. Felicity considered jumping in and promising she’d trick out that phone but wasn’t sure it was her place to interfere.

Should she even be watching? Her eyes found Oliver and he was watching just as intently and if Felicity knew him, and she did, she’d swear he was holding his breath.

“I’d rather move to Star City than have a phone,” William finally whispered.

Felicity’s hand flew to her mouth. It was the only thing that kept the sob inside as her eyes filled with tears and her gaze instinctively found Oliver again. He was looking right back at her with an emotional smile and watery eyes. Felicity moved to Oliver’s side and his arm fell naturally around her shoulders, pulling her to him.

And Samantha’s face…there were tears in her eyes too as what William said sunk in. She reached up and cupped William’s face, her voice raspy as she pleaded, “Just give me a few days to figure everything out. Okay, sweetheart?”

William nodded, but his face was still so sad as he whimpered a small, “Okay.”

“And, William, don’t you ever doubt I love you.” Samantha murmured and now Felicity really felt like she should turn away, but she couldn’t make herself move. “I love you so much—”

Samantha’s voice cracked and William’s face crumbled.

“I know. I know, I’m sorry.”

“I know you are, sweetie. But the things you said last night…they aren’t okay. You know that.”
“I know. I know,” William sobbed, *really* crying now, looking so very young, tugging at each and every one of Felicity’s heartstrings.

“It’s okay, sweetie.”

William threw himself into Samantha’s arms, sobbing into her shoulder, babbling a litany of, “I love you, mommy. I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean it. I didn’t mean it.”

“Shhh…” Samantha hushed him, burying her own face in her son’s shoulder, and soothing him with long strokes down his back and…Felicity was *finally* able to turn away.

Lucky for her, Felicity turned right into Oliver’s arms. His chest was right there and it was the perfect place to bury her face, because this…*all of this* was becoming way too much.

Oliver’s arms enveloped her as he turned both of them away from the emotional scene. He cupped the back of Felicity’s head and leaned his cheek against her hair.

Cause, *wow*, that was intense.

Felicity balled her fists into the back of Oliver’s shirt and…she was just *so grateful* that he was here. That they were *together*. This was the way things were supposed to be. She was so grateful for every single person in this room but mostly Oliver and…she *really* needed to call her mother.

And…

Felicity was so very *done* wasting time. Guarding her heart.

Love.

Family.

*That* was what was important.

And it was *too important* to hesitate. Felicity needed to jump in with both feet and pray for the best.

Lyla cleared her throat, giving everyone an excuse to turn their attention to her and give William and Samantha some privacy.

“Oliver, Felicity, I want you both to meet Captain Mitchell, of the United States Navy. He’s the Commanding Officer of this ship and graciously agreed to join ARGUS on this mission.” Lyla gestured to a kind looking older man in Naval Uniform.

Oliver held out his hand to the man and he took it in a firm handshake. “Captain, Sir. *Thank you.*” Oliver’s voice held a firm and genuine sort of gratitude that…Felicity didn’t know why, but it made her tears come harder, fall faster.

She really was a wreck. Trying to compose herself, Felicity forced a smile and wiped her eyes hastily with the back of her hand, then turned and offered the Captain her hand as well, squeezing Oliver tight with the other.

“Yes. *Thank you, Captain.*” Felicity was surprised at how steady her voice was because she felt anything but.

“My pleasure, ma’am.” His handshake was gentle and he (believe it or not) gave her a little bow. He was quite a gentleman this captain…
The conversation started up around her, but Felicity couldn’t hear. Blood had started to roar in her ears.

The ship’s captain…

She was done waiting…

“So you’re a captain?” Felicity blurted out, interrupting whatever conversation had been going on around her and drawing stares. They thought she was crazy. “Of this ship?”

Maybe she was crazy. But just a little.

“Yes, indeed,” the Captain answered, still smiling. He was the only one not looking at Felicity like she’d lost it.

Oliver was frowning down at her. “Fel—”

“Can you marry people?”

Felicity could feel Oliver stiffen at her words, his breath catching and his hand spasming at her waist. There might have been a soft gasp in the background.

But Captain Mitchell just grinned wider. “Well, actually I can. I have. It’s a funny story—”

Normally, Felicity would care but…

“Can you marry us?”

Revised 6/16/18

Chapter End Notes

Notes:

Okay, so wow that was a long chapter. I think I got comfortable with the shorter ones again. Please, let me know if it was too long. They are easy enough to split. :-).

There is so much in here this is going to be a long author’s note so bare with me.

So Felicity didn’t have to use her loud voice and on re reading I did wonder if the Samantha issue was resolved too quickly (not that it’s 100% resolved, but it’s so much better), but this story can’t go on forever. I hope you, like Felicity understand where Samantha is coming from a little more now. The part at the end where William forgives his mom and asks for forgiveness is reminiscent of the end of so many of my kid’s meltdowns. I hope it resonates and is as real as I felt it was.

The chocolate muffin…I might have gotten obsessed with the chocolate muffin (I rewind a bit in the next chapter with Oliver’s pov and the muffin comes back). If it
isn’t obvious, it started to represent every stupid little parenting decision that we agonize over and second guess and judge each other for, that feels so important (but probably isn’t), especially as a new parent. I hope it was funny too.

I have JJ here and I know many (maybe most) prefer Baby Sara, but Baby JJ is who we have before this diverged from cannon and that’s who I’m going with in this verse. Hopefully, he was like-able.

If you don’t know what ROBLOX is, it’s exactly as William describes. It looks kinda like Minecraft, but kids can build their own games and play each other’s. At least that’s how my kids described it. Around here anyway, it’s THE hot game that all the kids 6-12 play on their tablets and computers. Mostly I used it as a way for Felicity and William to bond.

The usual thank yous so much to Fairytalehearts, Imusuallyobsessed, and Ireland1733 who are now having to flip back and forth between fics with me.

Thank you all so much!!!

Emmy
Author’s Note:

This chapter begins with a bit of a rewind, from Oliver’s pov, which I know is hard with the cliffhanger from the last chapter. Sorry about that, but…there were things that Oliver wanted to show us.

Hope you enjoy it!
Oliver didn’t know how she did it or what she said, but he would swear that Felicity had accomplished a *fucking* miracle.

In twenty minutes, Felicity had managed to do what Oliver couldn’t in all those secret, guilt-ridden trips to Central City. Felicity had convinced Samantha he had changed. To give him a chance. To allow him…them…*all of them* into William’s life. To work *with* them, instead of against them.

Yup, Felicity was a *Goddamn* miracle worker and Oliver didn’t know how he had gotten so lucky. On top of that, Samantha was actually considering moving to Star City. And after last night…

Oliver could finally admit to himself that he hadn’t thought it was going to happen, not without lawyers which he *really* didn’t want. Mostly though, Oliver had dreaded William’s disappointment and he was afraid of the lengths it would drive him to. He was so Goddamn thankful he wouldn’t have to find out.

Even the second option Samantha was considering, her and William moving back to Central City, William visiting Star City twice a month, along with *unlimited* access to his son on the phone and Skype…Oliver had to admit *that* was better than anything he thought he would get from Samantha. Voluntarily anyway.

Don’t get him wrong, Oliver *very much* wanted his son in *his* city where he could be involved in his day to day life, where he could keep a close eye on him but…William living in Star City hadn’t been anything Oliver allowed himself to consider before.

The Central City arrangement, it was kind of Oliver’s dream come true…*literally*. It was *exactly* what he had wanted, what he had been working toward when he had been visiting William in secret, trying to convince Samantha that he could and *would* be a good father to their son.

Oliver had thought…*hoped* that after he and Felicity were married and he was mayor (and after the
Darhk threat removed), Samantha would see that he was a responsible man who could provide a stable place for William to visit. That she would, eventually, relent.

Now it was pretty clear that was an idiotic plan. Oliver should have turned to Felicity right away. Lesson (so incredibly) learned.

In fact, Oliver was pretty sure (because of Felicity) this was the most pleasant conversation he had ever had with Samantha. Well, in eleven years at least.

Samantha didn’t even seem bothered by how well Felicity and William were hitting it off. Felicity even appeared to be getting William to eat. Which Oliver had tried and failed (miserably) at.

Yeah, he was 100% sure she was gonna be the better parent. Felicity was a natural. Oliver saw William stuff a chocolate muffin in his mouth and he grinned. Though…

That really didn’t seem like the healthiest choice. “Those muffins seem more like dessert than breakfast,” Oliver murmured, almost to himself.

Which unfortunately had Samantha’s eyes jerking to William as she frowned. Fuck. Oliver shouldn’t have said anything. What was wrong with him?

Rolling her eyes and shaking her head, Samantha turned back to her own plate, muttering, “William’s been angling for that damn chocolate muffin all morning.”

And things had been going so well. Now Samantha was probably pissed at Felicity and thinking she was incompetent and it was only a chocolate muffin, what was the big deal anyway?

Taking a deep breath, Oliver tried to swallow his defensive panic and tried to be diplomatic, “I’m sure if Felicity had known that you said ‘no’—”

Samantha put up her hand, giving Oliver a small, if tired, smile and shaking her head again. “It’s fine. You need to learn to let these things go. Besides, at this point, I’m just glad he’s eating something, anything. And by Felicity giving it to him,” Samantha’s grin widened, a shrewd light in her eye, “it’s not me giving in to the power struggle. I’ll just tell William later he had better eat a really good lunch and he’ll probably feel guilty enough to do it.”

Oliver just stared at her. His mouth hanging open (like a fool, he was certain). He wasn’t sure if he was impressed or terrified. Finally, he managed to say, “This parenting thing is a lot more complicated than it looks, isn’t it?”

Chuckling, Samantha’s tired eyes brightened. “It’s certainly not for the faint of heart. And, lucky you, you get to start right at the beginning if puberty.” She patted Oliver’s hand and he couldn’t help but feel there was a part of her that was going to enjoy watching him flounder a bit.

But that was okay. Oliver would gladly serve as Samantha’s entertainment to get a chance to be an actual parent to William. Looking at Samantha…

“Tell me about him.” The words just popped out of Oliver’s mouth before he really thought about it and Samantha tipped her head to the side, her forehead crinkling. “William. Would you…?” Oliver sucked in a deep breath. “There’s so much I don’t know.”

Samantha’s face became serious, maybe even cautious, but not displeased. “What do you want to know?”

What a question? What didn’t he want to know?
All the air left Oliver’s lungs and he said, “Everything. All of it. From the beginning.” He chuckled but there was a bitter edge as he thought of everything he had missed. “What kind of baby was he? What was his first word? Has William always…had a mind of his own? Was he a cuddler? Does he have allergies? Fears? Has he ever had a pet—?”

Samantha broke off Oliver’s very Felicity-esque babble with a tearful laugh and the look in her eyes, it wasn’t suspicion anymore it was…almost wonder. She leaned in and squeezed Oliver’s hand. “I think we’re going to be okay.” Then she nodded again, almost to herself.

And while Oliver was very happy that Samantha approved of his curiosity, he really wished she’d start answering because the questions were now burning a hole in the back of his brain and—

“JJ here!”

Oliver’s gaze was immediately drawn to the door and he couldn’t help but smile as John walked in with his very happy little boy perched on his arm. Lyla, Quintin, and a man who must be an officer on this ship followed them in. Oliver had no idea Lyla had brought JJ, but was thrilled for John (and JJ) that she had thought to do so.

Digg had spent far too much time apart from his son in the last year and, while Oliver knew rationally, that wasn’t his fault, well…

He had tried to be there for JJ while Digg was back in the army and, later, when he had been locked up. Even though being around JJ had been bittersweet at best, downright painful at worst. The boy had always reminded Oliver of what he couldn’t have.

First, when JJ was a baby, he reminded Oliver of everything that he wanted with Felicity but couldn’t have. Then later, it was everything Oliver had and was missing with his own son. After Darhk kidnapped William and he went into hiding…it was both. Ten times worse and both.

It had been hard…so damn hard but with Digg away and JJ’s only uncle being both an asshole and dead, Oliver had tried to give JJ something resembling a father figure. He knew he was a pathetic substitute for John, but he’d tried.

“No. Say hello to your friend’s son, Oliver,” Samantha said softly, pulling him out of the daze he hadn’t even known he was in. She gave him a small smile. “We have plenty of time to talk about William’s favorite baby food. ‘JJ’s here’ now.”

“I…” Oliver was torn. There were plenty of people here to pay attention to JJ, but William was—

JJ decided the issue by screaming, “Unca Owie!”

Oliver knew the boy was lunging for him before he caught a glimpse of it out of the corner of his eye. He was on his feet and moving the minute the words left JJ’s mouth. He knew from experience that Little John had a fondness for throwing himself from things and expecting to be caught. The last thing Oliver wanted was to be the first one to let the little boy fall.

But, of course, Digg wasn’t going to let that happen. “Whoa there, little man.” John tightened his hold, grabbing JJ’s legs and keeping him suspended long enough for Oliver to snatch him out of his dad’s arms.

Grabbing JJ around his middle, Oliver kept him upside down and lifted him over his head. “Hey, Jay. What’s ya doing hanging around up there?”

JJ squealed with delight. He’d always loved this. Flying through the air. Being swung around.
Upside down. Sideways. Whatever. The kid was a little daredevil and had been from the first
time he had seemed sturdy enough for Oliver to hold over his head. This was kinda their thing.

Sometimes Oliver wondered if Baby Sara, the little girl he had never known, would have been just
as rough and tumble. Somehow, knowing her parents, Oliver thought she would have been a little
spit-fire. He also couldn’t help but wonder if it would have been less painful to be around a little
girl.

Flipping JJ over (with maximum acrobatics), Oliver got him right-side up and hugged him to his
chest.

It didn’t really matter. Baby Sara was just an idea. This little boy, here, in his arms, was his
godson. He was the one he had visited hours after his birth, who he had seen Felicity hold and
wished…Oliver pressed his lips to JJ’s cheek and the boy squealed again as he was tickled by his
scruff and…

Oliver’s eyes automatically found Felicity across the room, standing next to William, talking in
hushed tones and realized…

It was all back on the table.

Felicity holding a baby…their baby. It could happen. God, what a fucking miracle.

JJ wrapped his arms around Oliver’s neck, squeezing hard enough to choke him (if Oliver’s neck
was a little less thick) and Oliver shared a smile with John, who had slipped an arm around Lyla’s
waist.

John had confessed to Oliver, one night over Jack Daniel’s, that ever since he had heard about baby
Sara, he couldn’t get out of his head the idea of having a little sister for JJ. As complicated and
difficult as their lives were…John had confessed him it felt like there was this little soul out there.
Just waiting to be born.

Oliver knew it had to be damn late and pretty far into that bottle of Jack for John to get that
sentimental, but he also knew if his friend said that out loud, it was something that had really
grabbed a hold of him. John wasn’t the overly sentimental type.

He wanted that for John. Oliver’s eyes, again, found William and Felicity. He wanted that little
sister for JJ and he wanted a little sister for William. He wanted…

God. How Oliver wanted.

The urge to throw himself at Felicity’s feet and beg her to marry him and have his babies was just
shy of overpowering.

Luckily (or not), Oliver had a ton of experience ignoring that very impulse. It was far from the
first time he dealt with it.

So, instead of humiliating himself, Oliver leaned in and whispered in JJ’s ear, “You know who you
haven’t said ‘hello’ to?”

JJ looked at him with wide eyes, as if he couldn’t imagine who. Which was particularly amusing
since there were close to a dozen people in this room who all loved JJ and would probably like a
‘hello’.

“Aunt Felicity,” Oliver told him in his best dramatic whisper.
“Huuh!” JJ gasped, as if it was the biggest revelation of all time. His eyes flew around the room until they found Felicity and immediately he pushed away from Oliver (as he had known the boy would) screaming, “An Wicity!”

His little feet were running before they even touched the floor and Oliver winced, because JJ at full speed could hurt. He only relaxed when he saw Felicity had managed to capture him and swing him into her arms.

After that, Oliver couldn’t do more than stand there and stare.

As the love of his life introduced his godson to his son.

It…it really didn’t feel real. Things this good didn’t happen to Oliver Queen.

This was maybe the tenth time Oliver had that thought since he woke up this morning with Felicity in his arms and…yet somehow things kept getting better.

Oliver listened to the three of their’s conversation (he tried to be covert about it but he doubted he was fooling anyone). He knew he should probably go over and try to help out but he couldn’t seem to make his legs move.

He was pretty sure if he did go over, he was going to start crying and it was one thing to tear up when he was alone with Felicity, but Oliver sure as hell wasn’t crying stupid happy tears in front of his team and his son.

He stood frozen as Felicity introduced JJ to William, then as Samantha accepted Felicity into her son’s life with a casual remark about how she’d ‘learn’. As William collapsed into his mother’s arms, sobbing, mending a relationship Oliver hadn’t realized how deeply he’d been worried about.

And, when Felicity finally turned from the emotional scene of William and his mother and into Oliver’s arms, it felt like that last ton of bricks had been lifted from his shoulders. He buried his hand in Felicity’s hair and the silky feel of it slipping through his fingers washed all the stress away.

He squeezed his eyes shut and again fought the impulse to plead with Felicity to make them a real family. In every way. Oliver bit his lip and pressed his mouth to her temple. It took all his will power not to fall to his knees right there and propose. Again. And, this time, he wouldn’t put it past himself to beg.

It was the epitome of selfishness really. Of greed. Oliver knew that. He had been given so much, right here in this room. Who was he to ask for more? Like the spoiled child he had always been, he always wanted more.

But the desire to solidify what he had found was real. Was that selfish? Oliver was terrified of losing it all again, even though rationally he knew holding tight wasn’t what was going to keep Felicity in his arms. Pressuring and suffocating an independent woman like her could only push her away.

But Felicity had said she was sick of baby-steps, that she wanted to wake up with him every morning for the next fifty years and…

Oliver just prayed that she still felt that way when the heady buzz of surviving a near death experience faded and they were back in their everyday lives (their very new and very different, everyday lives) in Star City.
Until then, Oliver needed to learn to enjoy what he had and not press for more.

He was grateful for the distraction when Lyla introduced them to the captain of this carrier (his will power could only last so long) and it was good to have the chance to thank the man who he owed so much. If it wasn’t for the Navy and ARGUS, Oliver had no fucking clue how he would have gotten everyone out of that damn hole.

Oliver was a pretty good judge of character (well, maybe not. He had trusted Adrian for far too long) but this Captain Mitchell seemed like an honest, straight forward man. Nothing like the generals he’d encountered in his time. Also, it was nice to have a simple conversation that wasn’t heart-wrenchingly emotional.

He was starting to worry about Felicity though. Oliver fully understood why the scene with Samantha and William had brought her to tears but…the tears didn’t seem to be slowing down. Her face was buried in his chest and she was holding on to him for dear life. Maybe everything was finally catching up with her.

Oliver was starting to wonder if he should bring her back to the cabin when Felicity blurted out, “So you’re a captain?” Which was an odd and concerning thing to say since she had just addressed the man as ‘Captain’ a few minutes ago. “Of this ship?”

Okay…it was definitely time to bring Felicity back to the cabin. Maybe she hadn’t gotten as much sleep as Oliver thought.

“Yes, indeed.” Captain Mitchell smiled, thankfully not realizing how…odd this behavior was for Felicity. He was probably used to traumatized civilians. Not that Oliver would consider Felicity a civilian.

Oliver pulled back to meet her eyes, but she refused to loosen her hold, refused to look anywhere but the captain. “Fel—”

“Can you marry people?”

Oliver froze. In fact, he was certain he felt like a marble statue beneath her hands because…

*What?*

He uh…whoa…*no*, Oliver couldn’t have heard her right. He just *couldn’t* have.

Oliver actually wondered if *he* was the one who said it. Which would have been weird, yes, but it seemed more logical than her saying it. Maybe he had just caught Felicity’s habit of speaking her thoughts out loud the way he now, occasionally, babbled when he was nervous.

But if *that* were the case, if Oliver had asked the question…Felicity would be looking at him. With concern and possibly panic, if he had his guess.

Felicity’s eyes were still stubbornly trained on the captain and Oliver thought maybe he could feel her trembling the tiniest bit.

“Well, actually I can,” Captain Mitchell answered, seemingly unaware the the tension in the room had quadrupled. “I have. It’s a funny story—”

It was a benign enough answer, but Oliver’s brain was still…spasming or…*something* because this was…Felicity wasn’t just making conversation. This wasn’t something she would take lightly and if she had spoke impulsively surely, she would have backtracked by now.
The other possibility was that Oliver was hallucinating. It wouldn’t be the first time (or the
tenth). Except he didn’t think he’d ever had a hallucination this...pleasant before. A dream? This
could definitely be a dream.

“Can you marry us?”

Okay. This was definitely a dream. Because there was no way that Felicity…his Felicity had just
asked that.

And, also, Oliver didn’t think he was breathing.

Was that a problem? He thought maybe breathing was important. Oliver needed all the oxygen he
could get at the moment. His poor brain wasn’t doing well.

“Well...” For the first time, the captain looked hesitant, as if he were finally understanding that this
wasn’t a casual question. That actually it was enormous. His eyes darted from face to face as he
answered, “Yes, I can. As long as you are on this ship, I can marry anyone. Did you
mean…now?”

Oliver thought he might pass out for a brief second. The blood was rushing from his head.

Or was it to is head?

He waited for Felicity to…laugh it off. To babble and say she meant to say something different.
To…say anything.

But Digg didn’t let Felicity respond. Stepping forward, he put a hand on Felicity’s shoulder.
“Okay, let’s slow down here.” He turned his dark eyes on Oliver’s…girlfriend? That word still
felt ridiculously inadequate. “Felicity, if this is a hypothetical question, I think it best you say so
now, because your boyfriend doesn’t seem to be breathing and he might be on the verge of a heart
attack.”

Truer words had never been spoken.

Felicity turned wide eyes to Oliver and he saw his own fear and excitement and hope reflected
back in them.

Dear God…was this real?

It couldn’t be.

Felicity’s lips trembled, then spread. Her teeth found her bottom lip as she looked up into Oliver’s
eyes and murmured, “Not hypothetical. Not at all.”

Oliver found himself smiling back and maybe getting a little lost in the blue of her eyes. Though
his brain…that had skittered to a full stop. Probably from lack of oxygen.

“Are we talking now?” Dinah pipped up, asking, her tone practical as ever. It was really good to
have someone so levelheaded on the team. “Because as romantic as this is, you are aware we are
all wearing slipper socks?”

“Whoa! Whoa whoa whooowa!” Thea came barreling over from the other side of the room, JJ on
her hip, looking far from little pressed against her small frame. Curtis followed two steps behind,
with the same wide-eyes excitement as JJ. “What is going on here?!”
Felicity, still staring into Oliver’s eyes, did this giddy little nose wrinkle thing that was too adorable for words but…she was really going to have to be the one to answer because Oliver, he had no fucking clue what was happening. Even if he was capable of speaking.

But then William (of all people) answered for them. “Oliver and Felicity are getting married!” he squealed and it was perhaps the only thing that could tear Oliver’s eyes from the woman in his arms.

William was vibrating with excitement, bouncing on his heels. And it was almost as shocking and…amazing as Felicity’s words.

Felicity suggesting they get married? Now? William not only being accepting, but excited? Surely this was just more evidence that this was a dream.

Certainly, nothing felt real.

The air almost seemed thicker than usual, like Oliver was moving through water.

“What! No, they are not!” Thea protested. Rather vehemently.

Oliver’s eyes flew to his sister and her…rather unexpected reaction and he tried not to feel hurt. Since when had she had a problem with him marrying Felicity? Or was this where the dream turned into a nightmare?

Thea’s free hand (the one not holding a wide-eyed JJ) flew through the air, gesturing toward their collective bodies…and, well, their matching blue outfits. “We are all wearing sweatpants and t-shirts. With logos. And slipper socks. No way my only brother is getting married in matching ARGUS work-out clothes, especially not to the love of his life! No way, no how! Not gonna happen!”

Thea got more and more hysterical the longer she spoke. But, yeah, that at least was the sister Oliver knew and loved.

“They ’e not even engaged!” Thea squealed but then her eyes narrowed and she turned accusing eyes on Oliver and Felicity. “Are you two engaged?” Thea was scowling and JJ was beaming, enjoying the impassioned tirade quite a bit. “You had better not have gotten engaged without telling me!”

Then before Oliver could deny it (because he was pretty certain he would remember if they gotten re-engaged) Thea lunged over and punched Oliver in the shoulder, making JJ laugh uproariously and…

“Ow! Thea, what the hell?” Oliver was shell-shocked. Though, oddly enough, Thea’s punch helped. Because as tiny as she was, her punch packed a, well, a punch. It helped snap Oliver out of the fog. “And, no…just no,” he babbled (see, that happened now).

But more importantly the punch hadn’t felt like a dream. So…that meant.

Just in case this was happening, Oliver pulled Felicity closer. He sure as hell didn’t want her to take his frazzled words as a rejection. Because he certainly did want to get re-engaged.

As soon as possible.

As long as it was the right thing to do for their future that was.
And Oliver had no idea if it was the right thing or not.

Also, assuming, this was actually happening.

Felicity held Oliver tight, but she turned her eyes to Thea, her lips pressed together as if to contain a laugh…what the hell was going on in that brilliant mind of hers?

“You had better not be lying!” It didn’t seem like Thea was letting go of this rant. “If you proposed last night and didn’t tell me immediately—”

“No one proposed!” Oliver almost yelled, finally finding his voice. Why did he feel like he had been dropped head first into crazy-town?

Then Dinah raised her hand. “Actually…I would argue that Felicity just popped the question with the whole let’s get married now thing.”

Had Oliver said that Dinah was the level-headed one? Because clearly not…

Wait.

Oliver’s stomach dropped. And not in a bad way.

Was that what was happening? Was Felicity proposing? And after Oliver had spent the last hour trying to talk himself out of doing the exact same thing?

“Does that count? I’m really not sure it does,” Curtis argued, his head tipped to the side…and hadn’t he been on the other side of the room playing with JJ and Thea? How the hell would he know? “Felicity kinda asked the officiant, not the groom.”

“If that was a proposal, it sucked!”

“William!” Samantha’s reprimand beat Oliver to the punch, which was good because he was back to feeling like all his words were stuck in his throat. In fact, his tongue felt thick and his thoughts were chasing themselves in circles.

“I agree with the kid,” Rene added and, crap, it was never a good thing when he joined in. The shit-eating grin he turned their way confirmed it. “Blondie, you need to get down on your knee and ask proper-like.”

“Rene,” Oliver growled, because that shook the words free. But he was too far away to… “Can someone…?”

Immediately, Digg and Dinah reached over to smack the back of Rene’s head. Unfortunately, it wasn’t hard enough to shake his damn grin free.

But then, a beat later, Nyssa leaned in and slapped his head. Pretty damn hard it looked like because Rene grabbed his crown and turned to her, hissing, “What the hell, Nyssa?”

“Is that not the custom?” Nyssa asked blandly, a small (but powerful) smirk across her face.

Oliver was getting pretty sick of all of them and their ridiculous antics, mostly because they were making it even harder to think. He looked down at Felicity, hoping that would somehow help, but she was looking up at him with this mischievous smile and a loving expression and…

Uh oh…
Her smile spread and she all but chirped, “Okay.”

Then Felicity started to sink to her knees and Oliver really was going to have a heart-attack.

Curtis let out a high-pitched shriek, his hand flying up to cover his mouth, and the sound mixed with William’s excited squeal and Rene’s full belly laugh.

“Oh…my…God…” Thea gasped and that rather echoed Oliver’s own thoughts, though with a lot less swearing.

Holy fuck…was more accurate and Oliver couldn’t…wait, no way he was letting Felicity kneel in front of all these people!

Oliver grabbed Felicity’s elbows, lifting her back to her feet before her knees could hit the cold tile floor. “No! No no no no…”

Felicity’s smile faltered and…

Fuck! Now he was really getting this all ass backwards. “No kneeling,” Oliver told her, his voice lowered to a whisper. “Baby, you don’t have to do this?” and he really hoped she could tell by the look in his eyes that the last thing he was doing was saying ‘no’ to her.

Her smile returned, so it seemed like she did. Thank God. “I want to.” Felicity said it so sweetly, Oliver almost melted at her feet.

A lump formed in Oliver’s throat and…great, now he was going to cry. In front of the team. In front of his son. He was never going to live any of this down and…

“Daaad, just let her propose already.” William’s hand was on his shirt, tugging at it and Felicity’s smile spread.

“Yeah, daaad, let me propose already,” she whispered.

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Oliver’s hands clenched on her elbows, his thoughts tripping over themselves. There were too many people talking. He couldn’t think!

Then Digg added, “Kneeling isn’t really necessary.”

Thank God, a voice of reason. At least John—

“But someone needs to actually ask,” and Digg, the traitor, just smiled his stupid innocent smile.

Dammit! Oliver threw a hard look at John, but the asshole’s grin was completely unflappable.

“Yeah, ask!” William insisted and he didn’t seem to care who did the asking, as long as it happened.

In fact, it set JJ off and he started chanting, “Ask! Ask! Ask…” The toddler even clapped with the words. Like he was asking for more goldfish at snack time

The roomful of grins did nothing to discourage the little devil. Then Rene, that bastard...

“I still say it doesn’t count unless she gets down on her knee—Ow! Dammit, Nyssa!” This time Rene used both hands to rub his head, grimacing in pain.

“I like this custom,” Nyssa announced and Oliver was tempted to give her Rene’s spot on the team.
“Is it even sanitary to kneel on this floor?” Curtis asked, earning a glare from Lyla.

“Yes!” the ARGUS Director scoffed, sending an apologetic look to the captain who just looked bemused and…frankly, amused by this entire circus. “Yes, it is.”

Oliver was certain he was living in a coo-coo-clock.

“I’m pretty sure Oliver knelt in the dirt when he proposed,” Quintin threw out, joining the insanity. Why was he joining, exactly? “Call me a traditionalist, I think Oliver should do the kneeling. It only seems right, since he’s getting the better end of the deal.”

Oh, that was why.

“Ooo, truth.” Rene nodded.

No one hit Rene this time but…Oliver couldn’t say he didn’t 100% agree with him.

Forgetting the fact that they really needed to talk about this and that Oliver needed to make sure Felicity wasn’t rushing into it as some sort of trauma response… Oliver started to sink to his knee, because…wasn’t that what he had wanted to do since he woke up this morning?

“Shit,” Rene breathed. And this time he did earn another hit.

“Rene,” Dinah hissed. “Language. There are kids here!”


It didn’t stop Lyla from calling out a firm, “JJ, don’t you ever repeat anything Rene says, you hear me?”

Oliver didn’t see the response. He was in fact only half paying attention, because the second he had started to go to his knee, Felicity latched onto Oliver like a monkey, using her full weight to keep him standing. “Oh, no, you don’t. It’s my turn.”

All Oliver could do was huff out a laugh and shake his head. Because he was never going to be okay with Felicity kneeling in front of the team (never mind him).

“Is someone going to propose already?” Rene groaned. Because it was completely logical that he care so much!

“Yeah!” JJ agreed, giggling.

Then Digg turned to his son with a, “Don’t agree with anything Uncle Rene says, either.”

“Hey!” Rene actually sounded insulted this time. “You know I’m a dad, too. I know how to be appropriate around kids—"

“Oh my God, this is so romantic,” Curtis squealed, ignoring whatever the hell was going on over there and Oliver thought he might just prefer Rene’s reaction. “Does anyone have a phone? We need a video of this!”

“Lyla? Do you have one?” Thea asked and Oliver’s eyes snapped opened wide. They had to be kidding! “Chase took all of ours.”

Seriously? This was just too much!
“Okay, you know what?” Oliver was done with this circus. So done. He wrapped an arm around Felicity’s back and straightened up to his full height. He turned to look at the room full of faces. Amused. Hopeful. Excited. All of them staring at Oliver and Felicity expectantly. And…

No.

They were not doing this. Just…no.

Clearing his throat, Oliver asked in his best mayoral voice, “Can everyone give us the room?”

They froze. Every last one of them.

And turned to look at Lyla.

“What? You…?” Lyla looked confused. Her eyes snapped to Captain Mitchell, who just shrugged, then back at Oliver. “You want us…to all leave?”

“Please,” Oliver sighed, feeling like he could finally breathe. Thank goodness.

Except…Lyla’s face scrunched up and she didn’t seem at all pleased. In fact, she looked pretty damn irritated. “No! This isn’t your ship, Oliver. You can’t just order everyone to leave.”

But…

Oliver deflated. That made it sound so…rude. He wasn’t ordering them around (though, they were his team). He was just asking for some privacy. “I said please,” he finally muttered, feeling…thrown and irritated by Lyla’s response.

But now Lyla was completely incredulous. “Do you…do this a lot? Ask for the room and expect everyone to just leave?”

What the hell? What was the big deal with asking for some privacy?

“Yup,” Rene answered immediately.

And Thea’s response was right on Rene’s heels. “All. The. Time.”

“And people just do it?” Lyla prodded, sounding like she didn’t actually believe it.

“Pretty much.” That was Curtis, the big dope nodding like a fool. Oliver was starting to feel the sting of betrayal. Why were they ganging up on him like this? And did they have to do this now? All he wanted was a few minutes alone with Felicity, for Christ’s sake.

Then there was another, “Yup,” from Rene, who couldn’t not add his two cents. Not that Oliver expected any less but Thea…

“All the time,” his sister repeated and that stung. If it bothered her so much why hadn’t she said anything? “We will be having a city council meeting and Oliver will be just like ‘Can I have the room’ and twenty people just get up and leave so that he can talk to one person. And sometimes, it’s not even an important person.”

Okay, well, that was why Thea was jumping on the Attack Oliver Wagon. He barely refrained from rolling his eyes because the only visitor to the mayor’s office that Thea would call ‘not important’ was Susan Williams.

“Lyla?” Oliver asked, feeling a little lost and worried that he sounded like a little boy. Felicity’s
face was buried in his chest, her whole body shaking with (almost) silent laughter...so no help there.

Finally, Lyla seemed to take pity on him. Shaking her head, she looked at him with an exasperated indulgence Oliver had often seen her use with JJ (and John), and said, “You two can have some privacy through that door.” She pointed behind him. “There’s a small kitchen attached.”

“Thank you,” Oliver exhaled (in profound relief) and grabbed Felicity’s hand. They needed to get away from this freak show right the fuck now.

“Aw man,” William’s disappointment rang out behind them.

Oliver probably would have felt bad about it if Curtis didn’t turn to William and say, “It’s okay, Will, they’ll be engaged by the time they get back. Guaranteed!”

Oliver really hoped someone would hit him on the back of his fluffy head, but he had a feeling Curtis would only be getting a fist bump from William.

“Remember,” Thea yelled, as Oliver opened the door and ushered Felicity through, “slipper-socks are off the table.”

Goddamn siblings. The door closed behind him and Oliver sagged back against it.

He could finally breathe. And think. Mostly.

Then, meeting the bright eyes of the love of his life, Oliver asked the only question that was important right then.

“What. Was. That?”

Felicity grinned, her face...her whole body exuding this wild happy excitement. It was a look that couldn’t not make Oliver smile back. Then a giddy...almost delirious laugh bubbled out and she shook her head. “I’m not sure?”

Oliver laughed too and his was downright delirious because as great as this all was...what the fuck! Felicity didn’t know? How could she start this and not know? John was right, Oliver was going to have a heart attack.

“Felicity! You just asked the captain of the ship to marry us! This ship. There’s skipping steps and there’s...demolishing steps. I’m pretty damn sure this is a hell of a lot more than skipping to the middle!”

Immediately, Oliver had the urge to kick himself. Why was he even arguing? It wasn’t like he had any desire to go slow. But impulsivity was not the best way to start a lifelong relationship. He’d learned that the hard way.

But the grin Felicity gave Oliver...God, help him. “Well, I don’t think it’s fair to say getting married is skipping to the end. It’s more like a...another beginning. Of that fifty years we talked about.”

Christ, Felicity was trying to kill him. Also, she was so beautiful. Another beginning? Had anything ever sounded so fucking wonderful?

Oliver was across the room in two long steps and, before he knew it, his lips were on hers and Felicity was tugging at his hair and her tongue...God, her tongue...
All thoughts happily left Oliver’s overtaxed brain. And this time he didn’t fight it.

He didn’t know how long they went on like that (not long enough as far as Oliver was concerned) before Felicity pulled her lips from his. Though from the way she gasped when they parted, Oliver thought maybe it was so she could breathe. He’d allow it.

“Wow…okay, so that’s a ‘yes,’ then?” Felicity asked, all wide-eyed and panting.

“Yes, to what?” Oliver breathed, blinking. He was dizzy again. Though if Felicity was asking it was safe to say the answer was ‘yes’.

Felicity’s giddy laugh filled the small room. “To my proposal, silly!”

Oliver’s stomach dropped. Then did a backflip. Or twelve.

Okay…so they really were going there. He was having a hard time accepting it but…

Wow. This was real. Oliver was going to have to take this seriously. “I…uh…gotta agree with Curtis, I don’t think asking an officiant is the same as a proposal.”

Not that Oliver was asking for a proposal. He was just trying to find his feet here. To start a conversation.

“Fine,” Felicity announced and her tone…it was firm, determined. And it made Oliver nervous as fuck. “Let me go and I’ll just—”

Christ, that was not what Oliver was getting at. He could tell Felicity was trying to get on her knees. And…nope…no way…

Oliver’s hold tightened. “You are not getting on your knees!”

“Why not?” Felicity had on her confused, Oliver-is-being-ridiculous face. He knew then expression well.

“Because…because…” Oliver realized, then, that he had no idea why the idea was so abhorrent to him. “It’s just not right.”

Felicity (predictably) rolled her eyes. “Stop being sexist. Equal opportunity proposing, equal opportunity kneeling.”

“That’s not what…” But the problem was, Oliver didn’t know what he meant. “Felicity, honey,” he cupped her face, praying that he could make some sort of sense, “we need to…we need to talk about this before there is any proposing, kneeling or otherwise.”

Not that Oliver was ever going to be okay with her kneeling for him, ever. (Well, occasionally, for sexy-time purposes but only if her knees were cushioned and he had an opportunity to reciprocate.)

“Since when does a proposal need a discussion? When you proposed, we didn’t discuss it first,” and damn if Felicity didn’t seem indignant about it.

“Actually, We did,” Oliver reminded her gently, “there was a very memorable discussion in Darhk’s—”

“Fine,” Felicity interrupted, frowning, “but we only talked about it because my mother found the ring. We didn’t discuss it before you bought it or,” she shook her head, waving a dismissive hand,
“got it out of the family vault or whatever. We didn’t sit and debate marriage before you put the ring in a soufflé”—

“Felicity!” She was being ridiculous, and stubborn and… “That was different—”

“How!”

How? Wasn’t that obvious? How did Felicity not see it?

“Because at the time, we had been living together as if we were married for months and now…not forty-eight hours ago, before we almost died…we agreed not to run away to Vegas to get married,” Oliver argued and he was rather proud of how coherent that sounded. Really, it felt like the first complete, rational thought he’d had since Felicity asked the captain about his capabilities as an officiant.

And the crinkle in Felicity’s forehead and the pout on her lips told Oliver he had finally gotten through to her.

“Oh,” was Felicity’s only response.

Yeah, oh,” Oliver finally felt it was safe to set her away from him, without worrying she was going to fall to her knees. A little distance would help him think clearly. Hopefully. “Can we talk about this now?”

“I just…” Felicity muttered, still frowning. “It’s not very romantic.”

Oliver huffed out an incredulous laugh. Seriously? A coo-coo-clock! That’s where they were. “Felicity, we’re in slipper socks!”

“What’s wrong with slipper socks?” Felicity wiggled her fuzzy blue toes, truly not seeming to understand why it was a problem that they all looked like they’d been rescued from a thermonuclear war and gone through decontamination.

It wasn’t even that far from the truth.

“Felicity,” Oliver sighed, “can we be serious for a minute?”

Grunting, Felicity crossed her arms. “Fine, but first I just want to point out, in all seriousness…one: there is nothing wrong with slipper socks. They are comfortable and slip-resistant, so enough if your sock snobbery.”

That just left Oliver standing there in open mouthed shock. What the hell?

Then Felicity added, “And two: forty-eight hours ago, in that exact same conversation you just referenced, I seem to remember you saying you would love to elope.”

Okay, that was true…

“Yes, but—”

“Has that changed?” Felicity challenged.

“Of course not,” was his immediate answer. It was the only answer Oliver had, even though he felt like he was walking into a trap by saying it.

Though if the trap was marriage…was that a bad thing? Why was Oliver even fighting this?
was all he ever wanted.

“So…why are you arguing with me?” Yup, Felicity really could read his mind. Oliver swore she could. But then she started to wring her hands and…dammit. “I’m trying really hard not to feel rejected here.”

Lurching forward, Oliver grabbed Felicity’s fluttering hands and pressed a hard kiss to her lips before the idea could gain any momentum. “You are not being rejected.” They needed to clear that up right the hell now. “I want to spend the rest of my life with you—”

“But?” Damn the anxiety in Felicity’s voice.

“No ‘buts’.” Oliver’s answer was instinctive.

But…

He closed his eyes and shook his head. He was starting to confuse himself. “No ‘but’s about wanting to spend my life with you. The only ‘but’ is about how we start. I don’t want to mess this up and…Felicity, I really don’t want you to regret your wedding.”

Felicity searched his eyes, sighing, “Oliver…” She broke off, shook her head, and started again, “Oliver, I regret a lot of things. Chief among them all the time I spent not being married to you.”

Oliver had to close his eyes against the punch of emotion that assaulted him. “Felicity, I…you are only saying that because you’ve…we’ve been through a lot in the last forty-eight hours. It makes sense that you want to grab a hold of life with both hands, but we can’t do this because we almost died.”

“Why not?” Felicity argued and Oliver really wasn’t expecting her to go in that direction. “Yes, we almost died and that made me realize I want to grab life with both hands, that I’m tired of regretting what I didn’t do. Tired of wasting time. How is that wrong? Give me one good reason to wait?”

It was probably a full minute before Oliver realized Felicity was waiting for an answer. And even longer to realize he didn’t have one. “I…I don’t know. To make sure that we get it right this time?”

Again, Felicity was making him question…everything. He’d thought taking it slow was to ensure a better outcome. How it was supposed to do that? That one was way above Oliver’s pay grade.

“Why?” Felicity asked, pushing ahead with the questions Oliver had no answer to. “What’s going to change if we take a month…a year…? What will be different?”

Oliver shook his head, wracking his brain for an answer, because he felt like there was supposed to be one, but he honestly couldn’t think of a single thing. Though in all fairness, he wasn’t the genius here.

“Do you have any doubt, what-so-ever, that this is right?” Felicity persisted. “Any doubt that I’m the person you want to spend the rest of your life with—”

“No,” Oliver answered fiercely, interrupting her impassioned speech because he hadn’t doubted that in years. And it was a relief to have a question he had a clear answer to. “God, Felicity, you know I don’t.”

An almost relieved smile spread across Felicity’s face, reminding Oliver again how easy it was for him to forget that she could be insecure too. “Good, because I don’t either. And that’s not going to
This time, Felicity fell to her knees before Oliver realized what she was doing. Before he could stop her.

Oliver threw back his head and blew out a long breath. Christ!

Felicity reached out and grabbed his limp hand. “Oliver Queen, will you—?”

“Jesus.” Not sure what else to do, and feeling awkward as fuck standing there, Oliver dropped to his knees as well.

Letting out a huff in protest, Felicity rolled her eyes. “Why can’t you just let me do this? Why do you have such a problem with me kneeling in front of you?”

Oliver reached out and cupped her face, telling her the only answer that made sense in his muddled head, “Because you, Felicity Smoak, should never kneel to anyone.” And that he was certain of.

Felicity’s lip trembled and she sniffled a bit. “Stop trying to steal my thunder,” she reprimanded, soft and tearful and completely without bite.

“Sorry.” Oliver smiled and it was probably the least genuine thing he’d said all day.

Taking Oliver’s hands from her face, Felicity entwinned them with hers. “Let’s try this again.” Her voice was soft and scratchy. “No more interrupting.”

“No more interrupting,” Oliver agreed, completely unsurprised to find his own voice hoarse as well.

“Oliver Queen...” Felicity took a deep breath and let out a happy, tearful laugh. “Would you do me the honor—?”

Oliver let out an incredulous laugh...as if it would be him doing her the honor.

Felicity threw him a reprimanding look, so Oliver pressed his lips together and did his best to listen and not interrupt, even if it made him...insanely uncomfortable to hear her say these things about him.

“Would you do me the honor of being my partner in everything, being my husband, my soul mate...?”

There was no preventing Oliver’s own tearful whimper.

“For the rest of our lives, be that days or decades, for better or for worse, for good this time?”

“Baby, if you think death is going to keep me away...” Oliver shook his head, tears clouding his vision, completely overwhelmed.

Felicity just laughed. “The correct answer is ‘yes’, Oliver.”

He hadn’t said that yet? It felt like he had.

“Yes. God, yes!” Oliver pulled on her hands, pulling her closer as he leaned forward to say it again, against her lips this time. “Yes, today, tomorrow, a year from now—”

Felicity cut him off with a hard kiss. “You always have to one-up my speeches, don’t you?”
Oliver laughed out loud. “I couldn’t one-up your speeches if I tried. Your speeches are perfect. I love your speeches. I love you.”

And he kissed her, slow and soft and languid, but with adoration and passion. God, Oliver wanted to kiss her forever.

“Mmm and I love you,” Felicity hummed as she eased out of the kiss slowly, a warm happy smile across her face. “So you’ll marry me today?” she asked, her voice hopeful.

But…

Okay, they needed to take a step back here. Oliver really didn’t think Felicity had thought this one out. “Do you really think Thea will let us get married in slipper socks?”

That might have been a deflection. Oliver wasn’t sure he wanted to get married in slipper socks either. And he couldn’t imagine Felicity not regretting the choice later.

He pulled her closer, so they were pressed together from knees to chest. Because Oliver wanted to be closer, he always wanted to be closer, and not because he wanted to distract Felicity from her impetuous plan. Much.

Felicity shrugged. “It’s not Thea’s wedding.” Wrapping her arms around Oliver’s neck, she scooted forward, pushing at his chest until he sat back on his feet and she could climb onto his lap which was…pretty damn good actually. “Or her marriage. And right now, I’m much more interested in the marriage than the wedding.”

And that just filled Oliver…that just filled him. Marriage. God, he wanted that.

“Me too,” he whispered, taking the opportunity to kiss Felicity’s adorable lower lip. It was right there so why wouldn’t he. After a moment, he pulled back and tried to refocus on the matter at hand. “But this is still a really important moment for us and I want you…us to look back on it and smile.”

But while Oliver was utterly serious, Felicity was all sass and playfulness. “Slipper socks won’t make you smile?”

Well, Oliver couldn’t not smile now, imagining it, but still he protested, “I want it to be perfect for you.”

Felicity just sighed, losing a little of that lightness. “Oliver, we did the fancy ballgown and tux, the chuppah and, well, other than perhaps your vows the entire thing turns my stomach. Those aren’t exactly happy memories.”

It felt like a blow to the gut. Fuck. Oliver had no idea that had…it still upset her? The Cupid thing?

Shit, anything else he had completely fucked up and forgot about? “I’m sorry. I…I shouldn’t have even suggested that fake wedding.” Oliver wouldn’t have if in his deluded mind he hadn’t thought it would help him win Felicity back.

Felicity shrugged but that happy light in her eyes had been extinguished. Double fuck. That was the last thing that Oliver had wanted.

“We caught Carrie. That’s all that matters.”
Except it really, really wasn’t.

“You matter,” Oliver insisted and he really didn’t think he could express the depth of his regret on this one. “I should have found another way. I—”

Felicity stopped him with a thumb to his lips. “I really don’t want to talk about that day. It’s over. Long over. And this is a new day, a new relationship, a new engagement…wow, we just got engaged. Again.” Her face brightened again, something like awe in her voice.

And, yeah. Wow.

Oliver could second that. And third and fourth it.

They were engaged. Oliver just let that settle into him.

“I can hardly believe it,” and Oliver knew that it was awe in his voice.

“Believe it.” Felicity gave Oliver another hard kiss and another bright smile. “Hey,” her eyes lit up even more, this time as if in inspiration, “we don’t have to wear this. I’ll borrow something from Lyla and you can wear the Green Arrow Suit.” She looked delighted by the idea but…

No. Just…no.

“Felicity, I’m not getting married in the suit.” Oliver was horrified by the idea. Like deep in his bones horrified.

Immediately, that lower lip popped out in a pout and it was something he found near impossible to resist. “But you look so good.” Felicity’s eyes twinkled and Oliver couldn’t say the promise in her voice didn’t do something to him. But still…

“Felicity…” Oliver hoped it didn’t sound like he was whining. “I’d like a picture that we will be able to show our kids one day. One that we can hang on the wall.”

There was a momentary frown, before Felicity suggested with a grin, “We can hang it in the Bunker.”

Oliver groaned. Fine. He was going to have to say it. “Felicity, I’ve killed people in that suit.”

That wiped the smile off her face. Which was so not what Oliver had wanted but he hadn’t seen any other choice.

“Well, these ARGUS outfits aren’t really that bad,” Felicity muttered looking down at the blue fashion nightmares, chewing on her lower lip.

Shaking his head…Oliver just couldn’t figure out why Felicity was so stuck on doing this today. “Honey…what’s the rush?”

Felicity’s pouty lip poked out. Again. And this time Oliver gave in to the urge to press a light kiss to it.

When Oliver met her eyes again, Felicity confessed, “I dunno. I just…I feel like we’ve lost so much time. I don’t want to waste more planning another wedding. I just want to be married. I want to step back into Star City, with you as my husband, and start our lives. Together.”

It was a very convincing argument. Because, wow, that sounded good.
But Oliver still didn’t want to give Felicity some half-ass wedding. She deserved so much more. “That doesn’t mean we have to get married in ARGUS sweats. Today. We can take a few days, a week maybe, to arrange things. And still be married when we go back home.”

And finally, Oliver felt a huge burst of excitement. They could be married when they got home. Step off the plane as Mr. &Mrs.

*God*, that sounded so good. There were so many options. They were on a ship, they could go anywhere, and all the people he really needed at the wedding were already here. Except maybe Donna but even that could be fixed.

There were so many ways to have a quick but beautiful wedding, before they went home.

Yet, for some reason, Felicity seemed disappointed. “I guess not.”

It was simultaneously heartwarming and heart-wrenching that Felicity had her heart set on it being today, but it only gave Oliver more incentive to find something that would be just perfect for her. That would make her happy…excited even, to wait. For a few days anyway.

“So you don’t want formal dress and a wedding hall. What *would* make you happy?” Oliver asked gently, rubbing his hands up and down her arms. He was determined to figure it out and give her the dream.

“To be married,” Felicity responded way too quickly and way too...unhappily.

Oliver gave her a soft (indulgent, he was sure) smile. “How about this? Close your eyes,” he whispered, running a finger over her eyebrows.

“*Oliver*…” It was both a protest and a whine, but he was going to bring the light and enthusiasm back to Felicity’s eyes, so help him God.

“Shhh. Indulge me.” Oliver pressed a kiss to the tip of Felicity’s nose, teasing, “I let you kneel, remember?”

That at least earned Oliver a soft chuckle. “I don’t know if that counts since you knelt too.”

True, but not the point. “Close your eyes,” Oliver insisted again, softly.

Felicity sighed but she finally did as he asked. Oliver rubbed his thumbs over her eyelids, pressing a kiss to each of them. Just because.

“Now, tell me how you see us getting married,” Oliver whispered.

And in that moment, Oliver knew, whatever Felicity wanted, he would *make* it happen. Slipper socks or a red ballgown on the top of the Eiffel Tower…

Oliver was going to give his beautiful bride anything and *everything* her heart desired.

*Revised 6/19/2018*
As I wrote this, I found out that Felicity (this Felicity anyway) wasn’t quite over the whole Cupid/fake wedding fiasco. Sorry for the angsty beginning. It’s an emotional chapter, so if you often need Kleenex for my stories, grab a box. Oh and it might get a little “E” rated later. ;-)
Felicity wasn’t sure she liked this.

They had just gotten engaged (well, reengaged actually). Felicity had proposed (which was really only fair. It was her turn) and Oliver had accepted. They were safe. Their friends and family were safe. Both a rarity in their lives.

Shouldn’t this be all ‘I love you’s and sweet kisses and, God, engagement sex. Wouldn’t that be lovely?

Tender, loving, hot…engagement sex.

That was all Felicity wanted. Was it really too much to ask for?

Apparently so, because what Felicity kept getting was conversation. Long, involved, initiated by Oliver conversation, which was weird in of itself but would be fine, except it kept getting all…angsty.

But then again who would have guessed that the idea of a wedding itself (not the marriage) would be so…upsetting. Certainly not Felicity. A ceremony where they pledged their love to each other followed by a party. What’s not to love?

So why did it give her a pit in her stomach and a sour taste in her mouth?

“Close your eyes,” Oliver whispered, with the clear implication that he wanted to keep talking about the wedding and…

But…but…Felicity didn’t wanna.

What about the engagement sex?

Why was Oliver making her do this? The last thing Felicity wanted to do was close her eyes.
Unless it was in the middle of that engagement sex that she really, well, deserved.

Actually, Felicity and Oliver deserved epically fabulous engagement sex, Goddamn it!

But instead of celebrating their love like normal people, Oliver wanted her to think. And talk. Communicate. Which would have been awesome like…a year and a half ago. But now…

Now all Felicity’s stupid, stupid brain seemed to be fixated on was remembering their last wedding. The fake one. The day she had tried so hard to forget. Which was ironic, since it seemed like the whole damn thing liked to replay in her mind on repeat. In excruciating detail.

It had been one of the worst days (and nights) of Felicity’s life. And that was a category that had some fraking fierce competition.

Oliver was still insisting she close her damn eyes and, to be fair, he wasn’t aware of the way Felicity’s brain was doing its best to ruin their moment. He was just trying to figure out a way to give her the wedding he thought she deserved.

Except all Felicity wanted was Oliver to listen and believe her when she said she just wanted it over.

Oh God, that sounded horrible.

What Felicity meant was she wanted the wedding to be over, so they could get onto the marriage part.

Okay. Nope, that didn’t sound much better.

Maybe Felicity needed to try it Oliver’s way. Besides, the fingers stroking her brow were soothing. And his voice and the way, straddling his lap as she was, their bodies were pressed so closely together that she could feel his heartbeat…

Alright. Maybe Felicity could do this. She just needed to trust in Oliver.

Felicity closed her eyes and tried to focus every one of her senses on him. To concentrate on the present. The future. Anything but the past. The past was past and she wanted to leave it there.

“Now, tell me how you see us getting married,” Oliver whispered.

Crap.

Felicity pressed her lips together to keep from frowning as the image of her and Oliver standing under the chuppah again assailed her. Fraking hell.

That damn chuppah, beautiful and lovingly designed (by her mother, as a matter of fact. But Felicity had agreed to it, had…classed it up a bit. Removed the excess…excess). And there was Oliver, standing there under it, with hearts in his eyes, looking more perfect than any man had a right to, better than the models in any of the four dozen bridal magazines Donna and Curtis had accumulated.

And Felicity in her gorgeous dress, the one that hadn’t undergone that last fitting, so it hung on her frame (especially since she hadn’t eaten well since the break-up). It just seemed to emphasize the wrongness of it all.

Felicity had felt nauseous from the moment she had pulled the dress on. Uncomfortable in her own
skin. The whole thing had been a farce...no, worse than a farce. It felt like a horror film.

All her hopes and dreams turned upside down, distorted. Like the world was mocking her for thinking she could have something so good, so perfect. Burying the knife deep and twisting it for maximum painfulness.

And then there was Oliver, standing there saying the most beautiful things. Felicity had had no doubt then, as she had no doubt now, that he had meant every word. And yet...

It had felt so manipulative and it hurt so badly and all Felicity had been able to think was that it was too little, too late. And looking into Oliver's beautiful, sad eyes was the most excruciating thing and she just couldn't keep doing it day after day—

“Hey...hey...what’s wrong?” Oliver asked, pulling Felicity back from her ugly memories. His tone changed, from hopeful and cajoling to concerned and anxious.

Great.

Felicity blinked open her eyes and watched as Oliver caught a tear on his thumb. Fraking hell. She hadn’t even realized she was crying. And now she had completely ruined their beautiful moment.

Swallowing around a tight throat, Felicity managed an, “I’m sorry.” It came out as little more than a croak.

“No. You don’t have to...” Oliver’s voice was scratchy too and that pained look was back in his eyes. The one that was so hard to look at. It was everything Felicity did not want for this moment. “Is this still about the Cupid...?”

Felicity’s breath hissed and she turned her face away, fighting a fresh wave of tears. Could they just...stop talking about it?

“I didn’t realize,” Oliver murmured his voice heavy with regret, “I...I didn’t know that that fake wedding had hurt you so much.”

Felicity laughed, a bitter, almost hysterical sound. “I would have thought that me saying, afterwards, the most horrible things I have ever said to you and then not speaking to you for a month would have broadcasted the message loud and clear.”

The laugh Oliver gave, though quieter, was just as hard to hear because it was full of self-hatred. “I’ve always been slow on the uptake.”

God. “Oliver, that’s not—”

“Plus, it wasn’t like everything you said that night hadn’t been what I’ve been telling myself for years—”

Which was exactly why Felicity felt so terrible for saying it. “Oliver!” she tried to cut him off before he got a good monologue started. “Nothing I said was true.”

Oliver gave her that sad smile, the one Felicity just despised. Because she could see the self-loathing in it. “It’s okay. I know you meant every word,” he murmured and somehow it didn’t even come out accusing. Just accepting.

Felicity swallowed the lump in her throat. No use fighting the tears now. “Oh, I meant them.
They just weren’t true.”

Which of course was confusing and Oliver’s face reflected that. He had no idea what Felicity was trying to say. How could he?

“My head was all screwed up. I was in so much pain. I don’t know what I was thinking,” Felicity tried to explain because as much as she didn’t want to talk about it, she had no choice now. “So, yeah, I believed what I was saying but that was because I was in an awful place mentally. It made me think all sorts of things that were just…wrong.”

And somehow Felicity’s words seemed to bring Oliver even closer to tears. “I’m so sorry. I never should have put you in that position.”

Wonderful. Every time she opened her mouth it got worse. They sank deeper into the past. Felicity shook her head. “We had to. Cupid—”

“We’re being honest, remember,” Oliver insisted, his thumb stroking her cheek. “Let’s not pretend I didn’t jump at the chance to go through with the wedding. I saw it as a way to win you back.”

Felicity laughed and it wasn’t a pretty sound. She had known that and the knowledge had just pushed her further away because of the…dishonesty of the whole thing.

Oliver scrunched up his face and sighed. “I fucked up.”

Okay, maybe that was nice to hear.

Oliver had fucked up. And maybe Felicity needed to hear him admit it.

When Felicity chuckled this time, it was less ugly and more…she didn’t know, understanding maybe? She ran her fingers down Oliver’s face, stroking her nails through his beard. It was strangely soothing.

God, she loved this man, flaws and all.

“We both have,” Felicity admitted, because it was true. “But we are trying and changing…growing. And that’s what really matters.”

Oliver turned his head and pressed a kiss to her palm. “You really can’t compare your mistakes to mine. Mine are in whole different league.” Felicity opened her mouth, but Oliver pressed a kiss to her lips. “No, don’t disagree. You know it’s true. I appreciate that you want to take equal blame, but that’s not fair.”

“Well, actually I was only trying to take some of the blame. Not equal blame,” Felicity teased, smiling as she said it. The instinct to use humor to lighten things was creeping in.

But then Felicity realized…no, it wasn’t just that. The tightness she had felt in her chest since they had started talking about weddings had eased, allowing the humor to flow and it seemed to allow Oliver to smile too. And, this time, it reached his eyes.

That alone, made Felicity so relieved she could cry. Oliver wiped her cheek and she really hoped it would be for the last time.

“Well, my only excuse,” Oliver told her, his voice hoarse, “is that I was pretty desperate to win you back. And that I’m a moron.”
Felicity let out a bark of laughter, which quickly turned almost giddy as she realized this wasn’t Oliver hating on himself, it was just him admitting his mistake. He was getting pretty good at it actually and it was an excellent sign for their future.

Still, Felicity felt the need to argue. “Hey, that’s my future husband you’re insulting there.” She was starting to feel like herself again. Thank goodness.

Oliver’s smile spread until it seemed to take over his entire face. It was a smile she so rarely saw and…then it hit her, a wave of emotion. Of love and relief and happiness and hope. So strong that Felicity was dizzy with it.

“I can’t fucking wait,” Oliver breathed and Felicity might have laughed except his lips were moving towards hers and she decided instead to meet him half-way with a hard, almost desperate kiss.

Oliver held her to him and swept her tear-dampened hair free from where it tangled in her glasses. Felicity cupped the sides of his face and…they kissed until they were breathless. Until all those painful thoughts and memories were where they were supposed to be. In the past. A distant memory that had lost it’s sting because how could anything that have led them to here, to this place be that bad.

Felicity had been wrong. So wrong. They had needed to talk about it. It was the only way to truly move past it.

When the kiss finally ended, Oliver was short of breath. He laid his forehead against hers and murmured, “Okay, let’s try this again. I’m going to give you a wedding so perfect you won’t even remember that farce.”

Ugh. Really? Oliver was still stuck on this ‘perfect wedding’ thing? Why couldn’t they just have a quickie ceremony and get on with their lives?

Felicity was glad Oliver had forced the issue and they had cleared the air but...

Shaking her head, Felicity tried to explain, “Oliver, I…”

But, God, she really didn’t want to disappoint him. Especially when all Oliver wanted was to please her. Or to dampen his enthusiasm. But…Felicity didn’t even think what he wanted was possible. Just the idea of a wedding ‘so perfect’ was…the opposite of what she wanted. “I really don’t want a big fancy wedding.”

How did Felicity make him understand without crushing his dreams?

But Oliver didn’t look disappointed. He just looked…far from convinced. Of course, a Queen couldn’t comprehend the concept of a small wedding. The one they had planned last spring was supposed to be simple. Yeah, right.

Tilting his head, Oliver pressed, “Are you sure—?”

So, so sure. This was probably the surest Felicity had ever been in all of their wedding planning chaos.

“Oliver, I don’t think I ever wanted that,” Felicity blurted out. And…she really hadn’t meant to admit that out loud. She had barely admitted it to herself.

Of course, Oliver’s face fell. “You seemed excited about our wedding,” He murmured, his
forehead creased, all adorably sad and confused. God dammit. This was exactly what she had been trying to avoid.

“I was,” Felicity rushed to reassure. How to say this? “But mostly I was just excited to marry you. Sure, I love a fantastic dress and great shoes, throw in friends and some wine and…it’s great. Exciting. But I never really cared about the traditional…” Her hands flapped uselessly as she tried to put her feelings into words. It didn’t feel like she was doing a very good job. “I’m not sure any of it really felt like me. Like us. Honestly, I think I was just carried along in the tide. It was more my mother’s vision than mine.”

This time, Oliver looked skeptical. “That was your mother’s vision?”

Felicity almost laughed. “Well, obviously, I vetoed the golden candelabras and the blow-up guitars and…a million other things.” Now, that Felicity thought about it… “I think I was so busy trying to control my mother’s vision, to make it less Vegas and more Queen, that I don’t think I ever really thought about what I wanted.”

And, wow, it was amazing how relieved Felicity felt saying that. Not because she was telling Oliver but because she was finally realizing herself what had happened. Because that was exactly it. She had finally pinpointed what happened.

The wedding planning last year, in the middle of her paralysis and the mess at Palmer Tech and Damian Darhk…it had been more damage control than a labor of love. She had let her mother do so much largely because she didn’t have the time or energy to do it herself. Her input became mostly about…editing.

And honestly, at the time, editing her mother’s vision had been so much easier than coming up with her own. Much more doable. And much like now, Felicity had been much more interested in the being married than the wedding.

A wrinkle appeared between Oliver’s eyebrows, he was having trouble with this and Felicity couldn’t blame him. It wasn’t like she had even hinted at it before. It seemed that he wasn’t the only one with trouble being open with their feelings. And that was back when things had (supposedly) been going well between them.

Though maybe they hadn’t been so good after all. Felicity had been on a course to an emotional implosion since she’d gotten shot. She’d started locking her feelings up tight as soon as she woke up with non-working legs. There had been a plenty of things she’d kept from Oliver after that. Her hallucinations. Her father (for days, anyway). And…this, apparently. She hadn’t even realized she was doing it at the time.

“Well, when you were a little girl what kind of wedding did you imagine?” Oliver asked, focusing on the wedding planning part and not the…she kept things from him part. Felicity almost wished he’d concentrate on the later.

But the question was so genuine and Oliver’s voice so sweet that Felicity did her very best not to roll her eyes. It wasn’t easy. “I didn’t. You know, not every little girl’s fondest wish is to get married.”

Oliver, however, did roll his eyes. “I know that but that doesn’t mean you didn’t imagine…”

Felicity shook her head. “No, I never did.” And that was the truth. She had no wedding dress sketches in her old notebooks, just math equations.
“Really?” Again, Oliver seemed to be having an exceptionally hard time with this. Wow, the girls in his life must have been wedding obsessed but, then again, the unlimited Queen resources did mean…well, no limits.

That hadn’t been the reality of Felicity’s childhood. “Having your father leave when you’re seven and being raised by an overwhelmed single mother really sours a girl to marriage.”

Oliver deflated then, his understanding eyes searching hers. Finally, he asked, “What did little Felicity Smoak dream of after her father left?”

And…that really wasn’t a question Felicity was prepared for. Oh, God, what had she dreamed about? Or maybe what hadn’t she fantasized about was a better question. Imagination was a lonely child’s best friend.

“Space travel?” Felicity answered with the first thing she could think of. Before she could over-think it. She didn’t know if she wanted to dwell on this. Did weddings always open up so many old wounds?

A delighted smile formed over Oliver’s face so, clearly, he wasn’t aware that these were all open gaping wounds. “You wanted to be an astronaut?”

It was cool that Oliver thought her fantasies were so reality based. Her daydreams involved something more like a female Captain Picard or flying an x-wing. “Sorta kinda.”

“Why didn’t you apply to NASA? I’m sure they would have snatched you up.”

There was something about the absolute surety and pride in Oliver’s face that was…well, it was addictive. And it did make Felicity feel better. Instantly.

Resting her elbows on his shoulders, Felicity felt herself relax. Maybe this conversation wasn’t so bad. Unless Oliver decided to try to give her a space wedding.

Oooo…a space wedding….

Okay. Stop. Reality time. “Well, by the time I reached middle school I’d moved on to being the first female Steve Jobs.” At that point, the day dreams were more plans. Not that being Steve Jobs was remotely realistic.

“So what’s stopping you?” Oliver asked and…

Wow, that question was a kick in the gut.

Felicity hadn’t even seen that one coming. But…maybe, she should have. And with the complete confidence in her that reflected in Oliver’s eyes…

What was stopping her?

He and William really were so much alike. Felicity felt like she was having her second ‘ah ha’ moment of the afternoon. And the first Queen that had triggered an epiphany had gotten her engaged to the love of her life so…

“Don’t know. I’ll have to get on that.” Felicity pressed a kiss to Oliver’s lips, because they were right there and so enticing and she was starting to feel really good. Also, maybe she still had a chance at her engagement sex. Then everything would be perfect. “As soon as we figure out this pesky wedding thing.”
As soon as friggen possible. Which, unfortunately, threw a space theme out the window. The most important thing now was to figure out a way to get married before going back to Star City that was acceptable to Oliver (which, unfortunately, meant no slipper socks or Green Arrow suit).

Then they needed to have engagement sex.

After that, they could go home and Felicity could start her own company and become bigger than Steve Jobs. Yup. Sounded like a plan. Done and done.

One more kiss (just because) and Felicity asked, “So what do you want in a wedding?”

Because this sure as hell was not all on Felicity. It was Oliver’s wedding too and if he knew what he wanted they could just do that (as long as it was quick and small and easily accomplished).

Still, when Oliver opened his mouth, Felicity knew what he was going to say before a single word left his mouth.

“And don’t say ‘me’,” Felicity clarified, holding up her hand to stop him from jumping on that train. “If that didn’t fly when I said it, it’s not gonna fly for you either. When you close your eyes, what do you see?”

Oliver gave her a slightly disgruntled look (see, ha, wasn’t as easy as it sounded) before saying, “I see you, looking your usual gorgeous self, in a dress you love. I see Thea, John…William…” He blew out a breath, shaking his head. “That’s more than I could have ever hoped for. Everything else is gravy.”

Well, that was good. It worked nicely with Felicity’s plan of ‘quick and small and easily accomplished.’ All they really needed was a dress and it was show time.

But then Oliver added, “Except I really want a photographer. It doesn’t have to be a professional. I just want pictures.”

Okay…harder. Though they were basically on a floating city. Someone here had to be capable of taking pictures if it meant so much to Oliver.

And, clearly, it did since it was the second time he brought it up. Felicity felt a sudden rush of affection. “I can’t believe how much you love your photos. You’re such a sap,” she teased, knowing Oliver knew how much she adored this secret, softer side of him.

Oliver gave her an almost bashful shrug. “Felicity, it’s just that…sometimes…sometimes, it’s hard to even remember it’s possible to be happy. It’s important to capture the moments when we are.”

A brand-new lump that formed in Felicity’s throat. “You’re right. Pictures are important,” she rasped. “Though, that doesn’t help us figure out the whole…wedding thing.”

The damn wedding thing. Just saying it made Felicity feel overwhelmed, heavy. She didn’t want to wait and plan. She just wanted to do it. Slipper socks be damned. But that certainly wasn’t the picture-perfect Oliver wanted.

Oliver leaned in and gave her a small smile, pressing another kiss to her lips. When he pulled back, he looked lighter at least. Lifting her glasses from her nose, he carefully folded them to the side.

Resting his forehead against Felicity’s, Oliver murmured, “Let’s try this again. Close your eyes.”
Noooo. *No more.*

“*Oliver*—”

“Trust me.” And that tone and those words were impossible to resist. “We’ll try it a little differently this time.”

*Fine.* Anything to get this over with and move on to the sex part. Oliver had better make it worth her while. Especially since Felicity really didn’t know how this was going to help.

Felicity closed her eyes (without her glasses everything was blurry anyway).

“Okay, now…try to imagine say…stopping at Vegas on the way home and getting married there…”

That was something Felicity could imagine easily. *Unfortunately.* She had plenty of images…*memories* to draw from. Flashing lights, Elvis impersonators, drunken brides, and obnoxious grooms—

“Guess not,” Oliver drawled with a chuckle.

Felicity’s eyes popped open as Oliver pressed a kiss to her scrunched-up nose, which was when she realized that her face must have contorted in distaste.

Don’t get her wrong, at *this point,* a Vegas wedding, just to get it *done,* wasn’t out of the question. But it wasn’t something she had ever considered *romantic.* Plus, if Oliver was asking for the (so called) ‘perfect’ wedding…

“I guess, I don’t really see Vegas as very…*us,*” Felicity confessed. Vegas was the old Ollie and…*her mother.* But times a *thousand.* “The only thing for me there is my mom and while I would love for her to be at our wedding…”

Felicity felt a wave a guilt. Maybe stopping at Vegas *was* a good idea. She’d shut her mom out enough this last year. Wasn’t compromising on her wedding only fair if her mom could be there? Wasn’t that what *was* important? Being with family?

“So no Vegas,” Oliver said, a definitive note to his voice. And before Felicity could argue and reopen the possibility, he repeated, “Close your eyes again.”

This time Felicity’s sigh was more a grunt of frustration.

“Come on, it’s working,” Oliver argued. But…

Was it? Was it, *really,* Felicity couldn’t say she agreed but she indulged him. *Again.*

“Ohkay, now I want you to imagine us exchanging vows in our blue ARGUS t-shirts and slippers socks.”

An involuntary laugh popped out as the image appeared in Felicity’s mind. Especially when she added the slipper clad team, *plus* Nyssa and Slade. It really was a funny image. It wasn’t *bad* though. “Well, the blue does do great things for your eyes.”

“Right back at you,” Oliver teased, kissing her brow. “But…is that a happy laugh or an…that’s absurd laugh?”

*Well,* if she was being honest… “Probably more the later,” Felicity confessed, rather reluctantly,
because she was far from ruling this one out either. So very far.

“One more time then, eyes closed.” And this time, Felicity followed the instructions easily, her arms winding around Oliver’s neck as he stroked her back. She was holding him to this last time thing though.

As soon as her eyes fell closed, Oliver pressed a kiss to each eyelid in turn. Was that supposed to magically make her see the perfect wedding? Oliver was such a sap, Felicity wouldn’t be surprised if he thought so.

“So where do you see us?” Oliver insisted.

Double ugh. Oliver couldn’t have stuck with the ‘yes’ or ‘no’ questions? But it was hard to fight him when he was being a sweetheart and, thankfully, Felicity no longer saw last year’s disaster as soon as she shut her eyes so…

Felicity tried. She tried to relax and focus on Oliver and how much she loved him, how much she felt his love for her and…to let the images come. Relaxation techniques were never her strong suit, but she tried.

“I see…” What did she see?

Felicity could see Oliver smiling at her. With that big adoring smile that made her feel like she could walk on water. That was nice. And she saw…blue sky behind him. She could almost feel a breeze….

“I…outside maybe?”

Most of Felicity’s outside memories with Oliver were good ones. Really good ones. As long as they stayed away from dark alleys (which shouldn’t be hard). And they’d spent so much of their time away outdoors in the sunshine.

“Okay,” Oliver sounded a little surprised. But pleased. That was good. Encouraging. “What else?”

Felicity resisted the urge to stick out her tongue at him. Outside wasn’t enough for him?

“Maybe…at sunset?”

She smiled as the blue faded in her mind’s eye and became streaked with color. Then Felicity saw them standing in front of a sky painted with red and oranges and pinks, blue and purple. She had always loved color. It made her feel alive.

“Sunset?” The delight in Oliver’s voice made it feel even more right. Yes, this was right.

She didn’t open her eyes, though. Not yet. Leaning into Oliver more, Felicity felt her muscles unwind as she let her mind wander. Finally confident it wouldn’t get lost in a dark place, she said, “Since we live so much of our lives at night, I think our new beginning should start at sunset.”

Oliver hummed, his lips pressing to hers as he agreed, “Definitely sunset. What else?”

The images were coming more easily now. Felicity saw them holding hands, the breeze catching her white dress and her hair, but she felt no concern that either would be messed up, they were both loose and free and comfortable. And Oliver wasn’t in a stuffy Oliver Queen tux. He was in soft colors, relaxed and free.
“Hon?” Oliver prompted, his tone soft and amused.

Humming, Felicity sighed but it was a happy sigh this time. “I think I’d like a breeze.” Then she laughed at her own silliness. “Do you think you can conger a breeze for me?”

Oliver chuckled. “Well…I think if we were married on or by the ocean it would be likely,” he whispered in her ear and Felicity shivered. She could almost smell the ocean as he said it.

Of course, that could be because they were on a ship. That was technically floating on the ocean.

“Mmm…the ocean.” Felicity could see that. If one forgot that stupid hell island, all the times they had spent by the ocean were wonderful. From their first day as a couple driving along the coast…into the sunset.

Oh, yes. It had to be at sunset. Could anything be more perfect?

She saw them standing on the beach…barefoot maybe. Felicity loved her heels but barefoot would solve their slipper socks problem. “The sunset would be especially beautiful over the ocean.”

She opened her eyes to see Oliver beaming at her and, damn, if it didn’t make her heart skip a beat. “Well…we’re in the Pacific Ocean. Not too far from Bali….”

Felicity’s mouth fell open at Oliver’s words, her eyes filling. She was…overwhelmed. The images that conquered were…just beautiful. Overwhelmingly beautiful. “I think…I think that could work,” she managed to force out.

Those words were far from adequate, however. Actually, as it turned out, Felicity didn’t really have any words. She surged into him and before she could stop to think about it, her lips were on Oliver’s, passionate and fierce, as she sucked on his lips and, this time, she really wasn’t going to be satisfied until he let her in.

Oliver opened to her willingly but with a hesitance that showed he was surprised at the vehemence of her kiss. That was fine. Felicity enjoyed surprising him. She swept her tongue into his mouth and pressed her breasts tightly against his chest, feeling them pebble and drag against the soft cotton of their matching t-shirts.

Felicity ground her hips down, seeking Oliver’s hardness, feeling him lengthen against her thigh as he moaned into her mouth, his fingers digging into her back.

When Oliver dragged his lips away, panting, she couldn’t say she wasn’t pleased. Especially, when he said, “Fe-li-ci-ty…don’t you think we should tell the others what we have planned?”

No.

Actually, no, she didn’t.

As much as Felicity loved and cared for all of them. And as adorable and heartwarming their investment in her and Oliver’s wedding was…

Felicity was nowhere near ready to give up her alone time with Oliver. She didn’t even care if that was selfish.

“Oliver, we’re engaged,” Felicity reminded him.
He gave her that slow dopey, lovesick smile…yup, that was the one Felicity had imagined staring up at as they exchanged vows.

“Yeah. Yeah, we are.” Oliver leaned forward that fraction of an inch that stretched between them to give her a soft sweet kiss. “I love you.”

Now this was more like it. This was what the minutes after an engagement were supposed to be like.

*Finally.*

“I love you, too,” Felicity murmured, pretty sure she looked just as dopey and lovesick. Which was perfectly fine with her.

Oliver completed the moment with a soft, sentimental sigh. “Thank you.”

Okay, *that* Felicity hadn’t been expecting. “For what?”

Shrugging, Oliver shook his head. “For taking the leap, I guess.”

Oliver really needed to stop making her cry. The crying was supposed to be over. “Well, you are very welcome.” Then Felicity cupped his cheeks and drew his lips back to hers.

But Felicity had barely gotten going when she felt Oliver pull back. *Again.*

Meh.

She knew what he was going to say too. Felicity just *knew* Oliver was going to start in again on going out and talking to the others and planning with Lyla and…blah blah blah….

Why did Felicity have to fall in love with such an infuriating man?

Though *maybe* Felicity needed to stop expecting him to read her mind and start communicating what she wanted. Because really was there even the smallest chance Oliver wouldn’t give it to her once she did?

So, before he could even start his argument, Felicity placed her fingers to his lips and asked, “Oliver, do you remember the first time we got engaged?”

Oliver’s breath hissed and Felicity cursed herself for beginning this way. Clearly, he was thinking about the wrong parts of the night.

“No, don’t think about after. About the attack. I mean the proposal. Your *beautiful* proposal.” Felicity felt a wave of love and affection just thinking about it. “It was a perfect moment and Damian Darhk can’t take that from us.”

Eyes immediately softening, Oliver murmured, “No. No, he can’t.”

She was almost surprised how quickly Oliver had turned that brood wagon around. Maybe Felicity was finally getting through. She pressed another quick kiss to his unfairly plump lips as she continued, “But you know what Darhk *did* take? And it still pisses me off.” She forced a smile and flicked her hand, willfully inserting, “Well, besides the six months I spent in that damn chair?”

“Besides that,” Oliver repeated in a murmur. He was smiling but Felicity could see the sadness lingering in his eyes.
Felicity really hoped her next words would get rid of it entirely. She leaned forward and whispered in his ear, “Engagement sex.”

Because, come on? Hadn’t Felicity waited long enough?

Oliver burst out with a full belly laugh that just…filled her. With warmth and happiness and so much more.

And even though making him laugh was exactly her intention, Felicity pouted, arguing, “I’m serious. I had plans.”

“Oh, I bet you did,” Oliver drawled, his eyes bright and very interested. His hands settled on her hips.

Much better.

“And not just that…” Felicity put on her best sultry voice, gaining confidence as she spoke. “Ever since I put on that red dress…”

Oliver’s breath caught. “The one with the zippers?” He said it so reverently, Felicity couldn’t help but chuckle.

“The one with the zippers,” Felicity repeated, directly in Oliver’s ear, her lips dragging against his skin. “As soon as I put it on, all I could imagine was you taking it off…”

The unspoken words, ‘with your teeth,’ hung in the room between them. Judging by the way Oliver groaned and his eyelids fluttered, she really didn’t think it needed to be said out loud. He knew the end of that sentence as surely as Felicity did.

So Felicity pressed on, “Then the kidnapping happened and we so deserved reunion sex after that.”

“Oh, definitely,” Oliver agreed with a nod, playing along. But Felicity could see how his breath was getting shorter and his pants tighter.

Perfect.

“But I knew we had the tree lighting, so I was patient.” Felicity sighed dramatically, just to emphasize how difficult that had been. “Then after, I almost jumped you in the limo.”

Oliver laughed and it made Felicity so happy he could remember anything about that damn limo and laugh.

“But I was patient then too.” Licking her lips, Felicity made sure her tongue teased his ear as she said, “But, Oliver, I’m all out of patience.”

Letting out a groan…or maybe it was more of a growl, Oliver’s hands framed her face and…

Then his tongue was in her mouth and…yeah, that was much better. A+ for enthusiasm and, well, everything else. Also, a win for communication. Felicity really needed to remember that when she wanted sex, all she really needed to do was tell him. She didn’t even need to ask. Just keep Oliver informed of her…wants and needs.

Yup, communication really was the foundation of a healthy relationship.

Felicity was able to feel Oliver’s cock length against her thigh while she spoke and now he was pressed against her, trapped in the leg of his pants, undoubtedly getting more and more
uncomfortable as she sucked on his tongue.

Slipping one hand between them, Felicity dove straight past his waistband and went right for her prize.

Oliver groaned into her mouth which, BTW, Felicity had always loved. The closer their mouths were meshed (and they were pretty fraking tightly sealed at the moment) the more she felt the sound in every single nerve-ending.

The sound went straight to her clit and her hips bucked, grounding down against him, which was almost counterproductive to her rescue mission, but Felicity still managed to capture Oliver’s cock and release the poor baby from its confinement, helping it stand up tall between them, stroking (because why wouldn’t she?) until Oliver’s head fell back and his mouth tore away from hers as he groaned, “Fe-li-ci-ty…”

“Well, well, well, Mr. Mayor…” Felicity crooned in Oliver’s ear, sinking her teeth into his lobe and tugging. God, she couldn’t wait to seduce him in his office. She was totally allowed to do that now. Or at least would be. She was going to be his wife. Wives were allowed to seduce their husbands anywhere they wanted, even at work. It was a rule. “Thirty-two years old and your fourth erection in 24 hours. Impressive.”

Oliver chuckled, his breath hitching. “Don’t sound so smug.”

The tip of Felicity’s tongue found the shell of Oliver’s ear and swirled. “Why not?”

“Good point. You should totally be smug. Completely deserved.” Felicity laughed but then Oliver cupped her head and nudged it back, so they were eye to eye again. “Go ahead and be smug but don’t forget to be quiet,” he whispered, serious.

Except Oliver didn’t give Felicity a chance to answer as he tilted her head and, once again, thrust in his tongue to tangle with hers.

Okay. Quiet.

How the hell was Felicity supposed to do that?

Then she pictured just exactly who was on the other side of that door and…yup, Felicity had better remember to be quiet.

Her hand spasmed aground Oliver cock, pausing mid-stroke. Felicity was actually surprised he had let her play so long, but she supposed the 32 years old and fourth erection was probably allowing them both some leeway.

Which, now that Felicity thought about it, was kinda awesome. Go age and maturity! 10 points to Gryffindor! Which Oliver definitely was. She was more a Raven—

Oliver grabbed the hem of Felicity’s t-shirt and pulled, yanking her thoughts back to the matter at hand or…not as the case may be, since the shirt removal forced her hand and her mouth to disengage from their very pleasurable occupations.

Then, before Felicity had a chance to recalibrate, Oliver’s hands were on her ass and he was standing and all she could do was hold on tight as he rose to his feet.

So…uh, it seemed dominant Oliver was out to play. Which was…totally cool. Felicity was never disappointed when he took charge. At least not in the bedroom. Or the kitchen. Which was where
the were…actually, yeah, he should always be in charge in the kitchen.

Oliver’s hands slid down the back of her sweats, skimming over her bare ass, his fingers just barely touching her folds and…

Felicity’s ass hit the cool stainless-steel counter. Oliver yanked her pants free and had thrown them across the room before she had the chance to catch her breath.

See, Felicity should have just told him of her desire for engagement sex right away. Set her man in motion, then all she had to do was hold on tight.

Not that Felicity was generally passive in the bedroom, or had any desire to be. It was just Oliver on a mission was…all consuming. Overwhelming. In the best possible way. And he was clearly on a mission at the moment.

It would have been, well, perfect, except Oliver dropped back to his knees and…

Actually, Felicity had several problems with that.

But she had better tell Oliver what they were quickly, because he was teasing the inside of her knee with his mouth and his tongue was warm and his beard was rough and she was slowly (quickly) losing her mind as he worked his way up her thigh.

Okay. Right. Needed to speak. Work those communication chops.

Yup, any time now.

Oliver’s tongue traced the crease between her thigh and her…

“First of all,” Felicity bust out (okay, it was more of a gasp but whatever), slipping her toe into the neck of Oliver’s shirt (mostly because that was what she could reach but, again, whatever). “This. Off.”

It wasn’t very articulate but what the hell was Oliver expecting? He was hot as frak and on his knees, his breath teasing her pussy. Even with his shirt on, how was a girl to think?

Then Oliver grinned up at her and, with a look that said he knew exactly what he was doing to her, he sat back on his heels and pulled off his shirt.

Slowly.

With maximum sexiness.

Cause, yeah, her fiancé (mmm, that was a wonderful word) loved turning Felicity’s considerable intellect into alphabet soup.

God, that was distracting. The way Oliver’s muscles bunched and moved as he pulled off his shirt and flung it away…wow. It made her mouth water. It was…the beauty of this man…

And it was all hers. Forever and ever. So help her God.

Felicity had the primitive urge to eat…him…up.

Which was probably a good thing because it helped her remember other thing she wanted to say. “Secondly, why are you allowed to kneel for me and I’m not allowed to kneel for you?” Felicity wasn’t fond of double standards. Even if they came with multiple orgasms.
“I told you. Felicity Smoak…” And the look Oliver gave her when he said it…Felicity swore it caused liquid to gush from her. “Kneels for no one.”

Okay…that was kinda hot. Also, it made Felicity feel all warm and treasured, but still…not okay. “I thought we talked about not putting me on a pedestal?”

But Oliver, the bastard, just grinned, “It’s not a pedestal. It’s a counter.”

A cheeky bastard. Of course, Oliver was all confidence and charm once they got (mostly) naked.

“Oliver…” Felicity growled, trying desperately to keep her thoughts glued together in something resembling coherency. “Well, Felicity Smoak’s husband doesn’t kneel for—”

Felicity broke off with a muffled screech as Oliver leaned in and sank his teeth into her thigh, just shy of her core. Damn, he played dirty.

“Felicity Smoak’s husband kneels for no one but his wife,” Oliver finished for her (since he’d short circuited her vocal cords), his voice thick and rich. His tongue lashed out to soothe the spot he had bitten with quick, hard strokes.

Falling back onto her hands, Felicity let out a soft whimper but still managed to say, “Well, this soon-to-be-wife demands equal opportunity kneeling.” She took another gasping breath. Her voice was gonna give out any second now. “And…and when we get back to the cabin. I am gonna get on my knees and you are gonna stand there and take it!”

Felicity’s mouth was watering at the mere thought of it.

And Oliver…his only reply was a growl. Right against her folds.

Biting her cheek to keep her cries in (damn their nosy friends and the too thin walls. Should have gone back to their cabin), Felicity gave in. She’d have to be satisfied with the threat/promise that she would be returning the favor in the near future, because Oliver’s nose was probing her clit and his lips and tongue had begun to devour her. She was certain she was going to make her lips bleed with the effort to stay quiet.

It was so very worth it.

But wait…was there something else she had wanted to say? Frak, there was. She knew there was.

God, that was good.

It was almost unfair how good Oliver was at this. But then again, Felicity supposed if it wasn’t fair, she was the one on the winning side of this deal, being this talented man’s soon to be wife…

Then Oliver’s tongue was inside her and his hands were kneading the tender skin of Felicity’s inner thighs, moving closer and closer to her clit and…

“You have to be inside me when I come for engagement sex,” Felicity blurted out as soon as she was able to grab hold of that fly away thought. She was rather proud that she had managed to remember actually. Before it was too late.

Oliver’s face jerked back and he stared up at her, in shock…she thought…actually it was really hard to make out his expression. Damn, it was times like these when Felicity cursed her awful eyesight.
“What?” Oliver’s voice was incredulous. Yup, shocked disbelief.

“You heard me. Engagement sex…” Oliver’s fingers inched toward her clit again, derailing Felicity’s thoughts. Dammit! He needed to stop purposely distracting her! “…your cock in my vagina when we both come.”

Okay, that was sooo romantic.

But seriously, her brain was a swirlly mess of pleasure and her tongue felt kinda swollen. Plus, breathing was an effort. They were lucky her words resembled English.

And, of course, Oliver, the ass, laughed. “Why?”

Why? Talk about a stupid question!

“Be…because…” Okay, no fair asking Felicity to explain. Obviously, the language centers of her brain had gone numb. “Because it’s more romantic that way,” said the girl who just said, ‘she wanted his cock in her vagina.’ At least she hadn’t said ‘penis’.

Oliver’s chuckle showed Felicity that he had definitely caught the irony. He pressed a slow, careful, kiss on her clit, his eyes never leaving hers. Then he murmured, “I think this is pretty romantic.”

He would.

“Nope. Nuh-uh. I need you up here,” Felicity panted, so very eloquently. “Eye to eye.”

“Felicity, honey, when you come your eyes won’t be open.”

She kicked Oliver in his back (since that was all Felicity could reach). Stupid fluffy slipper socks probably cushioned the blow. “Ass!”

Oliver just laughed harder and…plunged two fingers inside of her as his tongue began to flick her clit.

Okay. So…Oliver wasn’t going to comply with her request.

Felicity wondered if she cared.

Her head fell back with a gasp and a muffled whimper. Felicity decided she was going to be annoyed with him. Later. Definitely, later. Maybe, she’d even figure out a way to get him back. Which would be fun actually.

But just as Felicity’s thighs started to tremble and she was certain she was about to fall off that oh-so-pleasant cliff, Oliver pulled back. She didn’t even have time to protest. Or breathe.

Because Oliver was on his feet and then he was inside her and his thumb was on Felicity’s clit as he ground into her and…

Felicity was exploding and it was glorious and Oliver was, truly, the most wonderful fiancé in the world. Of all time, actually.

And, wow, this was the first time they had sex as an engaged couple with her body back. And that was pretty fraking amazing too. God bless Curtis and his little miracle stimulator because every inch of her skin was humming with pleasure and that was a gift that brought tears to her eyes.
She blinked up at Oliver and he was finally close enough that she could see his smiling face. Then, still smirking (yup, it was a smirk. The arrogant ass), his hips pulled back and Felicity felt the long slow slide of his cock. Almost all the way out and...back in just as slowly. She bit the inside of her cheek to keep from crying out.

“Never say I can’t compromise,” Oliver drawled and Felicity looked at him with confusion. “You wanted to come with me inside you and I wanted you to have multiple orgasms. Everybody wins.”

Then the bastard grinned, clearly proud of himself, as he fucked her slowly and thoroughly. But Felicity could only laugh because Oliver’s compromise...really worked for her. Still...

“Arrogant much?”

Oliver shrugged. “And for the record, you closed your eyes when you came.”

Scrunching up her face at him, Felicity kicked her heel against Oliver’s butt as retribution. But then the feel of her foot bouncing off that perfect globe of muscle reminded her just what a thing of beauty it was and she rubbed the ball of her foot (which was unfortunately still in the damn slipper sock) against the smooth firm clenching marvel, pulling him closer.

And Oliver...he smirked even louder.

And, yes, with Oliver, such a thing was absolutely possible. His smirks were loud. Felicity swore to God they were.

So, since turnabout was fair play, Felicity clenched her inner muscles until Oliver’s face went slack and his head fell back. Then she nipped at his lower lip, telling him, “You are so lucky I love you.”

“I know I am,” Oliver answered immediately, the smile on his face turning adoring.

Dammit, now Felicity couldn’t even be annoyed (not that she really been had. How could she possibly be annoyed?). “You’re still an ass,” Felicity muttered, because for some reason she felt she should.

“I love you too.” Oliver stroked her neck and cupped her cheek, not in the slightest bit phased by her (half-hearted) insult. “My beautiful bride.”

Felicity sighed, a soft little sob sneaking in at the end, and shook her head. “You always have to one up me,” she teased. It was that or cry.

“Impossible.”

“Stop being so perfect,” Felicity panted, looking down at their bodies, fascinated by the way Oliver’s disappeared inside hers. Over and again. It was so damn perfect. “It’s annoying.”

Oliver snapped his hips and ground hard against her clit until Felicity gasped. “Is this annoying?”

Felicity’s eyes rolled and she arched her back, spreading her now perspiring fingers against the cool metal of the counter, trying desperately to gain traction.

“Uh huh.” Though Felicity wasn’t a hundred percent sure what she was agreeing to.

Chuckling, Oliver nibbled on Felicity’s chin as his hands ran down her flank. “How about this?”

“Yup. Absolutely.”
By that point, Felicity decided to just agree to whatever Oliver said. The results were pretty awesome. Plus, her brain was a giant ball of cotton candy. Spun pleasure. She’d forgotten how easily, completely, and blissfully he could make her brain turn off.

“How about this?” Oliver’s hands ran from her hips to her waist, in tandem, then slipped around to cup her breasts, squeezing and kneading. When his thumb and forefinger began rolling and pulling on her nipples, her hips jerked uncontrollably and…. Dear God, Oliver began these slow hard thrusts and Felicity thought she might (happily) die right there.

Felicity gasped as one particularly hard thrust sent a lightning bolt of sensation through her. “Oliver…”

“Oliver, what?” was his husky whisper. And how was he even coherent? No fair! “Oliver, stop?”

“Oliver, don’t you dare!”

His deep chuckle rumbled over her skin as Oliver leaned in to catch her lips. Felicity took pity on him. Swinging her arms up and around his neck, she pressed herself fully against him and met his lips halfway. One of his hands left her breast to span her back and pull her close.

Several long, slow kisses later, Felicity smiled into Oliver’s eyes, her body humming. “See how much more romantic this is?”

Oliver’s face melted and he rubbed his nose against hers. All teasing gone. “You were right. As usual.”

“Ooo, say that again.” Felicity even managed a shiver for affect. Or maybe it was genuine, who knew?

He didn’t say it again, but he did step up the speed and power of his thrusts and that might have been even better. Then the pressure of his fingers on her nipple increased and… Oliver captured her lips just in time to swallow her low moans as she came.

Again. Harder than before. The peak echoing as Oliver’s hips snapped harder and harder, losing their rhythm entirely until his lips went slack and his whole body stiffened.

Felicity held him to her, wrapping herself around him as they trembled together until the warm, languid aftermath seeped through her… their muscles. She smiled against the side of his mouth.

“So,” Felicity laughed, happiness bubbling up and spilling over, suddenly too much to contain. “I’d say this engagement has already gone much better than the last one.”

Oliver’s face jerked up from where it had fallen bonelessly onto her shoulder, his eyes wide with disbelief, his mouth open, the corners twitching like he couldn’t quite figure out if he should smile or not. “I sure as hell hope so!”

And again, Felicity laughed, probably too loudly but the hell with it. Let them hear her laugh. Let them hear how happy she… they were.

Resting her extended arms on Oliver’s shoulders Felicity beamed at him until every emotion that wasn’t happiness faded from his expression and he beamed right back. Only then did she say, “I love you.”
There were never too many ‘I love you’s when it came to an engagement. in Felicity’s opinion. Or in life.

Chuckling, Oliver seemed to agree as he echoed, with no less emotion, “I love you too.” Then, with a shake of his head, like he couldn’t quite believe this was all happening, Oliver leaned in to give her one…two…three soft kisses.

Then, all at once, Felicity felt like she was bubbling over with excitement and needed to share right the frak then. “Let’s go tell the others!”

And, wow, she was actually surprised at how eager she was to face the crowd, even Thea and all her very passionate opinions about wedding nonsense. A few minutes ago…half an hour…dear lord, how long had they been in this room?

Well, however long ago it was, Felicity had had no desire to share Oliver with anyone. The last thing she had wanted to do was talk wedding planning with her friends. But now…

Felicity genuinely couldn’t wait. Wow, this is what she should have felt the first time around. Maybe she had, for a few precious minutes in that limo, before her world came crashing down. And every time she’d managed to bolster up a piece of scaffolding, another piece fell.

It been a hellish year and half, but they had finally cleared away the rubble and were building again. The foundation was solid and they were using bricks and mortar this time. Everything that had felt hobbled together the first time, felt beyond perfect now.

Except…she should really call her mother. A part of Felicity was so excited to tell her everything, but her enthusiasm dimmed as she realized...if her mother couldn’t get here, and Felicity didn’t see how she could, then it would probably be better to tell her mom after they were married.

Maybe they could stop by Vegas on the way home. Her mom would like that. Maybe even bring William. He’d enjoy the lights (after all, they tended to make grown men and women behave like children). Hell, Felicity would even let her mother plan a post-wedding wedding extravaganza. Go nuts. Glitter and all. (But no actual nuts). After they were married, Felicity really didn’t care what sort of garish nonsense her mom planned.

Except, Oliver was mayor now…whatever, Felicity would pair up Donna and Thea and let them plan the whole thing together. That way it would be over the top, but at least it would be a classy over the top.

And Felicity and Oliver could just put their feet up and enjoy the memories of their perfect wedding in Bali.

“Yeah, that should be fun,” but Oliver’s sarcastic tone was completely contradicted by the uncharacteristically gleeful smile taking over his entire face. Felicity guessed he was probably more excited than she was to share this with his family.

The excitement they had already seen on William’s face…that was a miracle in of itself.

Getting dressed took longer than it should have because of all the kisses and the touches and whatnot and, well, the fact that it should have taken no time at all given they had a total of four items of clothing between them (they hadn’t taken off the slipper socks) and Oliver’s pants were still around his ankles. Did her glasses count as an item of clothing?

Oliver looked almost nervous when he finally opened the door. Excited, but nervous. To be fair,
who the hell knew what they would find on the other side.

Felicity, however, felt pretty confident she could take on the world at the moment. Bring it on!

_Revised 6/19/2018_

Chapter End Notes

I hope everyone enjoyed this chapter. This and the next were one chapter, but Felicity had too much to say. Then I took the opportunity to add some stuff I didn't have time for the first time around and wal-lah, two fairly long chapters.

A million and a half thank you’s to **Fairytaleshearts, Imusuallyobsessed, and iIreland1733** for all they do. I could never do this without them. And a special thanks to everyone who takes the time to comment and kudo. It keeps me going.

Thank you and happy reading!!!

Emmy

(Emmilynestill on Tumblr and Twitter)
A Family (Dys)Function

Chapter Summary

![A Family (Dys)Function](image)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.
Oliver didn’t feel nervous at all.

Not until his hand closed around the door handle.

Before that, Oliver had been flying pretty high on life, on orgasms (Felicity’s even more than his) and a wedding plan they were both more excited about than the first one.

Honestly, he couldn’t fucking wait to be in Bali again. It had become an almost mystical place in his head. A mecca they kept talking about returning to but with every passing day it had become more and more unlikely, until Oliver had given up on it ever happening. One more dream destroyed by his own stupidity.

Returning there now, with Felicity, making her his wife on its shore…it was more than fitting. It was…it felt like the completion of their journey together. An ending to the hell they had forced their way through and a new beginning to something so much better.

At sunset, one moment of beautiful transition.

It was so perfect Oliver’s secret inner sap wanted to weep.

Oliver couldn’t wait to share this…happiness with his family. With Thea and John and William and…

Except Oliver didn’t know what he was going to get back in that lounge. Weddings were easy to
plan…until family got involved. There was a reason people eloped.

Of course, Oliver and Felicity would be the only couple in history to try to elope with their friends and family in tow. Well, except for Donna which was something he really needed to think about.

Now, he had to worry about Thea’s very strong opinions and William’s feelings…which so far seemed positive, but if Oliver had learned anything in his whole two days of being a father it was that ten year-olds’ moods swing. Violently and without warning.

And then…

Then there was Curtis’ enthusiasm and Lyla’s stubbornness (since she was the one who would have to agree to bring them to Bali), Rene’s mouth and Slade’s mouth and Nyssa…Jesus Christ, Nyssa.

Taking a deep breath, Oliver entered the lounge as quietly as he could (which was pretty damn quiet), hoping to get his bearings before the team swarmed like locusts. Thankfully, everyone seemed pretty distracted. And loud. The chatter was far more…animated than it had been before.

John and Rene were in the back corner, next to Slade, engaged in a conversation Slade may or may not be involved in. Oliver couldn’t make out what they were saying because the others…the others were all huddled around one of the circular tables, completely engrossed in a loud and muddled debate that seemed to involve multiple people speaking at once.

Just looking at the group of them made Oliver…

Overwhelmed? Nervous? Petrified, possibly?

Whatever it was, Oliver had the very strong urge to grab Felicity’s hand and turn the fuck around.

Lyla had a sleepy JJ on her lap but her face was a little too serious for his taste. More ARGUS Lyla, than Mom Lyla. Unless someone was shooting at them, Oliver far preferred Mom Lyla.

Then there was Samantha and William, the former seemed to be watching the latter indulgently while his boy seemed very much involved in the conversation. Very animatedly engaged. Whole-body engaged.

Thea was busy scribbling on a piece of paper and talking at the same time while Curtis much the same, only with multiple tablets instead of paper. Dinah was there and certainly not silent and… Oliver closed his eyes and took a breath…Nyssa. He didn’t even want to know what Nyssa was doing there. And smiling, for Christ’s sake.

Oliver supposed he should be glad no one had listened at the door. But somehow whatever was going on over there seemed far worse than eavesdropping.

Looking back at his fiancé (yeah, that’s right. His fiancé. And this time, Oliver was planning to make sure that title didn’t last the week, before they both got a promotion), he found that Felicity didn’t look nearly as worried as he felt.

Which was good. Probably. Though Oliver thought maybe Felicity was disappointed no one had even noticed their return, which made him a little peeved himself.

Wasn’t it typical? His family and friends too busy planning their wedding to worry about the actual bride and groom. Oliver would just as soon slip out and back to their cabin, but Felicity deserved better.
Slipping an arm around her shoulders, Oliver tried to give her his most reassuring smile. Felicity snuggled into him and he pressed a kiss to her forehead and saw…

Well, at least someone had noticed their return. Quentin was in the corner next to the coffee, one side of his mouth tipped up in a knowing smile as he watched them. For some reason, it made Oliver feel like blushing, which was just…annoying. He frowned, hoping a nice scowl would mask the flush.

Quentin sauntered over quietly (he was a man who understood discretion, at least), stirring his coffee as his smile became more of a smirk than not. “You two might regret taking so long in that room,” he said when he was close enough to whisper and not be heard.

Not that that was hard with the racket the others were making…

Wait. Quentin had said…

Ahh crap. This was exactly what Oliver was worried about. “Why?” he asked, knowing damn well that there was a very good chance he didn’t want to know the answer.

Quentin gestured over to the table where Curtis, William, and the ladies were gathered, in a way that suddenly reminded Oliver of the knights of the round table, but instead of planning a battle they were planning…

“Wedding Summit,” Quentin announced, nodding with mock severity. “Very serious business.”

Fuckity fuck fuck. Oliver should have known he couldn’t leave Thea alone (especially with Curtis) long without her taking matters into her own hands.

Not that it mattered. This wasn’t Thea’s wedding. It was theirs. So Thea could plan until her face turned blue, Felicity was getting what Felicity wanted. Oliver swore to God, she would.

But...after it had taken so much care and effort to get Felicity to agree to any wedding plan (anything that didn’t involve slipper socks and take more than 5 minutes to prepare), the last thing Oliver needed was a horde of well-meaning, but pushy as fuck, opinionated idiots (even if some of the idiots were technically geniuses) getting inside his fiancé’s head.

Oliver could feel himself tense up just thinking about it. Especially now that he knew Felicity felt Donna had taken over their wedding planning the first time around. He’d be damned if he let his sister, or anyone else, do that to his bride again.

Felicity smothered a (semi-hysterical) laugh into the back of her hand, and Oliver frowned, squeezing her other hand, hoping she understood he had her back. His eyes fell shut and he took deep breaths through his nose, trying to center himself. He was going to need to stay strong. And calm.

It was okay. He could be diplomatic. He could. Oliver was downright charming when he wanted to be. Firm but charming. The perfect bridegroom. All he needed to do was make sure everyone was clear that Felicity was the bride. so Felicity was in charge. Thea would understand that. Hopefully.

“There is gonna be a wedding, right?” Quentin asked, pulling Oliver’s attention back to him. And the older man looked like he was ready to shove them back in that room until they came out with the correct answer.

And it kind of…warmed Oliver’s heart. Quentin was a man he had always admired. From
childhood. A man whose approval he had always coveted, perhaps even more than his own parents (whose expectations were painfully low for the things that mattered). A man’s whose daughter, Oliver was well aware, spent half of her life dreaming of marrying him. A daughter who would never have any of her dreams come true.

With all that history, all that baggage, Oliver really couldn’t express how much Quentin’s approval of his and Felicity’s marriage meant to him.

But his…reflection, made Oliver slow in responding and Quentin was starting to frown, until Felicity (thankfully) had the presence of mind to nod, beaming up at Quentin with a look of such excitement Oliver doubled down on his internal promise to make sure she got everything she wanted for her day.

“Thank God!” Quentin breathed with obvious relief. “Otherwise there probably would have been an intervention. Or a riot.” He shook his head in an exasperated sort of way and Oliver really didn’t think he was kidding. “Oh, and congratulations by the way.” He leaned in and kissed Felicity’s cheek.

It made Felicity blush this time. It was a good look on her. But then Quentin put a hand on her back, ushering her forward (and out of Oliver’s arms, which he cared for not at all) with a muttered, “Come on. Let’s get this over with.”

Oliver was left with nothing to do except follow and as he did Lance leaned over his shoulder and shot Oliver a hard glance. “You are one lucky bastard, you know that, right?”

“I do,” Oliver assured, quickly and easily, since it was probably the easiest question he’d have to answer today.

Felicity, however, frowned up at Quentin and Oliver was almost afraid she was going to start one of her defensive tirades before he had a chance to tell her it was fine. If the worst Quentin was going to say was to state the absolute fact that Oliver was the one getting the better end of this deal, he was more than happy.

Lance muttered, “Damn straight,” but he gave him a wink that seemed to relax Felicity and it would have made Oliver smile if Quentin didn’t immediately raise his voice and call out, “Hey! Everyone’s so busy planning somebody else’s wedding, that no one noticed the bride and groom were back.”

Oliver’s mind got stuck for a second on the phrase ‘bride and groom’ but there was no time to savor (or adjust), because the room went silent and everyone turned to stare.

William was the first to speak, turning in his chair and coming up on a knee to demand, “Did you do it? Are you getting married?”

Tears burned Oliver’s eyes and for a moment it was too much. He stepped forward and wrapped his arm around Felicity’s shoulders, pressing his lips to her hair and breathing in the harsh scent of military grade shampoo as he tried to gather some control. Oliver wasn’t even certain William was pleased, for God’s sake, and here he was about to start blubbering like a baby.

Thankfully, Felicity seemed more with it because she called out, “Yes. Yes, we are.”

“Yes!” William pumped his arm the air, then turned to fist bump Curtis.

So…William was pleased. The relief (and sheer emotion) left Oliver’s head spinning. Thank God.
The room erupted in cheers and hoots and hollers. Almost instantly, they were smothered with hugs and well-wishers. Then Felicity was crying and Thea was crying and Curtis was crying, but Oliver was very glad that he (somehow) managed to keep his in.

It was hard though. Damn hard. Thea threw herself in Oliver’s arms first, whispering, “I am so so happy for you. You deserve this, big brother.”

Burying his face in his little sister’s neck, Oliver whispered (not whimpered, damn it!), “Shush, I’m trying not to cry in front of my boy.”

Thea pulled back and cupped Oliver’s face, smiling tearfully into his eyes and saying, “Mom and Dad would be so proud of you.”

Oliver’s mouth fell open and…God damn it! “You’re evil, you know that, right?”

The minx just burst into laughter and lunged up to press a hard kiss to Oliver’s cheek before pulling away and throwing herself into a rocking hug with Felicity. And he was left…

Oliver’s eyes found William, holding himself back from the crowd, looking unsure.

He hadn’t held his boy since he had snatched him away from Chase. Actually, that had been the only time. And even though they had been getting along well…Oliver couldn’t say he didn’t feel pretty damn unsure himself, at the moment.

And if Oliver was feeling unsure, how was William feeling?

But Oliver was the Goddamn adult here, so it was his job to push past the awkwardness. And to, somehow, not pressure William at the same time. Why was parenting so complicated?

Taking a deep breath, Oliver caught William’s gaze and gave him a small smile. Then he waited…and when William finally gave him a smile back, Oliver chanced opening his arms and…

Then he had an arm full of ten-year old.

And, yeah, Oliver was a goner.

Oliver wrapped his arms around his boy and squeezed his eyes shut, fighting the burn. He tipped his head down and pressed his nose into William’s hair, trying to memorize his smell. Oliver couldn’t speak. There was no way but…when he could finally open his eyes (wet as they were) he found William’s eyes just as tightly closed, his face buried in his father’s chest.

Across the room, Oliver’s eyes sought out Samantha (God only knows why). She was the only one still seated at the table, but she was smiling and looking pleased and…really, that was all the wedding present Oliver needed from her.

Oliver pressed a kiss to William’s head and then turned his head to find Felicity smiling at him, her face drenched in tears. He almost envied her ability to show her emotions so easily. He hoped William would learn so much from her.

When William finally looked up at Oliver, the boy stepped back, out if his arms, looking almost embarrassed. Oliver wasn’t sure if it was because their relationship was so new or because showing this much affection in public was naturally embarrassing for a ten-year-old boy.

Oliver thought it was the later, but he couldn’t find the words to make William feel better. Where was Oliver’s fabled charm now?
Probably stuck in Oliver’s throat with all the emotion that threatened to choke him. But, of course, his Felicity saved the day, turning to William and saying, “Do I get a hug too?”

Since Oliver didn’t know anyone who could say ‘no’ to Felicity, he wasn’t surprised when William threw himself into her arms next. Though Oliver was a little taken aback at how close in height they were in bare feet.

Felicity whispered something to William that Oliver couldn’t hear and William grinned ear to ear, saying, “I told you!”

Cupping his face, Felicity tilted her head down the scant angle it took for him to be eye to eye and told William, “That is because you are smarter than any of us.” Then she noisily kissed each of his cheeks and William looked like he might faint he was so happy.

Honestly, Oliver didn’t know how the hell Felicity did it, but he was so damn grateful.

William practically skipped back to his mother, making room for more well-wishers.

Next came Lyla and a very sleepy JJ, who completely butchered the word, “Congratulations,” making it a thousand times cuter for the effort. Then Dinah and Curtis, who swung Felicity off the ground he was so excited, babbling on about something Oliver hoped Felicity understood, because Oliver sure as hell didn’t.

“’Bout friggin time,” was René’s form of congratulations as he took his turn hugging Felicity. Oliver got a hand slap that turned into a one-armed bro-hug from the smaller man as John enfolded Felicity in his strong arms.

“Don’t say that until the deed is done,” John warned Rene from next to him, still holding Felicity. Oliver could tell he was only half-teasing. “Papers signed. Rings exchanged. Then I’ll breathe a sigh of relief.”

“You and me both,” Oliver agreed, because no truer words had ever been spoken.

Oliver was able to hear John whispered in Felicity’s ear, “Congratulations. No two people deserve to be happy more.” And then he watched her sniff and pull up her glasses to wipe her now swollen eyes.

There wasn’t a thing Oliver could do to help though, because John turned to embrace him and, damn, if he wasn’t fighting again to keep his own eyes dry.

What was worse as soon as John stepped away, Oliver found himself staring at the one-eyed smirk of Slade Wilson. And talk about the last person on Earth Oliver wanted to catch him tearing up.

On the other hand, just looking at the bastard’s shit-eating grin as he lounged against the back of a couch, arms and ankles crossed, was enough to pull Oliver out of his emotions. It was hard to cry with happiness and want to slug someone at the same time.

“So I see you finally got your head out of your ass,” Slade drawled.

Yup, Slade was the gift that just kept giving.

Felicity rolled her eyes and leaned against Oliver’s shoulder, temporarily free from having someone to hug. “You talking to him or me?” she asked caustically, eyebrows up and head tipped to the side. It made Oliver want to grin, because everyone knew Slade was talking to him.
But Slade turned his one eye on Felicity and said, “Both.” Which was a lie and they both knew it.

But Slade and Felicity stared each other down for a full minute. Oliver had no idea what he was going to do about this dynamic if Slade decided to stick around.

And still Slade just stood there, looking at the couple as if they were there for his amusement, until finally he tipped his head to the side and said, “Of course, that depends on what you decide to do with that one.”

Slade jerked his chin to his right and Oliver followed his line of sight to see Nyssa sauntering over and... *Goddamn* it. She was probably the only person Oliver wanted to deal with less than Slade. Plus, he would swear that Nyssa was purposely putting on her most sexy badass strut.

Once upon a time, Oliver wouldn’t have been immune to it, but those days were long gone. Of course, now he was more worried about his so called “wife” hitting on his *actual* fiancé than anything else.

Nyssa’s smirk put Slade’s to shame (to be fair, she was a hell of a lot better looking) and even in ARGUS sweats and makeup free, she looked every inch the assassin as she murmured, “Who says anything needs to be done?” Nyssa’s eyes narrowed in on Felicity and Oliver really didn’t like the look in her eye. “I am very pleased with my husband’s choice. Felicity will make an excellent sister wife.”

Oliver threw his head back and closed his eyes, grunting. Though, who was he kidding? He’d known exactly what was coming. Felicity let out a burst of laughter and at least he could take comfort in the fact that she was finding humor in the situation.

But Nyssa seemed neither intimidated by his frown nor Felicity’s laughter. And certainly not by the arm Oliver had firmly around his fiancé…his *legitimate*, not coerced and sanctified by a defunct ancient cult, fiancé. This engagement was even consummated which was a hell of a lot more than anyone could say about that so-called marriage.

Even with the glare Oliver was giving her, and he swore it was his worst death stare, Nyssa walked straight up to Felicity and said, with what passed (for her) as warmth, “Welcome, sister.”

Then, before Oliver knew what was happening, she cupped Felicity’s cheeks and…

Oliver thought she was going to kiss her on the cheek. Or forehead. Or…well, he sure as hell would have stopped her if he had known Nyssa would give Felicity a hard kiss right on the mouth.

Felicity’s eyes snapped open wide and she gave a muffled, “Eep.”

And, unfortunately, Oliver couldn’t even find his voice until after she pulled back. When he did, he snapped, “What the hell, Nyssa?”

Nyssa gave him the least innocent innocent-looking Oliver had ever seen and shrugged. “It’s all in the family, husband.”

“No. *No. It’s not…*” Oliver sputtered, but they all seemed to be ignoring him.

Felicity might be blushing, but she also looked incredibly entertained by the whole thing. “So if you marry Sara, will she be my ‘sister wife’ too?”

“Felicity!” Oliver gasped, looking at her incredulously. Shouldn’t they be standing together on this? Shutting it down? As in *immediately?*
Instead, Oliver got further ignored as Nyssa told his fiancé, “Of course,” with sly a smile that really got Oliver’s hackles up.

And, of course, that set Slade off and he laughed, “I take it back, kid. I’m starting to see the advantages of this scenario.”

Crap. Now things were really getting out of hand.

Oliver’s eyes flew over to his son, his poor young, (he really hoped wasn’t catching the jokes about foursomes and polyamory) son. Luckily, Curtis seemed to have William engaged with something on his multiple tablets.

Now, to nip this nonsense in the bud. Oliver looked at Nyssa and very firmly said, “No.” Then Slade. “No.” And his fiancé. “N—”

“What?!” Oliver asked, looking up at Nyssa and Furman. “No! No! No! And nope.

“You know, I don’t share well,” Oliver whispered in Felicity’s ear. “And I’m pretty damn sure the only one Nyssa is interested in this arrangement is you.”

Felicity just laughed harder, her shoulders shaking beneath his hands. Nyssa’s smirk didn’t waver, either. She just turned to Oliver and said, “Congratulations, husband. Do let me know if you need any…help.”

Then, before Oliver could put an arrow in her, Nyssa patted his cheek and glided out the door like the Queen of fucking Sheba.

And Slade...Goddamn fucking Slade came over and cupped both his and Felicity’s faces. It was all Oliver could do not flinch as Felicity shrank back into him, eyes wide. Both of them froze as Slade kissed each of their cheeks. Then, grinning like a mad man, pronounced, “Half your luck, kid,” and walked back to his couch.

Oliver could only gape. “What?!”

Felicity gave Oliver a soothing little pat on his chest. “I think he said congratulations. In Australian.” Though the face she was making showed she wasn’t sure if she should be creeped out or not and she was holding the cheek Slade kissed as if it burned.

“Um…guys? If you are done getting vaguely threatening congratulations from your frenemies, we could really use you over here,” Curtis called from the table, waving them over.

So…done with the celebrating, time for the summit? Fuck.

Even Felicity looked nervous. “Um…why exactly?” she deflected, tipping her head to look up at Oliver and twirling a piece of hair around her finger. ‘Help,’ was what her expression said and he really wished he knew how, wished he could make it all go away.

But he couldn’t, mostly because they loved (most of) these people so much. So instead, Oliver
tried to express, without words, that it was all going to be okay. Because he was going to make
damn sure it was. It would be a cold day in hell before he let any of them take over their wedding.

“To plan the wedding, duh,” William answered. Loudly. Grinning ear to ear.

Except his son.

Damn it.

Okay, no. Oliver wasn’t even letting his son take this wedding from Felicity. Even if the thought
of disappointing William made Oliver physically sick.

His fiancé apparently felt the same, because Felicity completely melted in the face of William’s
enthusiasm and pulled out of Oliver’s arms to join the table.

“Oh, but rule number one,” Felicity announced, throwing a very pointed look at Thea (who, let’s
face it, they all knew was the ring leader), “we will not be waiting.” Oliver was relieved that she
was at least setting boundaries.

But Thea just grinned wider, reaching out (a surprisingly long) arm and grabbing Felicity’s hand.
Thea reeled Felicity in and pushed her into the seat next to hers. “Speaking of which…”

This time, the look Felicity threw Oliver was full-on panicked and he scowled as Felicity was
engulfed by the ‘summit’ table. Oliver decided it was best to stay standing and stationed himself
between his sister and his fiancé. He crossed his arms and frowned, hoping he looked good and
intimidating. He was not allowing history to repeat itself.

Felicity took a deep breath and sent Oliver a reassuring smile. He supposed she wanted to at least
listen to what they had to say, if for no other reason than William looked so excited. But Oliver
really thought it would be best to assert their plan as soon as possible (gently of course).

“Oh,” Thea began, sliding her chair even closer to Felicity’s, ignoring Oliver completely, “we
need to talk about this shotgun wedding plan—”

“Th-ea!” and maybe Oliver growled at his sister a little, towering over and sending her a death
glare.

Though, God knew, Thea was the last person on Earth ever intimidated by him. Well, besides
Felicity. So, of course, she just blinked up at him and singsonged in a mockery of his own tone,
“Ol-i-ver…”

This was really not going well. “Thea, this is Felicity’s wedding—”

“And yours,” Felicity piped up, sending Oliver a hard look.

Turning his eyes to his fiancé, Oliver felt his face melt into a lovesick smile and there wasn’t a
damn thing he could do about it. “And mine,” he agreed but then he turned back to his sister and
said (maybe a little less growly this time), “And we are going to have the wedding we want.”

Rolling her eyes and tilting her head, Thea sent Oliver a look that was 100% Queen Stubbornness
(yes, with a capital ‘S’) and, damn, if William wasn’t watching closely and taking notes. “Are you
seriously going to tell me slipper socks and work-out clothes is the wedding you want? After all
you’ve both been through?” Then Thea threw her hands in the air. “What am I saying? It
probably is what you want. But doesn’t your bride deserve better?”
And if they hadn’t already decided against slipper socks, Oliver would consider them just to spite his sister.

But Oliver didn’t have time to come up with a biting comeback, because Felicity slid her hand over and took Thea’s, saying gently, “I really don’t want a big wedding. I don’t want the spectacle that would be an ex-billionaire, now mayor, marrying an ousted CEO would be in Star City. And I don’t want to wait!”

Felicity was so much better at diplomacy than he was. Of course, she also had a softer heart so… Oliver needed to make sure no one took advantage of it. He sat back on his heels and watched his sister’s reaction.

Thea’s eyes brightened, twinkling almost which…okay, that was not what Oliver had been expecting. And it just made him more on edge.

“We can work with that,” Thea assured. “Just hear me out.” She didn’t wait for Felicity to agree (or Oliver, for that matter. Though he didn’t kid himself that Thea cared what he thought). She just launched into her pitch, “We have a plan that will have you married in forty-eight hours with a wedding you will want to remember—”

Okay…maybe Oliver should just shut this down. Make it clear that the plan was Bali before things went any further.

“We, Thea, we already…” Oliver started to argue, but Felicity shot him a look that stopped him dead in his tracks. She looked…intrigued. Okay, well, if Felicity wanted to hear them out, he certainly wouldn’t stop her. Oliver just hoped she (they) wouldn’t end up regretting that decision.

Felicity held out her hand to Oliver and he took it, squeezing it (and holding his breath). Then his fiancé turned to Thea and said, “We’re listening.”

“So,” Thea grinned, “tomorrow morning we pull into Manila Bay, Philippines—”

“As in the Battle of Manila Bay? World War II?” Felicity asked and Oliver…he had no fucking clue what she was talking about. Was that something everyone learned in school or was it some obscure thing only nerds knew?

“The same,” Lyla answered. She had JJ in her lap, his head lolling on her shoulder, trying to keep his eyes open as she rocked him. “It’s a thriving city now. The navy often docks there. It’s really beautiful.”

“But more importantly,” Thea threw in, “it has fantastic shopping!” Of course, that’s what Thea would care about. Oliver barely restrained from rolling his eyes.

“I think being beautiful is at least as important as the shopping,” Dinah drawled. Oliver knew she was the level-headed one.

Thea looked like she wanted to argue the point, but Curtis chimed in, “But really, the historical significance is poetic. Manila was completely decimated by World War II and now it’s a thriving metropolis. Risen from the ashes. Kinda like Oliver.”

Oliver winced, groaning, “Seriously, Curtis?” And this time he did roll his eyes. Where did they come up with this shit? Risen from the ashes? Oliver never rose from any ashes, he’d bathed in them. Ten years later and he was still trying to get himself clean.

Patting Oliver’s hand, Felicity smiled up at him. “I do think it’s rather poetic, as a matter of fact.”
Because she would. “It’s okay, Curtis. Oliver hasn’t quite learned how to take praise. Yet.”

Why did that last word sound more like a threat than a promise?

Oliver grunted, fighting a Goddamn blush he had no business sporting as Thea threw a look at Curtis. “Are we done with the history lesson?” Curtis shrugged so Thea plowed ahead, “We dock tomorrow morning and then we have 24 hours to shop and prepare. Captain Mitchell has agreed to marry you overlooking the bay on the deck of this Aircraft Carrier, which is quite the honor, in case you didn’t know.”

Great, now Oliver had to worry about insulting the naval captain who saved their lives when he told them he and Felicity had already decided on Bali.

“We checked the weather,” Dinah added, “and it will be gorgeous, clear and milder than usual for this time of year. Perfect for an outdoor wedding.”

Oliver needed to stop this runaway train before it became a wreck. He squeezed Felicity’s hand and interrupted, “We appreciate this but—”

“Can it be at sunset?” Felicity asked and…she actually sounded excited.

Oliver’s eyes flew to her face as he tried to figure out what she was thinking. He really wasn’t okay with Felicity giving in to make everyone else happy.

Lyla shrugged. “I don’t see why not.”

“Manila has incredible sunsets.” Curtis swiped at one of his tablets, then pushed it over to Felicity. Her breath caught as she looked at it.

Okay, Oliver had let this go on too long.

“Felicity and I decided we want to get married in Bali,” Oliver told the crowd. Calmly but firmly. Then he turned to Lyla. “Isn’t there a way to go there instead?” Was it really that much further than the Philippines? They were already on the open ocean.

“Oliver,” Lyla sighed and, unfortunately, she did not look all that accommodating. “A ship this size can’t just dock anywhere. With the weapons on board it has to be cleared weeks or months in advance for a new dock. Manila is one of its bases in the South Pacific.”

“Oh.” Goddamn it. Oliver swallowed his disappointment and…it was okay, he could still make this work. It could still be perfect. He crouched next to Felicity and turned her chair so it faced him, telling her gently, “We could still fly to Bali from Manila.” It couldn’t be more than a single flight. “All of us.”

Felicity didn’t look disappointed. Actually, if he was interpreting her expression right, Oliver thought she seemed most worried about disappointing him.

Lord, what a pair they were.

“Oliver, look at this,” Felicity whispered, flipping over the tablet and showing Oliver…well, he had to admit it was one of the most magnificent sunsets he had ever seen. “It’s breathtaking.”

Oliver had to agree. It was even better than what he had imagined when Felicity first put the idea in his head. But Bali…it had meaning for them.
Taking a deep breath, Oliver searched her eyes. Because as much as he loved the idea of Bali, when it came down to it, all Oliver cared about was making Felicity happy. And she looked really taken with this sunset.

Oliver’s eyes softened and his voice lowered, “Is this what you really want? I want this to be the wedding you want, not your mom, not Thea…” Or even William.

Felicity cupped Oliver’s cheek and he leaned in to it. She didn’t look like someone who was giving up their dream and the smile in her eyes was nothing like the way she looked when her mother was trying to…glitterize everything.

“Captain Mitchell couldn’t marry us in Bali. Or on the beach. I like Captain Mitchell,” Felicity argued, her voice soft. “Which…okay, is probably silly since I barely know the man, but he gives off a really good vibe.” Curtis hummed his agreement and Oliver found it distracting (and annoying). “And he’s willing to marry us on deck. How many people can say they got married on the deck of an aircraft carrier? At sunset? Overlooking Manila Bay in the Philippines?”

Okay…Felicity made an excellent point. Several actually.

She did look happy with the plan and Oliver couldn’t say it wouldn’t be a relief not to have to worry about getting them all to Bali. And getting a marriage license. And finding an officiant. And…a million other things. He didn’t quite have the money he used to to make the impossible happen.

“Are you sure?” Oliver asked even more softly, his eyes searching hers. Because he really needed to know Felicity was sure. If she wasn’t, he’d pull the plug on this right then and there.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Was she sure?

Actually, Felicity thought she’d known the minute Curtis handed her the photograph of that gorgeous sunset over Manila Bay. I just felt…right.

And, wow, Felicity could just imagine staring into Oliver’s beautiful eyes, exchanging their vows with that as a back-drop. And on an fraking aircraft carrier? How cool was that?

Felicity could still have her breeze and the smell of the ocean, the sun glinting off it the water and she’d get to buy a pair of fantastic heels. (While Oliver may have rolled his eyes at the idea of great shopping, she had not. Thea as her personal shopper…nothing to scoff at). Honestly, Oliver was far too tall for her not to be wearing heels when they got married.

Yes, Felicity had agreed to Oliver’s wedding in Bali plan. And, yes, that had seemed like the best
plan at the time. But really, she had to admit this one was sorta, kinda better.

This way, they didn’t have to worry about all the annoying logistics of getting married in a foreign country (technically this boat was American “soil” and its captain could issue an American marriage license).

And frankly something that was guaranteed to happen in 48 hours, where Thea and Lyla handled all the annoying details, sounded great.

So fantastically great. Felicity really didn’t think Oliver fully comprehended the part where she was not a party planner (Green Arrow birthday cakes aside).

Biting her lip, Felicity let the team’s plan (Team Wedding’s, not Team Arrow’s) wash over her, the whole idea of it.

They could be married in forty-eight hours on the deck of this ship, at sunset, and Felicity wouldn’t have to wear slipper socks.

Yup, worked for her.

But Oliver…Felicity really worried Oliver had his heart set on Bali. She knew he would do whatever she wanted but…she didn’t want him to bend for her. She wanted him as excited as she was. Taking both his hands in hers, Felicity bit her lip and offered, “We could still honeymoon in Bali?”

Because really wasn’t that having their cake and eating it too?

As soon as Felicity said the word ‘Bali’, Oliver relaxed (though maybe it was the word ‘honeymoon’). His smile started out small but soon took over his entire face. “I think I could live with that,” he murmured and his words might be mild, but Felicity could tell from the look in his eyes he was already imagining it. And was quite pleased with the images his brain had conjured.

“So it’s settled?” Thea prompted, starring her brother down. She seemed more eager than anyone to move things along. “Wedding in Manila, day after tomorrow?”

Felicity almost squealed it sounded so good. Day after tomorrow. Oh God, this was really happening.

But even though Felicity had managed to keep the sound in (she thought), Oliver seemed to understand how excited this made her. He gave her a private smile and turned to his sister, putting his hands up in surrender. “Whatever Felicity wants.”

Quentin appeared to clap Oliver on the back. “Already sounding like a good husband.”

There was a smattering of chuckles as group turned to her and Felicity could feel giddy anticipation bubbling up inside her, in a way she hadn’t experienced in a long, long time. “Manila, it is!”

“Yessss!” William shouted, bounding to his feet and it made Felicity very glad that they had made this decision. Who knew he would care so much?

Then Oliver leaned in and whispered into her ear, in a tone that made Felicity shiver, “Then Bali.”

Blushing, Felicity swallowed and agreed, “Then Bali.” God, that sounded fantastic. Just a quick stop in paradise before heading back to reality. Alone. “Though after that we really should stop in Vegas to break the news to my mom.” She winced a little at the thought. Her mom at least
deserved to be told in person.

There was guilt and maybe touch of grief that her mom wouldn’t be here for the ceremony, but Felicity pushed it aside. There was no time for those sorts of thoughts. Forty-eight hours was not a long time to plan a wedding.

“We can do that,” Oliver agreed but he was frowning, looking at her with a concerned expression and…oh God, he probably wanted to talk about her mother. Which would probably make her feel even guiltier. He’d get his soft eyes and his I-would-give-anything-to-have-my-parents-here expression and…

Crap, now, Felicity really was feeling like…well, crap.

Blowing out a breath, Felicity didn’t want to go there right now so…pressing on. They needed something else to focus on.

“Oh…we need a photographer.” Felicity patted Oliver’s chest. He was still crouched beside her. He could do that for hours, because of those fabulous thighs and abs and…right, she was trying to focus here. “The only request Oliver has is that we get some good pictures.”

“My mom’s a photographer,” William announced, loudly and with a whole lot of zeal. And that was…huh…okay…

Felicity was certain Samantha was just thrilled to be volunteered to photograph her Baby Daddy’s wedding.

“Oh William…” Samantha winced (who wouldn’t), before turning to Oliver and Felicity. She had been quiet, but surprisingly pleasant, through this entire…spectacle. “I’m an amateur really. It’s just a hobby.”

And that surprised Felicity more than anything. Because she didn’t seem to be saying ‘no’. Samantha actually seemed more concerned about her abilities than…the incredible awkwardness that was this situation.

“She’s really good,” William insisted and the pride he had in his Mom, his eagerness to help, it really was very sweet. He was such an easy kid to love.

But this…this wasn’t something Felicity knew how to answer. Having your fiancé’s Baby Mama as your wedding photographer?

It was odd, that was for certain. But strangely enough, she wasn’t completely opposed to the idea. Options were limited. Still Felicity hedged, “We really wouldn’t want to impose.”

That seemed the polite thing to say either way, because if Samantha wasn’t genuinely interested in doing it then…epically bad idea. Felicity glanced at Oliver and he shrugged, his expression…he wasn’t against the idea either.

“Actually, I’d be happy to. Really,” Samantha burst out and that stunned Felicity again. Because it seemed so genuine. “I enjoy it but…I’m just not a professional. I don’t want you to be disappointed.”

Samantha was sincere and William looked like it would mean the world to him. Felicity turned to Oliver. If it was okay with him, it was good with her. What was the worst that could happen?

Wait. Felicity didn’t think she wanted the answer to that one.
Oliver searched Felicity’s face, and when she nodded her encouragement, he turned back to Samantha with a half-smile. “I really don’t think we are getting a professional photographer in forty-eight hours in a country we’ve never been to, so if you really don’t mind—?”

“In that case, I’d love to. It’s the least I can do.” Samantha was smiling. She looked pleased. Relieved, even.

That was when Felicity realized the depth of Samantha’s guilt for breaking them up in the first place. Though Felicity thought that maybe this spoke very well of her being a good person at heart. And thank God, since she’d be in their lives for, well, ever.

Squeezing Oliver’s hand, Felicity smiled back and said, “Thank you.” And she actually thought Samantha blushed.

“Oh…but I don’t have a camera.” Samantha bit her lip, looking around. “And for something like this, you really want a good one. Not every camera can capture a sunset like that.”

There was a fire that flashed in Samantha’s eyes when she mentioned the sunset and Felicity realized she was seeing a new side of her. An artist excited by capturing something beautiful. Maybe this wasn’t just guilt and the desire to make her son happy.

Lyla waved a hand and gave a dismissive shrug. “You’ll find everything you need in Manila.”

Thea looked at Curtis and William (her partners in crime) and did a little dance in her chair, singing, “Shopping! Whoo hoo!”

Oliver rolled his eyes, but Felicity found it hard not to laugh. Actually, why shouldn’t she laugh? This was…fun.

So she did. Felicity laughed.

She was pretty damn excited about the shopping herself. Not for the camera (though Felicity had a feeling if she started researching the technical specs on the different cameras out there she could fall into a pretty deep rabbit hole), but when it came to shopping for clothes and shoes her enthusiasm could rival Thea’s.

Curtis turned his biggest smile on Samantha, “You can hang with me. I’m going to look for some video equipment to hook up a drone and get some aerial shots.”

Felicity could have kissed him. For so many reasons.

“Cooool!” William breathed, in complete awe. It was adorable. Now Felicity wanted to kiss them both.

The kid’s excitement just made Curtis grin bigger, “Wanna be my assistant?”

William nodded his head with more eagerness than Felicity had realized a person could possess. It was…so incredibly amazing to see him so juiced up about his part in this. In their wedding.

And also…tech. Felicity had a feeling her and Curtis were going to get a little apprentice for the lab. Oliver would hate it but she was so excited she could squeal.

But then she saw Oliver looking at her with a look of pure joy and awe and…well, maybe he would be fine with William in the lab. As long as they kept him away from the explosives. T-spheres could be unpredictable…
It would be fine. They’d figure it out.

“Thank you, Curtis,” Oliver breathed and Felicity knew he meant for including his son but, thankfully, anyone else who realized ignored it.

Curtis shrugged, his grin seemingly perma-plastered across his face. “It’s the least I can do for my favorite ‘ship.”

Samantha tipped her head and narrowed her eyes in confusion. “You’re a fan of aircraft carriers?” She asked it so politely. As if it was a weird thing to be fond of but she was trying to make it sound interesting instead of strange. Poor Samantha. She had no idea what she was getting herself into.

“Oh mo-om,” William groaned, rolling his eyes and shaking his head. “Curtis means ‘couple.’ As in relationship.”

And, seriously, Felicity had to bite her lip and press her hand to her mouth to keep from laughing out loud. Poor, poor Samantha.

She took it in stride though, giving a very mom-like, long-suffering sigh. It seemed Samantha was used to being out of touch as far as William was concerned.

Then Samantha shook her head, pushing herself back from the table. “Okay then. On that note, I’m going to go and try to catch up on some sleep. It sounds like tomorrow will be a big day.” She turned to her son. “I’m guessing you want to stay?”

William gave her another of his frenetic, hopeful-excited nods. Though honestly, he looked almost as tired as his mother. In an almost delirious, too-tired-to-rest way. “Can I?”

Felicity was sure that Samantha was in for a fight if she said ‘no’ and prepared to have to back her up but Samantha just gave a tired smile and told her son, “Just stay with…” She looked around the table with an overwhelmed look (and Felicity had never related to her more). “Just stay with someone you’re related to. Or soon to be related to.”

Wow. Okay. Felicity realized she had been included in that list and that was…all right then.

“Thanks, mom.” William beamed and tilted his head for Samantha to place a kiss on his cheek.

“Be good.”

Samantha left but no one else seemed ready to call it a day. Dinah rubbed her hands together and leaned forward, jumping in with, “Okay, we need a game plan. We don’t have much time.”

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Felicity would never have pegged Dinah for someone who would be excited about wedding planning, but it was kinda awesome that she cared. Also, they could use all the help they could get.

Thea pulled a pad of paper in front of her, grabbing a pen and tapping it on a list she had already scribbled down. “Obviously a dress and clothing for, well, all of us is the number one priority. We need to get out of these fashion nightmares asap. Oh and rings. We’ll have to buy wedding rings but,” Thea stopped her almost manic diatribe to look over at Oliver and Felicity, “do you want a new engagement ring or did you plan to still use mom’s?”

At the mention of her old engagement ring, Felicity’s heart kind of did an odd skipping sort of thing and her left hand clenched. As if to feel the phantom ring. It had taken months to get rid of that feeling.
“Your mom’s ring has the disadvantage of being not here,” Curtis offered.

And also…Moira’s ring. Felicity wasn’t having the warmest feelings for the woman today and she couldn’t say she hadn’t thought maybe that ring held some bad mojo. It wasn’t like Moira had a history of healthy marriages.

“Wellll, um…” Oliver muttered.

Felicity turned to look at him, narrowing her eyes as he shifted uncomfortably which she…she had no idea what that was about. Plus, he was refusing to look at her. Or anyone, really. Suspicious.

“Not exactly,” Oliver finally spit out, chewing on the inside of his lip.

Not exactly what? Felicity frowned and, cupping his chin, forced him to look at her. “Oliver, what’s going on?”

Clearing his throat, he took a deep breath. Then Oliver again bodily turned Felicity’s chair, so they were eye to eye, only closer this time. And in his eyes…there was something deep and fathomless going on inside there. Among other things, he was very nervous.

And that made Felicity nervous.

“If you want a new engagement ring, a fresh start and all that…” Oliver began and Felicity wondered if he was going to try to convince her to keep his mom’s. Because of the legacy or whatnot. “But…” He swallowed, looking ridiculously uncomfortable. “I do have your…old engagement ring. Here. With me.”

Felicity couldn’t do anything but blink at him, trying to make sense of what Oliver was saying. “What?” That didn’t even make sense. “How?”

Oliver’s face screwed up, embarrassment written across every feature, as his eyes darted around the room then back to hers. This was obviously a conversation he would prefer to have privately. Felicity was even going to suggest that…

But then Oliver lowered his voice even further and said in a barely-there whisper, “It’s, uh…sewed into the Green Arrow suit.”

Breath hissing, Felicity gasped, her hand flying to her mouth. And…here came the waterworks. No way she could stop them now.

Oh wow.

Oh wow oh wow oh wow.

But since Oliver clearly hadn’t been quiet enough, there was also the very distinctive sound of Rene bursting out laughing. “Dude, you are such a sap.”

“Shut up, Rene,” Dinah growled and then there was the sound of something, a pen maybe, bouncing off his hard head. Felicity really hoped it hurt.

“Oh my God, that is the most romantic thing I have ever heard.” And Curtis sounded like he was about to start crying. What was Felicity thinking? Of course, he was crying.

But she…Felicity didn’t know what to say. There were so many things she wanted to ask…

Like…why? When? How long?
But none of those things the team needed to hear. Besides, all Felicity could really manage was a half-sobbed, “Oliver…”

He shrugged, looking incredibly needy and vulnerable and rather like an overgrown Labrador retriever. Oliver wasn’t paying a speck of attention to the team, just to Felicity.

“I just figured…just in case…I wanted to make sure it was there. Then later…” Oliver’s voice was barely audible and Felicity really wanted to tell him he didn’t have to, he could tell her later, when they were alone but…her voice wasn’t working. “Then it was just a way to keep you with…”

Oliver looked away and…

Aw…frak. Wow, just the idea that ring had been on Oliver’s body all this time. With him…

Okay, so Felicity had totally been leaning toward the whole new ring, fresh start thing but God, now…

Fuck, Moira Queen! That was Felicity’s ring now!

Felicity took Oliver’s face in her hands and made sure he was looking her directly in the eye when she told him fiercely, “I definitely want my ring back!”

Oliver smiled, looking so relieved and so pleased and…he leaned forward to meet Felicity in the sweetest kiss.

It probably would have lingered too, if Rene, the asshole, hadn’t let out a loud wolf-whistle. Goddamn him. Hadn’t Felicity fired him back in the bar all those weeks ago?

But Oliver just rolled his eyes and gave Felicity one last kiss. Then he was standing and clearing his throat, trying very hard to look like someone who hadn’t just admitted what a giant marshmallow he was. “John, Quentin, could you two help me with my suit?”

Felicity couldn’t figure what he needed that much help with, but at this point Oliver could have whatever he wanted. Felicity was feeling beyond indulgent. If he needed to escape all the estrogen and try to stream a game, have at it.

But Rene was clearly not pleased to be excluded. “Hey, you guys are gonna leave me here with the homecoming committee? Seriously?”

Oliver shot the shorter man a glare, obviously not happy with him. “You can hang out with Slade.”

“For real? With the frenemy-slash-felon?” Rene protested.

Oliver shrugged, giving Rene a not-my-problem look (and seeming to enjoy it too).

Grunting, Rene grabbed a deck of cards and stomped off to the back of the room, “Hey, Wilson, you play poker?”

And Felicity had to bite her lip because, God, she played poker. A whole lot better than she party planned.

What she wouldn’t give to join them? It had been a long time since Felicity had gotten to hustle anyone and, damn, Slade and Rene would be a joy to fleece.

But…wedding. Right. Had to plan a wedding. Very important.
Except…couldn’t they just go shopping tomorrow and figure it out then? What was there to talk about?

Oliver turned to William and asked, “You good?”

He got another happy nod. William was clearly enjoying his place at the table, which wasn’t hurt by the fact that Curtis was currently showing him various drone specs on his tablet. Felicity wondered how Samantha would feel about Felicity teaching William to count cards. Because, really, how long could planning take?

Leaning down, Oliver pressed a kiss to the top of Felicity’s head, then whispered in her ear, “Don’t let Thea take over.”

Felicity smiled and nodded (though she might secretly be scheming to figure out how she could get Thea to take over, so she could fleece Slade and Rene) and Oliver, John, and Quentin disappeared out the door.

“I think I’m going to put this one down for a nap,” Lyla gestured to the semiconscious toddler in her lap. And, yeah, Felicity was pretty sure Lyla felt the same as she did about pre-planning shopping/party planning. JJ was just a convenient excuse to escape. Pretty sure Lyla had never been on the homecoming committee either. “Then I’ll make sure I get everyone passports ready.”

Well, the last part was a damn good excuse, so Felicity let her go with another, “Thank you, Lyla.”

As soon as the door closed behind her, Thea turned to William and grinned. “Yes! All the old people are gone. William, go grab the rest of those chocolate muffins. Curtis, you grab that plate of cinnamon rolls. Chop chop, people. We have work to do.”

Well, at least, Felicity would have plenty of sugar to see her through.
Hold on to your hats, guys, this is gonna be a long one.

First off, I never intended to write a wedding for (Don’t) Let Me Go. In my first “vision,” back in May/June, the plan was to end here and then sort of summarize things in a honeymoon epilogue (remember how I said I was planning on having two epilogues). Well, as time went on and I had more ideas about the wedding and more hype about the cannon wedding and…well, I started to change my mind. With a lot of encouragement. I’m looking at you Ireland1733. (She’s preening, totally unapologetic).

Part of me wishes I’d stayed with my original plan because I knew what would happen, knew myself, as a writer, and knew there was no way I would be able to do this simply. I started writing the wedding chapter (yes, I was still under the delusion that I could do it in one chapter) and, suddenly, I’ve got a chapter and a half of deep conversations in the bride’s room getting ready, then another chapter of the guys on deck. And then TWO FULL chapters of a ceremony because I can't cut anything. And, of course, I needed both povs (no real overlap, thank god.)

Some of you may decide it’s boring as all get out, but you should feel like you are on that boat, attending their wedding. At least that’s the goal. Then it’s several chapters for the honeymoon. And the epilogue from William’s pov (which is the chapter I’m most excited about, to be honest).

Okay, so if you survived that Author’s Note, I’ll wrap up by thanking my betas Fairytalehearts, Imusuallyobsessed, and Ireland1733 for all they do.

Thank you!
But before you dig in, I want to warn you that it’s going to take a few chapters before Felicity actually walks down the aisle. I don’t skimp on the lead up (even if some of you wish I did).

Also, after the most recent episodes of Arrow, the relationship of Oliver and Felicity with New Team Arrow in this story may seem off and/or forced. In particular (for this chapter), after the events in 6x09-13, Dinah may seem out of character.

However, please, remember that this story is as if Season 6 never existed.

Oliver leaving the team, Digg lying about an injury (or getting injured in the first place) none of that happened. Rene hasn’t betrayed anyone. Dinah doesn’t even know Vincent is alive. This team was rescued from Lian Yu in a way that brought them together, instead of driving them apart.

So…take a deep breath and let out all the negative feelings you may be having about Season 6 Dinah and try to remember the beautiful potential of 5B.

Thank you and happy reading.
“It’s...fantastic,” Dinah breathed, spreading out Felicity’s chiffon skirt. “I honestly can’t believe we found this in less than a day.”

Felicity took a step back, trying to get as full of a view as she could in the propped-up mirror as Thea declared, “And it fits perfectly.”

Thea was standing to the side, admiring the dress with crossed arms and a smile. One would have thought she had designed the dress herself, she looked so proud. Not that Felicity minded. Without Thea, there was no way Felicity would have found anything half as nice. Hell, left to her own devices they would have all been wearing slipper socks to the wedding.

Dinah shook her head, like she couldn’t quite believe it, adding, “Like it was made for you.”

And, incredibly, it did.

In fact, this dress fit better than the one Felicity had ordered specifically for her, months ahead of time. All they’d had to do with this one was hem the bottom. Which a lovely older woman had taken care of in the back of the bridal shop, quickly and easily, while they’d shopped for the ladies.

Even their dresses had been easy to find. So, soooo much easier than Felicity had anticipated. So easily, in fact, that Dinah had laughed and said, ‘someone up there wants this wedding to happen.’
And while Felicity wasn’t going to go that far, (if anyone deserved credit, it was Thea and her remarkable shopping skills), it had still made her a little bit giddy. What bride doesn’t want a ‘meant to be’ vibe around her marriage?   Her and Oliver had been throwing around the word ‘soulmate’ (with remarkably little irony) quite a bit lately.

So maybe Felicity did think (just a little) that this wedding was happening in exactly the right place and at exactly the right time. And maybe that was the work of a higher power.

Felicity had always embraced the heritage part of being Jewish more than the religious part. She was too much of a woman of science to believe in a god that was intimately involved in their lives.

But today, her wedding day, she felt like someone was watching over her. Maybe even her grandmother and grandfather. Sylvia and Jacob had been dead for more than half of Felicity’s life and she didn’t think about them nearly as much as she once did, but today she couldn’t seem to stop thinking about them.

Maybe that was because theirs was the only example of a healthy happy marriage Felicity had known as a child. Because thinking about starting a life with her great love (praying for that 50 or 60 years), she couldn’t help but remember how her grandparents had been so in love that Bubbe’s health had faded and she’d slipped away not six months after her husband had died.

At the time, in her eleven-year-old grief, the idea of a love that strong was terrifying, not something to be coveted. But now Felicity understood. Now she was glad her bubbe had been able to follow her zayde so soon after he’d died because she knew that living without your love was so much scarier than dying.

Loving that much was still terrifying but now that Felicity had experienced it, she couldn’t live without it. So, yes, it gave her such comfort to think of Grandma Sylvia, watching over her and easing her way. Especially, on a day when she was missing her mother so much and…

Felicity was really trying not to think about that.

Better to think of the things that were going right. It happened so rarely in their lives that Felicity was determined to enjoy it.

Felicity just hoped her luck would hold for a little longer. To get them through the honeymoon and settled back in Star City…no, that was greedy. All she needed was one more day.

Please God…or Bubbe…Zayde…anyone watching out for her. For them. Just one day. It didn’t need to be perfect. But if it could go as well as the last few days Felicity would be eternally grateful.

Yesterday could have been a giant headache but it had all fallen together. They’d even been back in time for her to trounce the boys at poker. And, truly, there were few thrills in life as good as wiping the floor with Mr. Terrific, Wild Dog, and fraking Deathstroke at cards.

Well, except marrying the love of her life.

Which Felicity was doing in…just over an hour. So soon it made her heart flutter and her palms sweat. And yet long enough to drive herself nuts.

So, yeah…getting ready. Making sure everything was as perfect as it could be. That was what Felicity was supposed to be doing. She should get on that.

Smoothing down the dress, Felicity turned, examining it from every angle.
Felicity had gone into their shopping spree dreading it. Dress shopping had been more a chore than a joy when she’d gone with her mother (of course, being in a wheelchair at the time was enough to land anyone in tears), but how could finding a dress, and everything else, in one day be anything but stressful and frustrating?

Yet, the only thing that had been even slightly stressful was getting a set of her prescription contacts before the wedding. Because no matter how much Thea assured her that Oliver would love it if Felicity wore her glasses down the aisle, it just…it was not the look she was going for.

Thankfully, Felicity’s contacts arrived an hour ago. She should have trusted Lyla’s ARGUS connections and avoided the internal freak-out. Of course, a super-secret international spy group had a guy in every port who make contact lenses in any prescription or color in less than 24 hours. Duh. Why wouldn’t they?

And now, here they were, in the captain’s spacious quarters, which he had graciously lent them for the bride to get ready, staring in an enormous mirror (one she had a sneaking suspicion Rene and Curtis had removed from the crew’s bathroom wall) and…Felicity still couldn’t believe how it was all coming together.

Felicity looked at the two women smiling next to her and…wow, even that was surreal. It felt so weird (in a good way) to be standing there with a bridal party.

If she was completely honest with herself, Felicity hadn’t had a really close girlfriend in a forever. Not since she’d decided to skip middle school all together and Anna Berkowitz had never forgiven her for leaving her behind in the “regular” smart classes. (Maybe that was why the idea of Helix and Alena had been so seductive).

So when Felicity was planning her wedding last year, nothing had been more stressful than the idea of choosing and worse asking bridesmaids.

Felicity had considered getting one of her guy friends, Curtis or Cisco, to be man of honor, calling it progressive, and being done with it. She didn’t need a whole entourage of woman walking down the aisle.

But Felicity hadn’t been as close to Curtis then as she was now and it was probably insulting to ask Cisco instead of Caitlin, since they were equally close. Well, Felicity had thought they were until Cait had gotten metahuman powers and not told her about it. Which was exactly Felicity’s point about not being good with the whole girlfriend thing.

John would have been the perfect man of honor. If he weren’t already Oliver’s best man and Felicity hadn’t want to interfere with that. It meant too much to Oliver and there were so few people he was close to as well.

Felicity had even suggested to her mother that maybe she could be her matron of honor. But while Donna had cried and told her she was honored, her mom had insisted that she was going to walk her daughter down the aisle like a good Jewish mother. For an open-minded person, it was amazing how stuck her mother got on ‘the way it was done’.

In fact, Donna had insisted on the whole bridal party thing. Unfortunately. She didn’t believe her when Felicity had tried to explain she wasn’t sure who to ask. What she hadn’t told her mom was that finding bridesmaids made her feel like she was still that eleven-year-old freshman in high school, eating lunch alone in the library.

But if Felicity had just explained how insecure it had made her feel, her mother may have handled
it differently. But she’d kept it close to her chest, inside her little pistachio shell and…asked Caitlin to be her maid of honor. (It was preferable to admitting she still occasionally felt like a social outcast).

Caitlin seemed thrilled and so very sweet. Felicity had always thought they could have been really close if they lived in the same city or even had more time to talk.

But that hadn’t been enough for her mother. Felicity needed bridesmaids. God, Donna could be so difficult. So Felicity traded out the tacky-ass three feet high centerpieces and gave into the bridesmaids thing. Besides, Thea really needed to be in the wedding and…Laurel.

God, Laurel.

Felicity took a deep breath in her nose and out again. Was it strange that, other than her mother, Felicity missed Laurel the most today?

At first, Felicity had thought it would be pretty damn awkward asking her fiancé’s ex-girlfriend (the ex so many people had assumed Oliver would eventually marry) to be in her wedding and she’d wondered if it was putting Laurel in a weird position by asking. But…not asking had seemed even worse. (See, this whole bridal party thing was an emotional landmine waiting to happen).

But Felicity and Laurel had been friends, they’d even started to approach ‘close’ during all those horrible months between Oliver first almost getting himself killed on that mountain and joining the League.

But then Felicity and Oliver ran away together and they’d barely had time for goodbyes and...

When Laurel walked into their (disgustingly) perfect suburban house in Ivy Town, Felicity knew things had changed. Laurel never said but Felicity saw her looking around the house and she could only imagine that she was seeing the dreams she’d had for her and Oliver being played out with another woman.

Felicity could only imagine, if the situations had been reversed, how painful it would have been for her. But Laurel had been nothing but supportive of Oliver and Felicity’s relationship. She’d beamed and clapped when they had gotten engaged, had sat at her bedside when Felicity was shot, and when she’d asked her to be in the wedding, Laurel had smiled and hugged her and been genuinely pleased (Felicity was certain it was genuine. Laurel was a terrible liar).

Laurel had looked beautiful in the long clingy red dress they’d picked. Donna had said it was too late in the season for red. It was a spring wedding and she needed to pick a pastel. But Felicity loved red. Red had meaning for her and Oliver and every one of the girls had looked beautiful in it. Especially Laurel.

Felicity and Laurel had a fourth red dress made. On the off-chance Sara got the message and was able to make it back for the wedding.

They would never know.

And now…well, as soon as the word bridesmaid came up, Felicity had felt that old familiar anxiety rising up from her stomach. That flashback to ninth grade.

Initially, Felicity dealt with it the way she had wanted to in the first place. By not dealing with it. The guest list barely topped a dozen (which she loved, btw). All she needed was someone to stand up for her and Thea had agreed to do that. Her and Thea had gotten much closer over this last year,
thank goodness, and it felt right.

When the four women had broken off from the guys to go shopping together, Felicity had figured that Dinah, Thea, and Lyla would help her pick out her dress and then pick anything they wanted for themselves. Even if she wanted them all to be in the wedding, how could they possibly find bridesmaids dresses, off the rack, in their size, that didn’t look like crap? In one day?

But the bridal salon Thea had found, where Felicity had found her own dress…they had a whole rack of these short green silk dresses, the styles slightly different but the color fabric and length the same. It had felt like…destiny or…Grandma Sylvia calling in a favor. But looking at those dresses…Felicity had been possessed by that sentimental emotional demon that had been following her around since she’d gotten engaged and she had declared that both Lyla and Dinah had to be her bridesmaids.

She was almost glad that Nyssa hadn’t been with them because the mood she’d been in, Felicity had no doubt she would have asked her to and…yeah, that would have been way too weird. Even for them.

Thankfully, Lyla and Dinah had seemed as caught up with wedding fever as the rest of them and agreed without argument. All three women had been able to find a dress that suited them. Felicity was sure it helped that all three were also leggy, gorgeous brunettes, who wore small off-the-rack sizes.

It was surprising how natural it felt to have these three women supporting her. Especially Dinah. They had never really spent any one-on-one time together…well, she was sure they had at some point in the bunker been technically alone, but nothing that stood out. They hadn’t hung out. Had never spoken about anything personal until recently.

But, like Laurel and Sara and Thea…even if they didn’t spend their rare free time together, they saw each other every day. They were more than just colleagues, more than work friends. They had their lives in each other’s hands. They were a team. If they didn’t work together seamlessly, someone was going to get killed. They had to trust each other.

So really even if they didn’t have coffee dates and mani-pedis, they were close. In a way most people couldn’t even understand. Being a member of Team Arrow didn’t mean that they were all friends, but it did mean they were family.

That was probably why it felt so good to have Dinah with her and Thea now, this whole experience bringing them closer. And why Felicity missed Laurel so much today.

“Whoa! You’re frowning! No frowning,” Thea squeaked pulling Felicity out of her thoughts. “No frowning! It will ruin your perfect makeup.”

Felicity sent Thea an amused look in the mirror. “Pretty sure smiling is worse for makeup than frowning,” she pointed out, trying to inject some humor because while she was happy, the air around her just felt heavy. And if she kept skipping down this mental path she might just cry and that would ruin her makeup.

Thea ignored Felicity’s attempt at humor and grabbed her shoulders, squaring them so they were both looking directly into the mirror. “Don’t tell me you’re second guessing the dress again? You look perfect. So, so perfect.”

She hadn’t been. Not at all. But…Felicity blew out a breath and smoothed her hands down her waist.
“I do wonder if I decided too quickly.” It was a silly, minor worry but Felicity really didn’t want to talk about the people who weren’t there. Especially the ones that were lost and never could be. This was safer. “Maybe we should have gone to another store.”

A small part of her (a very small part) worried she had settled and convinced herself this was the dress, just so she didn’t have to go to more bridal shops. It did seem a little too good to be true that they had gotten everyone’s gown in the first (and only) shop they had gone to. In fact, this was the first dress Felicity had tried on.

“Felicity,” Dinah said, in a firm reasonable tone, pulling her out of that neurotic brain spiral. Felicity envied that sometimes, her steady level headedness. “You tried on a half-dozen dresses after this one and immediately rejected them. Because they weren’t this dress. You had a mystical Say-Yes-To-The-Dress moment, don’t fight it.”

Both Felicity’s and Thea’s eye flew to Dinah’s, wide and incredulous, because…huh?

“You watch Say Yes to the Dress?” Thea gapped at Dinah and, yup, that had been Felicity’s thought exactly. Of all the woman she knew, Dinah was the last person she saw spending a Sunday indulging in TLC reality trash TV (granted Say Yes to the Dress was one of the least trashy).

Dinah shrugged, completely unapologetic of her tv choices (and Felicity respected that). “Who hasn’t indulged in the occasional late-night marathon? It’s great for insomnia.”

Felicity had to give her that one. That was pretty much her excuse as well.

And the dress…Felicity bit her lip and indulged in that super girly thing of picking up the skirt and holding it out wide. The clingy white chiffon shimmered in the light…it was beautiful.

Yesterday morning, Felicity had thought they would be lucky to find a flattering white sundress. Something short and simple. Casual. She’d even argued with Thea against going to a bridal salon, thinking a department store or boutique would be a better use of their time.

But Felicity was woman enough to admit she’d been wrong. She’d never question Thea’s shopping instincts again.

The dress wrapped in the front, hugging Felicity’s waist and bodice, emphasizing her waist and somehow making her look hourglass shaped and not the pear-shaped she was. Then the skirt just flowed, falling loosely to the floor in what felt like miles of breezy chiffon that was so light and airy Felicity felt like she could float.

There was no underskirt. No crinoline or tulle (like her first dress had needed) that made the dress bell out in a princess style. And, God, Felicity was grateful for that. Especially in the warm weather.

Compared to all the intricate beading on Felicity’s first dress, this was almost simple. The only lace and beading was on the small loose cap sleeves and framing the back of the dress, where it dipped low in the back. It was actually a large oval cut out, but with her hair down, it looked like the dress was held up by magic.

Felicity had been adamant about avoiding a sleeveless dress. She didn’t think she had the chest for it and had argued that fact with her mother last year (everyone had assured her the final fitting would have fixed this issue, but they’d never gotten that far). These sleeves did little to keep the dress up, but with the hidden fastening on her upper back and the way the chiffon hugged her…it
fit so well it wasn’t an issue.

Never in a million years would Felicity have imagined this dress. Or picked it out of a magazine. But it felt right.

Just like Oliver.

Never in a…trillion…gazillion years, never in the entire multiverse would she have imagined that her, Felicity Smoak, would be marrying Oliver Queen, of all people. It was unthinkable.

Yet, here they were. Fitting together so perfectly it…had to be fate. Didn’t it? There was no other explanation.

“It’s is perfect for a tropical wedding,” Felicity finally said, as soon as she realized her friends were waiting for her assurance that she was happy with the dress. And her other thoughts, well, they felt like too much to say aloud. To anyone but Oliver, anyway.

“It does make me wish that Captain Mitchell were able to perform the wedding on the beach,” Thea bemoaned, fingering Felicity’s skirt. None of them seemed to be able to keep their hands off the soft, gauzy fabric. “This would have looked so perfect on the beach.”

But Dinah scrunched up her face and shook her head. “She would have gotten sand all over the hem.”

“And I couldn’t wear the shoes,” Felicity added, feeling a ridiculously giddy rush as she mentioned them. Because, good God, she loved the shoes. They had all the sparkle the dress lacked. Glittery and strappy and 4 ½ inches high, they cost far more than no-longer-billionaires should spend. She simultaneously never wanted to take them off and couldn’t wait for Oliver to peel them off her feet, to soothe the ridges left behind. “Besides without the shoes I’m too short—”

“You are not too short for the dress,” Dinah and Thea repeated together. Again.

Okay, so…maybe Felicity had mentioned that one too many times. It was irrelevant now, anyway. She wasn’t taking the gorgeous things off until they crossed the threshold of her hotel suite at the Manila Grand that had booked for their wedding night (preferably being carried by her oh-so-capable new husband).

Dinah put her arm around Felicity’s shoulders, grasping them in a way that made Felicity wonder if she wanted to shake her. “Jeez, Felicity, since when are you so insecure about your appearance?”

“I’m not,” came the automatic (and only slightly defensive) reply. Felicity met Dinah’s concerned gaze in the mirror. “I’m very happy with my appearance.” She hadn’t been insecure about her looks in years...but then she gulped. Because she was starting to learn that weddings could resurrect old wounds. “Generally. Today…”

Before Felicity could figure out how to end that sentence, Dinah’s grip loosened. Her face became more sympathetic as she said, “It’s completely understandable if you’re nervous.”

“No, it’s not,” Thea threw out with a playful grin. “You are marrying my brother, you are not allowed to have any reservations. No, wait…” Thea tapped her chin and paused dramatically. “Okay…strike that. All reservations are understandable.”

Felicity laughed. Sometimes it struck Felicity how very…sibling Thea and Oliver could be. Despite their huge age difference.
“No reservations,” Felicity was able to assure. With complete confidence. But…was she nervous?

There was this fluttery butterfly feeling in her stomach. And the tumbling thoughts and random obsessing over what was probably insignificant details certainly pointed to nerves. Yet when Felicity thought about Oliver…

“And I’m not nervous about marrying Oliver.” There was only excitement and anticipation. Felicity couldn’t wait to be his wife, for him to be her husband.

“There’s the smile we’ve been waiting for,” Thea sighed, grinning almost dreamily herself.

“I don’t think she’ll have any problems finding that smile once she sees Oliver.” Dinah’s eyes crinkling with her own smile.

“Ollie is going to die when he sees you!” Thea agreed, sounding almost as giddy. In fact, she looked like she wanted to clap at the idea. “But,” Thea wrapped her arm around Felicity’s waist, “if you get nervous, just imagine Ollie’s face as you walk toward him and the breeze catches the skirt and he sees those shoes and that leg—"

The slit. It was possibly Felicity’s favorite thing about the dress. It went all the way up to her mid right thigh, but there was enough of the light material that it would only be seen if… when the ocean breeze caught it as she was walking down the aisle.

“Oliver’s going to swallow his tongue,” Dinah finished.

And, yeah, that was the idea.

“He really will, won’t he?” Felicity whispered, imagining the way his eyes would darken, how his fingers would rub together. Why had she wanted to wait for sunset? They could be getting married right now. They could be married already, moving on to far more pleasurable things.

“Oh yes. Ollie’s face will be priceless,” Thea said with great relish (making Felicity wonder if she was hoping it would be embarrassing). “And we had better get a photo of it. I’m not so sure about this Samantha being the photographer thing.”

There was an edge to her tone that had Felicity… kinda confused. Turning to Thea, she studied her. “I thought you liked Samantha.” Thea had been the first one to comfort her on the island and never showed a single sign of disliking her.

Well, until now. The face Thea was making showed more than dislike. It showed distrust and resentment. Wow, Thea really was the best actress among them. But Felicity had known that. She’d never known anyone better at putting on a happy face and seeming to be in a good mood while she…was slowly dying inside.

“You always seemed very understanding,” Felicity pressed, because even knowing this about Thea, it felt weird that Thea hadn’t shown any indication of bitterness or dislike until now.

Thea opened her mouth and closed it twice. Felicity studied her eyes, becoming even more confused at the flash of guilt and almost panic she read in their hazel depths.

“I am…sometimes.” Thea shook her head, like she wanted to shake the question away. Why would this subject bother her so much? “I mean, growing up as a Queen I understand a mother not wanting her kid to have anything to do with us but…on the other hand, Samantha’s history doesn’t exactly make me feel confident in her loyalty.” Thea shrugged, trying to pass it off as no big deal.
but her arms were now crossed tightly. “So I guess I’m a little bipolar on the subject.”

But the weird part was... Thea looked a lot more upset than she should be. It was obvious (to Felicity anyway) Thea was trying to go back to that easy breezy cheerfulness of a few minutes ago but... she didn’t quite seem to manage it.

Was it because the Samantha situation reminded Thea of her own mother? Her absence was undoubtedly weighing on both her and Oliver today. Or was it the fear that Samantha would take William away again and they’d lose more family? Because that was happening over Felicity’s dead body.

It couldn’t possibly just be worry over wedding pictures. Could it? Rich people were weird about things like that.

“I’m not worried about the pictures,” Felicity told Thea in her most assured voice, trying to pass along her confidence. It was seriously the least of her worries. “I’m pretty sure Samantha is trying to appease her guilty conscious over the part she played in our break-up.” And Samantha seemed the type who’d rather cut off her own nose than be accused of something as petty as sabotaging her Baby Daddy’s wedding pictures. “Besides Curtis says that he has a backup plan.”

Just in case Samantha wasn’t all that great a photographer after all. And if Curtis said he had it covered, Felicity had complete faith that it was. Of course, Felicity would have been happy with a couple good shots on their cell phones.

“Uh,” Dinah made a face, “what does that mean? Because if Curtis has T-spheres floating around, getting in our faces during the ceremony, I don’t know how I feel about that.”

Felicity grimaced. Yeah... she hadn’t considered that. There was a good chance that was exactly what Curtis had planned. “I’m sure they won’t be in our faces...” The more Felicity thought about it... it could be kinda cool. A very high tech, very merry Team Arrow wedding. “And, besides, if he does at least we’ll be prepared. You know, if anything goes wrong.”

Wow, where had that come from?

“Like what?” Thea questioned, sounding genuinely confused. Which was weird because shouldn’t Thea of all people be aware things could go wrong at any moment?

“Oh, I don’t know. It just seems like it would be just our luck if the wedding were crashed by...” Felicity paused as she tried to think of who might hate them enough to attack their wedding. Ironically, the only big bad still alive was now part of the wedding party. “An old enemy maybe, someone from Oliver’s past. A metahuman. Aliens. Doppelgangers. Ex-girlfriends...”

Dinah chuckled but... oh God, had Felicity been subconsciously worrying their wedding was going to get crashed? By someone a whole lot worse than Cupid? Well, it sure as hell wasn’t subconscious now. And wouldn’t it just be typical if their wedding turned into some epic battle.

Frak.

Okay, Felicity was starting to feel a genuine freak out coming on. Clearly this was why her brain had tried to keep it subconscious and...

Thea took her shoulders spun her around until she could look her in the eye. “Felicity, even if I could think of a single enemy who isn’t dead or in a super-secret prison, we are on the other side of the world. No one knows where we are.”
“On a fully armed, fully staffed aircraft carrier,” Dinah added, with just a smidge of ‘duh’ in her voice. “You’ll be walking down the aisle in front of fighter jets. Even if there was someone out there stupid enough to attack us, I don’t like their chances.”

Felicity laughed, a shocked sound that burst out involuntarily, but she felt her shoulders relax. She hadn’t thought of it like that but…thank God. “I guess we couldn’t have picked a more secure site.”

Yay, for spontaneity.

“And if you are worried about being married on a boat…and trust me the irony of Ollie getting married in the fricken South Pacific has not escaped me,” Thea said.

And it triggered a small, slightly hysterical, giggle to emerge from Felicity’s throat, because oh…my…God…why hadn’t she thought of that? Even though an aircraft carrier was hardly a boat, Oliver still had nightmares from the night the Gambit sank, what kind of fiancé was she that she hadn’t even asked him if he was okay with being married on it?

“But,” Thea continued, her eyes boring into Felicity’s, as if she could see the path her mind was racing down, “even if this monstrosity were sinkable, we’re in port. We could swim to shore. Hell, this thing is so massive, I wouldn’t be surprised if at low tide it touches the bottom of the bay.”

And that just made Felicity laugh again. She was overreacting. Of course, she was. They were in a bay, not an ocean. On a massive naval ship, not a small yacht. The weather was beautiful and…if Oliver was upset about being married on ship, she really didn’t think he would, or could, hide that from her.

“So, relax,” Thea insisted, “you are safer than you have ever been. Ever. You’re marrying your fricken soulmate and you look so heartbreakingly beautiful.”

Thea was an excellent maid of honor. Felicity was very lucky how this had all come together.

All she could do then was smile, caught between the urge to laugh and to cry as Thea arranged the curls around her face, before turning to face herself in the mirror.

She really did look beautiful.

But…Felicity reached up to touch the loose curls on the shoulders. “It’s not too late to put my hair up—”

“Felicity!”

This time their combined reprimand made Felicity jump. Wow, Dinah’s voice was powerful even without the Canary Cry.

“It looks perfect!” Thea insisted and Felicity almost worried her neuroticism was getting to be too much for them. Maybe she shouldn’t have gotten ready yet. Too much waiting was driving her insane. “Besides, you can’t disappoint William by getting rid of the flower crown.”

“I love the crown. I wouldn’t dream of getting rid of it,” Felicity assured them quickly, her hand instinctively going to the wreath as if she had to protect it.

The fact that William had cared enough to pick out the flowers and help weave it together to make Felicity this beautiful headpiece…it just made her so emotional. She didn’t want to think about it.
too much or she would start crying.

The kid must have an artistic eye or something, because it was gorgeous. It was modern and different enough to suit Felicity’s personality. Tightly woven greenery lay over her the top of her head like a headband, then it tapered to incorporate jasmine before two large open white roses completed it at its base.

Yet again it was something Felicity would have never thought to want. And more perfect than anything she could imagine.

“The crown is non-negotiable,” Felicity whispered, her voice thick.

Dinah grinned, saying, “Every Queen needs her crown.”

It made Felicity chuckle. Maybe it was even more perfect than she’d thought.

“Oh Felicity is keeping her maiden name,” Thea threw out, breezily (almost too breezily) as she started rearranging Felicity’s curls again (completely unnecessarily), avoiding eye contact.

It made Felicity feel even better about the decision she’d come to and discussed with Oliver the night before.

“I’ve changed my mind actually,” Felicity said just as breezily (and just as feigned), watching Thea out of the corner of her eye.

The younger girl froze, her eyes jumping to hers. “You’re going to hyphenate after all?”

The corners of Felicity’s lips twitched. “No…I think I’m just going to go with a simple, ‘Felicity Queen.’” She spread her hands out as if she were picturing her name on a door and…

Thea’s eyes lit up almost as much an Oliver’s had when Felicity had told him last night, which was almost surprising. Felicity could imagine Moira caring about her taking the ‘Queen’ name, but now it was clear that Thea did as well.

It was amazing, after everything, how much the name meant to them. All the unwanted expectations. All the complicated parenting. They’d handled the loss of property and fortune with grace but the name…it was still important. To both Thea and Oliver.

More important than ‘Smoak’ was to her. It wouldn’t even be the first time Felicity changed her name. She had been Felicity Kuttler until she was seven and they had moved in with her grandparents.

God, Felicity had been furious at her mother for the change (back then she still thought her father would come back), but Zayde Jacob had sat her down and explained that where he was from the surname wasn’t important. It was something forced upon their Jewish ancestors. Something they had taken on to survive.

It was why, when her grandparents had escaped to America in the months following the war and he realized that Jake Smoak was much more likely to be hired than Jacob Smoleck, he’d had no hesitation in changing his name. It was the same practical resourcefulness that allowed him to survive the Holocaust.

Jacob and Sylvia had meant the world to Felicity, but she really didn’t think the name Smoak meant all that much to either of them. Not like it meant to the Queens. And when she had explained all this to Oliver last night, he’d shyly suggested they incorporate her
grandparents first names into their children’s…God their children…and that had felt so very right.

“Keeping my name was mostly a professional decision,” Felicity explained, going with the practical reasons, instead of the sentimental. She’d learned a lot from Zayde. “I thought it would be a good idea for Palmer Tech’s CEO to keep the same name. You know, give an unstable company the appearance of stability.” At least that was what she told herself at the time, now she wasn’t so sure. “But since that plan was thrown out the window when they fired me…”

The girls bracketing her had serious faces now. Great, now they were feeling sorry for her. And all because she hadn’t wanted to say…she really didn’t want to tell them what she had only recently realized. Felicity hadn’t wanted to change her name because...

Well, because changing her name terrified her. Not because of her heritage. Because…it had felt so final. Like Felicity was willingly giving away her identity, who she was. To become a wife.

Which was ridiculous. Oliver never asked or wanted that of her. It had taken Felicity far too long to recognize he loved her as she was, for all those things she was afraid of losing. He did nothing but support and bolster her strength and independence.

Felicity didn’t need the artificial barrier of a different name between her and her new husband. She didn’t need any barriers at all. Lots of women had excellent reasons for keeping their name when they married. But now, for her, it felt important that they have the same last name.

They found themselves in each other. Felicity wasn’t losing anything. She was gaining. Getting married to Oliver could only make her…more.

“And…” Felicity grinned, deciding, rather impulsively, to share something she hadn’t discussed with Oliver yet. Something that had her humming with excitement. “My non-compete clause from Palmer Tech expires in a couple weeks, so I can work on starting my own company.” She was so tired of answering to a bunch of mindless soulless suits. It was time to write her own destiny.

This time when Thea gave Felicity an encouraging smile, there was a sad edge. “You could still keep ‘Smoak.’ Smoak Technologies has a nice ring to it.”

That Thea was suggesting this when it was clearly the opposite of what she wanted, made Felicity even more emotional. “Don’t tell Oliver yet. I want to surprise him but…I was thinking…Queen Innovations. Maybe eventually Queen Incorporated.” Thea drew in her breath and Felicity smiled, trying not to get choked up. “The Queen name will help us take off. But not too much. Not planning to have it traded publicly for a good, long time.”

Like never, maybe. After losing QC, Felicity really didn’t have any desire for the shares of a company she started to be owned by anyone she didn’t trust.

“Felicity…”

Oops. Now it looked like Thea was going to cry.

“Well, I think your future stepson will be thrilled he was crowning an actual Queen,” Dinah threw in, saving the day, because if Thea started crying Felicity was done for. “I don’t believe for one minute that this piece of art,” she touched it on Felicity’s head, making sure the wreath was secure, “is Curtis’ doing. The man has no subtlety. Now that…” Dinah pointed to Felicity’s elaborate wedding bouquet.

It was complete with blue orchids, green lilies and white roses. It had even sported peacock feathers until Felicity made Curtis pull them out. Really, he was worse than her mother.
But the dig got a laugh from Thea and that was exactly what Felicity needed. “Who knew ten-year-old boys cared so much about flowers?” she joked and that’s when Felicity knew they had moved past that mini-emotional crisis. “But it’s kinda awesome. Good for Samantha. Dad would never have allowed Ollie to make a floral wreath and look where that got him.”

Felicity tried not to wince. Thankfully, Oliver wasn’t following in his father’s footsteps with that one. He’d been thrilled when he found out that William was working with Curtis on the flower arrangements. “I think it’s great. Even if I don’t want to know how William and Curtis got the flowers through customs and onto the ship.”

Yup, William hadn’t been part of this family for a full week and already he was breaking international law.

But William’s crown aside…tipping her head to the side, Felicity studied herself in the mirror. Gathering up the curls, she held them off her shoulders. “I could still put it up. With the head piece. Do you think that is more…me?”

“Uuugh!” Thea threw her head back in frustration and Felicity thought maybe, she’d gone too far. Thea stepped in front of her blocking her view of the mirror and cupping her face. “Listen to me. You. Look. Beautiful. The sleek updo may be very Overwatch, or Felicity Smoak the CEO…or even Felicity Queen tech mogul and mayor’s wife…”

Felicity let out a soft laugh. She really liked the sound of that.

“But this Felicity, with her hair all down and soft, the curls…this is vacation Felicity. Day-off Felicity. This is Oliver’s Felicity…”

“Okay, you’d better stop,” Felicity warned with more watery laughter. “You are just determined to make me cry and ruin my makeup, aren’t you?”

“Of course not,” Thea scoffed but Felicity was pretty sure she saw tears in her eyes too. “As if I wouldn’t make sure your…well, all of our makeup was waterproof.”

The only thing Felicity could think to say…or do was pull Thea into a tight hug, rocking her, making her feel a little like she was turning into her mom. And for maybe the first time she didn’t think that was a bad thing.

When they finally pulled back, Dinah said, “So now that we have finally agreed that you aren’t changing anything, how about I go check on the boys and report back on how adorably nervous Oliver is?”

All the air left Felicity’s lungs and she smiled. “That would be great, Dinah.”

She would feel so much better if she knew what was going on. Felicity didn’t do well with waiting, especially without constant communication. She’d spent too much time with a comm in her ear.

Maybe Felicity should have suggested to Oliver they use them today. It might not be tradition, but it would certainly be fitting.

“I won’t be long.” Dinah squeezed Felicity’s hand and disappeared out of the door, her skirt swishing and her heels clicking on the tile floors.

Blowing out another breath, Felicity pulled over a chair to sit in front of the mirror and grabbed a tissue, leaning forward to delicately dab her eyes. Great makeup or not, she really didn’t want to
“Do you want me to give you a touch up?” Thea asked softly and Felicity looked up at her, smiling gratefully.

They were silent for a moment while she worked. Felicity didn’t usually love other people doing her makeup but…let’s be honest, Thea was a whole lot more relaxing than her mom. And a lot more trustworthy with a cosmetic brush.

It was only a few minutes before Thea stood, stepping back and announcing, “There you go. Perfect again.”

“Thank you,” Felicity beamed up at her and grabbed her hand. “You are really an excellent maid of honor.”

The side of Thea’s lip quirked up in a half-smile that…was so like Oliver it almost took her breath away. But the problem was, Felicity knew that smile well. That was the self-deprecating smile.

Thea gave a one shoulder shrug, her arms once again winding around her middle. “I’m sorry Caitlin couldn’t be here for you. You should’ve had the maid of honor you chose.”

That took Felicity off guard and felt just the bit like a kick in the gut. Just like her brother, it was so easy to forget that under their self-assured veneer, the Queen siblings had deep seated self-esteem issues. And now Felicity really, really wished that she had asked Thea to be her maid of honor the last time.

“Hey,” Felicity reached out and took Thea’s hands back, having to pull them from the tight hold they had on her waist to do so, but she managed to turn the younger girl to face her. “I am so glad you are standing up for me.”

But when Thea still seemed to be having trouble meeting her eyes, Felicity made a decision and confessed, “I would have asked you last time, but I was afraid you’d ask, ‘Don’t you have any closer friends than me?’ Which would have been kind of humiliating since, you know…I kinda sorta didn’t.”

Felicity had seriously considered having Thea as her maid of honor before she decided to ask Caitlin and she knew she would have said ‘yes.’ She just really didn’t want her to say ‘yes,’ because it was her brothers wedding and she felt sorry for Felicity. And maybe Felicity didn’t want to admit to her super-sophisticated, undoubtedly popular future sister-in-law that she didn’t have any really close girl friends.

It was a little humiliating to admit but at least it got Thea to look her in the eye. “Seriously?”

Felicity screwed up her lips and nodded. God, she hated this. The only thing worse than being pathetic was people knowing she was pathetic.

“But you and Caitlin…aren’t you super close? I thought she was your best friend…after Ollie and Digg and Curtis…your female best friend…” And now Thea (always-in-control Thea) seemed to be rambling and Felicity had never seen her babble before.

Was it contagious? Or was Felicity just seeing Thea without her protective shields up for the first time? The last thought almost made Felicity choke up.

It also made it easier to say, “Caitlin and I…we’re friends. Just not…” God, how to even say this. “Not as close as I’d like. Maybe if we lived in the same city and weren’t so busy and…” And
weren’t so wrapped up in their own personal tragedies. “We’re not…say, first person you call when you discover you’re a metahuman friends.”

Of course, it had fallen to Oliver to tell Caitlin about Felicity’s paralysis and she’d told Caitlin the wedding was off over text so…maybe this was a pot-kettle situation. Felicity was great at being there for her friends, less so about letting them be there for her. Or being vulnerable.

But maybe it was time to change that. Ignoring the look of concern in Thea’s eyes, Felicity took a deep breath and stepped into the breach. “Actually, I think you and I are closer now than Caitlin and I ever were.” Thea’s eyes flashed with surprise and a genuine, unguarded smile spread across her face. So, of course, Felicity started to babble, “But last year, well, we didn’t spend any time alone together. Usually you were with Laurel. Which is fine since you two were super tight. So much more than you and I….”

Ahhh frak. Now Felicity really sounded like a middle-schooler. ‘You liked Laurel better than me…’ Meh. Meh. Talk about pathetic.

Thea’s face fell and why, oh why couldn’t Felicity have stopped while she was ahead?

But before Felicity could come up with anything to fix this, Thea asked, “You can’t possibly think…you don’t think that I thought Ollie belonged with Laurel and not you?”

“Nooo!” Felicity immediately answered. Except she answered so quickly and so…anxiously, it didn’t sound genuine at all. “I just…all I meant was that you were really close to Laurel. I’m sure you hoped she’d be your sister one day…”

Frakity frak frak.

Felicity didn’t know where that came from, but she really wished it would go back from whence it came. It wasn’t like Thea had ever been anything but one-hundred percent supportive of Felicity and Oliver’s relationship.

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Thea said it the way Oliver did and…

It made her eyes burn. Felicity pressed her lips together in an effort to contain…everything. Like she wished they’d contained that last dozen words.

Grabbing a chair, Thea pulled it over and sat directly in front of Felicity. Taking her hands in hers, Thea leaned forward and said, “Felicity, I can honestly say, from the first moment I saw you and Ollie together…even though I had just gotten out of the Lazarus Pit and was half out of my mind…” Felicity let out a soft laugh, she just couldn’t help it but Thea smiled back. “I knew that you were the only one for my brother.”

Okay, that was…tears filled Felicity’s eyes. She couldn’t keep them in any longer. Taking a shaky breath, she managed to get out, “You realized that as we were saying goodbye? Possibly forever? Talk about tragic.” Felicity wasn’t sure if that was a joke or not, but tears were cascading down her cheeks.

Thea’s smile was soft and a little sad but also full of love. “I had never seen Ollie look at anyone the way he looks at you. That was the first time I saw it but…I’ve seen it a million times since.”

Again, a soft watery laugh burst from Felicity’s lips and she couldn’t stop the smile that took over her face.

Reaching out, Thea brushed a tear from Felicity’s cheek. “Felicity, I…Laurel was like a sister to
me.” Her voice cracked and Felicity nodded, squeezing her hands tight, trying to let her know she didn’t resent that at all. “And Quentin has become like a father to me but…I didn’t need Ollie to marry Laurel for that to be the truth. Sure, when I was seven and knew nothing, I dreamt of them getting married, so I could be a flower girl.” Thea’s lip quirked up. “I would have been an adorable flower girl.”

“Yes, you would have,” Felicity laughed, “but I can’t imagine you would have been more beautiful than you are as maid of honor.”

Thea’s face scrunched up and tears filled her eyes. She blew out a breath and continued, “Now that I have some idea of what a healthy relationship looks like, I know Ollie and Laurel were not it. But you and Oliver…” Thea sighed, her eyes getting softer. “He’s so happy with you. So at peace and comfortable in his own skin. I can honestly say that Ollie is the best Ollie…no, the best Oliver when he is with you.”

This time, it was a small sob that tore from Felicity’s throat. She couldn’t…she had no words for what that meant to her. So, of course, she said something stupid, “Well, your makeup is certainly getting a work out.”

Thea’s lips twitched but her eyes remained serious. “Well, let’s see if we can test it a little more.” Leaning forward, Thea gently cupped Felicity’s face in both hands. “Felicity, my relationship with the Lances aside, I can say with complete certainty that there is no one I would feel more honored to welcome into our family, to call my sister than you.”

“Oh God…” Felicity let out another sob, followed by more of that watery laughter as she clutched Thea’s hands and the tears really started to pour. “Yup, you were right. That was an even better test.”

They both laughed then, the sounds full of joy and relief and…love.

Taking a deep breath, Felicity tried to pull herself together and find her voice. “Thea…God, I can’t…” She had no idea how she was going to match that beautiful speech. “I’m so glad we’re going to be sisters. You are already such an amazing sister to Oliver and I’m so lucky—”

Felicity broke off as Thea pulled away. Sitting back, her eyes shuttered and her face turned away. O…okay…

That was an abrupt about face. Had Felicity said something wrong? Swallowing, Felicity faltered, then managed to ask, “Thea?”

The younger girl wiped away a tear, her jaw clenching. “I’m not an amazing sister. I don’t deserve to be Ollie’s sister, never mind yours.”

Oh wow. Okay. Um…the resemblance between Thea and Oliver had never been so obvious. “Thea…” Felicity didn’t know where to begin. “Thea, you couldn’t be more wrong.”

Felicity reached for her hand again, but the younger woman stood before she had a chance, turning her back and pacing away.

“You have no idea all the things I’ve done. What I did to you…” Thea muttered, shaking her head and squeezing her eyes shut.

“Me?” What? “You’ve never done anything to me.” Thea was acting really weird now, but Felicity tried to smile and keep her voice soft and supportive. All the emotion was probably just
activating the Queen siblings’ overdeveloped guilt complex. Add in Thea’s very conflicted grief over Malcolm and...

Thea shook her head again, rejecting her words. “Felicity, I…” Her nails were digging into her tightly crossed arms. She took a deep breath and faced her. “I shouldn’t have said anything. This is your wedding day. We should be talking about happy things. It was selfish of me to say anything at all.”

Okay, now Felicity felt something suspiciously like dread build in the pit of her stomach. She even considered taking Thea’s advice and letting it go. Not opening a potentially ugly can of worms on her wedding day. But really what could Thea have done to her? It couldn’t be nearly as bad as Thea was making it sound. Right?

“Thea…you are not selfish. Tell me what’s going on.”

Turning her face away, Thea shook it almost violently this time, scattering tears as she did. “It’s not important—”

Now that was the most obvious lie Felicity had ever heard. Worse than the sports bottle one. “It’s important to you, so it’s important to me and—”

“It’s my fault you and Oliver didn’t get married last year,” Thea burst out. Then her eyes opened wide as if she couldn’t believe she’d said it and her hand flew to cover her mouth.

And Felicity…Felicity sorta…laughed. She couldn’t help it. It was just so ridiculous. There was plenty of blame to spread around with the implosion of her love life last year, but precisely none of it could be placed on Thea’s feet.

Letting out a deep sigh, Thea seemed to deflate. She came back to sit across from Felicity, before saying, “Look, I shouldn’t have said anything but…now that I have, I…” Her voice broke and she swallowed. “At any point, I can go get Curtis and he can take over as maid…man of hon—”

“Thea!” Felicity burst out, not able to hold back another incredulous laugh. This was getting crazy.

“I’m serious,” Thea insisted, sitting forward and bracing her hands on her knees. “If at any point you don’t…feel comfortable with me standing up with you, I’ll go get Curtis. William and I will take over the drones. How hard can it—?”

“Thea, I am not switching…persons of honor and,” Felicity shook her head, not even believing they were having this conversation, “and you are not responsible for Oliver and my break up.”

“It is. It’s my fault as much as…” Thea waved her hand, “Samantha’s. Why do you think I couldn’t hold a grudge with her? I’m just as bad.”

That didn’t even make any sense. “How could you possibly—?”

“I told Oliver to keep the secret about William.” If Thea’s first confession burst from her mouth, this one positively exploded.

And Felicity, she…froze. Her body, her brain…everything.

“The night before your engagement party, I found out about William and Ollie told me he felt
awful for keeping it from you and I told him not to feel guilty. I told him he was doing the right thing...” Thea broke off with a soft sob.

But Felicity…she couldn’t focus on Thea’s feelings right then. She…it wasn’t just a blow. It was a knockout punch. It sent her reeling. A ringing started in her ears because…that didn’t make sense.

“I…I don’t understand,” Felicity was finally able to whisper. Because she didn’t. She couldn’t begin to wrap her head around this.

Looking almost panicked now, a full speed barrage of words erupted from Thea’s lips, “I didn’t know what would happen. I never meant to hurt you. I never thought…it didn’t occur to me that you’d break up over it. I…told Ollie he shouldn’t feel guilty about keeping the secret because the secret was keeping William safe and his safety was the most important thing but, I—”

“How would telling me have put William in danger?” Felicity interrupted, maybe a little harsher than she would have liked but…this was a lot.

“It…it wouldn’t have…” Thea looked like she might throw up. “Honestly, I wasn’t even thinking about it like that. It was never…‘Are you trustworthy?’ Or John. Or anyone specifically. I was just trying to reassure Ollie that telling no one was the right thing. For William. I wasn’t thinking of it as and you and Ollie thing. Which just shows how FUCKED up my relationship instincts are because…I don’t think Oliver wanted to tell everyone. Just you. Maybe if I had understood that,” Thea shook her head, looking almost defeated now, “maybe I would have said something different and…”

Felicity had no idea what to say. It didn’t make sense. She had many questions, yet couldn’t even seem to formulate a single one.

Thea didn’t seem to be having the same problem. Eyes fixated on the ceiling, she continued, “I still can’t believe it. I sat there and told Oliver he was keeping William safe by making sure he was as far from us as he could get and…” Thea let out a bitter, ugly laugh. “A week later, William was kidnapped by my asshole father. Looks like I have awesome instincts when it comes to protecting children. Remind me never to have any—”

“Thea!” Felicity tried to interrupt. She was a runaway train of guilt and Felicity needed her to just…stop.

But Thea didn’t stop. “You probably shouldn’t let me watch William either, all things considered. Though your kids will probably be the only kids in my life, since my relationship skills obviously suck…and, God, now I’m having a pity party and acting completely self-centered. Which you know I am—”

“Thea, stop! Just…I need you to stop,” Felicity groaned, her fingers finding her temples and rubbing. It was hard to even figure out how she felt about Thea’s confession with the barrage of guilt and self-hatred spewing out. “You’re not self-centered and—”

“I am,” Thea insisted, “and, look, now I’m ruining your wedding day.” Her eyes were swimming with tears as they met Felicity’s. “I ruined your first wedding and now I’m doing it again. I had the opportunity to encourage Ollie to do the right thing, but I took…the dishonest way, my mother’s way. A week later, William was gone, you were broken up, Ollie had dropped out of the mayoral race, you stopped speaking to him, but kept speaking to me and stayed my friend because I was a selfish cowardly bitch who—”
“Whoa! Stop, right there!” Felicity held up her hands, her eyes wide as she tried to recover from that…spray of truth bullets.

Or maybe truth bullets was there wrong metaphor. Perhaps guilt grenades would be more accurate.

Felicity managed to at least pause Thea’s tirade, but she still looked so broken. The younger girl stood, not making eye contact as she murmured, “I’ll just go get Curtis—”

“Thea! Sit! And for goodness sake shush!”

And, okay, Felicity was using her loud voice and she wasn’t sure this was the best time for it but Thea wasn’t listening and…this was a lot a lot.

Thea did as she was told, looking a lot like she was getting into the electric chair as she sat back across from Felicity.

“Give me a minute,” Felicity asked, managing to temper her tone at least a little this time. “I need to…take it all in.”

Then…Felicity found she couldn’t sit still. Wrapping her skirt tightly around her fist, she stood and took a few steps away, trying to get her brain working, to figure out what she was feeling.

She was hurt, certainly. And there was a twinge of betrayal. But mostly Felicity was…confused.

And Felicity really hated feeling confused. It was one of her top hated emotions. Turning, she gripped the back of her chair and looked over Thea’s miserable form.

“I…Thea, I’m having so much trouble with this because I… can’t fathom why you did that. It seems so out of character. You hate lies. You’ve been lied to by your parents over and over, by Oliver. I just don’t get why you would encourage him to lie.”

Thea just shrugged, her voice flippant and bitter as she said, “Guess, the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.”

“That’s not an answer, Thea,” Felicity told her softly, knowing how frustrated she sounded. In that moment, she felt every one of the five years that lay between them.

“Isn’t it?” Thea asked and she sounded…defeated, her eyes tired and world worn. “I say that the last thing I want is to become my parents and yet every time I turn around, I’m acting just like them.”

Now, this was sounding suspiciously like brooding. Felicity closed her eyes and rolled her head on her shoulders, trying to combat the building tension. “Thea…that’s self-pity, not an explanation.”

Thea grunted and scrunched up her face, but Felicity waited and after a (rather long) minute Thea sighed and pulled herself up tall again, finally looking more like herself than a petulant teenager.

“All right. I…’ve thought about this over and over, tried to figure out why I …why I believed that was the right thing to do at the time and the only thing I could come up with was…” She turned and met Felicity’s eyes, “That was only about a week after I had almost died from the effects of the Pit, do you remember?”

Felicity tilted her head, frowning. “Yeah…”

She managed to soften her voice but if Thea was going to say this was an after effect of the blood
lust she’d suffered, Felicity didn’t know if she could buy that.

“Remember how…my father,” Thea spat the last part with disgust, “the man who said he’d do anything for me, remember how he refused to turn over the Ra’s al Ghul ring to save my life.” Felicity’s eyes widened. “You didn’t think I knew that, but I did and…it’s all really ironic given he just died for me. So apparently his priorities were…first the League of Assassins, then his only living child, and finally his own life…”

Okay. Wow.

“Thea, that doesn’t—”

“At the time, I was thinking a lot about how I wished I had never known,” Thea confessed, not seeming to even hear Felicity interrupt. “That Malcolm’s secret had died with him. That I just went through life believing Robert Queen was my father. What did knowing ever bring me but heartbreak?”

Felicity sucked in a breath as the pieces fell together.

“And I thought,” Thea’s eyes were far away, vacant almost. “William, my nephew, would be better off not knowing either. William had a good life. I checked. He was happy and safe and…normal. Wasn’t he better off not knowing he was a fucked-up Queen?”

That took all the air out of her lungs and Felicity collapsed back into her chair. She imagined the exact same thoughts tormenting Oliver when he had first found William. Samantha had only fed into them and now…it looked like Thea had too.

“And with Damien Darhk out there and so…fucking evil, I thought we could all pretend it never happened. William could stay safe and happy and…” The look of self-hatred on Thea’s face was hard to look at. “Obviously I was wrong. Clearly, I’m a complete moron.”

Sighing, Felicity reached out and reclaimed the girl’s hand (and Thea really did seem very much like a girl in that moment) and squeezed. Thea’s eyes snapped to hers, looking afraid to hope.

It gave Felicity the strength to say, “Thea…thank you for telling me.”

Thea let out a small huff of disbelief and she shook her head, asking in a small child-like voice, “Because now you can get Curtis to stand up for you?”

Felicity rolled her eyes and miraculously found herself smiling. “No. Because it means,” she gestured between herself and Thea, “you and me can start off with a clean slate.”

Just like her and Oliver. And Thea’s confession had given Felicity some new insight into how Oliver had made the decision in the first place. She was grateful for that too.

“Fe-li-ci-ty…”

Thea’s face crumpled. Her lips trembled as she tried to smile but failed. The tears that had been gathering spilled over.

A wave of protectiveness swept her and Felicity pulled Thea’s hands into her lap and held them tight. “And, Thea, I might not agree with what you said to Oliver, but it was not your fault we broke up. It wasn’t even Samantha’s, even though it’s convenient to blame her. It was our relationship. Mine and Oliver’s. No one caused it to fall apart but us.”
Thea sucked in a hissing breath. “But—”

“Thea…” Felicity considered going through the laundry list of reasons the relationship had fallen apart, but honestly, this was her wedding day and it was over. “It was about trust and fear and, yeah, honesty but also about how we worked together as partners—”

“Felicity, you and Oliver have always worked together seamlessly,” Thea protested, her voice soft and understanding now. “Your partnership is… effortless. Like you were born to it. You’re like drift compatible or something.”

With that comparison, there was no way Felicity could not laugh out of sheer joy and, perversely, it made her own tears start to fall again. “I need to tell Curtis you said that. I’d love to tell Oliver but…”

“It would take too long to explain, I know,” Thea agreed, finally relaxing enough to give a genuine smile.

“But the thing is as… compatible as we both were… are,” Felicity tried to explain, needing Thea to understand. Because they were family now and family didn’t turn their back on each other when they did something wrong. They worked it through. “As well as Oliver and I work as partners in the field. Relationships, they require giving a lot more of yourself, of opening up to and… that’s been hard for both of us.” Understatement of the century. “But we worked through it and I truly think we are better for it. I wouldn’t be marrying him if I wasn’t confident it’s with trust, openness, honesty…”

And this was their moment of truth. Felicity reached out and gently tipped up Thea’s chin, so she could be certain she was looking at her as she added, “I would really like it if we could go forward like that as well.”

Thea’s hands surrounded Felicity’s and clasped them tight. “You have no idea how much I want that but, Felicity—”

“No, buts,” Felicity insisted, her confidence only slightly exaggerated, “I’m the bride and what I say goes.”

Thea laughed, which was good since it was meant to be a joke. But before Felicity could say anything else there was a knock on the door.

“You girls decent in there?” Quentin’s voice called back.

Oh God. Was it time? Already?

Felicity tried not to look panicked as she turned to Thea, who was now dabbing her eyes. The younger woman nodded and smiled (just a little) as she called out, “We’re decent.”

Quentin peeked his head in and grinned widely. Felicity’s heart started to roar as she took in his tan suit sans tie. Frak, Oliver would look amazing in that. Were they all wearing the same thing?

“Well, look at you two…” Quentin hummed, his face softening to a fatherly gaze.

Grinning… beaming really, Felicity laughed. All the angst of the last however many minutes drained away and all she could feel was… happy.
Happy and relieved and so excited she could burst. And maybe also kind of overwhelmed. Swallowing, Felicity tried to keep her voice steady as she asked, “Is it time?”

“No…no…Curtis says the sun isn’t ready. He went on and on about angles and what-not. All I really understood is it will be at least 30 minutes until we have the perfect conditions to spotlight all this,” Quentin waved a hand at both her and Thea, “loveliness.”

Oh. Well, then. Felicity wasn’t sure if she was relieved or disappointed. “So…”

Was it rude to ask why he was there?

Luckily, Quentin was a perceptive man and Felicity didn’t have to. “I’m here delivering Oliver’s wedding present,” he announced, grinning.

Wow. Okay. That was…very sweet. Of both of them.

Felicity was feeling giddy and almost light-headed but… “I’m pretty sure wedding presents are supposed to wait until after the ceremony.”

“Well, this one won’t keep. Trust me.” There was a sound from behind him that had Felicity sitting up tall, but Quentin didn’t step aside. His grinned just got wider as he purposely blocked the door. “By the way, I want to point out I get at least forty percent of the credit for this present, ten percent goes to Lyla and J—”

“Oh Quentin, just stand aside!”

At the familiar voice, Felicity’s breath caught. It couldn’t be...

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Note:

This chapter has so many potentially controversial things in it, I’m tempted to go hide under my covers. I can’t (and probably shouldn’t) address all the possibilities here. But there are some I’d like to.

Felicity’s chosen married name…Queen, Smoak-Queen, Smoak…as I write this I have no idea what canon chose (which is odd since they’ve been married for at least 5 episodes now). I chose ‘Queen’ for this piece because it felt right. I wouldn’t say that it’s my headcanon. In fact, I may very well make a different decision in a different fic.

Also, I’m sure there will be plenty of people who disagree with what I saw as Felicity’s original bridal party. There was a lot of disagreement between me and my betas. A lot of discussion. Then a poll on Twitter (because any time Imusuallyobsessed and I disagree I feel compelled to post a poll and I truly appreciate anyone who participated). Then there was more discussion. I think that part of the story is richer for it and I’m happy with the results.
Because I decided to finish (at least the first typed draft) of this story before starting to post again, I asked for some more help with early feedback. Many thanks to mariposablue9, lageniuswannabe, and Noelle for answering my call, wading through my grammatical nightmare of a first draft, and keeping me motivated.

A million thank you’s to Imusuallyobsessed, who has gone through this chapter with me in exhaustive detail sooo many (too many) times. To Ireland1733 for her unending support and company down the rabbit hole, acting as my maid of honor in the of planning this wedding (which sounds epically ridiculous, but is true). And to Fairytalehearts who has been there with me from the first and who I’m so grateful for.

Don’t forget to leave a comment or kudos if you liked it. Thank you for reading!!!

Emmy

(Emmilynestill on Tumblr and Twitter)

P.S: ‘Drift Compatible,’ for those who don’t know, is from Pacific Rim. I don’t think it was a very good movie, but drift compatibility is one of the most romantic notions I have ever come across. Probably why it has inspired so much fanfiction (and why I watched the damn movie). I suggest googling it if you want to know more.

Xx
The Things We Do (Because We’re Family)

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes
“Oh Quentin, just stand aside!”

But the poor man didn’t even have a chance to react, never mind do as he was told.

Neither did Felicity, for that matter. The next thing she knew, her mother pushed Quentin aside and burst into the room, her arms thrown wide as she squealed, “My beautiful girl!”

Felicity flew to her feet, tears that had only just stopped welling up again as she cried, “Mom!”

Oh God. She couldn’t even…

Not pausing, Felicity opened her arms and Donna flew into them with a sob of her own. “Momma,” Felicity moaned, not even aware of what she was saying. “Oh God. I can’t believe you’re here.”

Donna squeezed her tight, rocking her from side to side, and Felicity had to laugh with the sheer joy of it. Because this was her mother and it was her wedding day and she was really here. And no one gave hugs like her mom.

Now everything really was perfect. Almost too much so to be real.

Burying her face in Donna’s soft (and abundant) hair, Felicity breathed in the familiar sent of her
shampoo and... she hadn’t thought... God, Felicity hadn’t even allowed herself to contemplate how much she wanted her mom here. She hadn’t thought it possible so she hadn’t gone there but... wow, she was here.

And Oliver had done this for her.

Could she be marrying a more perfect, more wonderful man? Felicity couldn’t even begin to express how grateful she was. To Oliver and Quentin and Lyla and John and... everyone who had made this happen. And to whatever higher power was looking down on them today.

“We’ll give you a few minutes,” Thea whispered, attempting to step around them.

It took Felicity a second to break through all the... everything swirling around her brain, but it was enough to register that Thea couldn’t go like this. Not yet.

Pulling back from her mom, Felicity tried to dry her eyes but, wow, this might just be too much crying for her contacts. It was a good thing they brought a spare. “No, wait...”

They hadn’t resolved this and, if Felicity was correctly interpreting the look in her almost sister-in-law’s eyes, Thea was off to brood herself right into a pit of self-loathing.

Feeling frazzled, Felicity hesitated. She didn’t want to let go of her mother but... frack. “Ten seconds,” she whispered before turning and lunging straight from her mom’s arms to Thea’s, pulling her in and rocking her as her mother had just done to her.

It was too much. Felicity was having trouble keeping up. Excitement, hope, love, gratitude, affection, wonder... wow... every single one of them were positive, yet still so overwhelming.

And she hadn’t even seen Oliver yet. This day... how the hell was Felicity going to survive it?

But first, she needed to say something to Thea. “You are the best maid of honor I could ask for. I don’t care what happened before. I...” Felicity’s voice broke mid-whisper and she swallowed. “I don’t want anyone else and I...” Frak, she was a mess.

Thea let out a half-sob/half-laugh, burying her head in Felicity’s neck and hugging her back just as tight. “You really forgive me?”


Thea responded with an embrace that was almost painful (that’s what Felicity got for marrying into a family of superheroes) and a soft sob.

But it was barely a second before Thea’s arms loosened and she whispered in Felicity’s ear, “Thank you.”

The next wave of emotion threatened to dissolve Felicity into a puddle of chiffon and really good makeup. She wasn’t ready to let Thea go. Not until, she said...

“I love you.”

Thea’s next sob was a little louder, even muffled the way it was into Felicity’s shoulder. She could barely make it out, but Felicity swore she heard a hushed, “I love you too.”

Then Thea stepped back, reaching out and cupping Felicity’s face, brushing away tears with her thumbs. “We’ll be back in thirty minutes—”
“Twenty,” Quentin corrected. “I hate to rush you girls but that sun ain’t gonna wait.”

“Twenty,” Thea corrected, her voice thick, her eyes never leaving Felicity’s. “Then I’ll fix your makeup. And mine.” She let out a breathy (and relieved) laugh. “Again.”

Felicity laughed too because all she seemed to be able to do was laugh and cry. Thea’s face was also covered with tears and her eyes were swollen, but her mascara and eyeliner were barely smudged. It seemed a very good sign, since Felicity was sure her face was a similar tearful disaster.

Taking two steps back, Felicity gave Thea’s hand one last squeeze and nodded. “Make sure Oliver knows I love his gift.”

“Tell him yourself,” Quentin muttered, gesturing for Thea to hurry. “It will take her twenty minutes to get to Oliver with the length of that damn aisle. Speedy or not.” Once Thea had slipped by him, he pointed at Felicity, then Donna, and warned, “Twenty minutes.”

After Quentin pulled the door closed behind him, Felicity turned to her mother and… she still couldn’t believe she was here. It felt like a dream.

Felicity fumbled for her mother’s hands, only managing a breathy, “Oh mom.”

It wasn’t the most articulate and it didn’t even begin to express everything Felicity was thinking and feeling right then, but it was the best she could manage.

Donna, tears rolling down her face, took Felicity’s hands and held her arms out wide. Her wide blue eyes flying over her. “Oh my baby girl, look at you! Has anyone ever looked this gorgeous?”

A laugh burst from Felicity’s mouth, closely followed by a sob. That wasn’t something she thought anyone would ever say about her, even her own mother. In some ways Felicity had always felt like such a disappointment to Donna.

But disappointment was the last thing she saw in her mother’s eyes. Felicity could feel her nose clogging up, which signaled she was moving to a whole ‘nother tier of snotty mess-ness. Felicity needed to get control of herself. There were some things even Thea’s magic makeup couldn’t fix.

“I can’t believe it,” Donna shook her head, tears in her own eyes as she echoed Felicity’s own thoughts. “You look like a princess!”

Felicity’s next laugh was even louder. Who would have thunk, Felicity Smoak, dressed like a princess, about to become a Queen?

Certainly not her. Felicity had never been that girl, the one who’d dreamed of being a princess and it certainly hadn’t been her goal to look like one today. Yet somehow…

Her mother’s words filled Felicity with joy. They felt real and perfect and…right. If there was ever a day for her to find her inner princess, it was today. She might as well embrace it.

Sniffing, Felicity found herself asking, “Do you really like it? It’s so different from the one we picked out together?”

Which frankly, had been the goal but even before her mother had shown up Felicity had felt the bite of guilt for ignoring her mother’s preferences. And an irrational belief she would be heartbroken if her mom didn’t like the one she chose.
Donna reached out and touched Felicity’s cheek with her finger-tips. “Oh baby, you would have looked gorgeous in that one too, but this…” She blew out a shaky breath, her eyes bright. “This entire wedding is extraordinary. Who could have thought to even dream such a thing?”

There was something in her mother’s voice that sounded a lot like awe and it made Felicity just…beam. She felt like she could just burst. “You really think so?”

It was insane but Felicity couldn’t think of the last time she’d craved her mother’s approval more.

“Hon,” Donna fixed Felicity with an are-you-kidding look, “we are on an aircraft carrier. An active-duty, five-thousand very fit sailors strong, aircraft carrier. In the Philippines. Thirty-six hours ago, I was doing a double in a packed casino and a man in black…a full-on Man in Black, sunglasses and all, strode into the casino and tells my boss I have to come with him. That it’s a matter of national security!”

“Oh no!” Felicity gasped, covering her mouth as hysterical laughter threatened to bubble out. But, wow, she couldn’t believe the trouble everyone had gone through just so she could have her mother at her wedding. Lyla was her hero. She deserved way more than ten percent of the credit.

“Mmm hmm,” Donna hummed, nodding. “It was rather terrifying, I must say. I was worried you had gotten into the same trouble as your father.”

Eek. Felicity winced. That was less great. “I’m so sorry, mom.”

But her mom waved it off with a flick of her wrist. “As soon as they got me in that SUV…you know, one of those with the windows so black you can’t imagine anyone can see out? Well, they put me on the phone with your Oliver and it was quite the relief to learn my daughter is working for the government and not against them.”

“Well, more with than for,” Felicity felt compelled to correct (for would involve a paycheck, which would be rather nice with her severance coming to an end soon). “I’m still sorry for all the drama.”

Shaking her head, Donna seemed far from upset. (Though that was only because she didn’t know how closely Felicity had flirted with exactly what her mother was afraid of, working with helix). “Oh, you know I love drama,” she teased. “Oliver cleared it up pretty quickly but then…well…” Her mom blew out a breath, her sunny enthusiasm evaporating in a blink. “Then I was just left worrying about whether you actually wanted me here.”

“Oh mom,” Felicity sighed and…here it came. The crushing guilt. She’d been waiting for it. “Of course, I want you here. You were the missing piece and now everything is perfect.”

Donna swallowed, looking far from convinced. Felicity wished she could brush it off as typical Jewish mom guilt but that was pain in her mother’s eyes and Felicity had put it there. By being a terrible daughter.

Felicity had hoped her mom would understand that after the breakup (and getting fired and Laurel’s death) she had needed time to lick her wounds. To not take the distance Felicity put between them personally.

But, of course, she had. And Felicity couldn’t even pretend she hadn’t known she would. She just hadn’t wanted to think about it.

“Truly, mom,” Felicity insisted, putting all the emotion she could in the statement. “I’m so, so happy you’re here.” Beyond that she didn’t know what to say or do to make this better.
Donna sighed, her face softening. She gave Felicity a small relieved, if a little sad, smile. “You forgive me, then?”

Felicity was taken aback and could only look at her mother with confusion. Shouldn’t she be the one asking that question?

Her mother seemed to read her expression and added, “For sending your father away?” Donna was wringing her hands and chewing on her lips…

And, God, was that what she thought? That Felicity had been distant this last year as a way to punish her?

Just when Felicity thought she couldn’t feel worse about the situation. “No. No. Mom…I forgave you the same day. I told you that.”

Well…okay. Maybe Felicity held onto the tiniest bit of resentment over what her mom had done when she was little. She certainly didn’t agree with Donna’s decision to lie to her about her father any more than she agreed with Samantha’s…

And, wow, talk about scarily similar. At least now William wouldn’t grow up thinking his father didn’t love him the way Felicity had. Then again, if Felicity hadn’t bottled her feelings up, if she’d told her mother how unloved she felt by her father’s abandonment, maybe Donna would have told her the truth long ago.

“I know but,” Donna shook her head, “avoiding me for almost a year tells a different story.”

Oh God. How on earth was Felicity going to convince her that wasn’t it? And she’d like to point out that it was pretty unfair that they were be talking about one of the worst decisions Donna had made as a parent and Felicity was the one grappling with heart-wrenching guilt. On her wedding day no less.

There was just something about her mother’s wide sad eyes. They always made Felicity feel like she was in the wrong.

Then Donna added, “I also figured you changed your mind after I sent your father away again, last year.”

“Oh—wait…what?” Felicity did something resembling a double take. Because…excuse her.

And suddenly Felicity wasn’t feeling like she was in the wrong any more. Wide sad eyes could only do so much.

The puzzle pieces fell into place and…Noah had taken a bullet for her, had spent days trying to convince Felicity how much he wanted to be in her life only to disappear into thin air as soon as Rubicon was dismantled. With only a vague message from her mother left behind.

“That fight in the hallway? You told…you convinced Noah to leave?” Felicity whispered.

At the time, Felicity hadn’t had time to feel hurt. Darhk showed up at the Loft and threatened to kill her mother and, then, they’d had to save the world. Again.

But once the dust settled…it had hurt. Her father’s disappearance. And Felicity had been pretty pissed off at herself for caring. Because shouldn’t she be numb to it by now? Shouldn’t she be over it?
It wasn’t even that Donna had asked Noah to go that upset Felicity. It was that she hadn’t told her the truth about why he left, she’d just left Felicity feeling abandoned. Again. For a woman who goes on and on about honesty, her mom certainly had her own share of secrets.

Donna’s hand fluttered up to cover her mouth and she stumbled back to fall into the chair Thea had vacated. “You didn’t know.”

Wonderful. Now, it was becoming clear that Donna still wouldn’t have told her the truth if she hadn’t thought Felicity already knew.

“Mo-om…” Felicity took a shaky breath. It was one thing to cry happy tears but she refused to cry ugly anguished tears on her wedding day. But, still, she had to know. “What did you say to him?”

What had it taken to make her father abandon her? Yet again?

“Just…” Donna shook her head, refusing to meet her eyes. “Just that we both knew the best thing he could possibly do for you was to get out of your life and stay out.”

Of course. God save Felicity from overprotective mothers.

“Oh God, mom…” Felicity collapsed back into her own chair, her head falling back and her eyes closing. This might just be one thing too many to deal with today. Maybe her and Oliver truly should have eloped. Alone. “I had just told you I work with the Green Arrow, you didn’t think I could take care of myself? That maybe it was my decision to make? I’m not a child.”

What if her mother hadn’t done this? Would Noah have still left? What if Felicity had tried to contact him herself? Could they have had a relationship this last year? Would he be around to walk her down the aisle? Did Felicity even want that after everything?

Because even if he had been pushed away because of guilt, Noah could have contacted Felicity at any time. He could have at least said goodbye. And he didn’t have the excuse of not realizing how abandoned and unloved Felicity had felt. Because she had told him. Then punctuated it my having him arrested.

Oliver had tried to stay away from William for what…a month after he initially found him, before contacting Samantha and running off the Central City. Then, when Oliver sent him away, he’d had to make sure he had no idea where William was and Felicity knew that was at least partially to keep himself from giving into the temptation of seeking William out, if only too assure himself his boy was okay.

A parent should want to be with their child. Like Oliver did. Hell, like Malcolm did.

Like Felicity’s mother wanted to be with her.

All Donna had ever wanted was to keep her safe and be in her life. And on both, Felicity had fought her every step of the way.

Crap.

“You may not be a child but you’ll always be my baby and you don’t know Noah like I do,” Donna finally said in a small voice, one with the tiniest hint of defiance. “And it’s a mother’s job to protect her child, no matter how old they are.”

Donna should have quit while she was ahead.
Felicity grunted. She’d heard this argument more times than she cared to and she refused to give into it. She flat out rejected the idea all woman immediately became…Machiavellian the minute their uterus got put to use. That it was their God given right as a mother to believe the end justified the means as long as it kept their child safe.

Samantha, Moira, and now Donna…all willing to throw morals out the window, over the mere possibility their child might be in danger. Lying to everyone in an attempt to control their kid’s destiny.

All Felicity could hope was that she would find another way. The world was a dangerous place and any child her and Oliver had would be more at risk than most. But if they couldn’t keep them safe without lying to and manipulating them, they had no right to have children at all.

Besides, the best thing Felicity and Oliver could do for their children is to teach them how to protect themselves. They couldn’t do that with lies.

Donna turned her head away, a tear spilling over and running down her face. God dammit.

Felicity didn’t agree with all of Donna’s choices. She refused to repeat them but what good would holding a grudge do? Especially when she knew everything Donna had done was because of the intense love she had felt for her daughter. For her.

Today was Felicity’s wedding day. It was about the future not that past. A day for family. And families forgave one another. They loved one another. And Felicity and Donna…they loved each other so, so much.

That was what was important. (Even if a tiny part of Felicity wondered if she was being besieged by confessions today because Thea and Donna realized she wouldn’t want to walk down the aisle with anything left unresolved).

Taking another breath, Felicity reached out and took Donna’s hand. Her mother turned to look at her with hope in her eyes and she did her best not to cry.

“Maybe we can start over. I’ll try to be more open and stop avoiding my feelings,” Felicity offered. It was already a promise she had made to herself. And to Oliver. “But I need you to trust me and let me deal with whatever relationship I do or do not have with my father!”

Felicity wasn’t exactly running to the computer to find him but for frak sake, she could take care of herself. More than her mother would ever know. She’d had a hard-enough time getting Oliver to let her make her own decisions about safety, she wasn’t going to fight the same fight with her mother, of all people.

Donna’s face scrunched up. “I’ll try, baby. I’ll always feel the need to protect you but I’ll do my best. No more secrets. No more lies.” Then she muttered, “Hopefully, your father will stay away and it won’t matter.”

Ugh. “Mo-om.” Why did Felicity feel like that was all she ever said when they were together?

“Sorry.” Donna had the grace to look apologetic at least. And she gave Felicity a smile so loving, it was impossible to stay angry with her. “I really would like that fresh start.”

And here came the tears again. At least, they weren’t the sad ones. “Me too, Mom.”
Donna pressed a kiss to her forehead. Then, leaning back, she took Felicity’s hands and looked into her eyes. “But…hon, if that wasn’t the reason you’ve been avoiding me, what is? You haven’t returned my phone calls and when you do, it’s barely two minutes before you have to go. I’m lucky if I get one text every few weeks…”

Felicity thought that was an exaggeration but…

Scrunching up her nose, Felicity steeled herself because after all this, the real reason just sounded…kinda pathetic. “I was having a hard time with my break up with Oliver.” And everything else. “I didn’t want to talk about it and I knew you would. I knew you’d tell me to talk to him.” Or maybe hound her to talk to Oliver was more accurate. “I wasn’t ready to deal with it and…I knew you would make me. So I avoided you.”

Wow, that was a terrible reason to not talk to her mother. For someone who had just insisted they were an adult, Felicity had been acting pretty childish.

Mouth falling open, Donna stared at Felicity for a long minute, before letting out a disgruntled sound. “That’s why you haven’t been talking to me? If I had known that, I would have shown up on your doorstep months ago to make you see sense.”

Felicity threw her hands up in the air. “And that’s why I didn’t tell you!” Suddenly, she felt a whole less childish and a whole lot more justified.

“Felicity…” Donna sat back, frowning and shaking her head. “Clearly, I would have been right.” She gestured around them. “Obviously, you are meant to be with Oliver.”

And that was…really difficult to argue with. Actually, Felicity had never felt less like arguing.

“I wasn’t ready then,” was all Felicity said. Then, before her mother could start a debate, she added, “But I am now. And I’m very glad you are here to be a part of it. Clean slate?”

Then Felicity held her breath and waited.

For all of two seconds.

Donna finally broke out in a huge grin and practically squealed, “A clean slate sounds wonderful,” leaning forward to hug her again. “I missed you, baby.”

“I missed you too, mom.” And she had. It might have been Felicity’s choice to isolate herself, but that didn’t mean she hadn’t missed her mother. She held her even tighter, closing her eyes pressing her cheek against Donna’s. “You can’t understand how much it means to me to have you here.” She was repeating herself but when Felicity thought about how close she had come to getting married without her mother, it made her want to weep.

“Well, hon…” Donna pulled back, arranging Felicity’s curls as her lips tipped up in an almost sly smile. “It just so happens, I brought some insurance. Just in case you weren’t happy to see me.” Her eyes were sparkling and her tone teasing, even though it stayed heavy with emotion.

Felicity shook her head. Only her mother would think to do such a thing. “Mo-om.”

Donna wagged her eyebrows at her. “A gift always greases the wheel of forgiveness.”

Felicity had to laugh, though she really hoped that her mother kept that little piece of Zayde Jacob’s wisdom away from Oliver. God knew he took those stupid sayings to heart and he’d have bought her a house by now, if he’d latched onto that one.
“And the more effort put into the gift…” Donna’s smile widened. “It wasn’t easy convincing those stone-faced Men in Black, who were unfortunately not as handsome as Will Smith, that they needed to escort me home first to get my medication.”

Donna reached over to grab her purse and Felicity heart did this teeny-tiny seizure thing. “Medicine? I didn’t know you were on medication.” Oh God, was her mother sick and Felicity didn’t even know? Had she tried to tell her but Felicity had ignored that call—

“I’m not.” Donna grabbed her purse, sending Felicity a mischievous smile. “I’m as healthy as can be and going strong. Not bad for 49.”

Felicity took a relieved breath but…

Then her mother pulled a velvet case from her purse.

A very old, very familiar velvet case. One Felicity hadn’t seen in over a decade but would never forget.

Letting out a soft cry, Felicity’s fingers fluttered up to her lips. “Is that…?”

Donna just grinned. “Your ring is old and your dress new, yes?” she asked. Felicity smiled and nodded, her eyes starting to burn again as her mom started to go through the ritual. “And you got the blue garter like I told you…?”

Felicity grunted, sending her mom a quick glare. “Garters are stupid, mom.” They’d had this argument a thousand times. All garters did was cut off her circulation and contribute to a tradition designed to allow creepy drunk guys to feel up young girls.

But before her mom could object, Felicity added. “My panties are blue.”

Her mother just huffed. “At least tell me it’s a thong?”

“Mo-om…”

“Fel-icity…”

Scrunching up her nose, Felicity rolled her eyes and admitted, “It’s a thong.” The dress might be flowy, but there was a breeze and she was not willing to risk panty-lines as she walked down the aisle.

Plus, Oliver loved her ass in a lace thong.

Donna patted her hand, so Felicity assumed she approved. Then her mother’s hands fell on the case again and Felicity’s breath caught. “So I brought something borrowed.”

“Lyla leant her bracelet….” Oh, why was she arguing? It was taking all Felicity’s will power not to snatch the case from her mom’s hand.

But Donna looked up and her grin just widened. “Good, if we don’t have to worry about your borrowed you won’t have to give it back. Unless you don’t want it?” She pulled back the case teasingly.

Felicity immediately burst out with, “Gimme.” She made grabby hands and Donna laughed, finally handing the case to her.

Once it was safely in her hands, Felicity took a deep, shaky breath and ran her hand over the case.
It was the same one Bubbe Sylvia had shown her all those years ago. The same one that had been buried for three decades under a large Oak tree on the out-skirts of the Ardennes Forest where her older sister, Sophie had hidden it from the Nazis before hiding the little girl herself with an older couple at their farm.

A tear splattered onto the case, breaking Felicity out of her daze. She hastily wiped it away and, swallowing, cracked open the case…

Oh wow. “It’s more beautiful than I remember,” Felicity whispered, fully aware that her voice was shaking.

Then Felicity couldn’t say anything at all because her throat had closed off. Her tears fell freely now, her fingers too busy tracing the delicate diamond filigree to wipe them away.

Felicity could still remember the day Bubbe first showed it to her, had sat her on her knee after Passover Seder and told her the story. She’d had only been five or six at the time (it was before her father left) and, thinking back, it seemed young to be told such a story.

The story of how this necklace, and Sylvia, had survived the Holocaust. Felicity hadn’t understood the significance. The horror. All little Felicity had heard was a tale of her grandparents’ survival. It wasn’t until much later that she realized it was also a story about how many more had been lost.

But her grandparents, not much older than herself, had escaped a great evil and found true love. It wasn’t much different than most Disney movies really. Complete with dead parents and a hidden treasure.

And not unlike Felicity’s own story with Oliver. She wondered if one day she’d sit with her grandchild on her knee and tell their story to a bright-eyed child. Would she show that child her ring and tell them her granddaddy had sown it into the suit he used to fight evil, keeping it close to his heart when they were apart? How they had fallen in love while protecting their city?

“Mom, I…” Felicity blew out a breath as she lifted the necklace up to catch the light. Even with Oliver’s romantic gesture, her engagement ring had nothing on the history, the legacy attached to this necklace. “I want to wear this. I’m going to wear this,” she assured, before her mom could protest. “But” Felicity turned and squeezed her mother’s hand, “I’m just borrowing it. I can’t—”

“You can and you will take it,” Donna insisted. Her tone didn’t leave a lot of room for argument. “It’s what your bubbe wanted. She was so angry when I eloped. She made me swear you would wear this when you got married.”

Donna took the necklace from Felicity’s fingers, standing and moving behind her to unclasp the necklace she was wearing.

All Felicity was able to do was let out a small sob. To think she had thought herself lucky to have been kidnapped wearing her favorite necklace. As if it could ever compare.

Donna laid Felicity’s ordinary necklace on the desk and placed Sylvia’s around Felicity’s neck. Leaning down, Donna whispering, “One day you will give this to your daughter on her wedding day.”

Felicity laughed through her tears. “You just had to throw that in there,” she teased, with absolutely no ire. “You couldn’t even wait for me to get married before you moved on to babies.”

“Mama would be angry if I didn’t. She’d say I was failing as a Jewish mother if I wasn’t pushing for grandchildren of my own.” Donna smoothed the necklace around her neck.
Felicity caught her hand and squeezed, chuckling because she could almost hear bubbe saying *exactly* that. She pressed her lips to her mother’s palm before letting go.

Dropping a kiss to her cheek, Donna came around and pushed her chair out of the way. Then taking both of Felicity’s hands in hers, she pulled her to her feet. “Now let me see.”

Taking a deep, steadying breath, Felicity looked in the mirror and took in the entire picture. The hair. The dress. The shoes. The necklace.

**Wow.**

Donna let out a long sigh, her hand going to her throat as she murmured, “Just when I thought you couldn’t get any more beautiful.”

It sounded like something people just *said*. But Felicity had no doubt her mother meant every word and…

Any reservations Felicity had felt about her appearance…gone. It was as if Sylvia’s necklace was the missing piece. Now it really was perfect.

“And can I say, that is some *incredible* makeup?” Donna gushed, making Felicity laugh again. “Where can I get some of that?”

Truly. Whatever Thea had paid for this stuff was worth it. Despite Felicity’s multiple sob fests, she was actually presentable. If she looked closely, the foundation was maybe a little uneven. Her lipstick needed to be reapplied and she wasn’t sure if her rosy cheeks were from blush or the tears but…this was great stuff. A+ maid of honoring.

But a glance at her mother showed she hadn’t fared nearly as well. “Help yourself,” Felicity offered, gesturing to the desk full of cosmetics. “Thea’s magic makeup is over there.”

As her mother touched up her face, Felicity dried her eyes and…she just couldn’t take her eyes off the necklace, couldn’t stop touching it. She…

“I’m sorry it’s not a traditional Jewish ceremony with a rabbi,” Felicity blurted out. Was it wrong to wear something so steeped in Jewish heritage when she was having such a secular ceremony?

“Are you kidding, hon?” Donna paused as she reapplied her mascara and threw Felicity her sunniest smile. The one Oliver said reminded him of hers. “You’re being married by a genuine naval captain and…have you *seen* how good that man looks in his dress whites? *So* much better than Rabi Levi. And better manners too,” she whispered in a conspiratory tone before giving a delicate shudder and fanning herself.

Normally, Felicity would be borderline terrified that her mother was planning to throw herself at the ship’s captain but…she found herself laughing instead. Let her mom enjoy herself, flirt with whoever she wanted to flirt with. Though…

Felicity grinned. “You know who else looks awful handsome today? Captain Lance.” Also, unlike Captain Mitchell, Quentin was single.

Donna’s smile faded as she caught Felicity’s drift. It wasn’t as if Felicity had been trying to be subtle. “Hon, you know—”

Totally ignoring the warning look her mother sent, Felicity pressed on, “That you two broke up because he fell off the wagon? After his daughter died and he lost the job that meant the world to
him? Well, he stopped drinking. Totally on the wagon. *Driving* the wagon even.”

Donna frowned and Felicity wasn’t sure why she was pushing this. Oh wait, yes, she did. Over a *decade* of her mother’s interference in her own love life. Turnabout was not only fair play, it was damn satisfying.

“He completed rehab months ago, did you know that?”

Donna licked her lip, turning her eyes away as a blush started to creep over her cheeks and spread down to her chest. “No. No, I didn’t.”

Also, they were adorable together. Not to mention, no two people deserved to be happy more. “*And* he’s Oliver’s deputy mayor now.”

“That I *did* know.” Donna chuckled, shaking her head, starting to look resigned. “What are you up to? Trying to turn the tables on me?”

Felicity laughed out loud. Maybe she was. Wow, what a roller coaster today was turning into. “Happy people want the people they love to be happy, that’s all.”

And Felicity *was* happy. Despite everything, she was so very happy.

Felicity wanted that for her mom too. For her not to be lonely any more. “You and Captain Lance were good for each other.”

Donna let out a sigh, shaking her head. “Hmmm.” But then she chuckled, teasing, “Well, if being deputy mayor has the same perks as being mayor…” She gestured around her at the spacious captain’s cabin.

And, *obviously*, it was just a joke but…

Something clicked in Felicity’s head because God knew Oliver being mayor had *nothing* to do with why they were on this ship right then.

And not fifteen minutes ago Felicity had made a very big deal about the importance of her and her mother being open and honest with each other. About not keeping secrets. So, unless she wanted to be the hypocrite she had (mentally) accused her mother of being, there were one or two secrets she needed to share.

Like the enormous green one about Donna’s soon to be son-in-law.

Frak. Okay, so…

She was doing this? Felicity was *actually* telling her mother that Oliver was the Green Arrow?

All right…yes. Felicity was doing this. Putting her money where her mouth was. Turning over a new leaf. Starting with a clean slate and…whatever other stupid cliches were escaping her right then.

What could go wrong?

Wait, Felicity didn’t want an answer to that question.

“Mom, there’s—”

The knock wasn’t loud but it still made her jump. Donna laughed (but only because she had no
idea the knock had interrupted the biggest confession yet), placing a soft hand on Felicity’s shoulder as she called out, “Come in.”

Thea appeared in the door way as she sang, “Sorry guys, times up.” And...

Oh. Dear. God.

Felicity was getting married.

Like…now.

Frakity frak. Good God in heaven. It was time.

Thea bounded into the room, a ball of energy. “I didn’t want to interrupt but Curtis says the sun is almost in…” Her hands flew through the air as she seemed to grapple for the right phrase. “I have no idea where the sun is but I’m pretty sure if you want to get married during the sunset and not after, in total darkness, we need to get moving.”

Thea scooped up a compact and brush, turning to Felicity. “Let see what the damage is…oh wow, Felicity…” Thea reached out to touch her necklace, her breath catching. “Wow.”

Felicity just smiled, her own fingers unconsciously finding the diamonds that lie between her collarbones. “It was my grandmother’s.”

“Is it real?” Thea gasped, making Felicity chuckle.

But her mom gave an indignant (if good-natured), “Of course, it’s real. It’s been in the family for centuries.”

Which it probably wasn’t. They didn’t know how old the necklace was. Sylvia was too young when the war started and anyone who might have known the full history was dead by the end. Felicity had researched it a few years ago and thought it was actually less than a hundred and fifty years old.

But Thea looked impressed and her mom so proud she could burst, so Felicity just smiled and allowed Thea to fix her makeup as her mother fluttered around, adjusting her hair and dress. Mother of the bride and maid of honor chatted briefly about the necklace before pulling back and declaring her ‘Perfect’ and ‘A vision’.

Felicity was starting to feel a little lightheaded.

They were done just in time because Felicity turned to see an impatient Quentin standing in the doorway with a huge smile on his face. He rubbed his hands together and asked, “Okay, whose ready to get married?”

Oh lord, was she? Was anyone?

Wow, how had they gone from the wait that would never end to getting married right the frak now?

“I think we’re set,” Thea answered for her, scooping up their bouquets, and Felicity was incredibly grateful to have someone else take charge. Best maid of honor ever.

Butterflies were doing the tango in Felicity’s stomach and the excitement was unlike anything she had ever felt before. She took the flowers Thea handed her, holding them tight. And…
Suddenly, Felicity couldn’t think about anything other than how she couldn’t wait to see Oliver.

To see his reaction to her walk down the aisle. To stand up next to him and promise to be together always.

To be his wife.

Felicity was getting married.

And as such, Felicity needed to not faint.

“Just one thing.”

Felicity’s eyes jerked up at the new voice and saw Dinah stepping around Quentin. She was biting her lip and looking a hell of a lot more nervous than Felicity was used to Dinah looking.

Oh God, now what?

“Tell me,” Felicity whimpered, bracing herself.

“It’s nothing…too bad,” Dinah hedged and Felicity thought she might throw up. Dinah immediately caught on and shook her head. “No one is attacking. Everyone is fine and in place. Well…maybe it’s the ‘everyone’ that’s a problem. You know how you wanted a small intimate ceremony…”

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Note:

I feel like I need to apologize for the rabbit hole I went down with the necklace and Felicity’s grandparents. I wanted a piece of jewelry that really meant something to come from Donna and before I knew it, I had spent hours…hours…researching Holocaust survivors. I actually wrote the full story of the necklace out but cut a little over 1K, after realizing it was too big a tangent (even for me).

I am going to post the piece that I cut over in Tumblr for any one who is interested. You can read it here.

It probably isn’t hard to tell from this who I think Donna should be with. In fact, I’m not sure what I found more forced and out of character during the 6x09 reception, Donna having apparently completely reconciled with Noah off camera or Curtis ‘I’m-Your-Biggest-Shipper-Holt’ having a post-divorce meltdown during the toast.

Sorry. Nope.

Thank you to mariposablue9, Imusuallyobsessed, lageniuswannabe, Noelle and Ireland1733 for all their help with
this chapter.

Happy reading!

Emmy

(Emmilynestill on Tumblr and Twitter)
(Questionable) Support

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

Two chapters ago, I asked everyone to take a deep breath and when you reexhale let out all your anger and resentment toward New Team Arrow, specifically Dinah before reading. This time, I’m going to ask you to do the same for Curtis, Slade, and (to a lesser extent, since he’s still a little shit) Rene.

This is the Curtis who ordered Oliver and Felicity take-out and then made a lame excuse to leave them alone, who was at Oliver’s birthday party, and who shared a beer with Felicity while they tried to take down Rubicon.

This is the Slade who taught Oliver to fight on Lian Yu and stood aside when Oliver was with Shado, even though he was in love with her. As far as this story is concerned, Slade is as responsible for killing Moira as Thea is for killing Sara and Roy is for killing that cop.

And Rene…yeah, Rene is Rene. He hasn’t betrayed anyone but he’s the same asshole he always was.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
“Do you think that Felicity is going to be okay with all this?”

Oliver’s eyes scanned the length of the aircraft carrier, the *considerable* length that was lined with a double row of sailors dressed in crisp white uniforms on both side…and tried not to be sick.

Felicity said she wanted a *small* intimate ceremony. Only close friends and family, she’d said.

And what she was getting was a goddamn spectacle worthy of royalty. They may as well have a complete military parade. Seventy-six fucking trombones. They hadn’t had a third of this many people on their original guestlist. The one Felicity had immediately rejected as too long.

*Fuck.*

“No more or less than the last ten times you asked,” Slade muttered, pulling at his collar. Which was just asinine, given the first three buttons were open and couldn’t possibly be too tight.

Oliver sent Slade a glare to show just how *unimpressed* he was. “I was *talking* to John,” he hissed.

But, of course, Slade was far from cowed. He was showing a particular pleasure in tormenting him after Oliver had maneuvered him so cleanly today.

Five men stood at the front of the carrier, all of them dressed in a simple tan suit and a thin white button down, Oliver and John (the best man. *By far*) along with Curtis, Rene, and, yes, despite his initial refusal, Slade.

Oliver’s old friend (turned enemy, turned friend again) had been adamant that while he was happy
for Oliver and wished him the best, he would not be doing more than standing in the back and watching the wedding. He didn’t have the right to more after the things he’d done.

But Oliver put high stock on forgiveness, given he wouldn’t be here today if he hadn’t been given the same gift. Many, many times.

Since Slade was in ARGUS custody and couldn’t leave the ship, all Oliver had to do was bring Slade the same suit as everyone else, then it was wear sweats to the wedding or...give in and become the reluctant groomsman.

It was a battle that Oliver had won handily and victory was sweet. For ten different reasons. Mostly, because he had once considered Slade a brother and he had lost too many family members. It felt good to have one back, free of Mirakuru and Malcolm’s brainwashing drugs. Maybe Slade would never be a hero, but he wasn’t a villain either. Not at heart.

And as a brother, Oliver was pretty damn entertained at how annoyed Slade was.

However, right then, Oliver would cheerfully throw Slade (or the next person to make a snarky comment) off the side of the ship.

Oliver turned to Digg, making it absolutely clear he was talking to John this time and not any of the other nimrods he called friends, and hissed, “Felicity said ‘small and intimate’. How the hell is 500 seamen we don’t know ‘small and intimate’?”

Okay maybe Oliver was starting to feel a little panicky. This was supposed to be perfect. For Felicity. And now…if she were disappointed or upset, after everything, Oliver didn’t know what he’d do.

And why did the suit that seemed so lightweight and breathable when he’d tried it on, now feel suffocatingly warm? ‘Unseasonably mild.’ That’s what Curtis had said the weather was today. Unseasonably mild his ass. Oliver was sure Felicity would find sweating bullets a super attractive quality in a groom.

Digg raised one eyebrow at Oliver and gave him the look. Damn it, Oliver was not in the mood for the look. “Do you want to tell the very nice naval captain, the one who saved our collective asses and agreed to marry you on his aircraft carrier that his crew needs to go inside?”

Clenching his jaw (and his fists), Oliver fought the urge to punch something or someone (preferably someone). As if he didn’t fucking know that! Otherwise, he would have already taken care of it.

“One-Eyed Willy can tell him,” Rene smirked, gesturing his thumb at Slade.

The idiot was going to get himself throttled but Oliver refused to give any response other than an eye-roll as he tried to resist the urge to pace. Why the hell had Oliver agreed to get married on a ship of all places? Talk about bad luck.

“Normally, I’d be happy to toss them all overboard,” Slade drawled, “but I’m trying to play nice.” Then Slade sent Rene a look that made it clear he would be the first one overboard.

A couple more quips from the younger man and Oliver wouldn’t even try to stop him.

But Rene just sauntered over to Oliver, a huge shit-eating grin on his face (the one that rubbed Oliver in all the wrong ways) and clapped him on the shoulder. “Relax, Hoss. They’re less guests than…decoration.”
If Rene didn’t watch out, Oliver was going to throw him overboard.

But, unsurprisingly, the idiot was completely oblivious to the danger he was in. Rene chuckled to himself as he gestured to where JJ was running between the sailors, all of whom were at parade rest.

JJ laughed with delight as he tried to get the sailors to react to him, ecstatic when they didn’t. William trailed behind the much smaller boy, keeping him from getting in too much trouble.

Watching them was almost enough to make Oliver smile.

Almost.

Digg, however, had no such problem. He crossed his arms and grinned unabashedly as he watched their boys playing amongst the sailors. “They are doing an excellent imitation of statues.”

John too? And was that supposed to make Oliver feel better? Because…what? Felicity wouldn’t notice the 500 uninvited guests if they stayed still?

“Or those British dudes,” Rene added. “What’re their names?”

Would Rene just shut the hell up? He couldn’t possibly think this was helping.

“Queen’s Guard,” Curtis muttered absently from his position off to the side. He was focused on his tablet which was at least productive (Oliver hoped), but was still unable to resist being a know-it-all (which was at least comforting in its predictability).

“Yes, them,” Rene nodded, “I didn’t know Americans could stand that still.”

“You should try it,” Slade suggested and Oliver was with him on that one. “Especially the part where your lips stop moving.”

In fact, Oliver was considering giving Rene’s place in the team to Slade.

“Ha!” Curtis froze, looking up, wearing what Felicity called his ‘eureka’ face. At the moment, it just made Oliver more nervous. “Queen’s Guard!” Curtis announced as if that meant something. Then he looked at them all as if they were stupid (which Oliver hated so, so much).

Finally, not getting the response he wanted, Curtis pointed to Oliver, “Queen,” then to the rows of sailors, “Guard.”

“Jesus,” John muttered under his breath, rolling his eyes.

But Oliver…

Incredibly, that made him feel better. Oliver had to bite his lip to keep from smiling as he remembered Felicity telling him last night she had changed her mind and, if he was okay with it (as if Oliver could possibly not be okay with it), she wanted to change her name to Queen after all.

Warmth flowed over him at the memory. Oliver hadn’t wanted to pressure her, so he never told her how much it meant to him. Maybe he didn’t even realize how much it meant to him until now.

But, God, Oliver wanted Felicity to be a Queen…his Queen with every fiber of his being.

“Come on, guys,” Curtis grumbled, clearly annoyed that no one appreciated the connection he’d made. “Queen’s Guard. During the Queen wedding, how perfect is that?”
Rene turned to Slade and muttered, “Why aren’t you threatening to push him off the ship.”

Maybe because Curtis was actually helping?

Oliver ignored Rene and turned to Curtis, saying, “If Felicity is upset they’re here, I’m counting on you to convince her of how ‘perfect’ it is.”

In fact, Oliver seriously considered sending Curtis to Felicity to explain it right now. The man was a triathlete. How long would it take for him to get there and back?

“As long as those sailors don’t let my son run off the edge of the ship, I don’t care what we call them or how many they are,” John threw out, almost absently, as his eyes tracked the boys. A ship with no walls was a dangerous place for an active toddler.

Oliver’s eyes followed and he blew out a breath, smiling as he watched William guide JJ back to the center aisle. “William’s got him,” he murmured quietly, just for John.

Out of the corner of his eye, Oliver saw John’s lips twitch. “I know.”

“Well, if they don’t your Baby Mama is going to get an excellent picture of him flying off the side,” Rene joked and it really wasn’t funny.

That man really needed one of those head smacks. Where were Nyssa and Dinah when Oliver needed them? If Rene kept this up, Oliver was going to tell Slade to do it and let Rene deal with the concussion that would undoubtedly result.

“Don’t be surprised if most of those pictures come back of her kid,” Slade snorted.

“He’s my kid too,” Oliver reminded him, irritated at him for suggesting otherwise. Samantha was wandering around deck, following behind the boys at a distance, snapping pictures of their antics. Thank God. If she was focusing on him, Oliver would probably scream. “She can take as many pictures of the boys as she wants. As long as she gets some of Felicity too.”

Slade’s scoff showed he didn’t think that was bloody likely, but before Oliver could start to second guess that decision too, Curtis piped up, “No worries, I got my home boy’s…and girl’s back.” He flipped his tablet so that Oliver could see the four views of the deck of the ship. “Guaranteed to capture the bride from every angle. I can pull any still you need.”

That got a genuine smile from Oliver. “Thank you, Curtis.” At least one of his groomsmen was useful.

Now all Oliver needed was Felicity to not change her mind.

“Dude!” Rene grunted, loud and frustrated, making Oliver realize…

Fuck. Oliver really had caught Felicity’s penchant for speaking his thoughts out loud. And they weren’t even married yet.

“After all the stupid shit you’ve done, Felicity still said, ‘yes,’” Rene argued. “She’s not going to change her mind because of a few hundred walking manikins.”

Scowling, Oliver snapped, “Thanks, Rene.” And he really hoped his sarcasm wasn’t subtle.

“Oliver,” John interrupted, a hand landing on his shoulder, “Rene may have the tact of a baboon —”
“Hey!”

“…but in this, he’s right.”

Oliver just grunted. Even if they did have a decent point, his anxiety wasn’t fading so what good was it?

Then John lowered his voice and asked, “Is this about those guests,” he tilted his head toward the deck, “or the one we had flown in?”

Oliver winced, crossing his arms tightly and rocking on his heels. The question hit a little too close to home.

“Wait,” Curtis jumped in, ensuring that Oliver was going to have to talk about it, whether he wanted to or not. “The only person who got flown in…you’re not talking about Donna?”

Digg nodded solemnly and Oliver wished he hadn’t or…oh, hell, Oliver didn’t know what he wished for anymore. Except to be done with this excruciating waiting. And to talk to Felicity. He just wanted to talk to her and make sure everything was okay.

“Why would you be worried about flying in Donna?” Curtis asked, completely oblivious to Oliver’s darkening mood. That or willfully ignorant. “Felicity is going to be stoked! It’s an awesome surprise!”

Oliver swallowed, not even able to meet Curtis’ eyes. He knew that Curtis was just trying to help but…

He’d thought so too. At first. Why wouldn’t Felicity be thrilled Oliver had arranged for her mother to be at their wedding? Felicity loved her mother and surprising her would make it that much more special. Right?

Except then Donna showed up and…Oliver didn’t have the best track record with happy surprises. He should have talked to Felicity first, before getting carried away.

When Oliver didn’t answer Curtis, John did, “I’m pretty sure it’s because the last time Oliver invited Donna to town to surprise Felicity she changed his handle to ‘Chatty Cathy’.”

Yup, that was why.

Though why John thought it was a good idea to share that information with the three stooges, Oliver had no idea.

“What?” Rene gasped, laughter lurking. “Why’d she change it back?”

Jesus Christ.

Slade chuckled and Oliver…he turned to both of them to growl, “Not helpful, Rene.” He swore to fucking God, if this wedding didn’t start soon, someone was taking a swim.

“Come on! It’s the best handle ever!” Rene kept pushing. Because Rene never knew when to take a hint. Or an outright command. “‘Chatty Cathy, on your left. Two masked goons—”

“Rene…” John warned and even he was losing his calm tone.

“I can knock him overboard,” Slade offered, looking the most cheerful he had all day. “All I need is the assurance you will all say it was an accident.”
It was tempting. Damn tempting.

Instead, Oliver sent them both a glare. His best Green Arrow glare. And…

Nothing.

When had that stopped working? It had to fizzle out now, of all times? And why the hell had Oliver thought it was a good idea to have these two goons up here with him?

“Look, man,” John’s steady voice drew Oliver’s attention back to him, “if I didn’t think Felicity would be thrilled about Donna, I wouldn’t have gone along with it.”

Letting out a breath, Oliver felt some of his tension unwind. That was true. John and Quintin had thought it was a good idea. That had to mean something. But…

“I shouldn’t have done it as a surprise. I should have…” Oliver shook his head. He should have consulted Felicity first. The way she’d been asking him to do for the last two years. Hell, the last five years. And she was right. Oliver never learned.

“What! Nooo! Best surprise ever!” Curtis swore and really his boundless enthusiasm wasn’t making Oliver feel any better. It was like having a giant Labrador puppy running around, knocking everything over.

“Oliver…” John sighed, shaking his head. Then he drew himself up tall and with a determined look put both of his hands-on Oliver’s shoulders, looking him straight in the eye. “If you tell Felicity I said this, I’ll deny it, but this is nothing like the last time you asked Donna to stay with you and not just because that was out of the blue and this is Felicity’s wedding and Donna is her mother but because…” If possible, John’s stare got harder. “This is the part you never tell Felicity, you understand?”

“Umm…” Was John really asking him to keep something from Felicity? Because Oliver wasn’t sure he wanted to agree to that. Especially minutes before their wedding.

But John didn’t wait for Oliver to agree. He just lowered his voice and said, “The last time… Felicity was out of her fucking mind.”

“What? Excuse me?” Oliver didn’t know what he had thought John was going to say but…

If anyone else said that about Felicity, Oliver would knock their teeth out. But this was John and John didn’t disrespect any woman, never mind Felicity. Which just left Oliver thinking he must have heard him wrong. Or that he was being pranked.

Then, of course, Curtis had to add his two cents. “We talking about the time Dr. Palmer got shrunk to the size of a cheeto and Damian Darhk kept him in a terrarium and Felicity got whacked out on energy drinks and junk food because she decided it was all her fault?”

“Yup,” John answered before Oliver could.

Curtis stepped forward to clap his hand on Oliver’s back. Why did everyone seem to think it was okay to touch him all of a sudden?

“Yeah, dude, I second that. I’ve never seen Felicity so…” Curtis made a face as he searched for the right word.

Feeling as if, perhaps, he’d stepped onto a different Earth, Oliver supplied, “Upset?”
Because Oliver might not know what the guys were getting at but he remembered that night very well. Mostly because he had been worried sick Felicity had finally come to her senses and was going to leave him—

“Nah, I’ve seen Felicity way more upset.” Curtis made one of those goofy faces he made sometimes, screwing his face to the side and looking at the sky. As if there were answers there or something. “This was more…”

“Out of her fucking mind,” John repeated and Oliver was really going to have to say something if he kept talking about his future wife like that.

“Yeah, that’s it,” Curtis nodded. “That’s the right description.”

What the fuck? He was living in a cuckoo clock! “Felicity wasn’t…” Oliver couldn’t even repeat it out loud. “That wasn’t Felicity’s fault. I shouldn’t have—”

This time, when John grabbed Oliver’s shoulders, he looked like he wanted to shake him. “Oliver, as your best man, I’m going to tell you something very important about marriage. Sometimes, if a wife…or a husband for that matter, is really fucking stressed out, they take it out on their spouse. Even when they don’t deserve it.” John turned to the clowns turned groomsman. “Help me out guys?”

“Oh yeah,” Curtis immediately agreed. Vehemently. “All the time.”

Rene nodded, looking for all the world like he was reliving a past trauma in his head. “It’s like they’re just waiting for you do something, doesn’t matter how small and…bam!”

“Mmmhmm,” even Slade hummed his agreement.

When had his wedding turned into a circus?

But…okay maybe there was something to this if all of them agreed. They had all been married.

Though, two of them were divorced. Three if he included John’s first marriage. And the fourth was Rene.

Besides, Felicity had a right to be angry after Oliver had invited Donna to Star City without asking.

Oliver shook his head. “In this case, Felicity was just—”

“You’re not listening, man,” John asserted and he did shake Oliver this time. “Felicity overreacted and, honestly, if you hadn’t invited Donna then she would have found something else to fly off the handle about.”

Was that true?

He couldn’t say it hadn’t felt like an overreaction at the time, but Oliver figured he mustn’t have understood. Felicity wouldn’t have been that mad at him if it wasn’t his fault.

Oliver looked at Curtis, which meant he really must be desperate, but the man actually knew Felicity pretty well. Did he agree with this?

Curtis nodded. Again. (He’d been doing a pretty good imitation of a bobblehead this whole conversation) and if Oliver correctly interpreted his look, he fully agreed with Digg on this.
Seriously? That was…it didn’t compute. For a moment, Oliver felt like the whole world was off its axis.

Then Oliver thought about it. Really thought about what happened that fall. With this new angle and trying to remember what Felicity said about him putting her on a pedestal.

When the world realigned, Oliver turned back to John and demanded, “If you felt this way, why didn’t you say anything? I thought Felicity was going to dump me!”

But John, the traitor, just shrugged. “I knew Felicity wasn’t going to dump you. Plus, she’s terrifying when she’s angry.”

“Yup,” Curtis seconded.

And while Oliver one-hundred percent agreed with that one, it didn’t mean he didn’t feel a bit betrayed. “You could have told me when we were alone.” He remembered, vividly, a heart-to-heart with John in the Bunker which would have been the perfect time to impart this wisdom of his.

“I didn’t want to choose sides,” Digg said way too casually, because really wasn’t staying quiet taking Felicity’s side? “And I figured Felicity deserved a pass with all she’s had to put up with over the years.”

Oliver grunted because, yeah, that was true but…

“A heads up would have been nice.”

A hint. Oliver probably could have handled the situation better if he’d understood what was going on. He hadn’t wanted John to take sides, just give advice. Because Oliver was fucking clueless.

John shrugged. “You worked it out, didn’t you?”

Really? That was what John was going with? That it worked out in the end? That was the kind of ass backward argument Oliver expected from Rene, not Digg.

“And Felicity is not going to be mad about Donna,” Curtis added. “Or the Queen’s Guard…” He actually stopped in the middle of his sentence to laugh at his own joke. Clowns. All of them. “You’re just nervous. It’s totally normal. I was freaking out before my wedding too.”

“It’s natural to have cold feet, kid,” Slade agreed and Oliver didn’t know if he was trying to help or if he was ribbing him.

Either way, Oliver snapped, “I do not have cold feet!”

John sent him a knowing look and Oliver…

This time Oliver pointed a finger at Digg, warning, “I don’t!”

Oliver was so done.

“Yeah, you don’t look nervous at all,” Rene drawled. And, seriously, Slade’s plan of knocking him off the edge of the ship and claiming it was an accident was looking better and better.

“The only thing I’m nervous about is that Felicity is going to change her mind!”

And, fuck, why had he just admitted that? Oliver was screwed.
All four of them started to speak at the same time.

“Kid, she’s—”

“Oliver—”

“Dude, she’s—”

“You know what guys, I got this,” and to Oliver’s shock, Rene stepped forward, pushing John and Curtis out of the way to take John’s place holding Oliver’s shoulders. He had balls, Oliver’d give him that. “Look, Hoss, I’ve only known you two for a year, but I know you’ve put that girl through a lot of shit over the years—”

Slade started to laugh uproariously and Curtis muttered, “This is helping?” under his breath.

But Rene, the little shit, kept talking, “But that girl…your girl, she stood by your side, she covered your back, and she got down on her goddamn knee to ask you to marry her. That’s love, man. Felicity ain’t gonna walk away now because the officiant she chose invited half the crew. Or because you surprised her by flying in her only family for her wedding.”

Oliver could only stare.

Okay.

Umm...

“Thanks, Rene. That…actually helped.” And that just might be the most shocking thing of all.

Then Rene went and ruined the moment by throwing up his hands in triumph and shouting, “You’re welcome!” In a strange way, it was comforting to see him revert to form. He turned to walk back to his spot next to Slade but stopped and leaned in, asking Oliver, “And if you want to…misplace that IOU I gave Felicity last night as part of your appreciation—”

“Don’t push it,” Oliver warned. Though he was definitely feeling less…terrified that Felicity was going to back out. John and the stooges had some redeeming qualities.

Plus, remembering how Felicity had cleaned the clocks of those same stooges last night was enough to put a smile on his face. Who’d a thunk it? Oliver Queen’s version of the best bachelor party ever was nursing a beer with his best friend while watching his fiancée hustle their friends at poker?

“No way,” Curtis argued (even though Oliver had just said, ‘no’). “If I’m not getting out of it, you’re not getting out of it. Besides, Felicity already said she’d let us clean the bunker for those IOUs—”

“You have any idea how much I lost, Hoss? I’ll be cleaning the bunker three presidents from now.”

John sniggered and Oliver found himself covering his face, trying to hide his grin. It really had been a beautiful thing to watch.

Rene shot them a dirty look before turning back to Curtis and jabbing a finger at him. “This is your fault! You were the one who said Felicity didn’t know how to play cards!”

Oliver let out an involuntary bark of laughter. He hadn’t heard that part. Why in Christ’s name
would Curtis think *that*? But when all eyes flew to him, Oliver ran a hand over his face, trying to school his expression. If Felicity wanted them to think she was an amateur, far be it from him to correct them.

Curtis narrowed his eyes at Oliver. “Outside Flush?”

What the hell was an outside flush?

Oh...*right*. The weird card throwing meta. Oliver remembered Felicity bemoaning how she’d gotten flustered lying to Curtis and tipped her hand, spewing a fake poker term mid-babble.

Ha! Curtis might have a photographic memory but, really, didn’t he know Felicity better than that by now? He deserved to be fleeced.

“Felicity knows nothing about poker,” Curtis continued to insist. “Yesterday must have been beginner’s luck.” But he said the last softly, like he wasn’t quite sure.

This time it was Digg’s snicker that drew the stooges’ gazes. John didn’t even try to hide the fact that he thought they were all idiots. “Felicity. *The math genius. Who grew up in Vegas. Whose mom worked in a casino all her life. You really think she doesn’t know how to play poker?”*

“Frak.” Curtis breathed, his eyes closing as his head fell forward.

In shame, Oliver hoped.

As a man who called himself one of Felicity’s best friends, Curtis *should* be ashamed. And cleaning the Bunker with Rene for the next several months was a very fair penance.

“Hoss!” Rene hissed, giving Curtis a sharp punch in the arm, clearly blaming him for the loss.

“Nobody *made* you keep playing,” Slade reminded Rene, hands shoved deep in his pockets, his lip quirked up.

Rene practically snarled as he turned to Slade. He wasn’t taking this well. Oliver really should intervene, but it was an excellent distraction. “At least, I didn’t *chicken out* and fold after like... four hands.”

Slade didn’t raise to the bait. In fact, he rocked back on his heels and grinned. “I called it quits as soon as I realized Ms. Smoak was counting cards.”

Rene and Curtis froze. They turned in tandem to stare at Slade, whose smile just grew. This time it was Digg who slapped a hand over his mouth, muffling his laughter as his deeply amused eyes found Oliver’s.

“Felicity counts cards?” Curtis gasped. Then his eyes widened and he breathed, “*Felicity counts cards.*”

And the lightbulb *finally* went off in that mop covered head.

Curtis went so far as to slap himself on the forehead (because sometimes the man was a living cartoon). “Of *course*, Felicity counts cards.”

Rene wasn’t taking it nearly as well and he turned accusing eyes on Oliver. “Cheats, you mean! Did you know your future wife *cheats* at cards?”

And *that* was the end of the fun. All amusement fled as Oliver saw red. Who the *fuck* did this
little punk think he was?

Oliver turned on Rene and he must’ve finally looked intimidating because Rene went white, taking two quick steps backward.

Oliver jabbed his finger at the little shit, growling, “My future wife uses her brilliance and expertise to play cards. She is so intelligent that she can calculate the probability of winning a hand with very little effort. That’s not cheating that’s skill.”

“Okay, Hoss, no offense meant,” Rene hedged, hands up as he continued to step back. But just as Oliver started to turn away, he muttered, “Just saying it’s illegal—”

Oliver let out a growl and lurched forward. If Rene was smart (which he wasn’t) he’d back himself right off the edge of this fucking ship and swim for it.

Slade laughed out loud. “Guess, I’m not going to be the one throwing that one over. Don’t worry, kid. I’m fully prepared to testify it was an accident.”

It was at that point that John must have realized Rene was in genuine danger and stepped between Oliver and Rene, arms spread. “Okay, let’s just—”

But Oliver had no desire to calm down. “It is not illegal. It’s just banned from most casinos.”

Of course, Rene didn’t stop. Did he have a death wish? “Because it’s—”

“Rene—” Curtis and John tried to warn him.

“Because the casinos are rackets,” Oliver snapped. He knew this too well. He’d seen the inner workings in Russia. “They stack the deck. They ban anyone with skill and call in cheating. They don’t want anyone playing that can actually beat them.”

“He’s not wrong,” Curtis added, looking at Rene, his eyes almost pleading with the younger man to stop arguing. But then he winced. “About the casinos, I mean. Not about you being stupid. Not that Oliver actually said that, just…um…implied it.” Curtis trailed off, eyes skirting back to his tablet.

Oliver kept his hard stare on Rene, waiting for him to either take another jab or admit defeat. In the end, he chose the later (which was almost disappointing) and deflated. “I’m cleaning the bunker for the next three presidents, aren’t I?”

Oliver let his look stand for itself.

“Kid, I wondered why you kept these buggers around. But I get it. They’re a fucking riot,” Slade chuckled, grinning ear to ear.

Rene rounded on Slade, looking ready to vent his frustration on him, since he’d lost his battle with Oliver. (He was about to learn the hard way that he wouldn’t fare much better with Slade.). “Hey, you—”

“Okay!” Curtis called out, interrupting what would very likely be an entertaining fight. “This will have to wait later.” He turned to Oliver and smiled. “It’s time.”

Oliver’s stomach clenched and then flipped over, his brain going blank.

Ummm….
Huh?

“What? You mean…?”

“That it’s time for you to get married? The reason we’re all standing up here in matching outfits? Yup, that’s what I mean,” Curtis teased, his eyes lighting up as Oliver tried not to hyperventilate.

“Now?” Oliver had no idea why he said such a stupid thing. Never mind why his voice fucking squeaked but from the looks on the guys’ faces, he didn’t think he’d ever live it down.

“The sun waits for no man. Or woman,” Curtis chirped, stepping over to speak to the leader of the band.

And, yes, there was a band on this aircraft carrier, all set up at the bow of the ship next to the guys. Apparently, all large naval ships had them, made up of various service members.

Digg’s arm came up and fell over Oliver’s shoulder, guiding him into position. Which was good because Oliver’s feet had stopped responding. “Don’t worry, man. In a few minutes, your beautiful bride is going to walk down that runway…I mean aisle and she’s going to smile at you and you’ll forget these assholes. You won’t have a care in the world.”

Oliver’s eyes followed John’s hand as he gestured down the length of the ship and he took a deep breath, nodding. He knew his best friend was right. As soon as he saw Felicity walking toward him, everything would be okay. He wouldn’t care about Rene or Slade or any other stupid thing.

All that mattered was her.

As long as Felicity was walking toward him and not away.

The band started to cue up, just loud enough for Oliver to hear it over the staccato of his heart. William’s head turned and Oliver could see the boy searching him out, so he pasted on a smile for his son.

When their eyes met William beamed back and Oliver…he just felt so full. It was all more than he’d ever dared hope for.

Curtis gestured to William and the boy turned to JJ. Immediately, the pre-teen scooped up the smaller boy, swinging him up and settling him on his hip. As if they had known each other all of their lives’ and not an entire forty-eight hours.

Then all Oliver could do was watch the boys’ backs as William quickly carried JJ to the aft of the ship, the opposite end of the long runway where the girls would appear on deck.

The double row of sailors in their white uniforms began just to the left of the band, followed the entire length of the runway, in front of a row of fighter jets, then curved around the end of the ship and back up the right side of the ship, forming an enormous U of navy shipman all at parade rest.

The Queen’s Guard.

As his son reached the sailors in white at the back end of the ship, Oliver strained to catch a glimpse of Felicity…Donna…Thea…anyone…hiding behind the damn wall of sailors.

But before he could, Captain Mitchell appeared beside them. He was in full dress uniform, crisp white with a chest full of metals and, God, Oliver hoped it impressed Felicity, because he could use all the help he could get.
The older man wore a wide smile as he extended his hand, calling out a cheerful, “Oliver!”

Oliver took it, though he kind of wished he’d had the forethought to wipe it off on his pants first.

Then, taking a deep breath, Oliver forced himself to take on the persona of Mayor Queen and Moira’s son. It was a relief, actually. A script he knew the words to. “Captain! Thank you, again, for doing this. It means so much to us.”

God bless his parents and the social graces Oliver had been trained in since birth because otherwise he’d be a bumbling fool right now.

Captain Mitchell put a second hand over Oliver’s, effectively trapping it as he leaned in and said, “Only too happy, my boy. Only too happy. Ready to take the leap as they say?”

Oliver almost laughed. Take the leap? What a phrase!

It felt more like free-falling.

But was he ready to get married? “More than, sir. Is Felicity…?”

Fuck, Oliver didn’t even know what he was asking.

Thankfully, the Captain didn’t miss a beat, answering, “Only caught a quick glimpse of her on the way up, but let me assure you, you will not be disappointed.” He gave Oliver a little wink.

“I can’t imagine I will be.” As long as Felicity showed up, there was nothing she could do that would disappoint him.

Captain Mitchell stepped aside, greeting the other members of the wedding party and Oliver again, went back to searching the end of the runway where he assumed the girls would be emerging.

Someone finally stepped out from between the wall of white. The bright pinks and oranges of Donna’s dress stood out as she waved William over with a flurry of excited movement. Oliver couldn’t make out her expression, but she didn’t look upset, so that was a good sign. In fact, she seemed to radiate the happiness and enthusiasm Oliver had always loved about her.

But more than that, Oliver loved the way she embraced William. How she crouched down and talked to JJ. Even from this distance he could see how enamored the boys were with her.

There were flashes from the camera, first toward Oliver, then back at Donna and the boys so Samantha seemed to be doing her job. Donna and William were talking rather intensely and…God, Oliver wished he could see better. But Samantha seemed to be capturing it for posterity so…

Then the music started in earnest. The first strains of a melody.

William turned to Oliver and…it was really far away but Oliver could see he was almost giddy with excitement.

And, suddenly…so was Oliver. Excitement bubbled up inside him until he could barely stand still.

Lyla stuck her head out from between the sailors, her eyes searching, skidding past both Oliver and her husband. Oliver followed her gaze as she found Curtis and gave him a thumbs-up.

Curtis grinned and returned the signal. Then he turned to Oliver and said, “Let’s do this thing!”

Oh God.
Let’s do this thing.

Oliver was getting married.

Now.

Fuck.

Chapter End Notes

I tackled 4x06 in this chapter. I didn’t plan to, it just happened. I know that is the episode that Olicity/Felicity Haters point to when they claim the relationship is “abusive” and “toxic.” Personally, I just think it was real.

I do think Felicity overreacted and took things out on Oliver that were not his fault. I also think pretty much everyone does that at some point. It’s normal and, dude, if you think that’s what makes a relationship abusive, then you have some really unrealistic expectations of a relationship (or are looking for a partner who is pathologically agreeable).

I also think Oliver of 4x06, relationship novice as he was, made the massive mistake of assuming it was his fault and not defending himself.

I’m hoping most people (because I know someone will be offended) see what I did here as not blaming Felicity but addressing the event in a humorous way and helping (this) Oliver understand better for the future.

“Outside Flush” is a reference to 4x03, where Felicity used an incorrect poker term with Curtis and many of us were annoyed because Felicity is canonly an excellent card player. I hope this little scene satisfied those who asked to see her trounce the boys. I just don’t know enough about poker and card counting to qwrite the scene itself.

Card counting is not illegal. Casinos ban it for obvious reasons. Is it cheating? That’s up for debate. Is it cheating when the only thing that gives you the advantage is intelligence, skill, and paying really good attention? Also, true card counting is only in Blackjack. In Poker the y is shuffled after each hand, so it’s even less likely to be considered cheating (some wouldn’t even call it card counting, just calculating statistics).

Thank you to mariposablue9, Imusuallyobsessed, lageniuswannabe, Noelle and Ireland1733 for all their help. It’s been invaluable.

Happy reading!

Emmy

(Emmilynestill on Tumblr and Twitter)
Chapter Nineteen: Expect the (Beautifully) Unexpected

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

Surprise!!

Happy Valentine’s Day!

I wasn’t planning to post this until the Spring when I had it 100% finished (I’m currently 98.2% finished according to my spread sheet) but was caught up in the spirit of the holiday and Olicity fever, so here you go…an Olicity wedding. Long over due.

To remind yourself of the previous 18 chapters quickly read the previously on here.:

To see a diagram of how the ship is laid out (and where the wedding party is on deck) click here.

Also: Bow: front of ship. Aft: Back of ship

See the end of the chapter for more notes
Holy shit. He was getting married.

After two years of planning and hoping and losing hope and not daring to hope and…

Holy shit. It was happening.

Oliver Queen was getting married.

To Felicity Smoak. The love of his entire worthless life and…damn, Oliver couldn’t believe it.

There was a voice in the back of his head that told him not to believe it. It was faint, but there. Oliver hadn’t seen Felicity yet, the annoying fucker taunted. She hadn’t said, ‘I do.’ There was plenty of time for her to come to her senses. For it all to go to hell.

So Oliver did the only thing he could. He told that voice to fuck off. To go ruin somewhat else’s wedding day.

But that didn’t stop him from straining to catch a glimpse of Felicity down the (ridiculously) long runway and through the rows of (stupid fucking asshole) sailors standing between Oliver and his bride.

The entire aisle, length of the Goddamn aircraft carrier was lined with two rows of naval servicemen and woman in dress whites. A living wall between him and Felicity. Assuming she was even on deck.
There were two ways to get onto the flight deck, by ladder and by elevator. And since Oliver couldn’t imagine his bride was climbing the narrow ladders…

The elevators weren’t normal elevators. They were enormous lifts used to transport helicopters and fighter jets to and from the hanger deck, large extensions of the deck (that moved) on the aft side of the ship.

Of course, Oliver was as far to the bow as he could get. Because wasn’t it fucking romantic to make Felicity walk the length of two football fields to get to him. The guys should have set up camp in the middle of the deck instead of the front. There was way too much time for Felicity to come to her senses and turn around this way.

Well, it was too late to change it now. Though what the hell were they waiting for? Curtis said they were ready, the band had started playing…not *Here Comes the Bride* (unfortunately) but surely that meant someone should be doing something.

Maybe Oliver *should* be getting nervous—

The music changed and became louder. And, finally, Oliver’s his son and his soon-to-be (*Please God*) mother-in-law started their long walk down the aisle.

He was so relieved it took him a full minute to register his surprise. Oh, Oliver had been there when William had asked (with great enthusiasm *and* in front of Donna) if he could be the one to walk the mother-of-the-bride down the aisle. Apparently, the idea of a brand-new grandmother was something that excited William almost as much as a superhero father.

As hard as it was for him to say ‘no’ to William, Oliver had tried to explain that Donna and Felicity had planned to walk down the aisle together (at least, they had last year and Oliver couldn’t fathom why they wouldn’t now).

Oliver even thought William had taken the news pretty well, but Donna didn’t seem to be able to tolerate any amount of disappointment from her soon-to-be grandson (she was as ready to adopt the boy as he was her) and immediately stepped up to insist she *would* walk with William.

It had left Oliver kinda thrown, since none of it seemed like a decision they should be making without the bride (that was when Oliver had started to second guess his decision to surprise Felicity with her mother).

In the end, Oliver had done the only thing he could think of. He made Donna promise to ask Felicity what she wanted and honor her wishes. Then he’d done his best to prepare William for the disappointment if (when) Felicity decided to walk with her mother.

But it looked like that had been unnecessary because there was his son, walking with Donna, both of them grinning ear to ear and…

Was Felicity upset they’d flown Donna in after all? Was that why she hadn’t wanted to walk down the aisle with…

Okay. *Stop.*

No. That was asinine. Felicity loved her mother. She wouldn’t have refused to walk with her out of spite. That was actually…the *least* Felicity thing Oliver could imagine. It was most likely that she, like her mother, couldn’t imagine disappointing William.

In fact, the graciousness and giving nature of the Smoak woman never failed to amaze him.
Oliver was one lucky bastard.

For a moment, Oliver forced himself to push aside his worry, his anxiety, his need to see Felicity (right the fuck now), and just watch his son.

Sometimes, Oliver couldn’t believe he even had a son, never mind one that was happy and healthy and here.

William looked so damn grown-up in his tan suit, a smaller version of Oliver’s own. And the fact that it really wasn’t that much smaller was enough to bring tears to his eyes. William was almost as tall as Donna. In fact, they might be the same height if she took off her heels.

Oliver had missed too damn much if his boy’s life. But right then all he could do was be grateful that William was here, sharing this moment and promise he would do everything in his power to be there from now on.

Not even a week ago Oliver had thought the best-case scenario was William coming to find him when he turned eighteen and now William was going to stand next to Oliver on the most important…the best day of his life. It was so much more than he’d ever dared hope.

Well, it would be the best as long as Felicity wasn’t getting into a lifeboat—

Dammit! Shut up!

When William was close enough to really make out his expression (yes, the runway was that long. Even with Oliver’s superior eyesight, he couldn’t make out their facial expressions until they were about half-way down the aisle) all Oliver could see were a pair of giddy, gleeful smiles, on both his bride’s mother and his son. In fact, it was probably the biggest smile he had ever seen on his boy.

Wow, Oliver hadn’t even realized William had dimples.

Donna caught Oliver’s eye and winked. Her eyes were sparkling and…Oliver felt such an intense wave of relief that, for a moment, he was unsteady on his feet.

Surely, Donna wouldn’t be beaming and winking if things hadn’t gone well below deck?

Or if Felicity was on a life boat?

William and Donna stopped next to Nyssa, Captain Mitchell’s XO, and the Chief Petty Officer of the ship. They were really the only real “guests” at the wedding. Everyone else had a job of some sort, even Samantha, who was still dashing up and down the run-way snapping pictures, something Oliver was insanely grateful for. She couldn’t have had any idea how much work photographing this wedding would be. None of them had.

Of course, there were also the five-hundred uninvited guests, whose job seemed to be to keep Oliver’s bride from him.

The Queen’s Guard. They stood like 500 medieval knights, making sure Oliver couldn’t approach his bride until the deed was done. Felicity was irritatingly well protected. Curtis’ nonsense seemed more appropriate with every passing minute.

Before letting William leave her, Donna turned and cupped his cheeks, smiling at him with so much affection no one would guess he wasn’t her grandson by blood (or at least since birth, before giving him an enthusiastic kiss on his cheek). Oliver’s boy blushed as Donna wiped off the
lipstick left behind but if William was embarrassed, he didn’t show it in any other way. He was practically skipping as he turned and made his way to Oliver.

Had Oliver mentioned how incredibly grateful he was that William was so accepting of both him and his marriage to Felicity? It was a fucking miracle.

By the time William was finally next to him, grinning up at him, Oliver didn’t have to fake a smile. Nothing had ever come more naturally. He leaned towards his boy and whispered, “Great job, buddy.”

If it was possible to glow with pride William did and it only made Oliver more emotional. John gently took Williams elbow, guiding him back so he stood next to Digg and slightly behind Oliver. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see William bouncing on his toes as he tried valiantly to put on an adult expression.

The music changed again and two sailors stepped forward and apart, leaving just enough for Dinah to step through their barrier and start the long walk up the aisle.

And still not a single glimpse of Felicity. The damn Queen’s Guard (fantastic. Oliver was using that damn fool name in his head now) closed ranks again. Goddamn it.

Though the color Felicity had chosen for the ladies made Oliver smile. It wasn’t his green, but it was still green. A brighter, happier, more tropical green that seemed so damn right and…

Dear God, were they really going to walk down this entire aisle one by one? They had to be kidding! It was like…half a mile! Oliver was pretty sure the tradition was the next bridesmaid started when the first was halfway there (he couldn’t say he’d paid a hell of a lot of attention to the weddings he’d been dragged to in the distant past, but he was pretty sure that was the custom) and that was with a normal aisle. In this case a third or even forth would be appropriate.

But Dinah sailed past the halfway point (couldn’t she walk faster?) and still no Lyla.

Okay, whose stupid ass idea was this? Because if Oliver had been consulted it would have been nixed right away. This was the problem with a rushed wedding. Too many details improvised. Hell, if Oliver’d had any idea this was the plan he would have objected to everyone being in the bridal party.

He was all for Dinah and Felicity bonding and all, but they weren’t that close and this was supposed to be a small and intimate (ha!) and, now that he thought about it, Lyla didn’t need to be in the wedding party either. The dresses were great but they should just be standing up here with the guys.

Thea and Felicity. No one else needed to walk down this monstrosity of an aisle.

God, this was going to kill him.

Closing his eyes, Oliver counted to ten. When he opened them again, Dinah was close enough to give him a saucy smile that…just irritated Oliver to no end.

They should have run off and gotten married in Bali. Alone.

As Dinah passed him to take her position on Felicity’s side of the bow, she grinned, leaning in to whisper, “Breathe, Oliver.”

Then Curtis, the asshole, ‘whispered’ (he was terrible at quiet) to Dinah, “Oliver’s afraid Felicity is
going to change her mind."

Immediately, Oliver shot Curtis his hardest glare and, this time, the genius actually winced. Which he should. Oliver’s mind was providing a very satisfying fantasy where he punted the tall man into the ocean.

Dinah’s eyes widened in surprise. Then she shot Oliver a sympathetic look and said firmly, “Not a chance.”

Oliver thought he might cry, Dinah’s words were such a relief.

He wouldn’t though, not if he wanted his Green Arrow Glare to ever work on these guys again. But it was enough to make Oliver decide Curtis and Dinah deserved their place in the wedding after all (Rene was still on the fence).

Except then Dinah’s smile grew, becoming almost mischievous as she leaned forward and whispered, “Actually, I think that girl is fully prepared to fight an army to marry you today.”

Fuck. Oliver hadn’t thought of that. Why the hell hadn’t he thought of that?

Wouldn’t it be Oliver’s dumb luck that someone, or something, would attack today? His eyes scanned the ship, then the horizon, looking for threats, but all he saw was calm…

And 25 fighter jets plus a naval battalion 500 strong.

Well, at least they had back up.

Swallowing, Oliver grunted, “Let’s hope she doesn’t have to.”

He turned his focus back to the runway, but he did catch Dinah’s eye-roll and h’d swear she muttered something that sounded like “made for each other.”

Oliver’s lips twirched but he kept his eyes on the runway. He was feeling more confident now. It felt much better to worry with Felicity about outside threats then wallow in irrational fears about her and the lifeboat.

Thankfully, Lyla was already more than halfway there so the temporary distraction had been a good thing. Oliver glanced next to him to see John smiling at his wife and tried to find some of the patience he’d once had so much of.

When Lyla found the spot next to Dinah, she sent her husband a warm smile and Oliver a wink, before looking back down the aisle. Oliver followed her gaze and grinned as JJ emerged from between the sailors, one small hand fisted around a pillow (which thankfully did not have a real ring tied to it).

At first, JJ looked around in confusion, behind him and then down the aisle, until he spied them all standing in their little cluster. Lyla and John gestured for the toddler to come to them and he broke out in a grin. JJ made it maybe five steps before he broke out in a full-out run.

“No—” Lyla started yell but Oliver held out his hand.

“Nope. That’s perfect.”

Oliver motioned with both hands for JJ to keep running and there was a round of laughter as the boy sped up even more.
John stepped out of position to intercept his son before he ran into them (or right off the edge of the ship) and swung him into his arms, murmuring, “Okay, Kid Flash, that’s enough.”

But Oliver made sure to give him an encouraging grin and held out his hand to receive a high five, “Good job, little man.”

And he really, really meant it. Dinah should have taken her cue from JJ.

JJ grinned proudly and slapped his hand with impressive strength. Oliver was pretending the boy had hurt him, shaking his hand as if it stung, when the music changed again (really this band was impressive all things considered) and Oliver looked up just in time to see his sister step out from behind the wall of white.

Oliver smiled. Even though he knew there was no way Thea was going to do anything but take her time walking the full length of the ship. Maybe Dinah’s reassurance (and everyone else’s) was finally sinking in or maybe it was just because it was Thea, but suddenly he was happy to savor the moment.

The restless energy drained away and Oliver clasped his hands loosely in front of him, feeling a sense of calm settle in as he watched his sister…his beautiful, strong, baby sister…practically sparkling with life as she walked toward him. How could someone so young have such grace?

And Thea looked so happy. It was so rare to see her genuinely happy. Before the Gambit, Thea had always been in good spirits. She’d been such a naturally cheerful child but…she’d been through so much. Too much.

But they were here now and his baby sister glowed as surely as she would at her own wedding. Thea, the only family Oliver had left…

It took Oliver a whole half-minute to realize…that wasn’t true anymore. He had to shake himself out of the old instinctive (and self-destructive) thoughts. Because…

Oliver had a son. A son that was standing right beside him. And when Felicity made it down that aisle (God willing) she would be his…their family as well. What a concept, the Queen family getting bigger instead of smaller.

God, it felt so fucking good.

When Thea was close enough to finally meet Oliver’s eyes, she wrinkled her nose and gave him a private smile. In that moment, it felt like they were thinking the same thing. It had been a long time since they had celebrated…growth. Marriage, birth, children. Years of nothing but mourning and goodbyes.

If it was in his power, Oliver would make sure this was the turning point. For his sister, his son, his wife. This family was growing from here on out. God willing.

And not just babies (though, Christ, he wanted babies). When they got back to Star City, he and Felicity needed to put their heads together and figure out a way to bring Roy home. Thea needed him and Oliver needed to keep that smile on his sister’s face.

His strong, resilient, amazing sister. Damn, but Oliver was proud of the woman Thea had become. He knew this wedding wouldn’t be what it was if it wasn’t for her. In less than two days, they had a full bridal party, music, flowers…

Oliver glanced at the flowers in his sister’s hands for the first time (because, really, flowers not his
thing). Even the flowers were perfect. Green orchids? How on earth had they found green flowers? All of them…never ceased to amaze him.

When Thea finally approached Oliver, he was pretty damn close to crying. All the times he had almost lost her…

Thea rose up on her toes and pressed a kiss to his cheek and Oliver squeezed her hand, leaning in to say something to her but then…she turned to the band and nodded. The wedding march started and…

Oliver couldn’t breathe.

His mind went blank and his eyes flew back to the aft of the ship. But Oliver still couldn’t fucking see Felicity. What the hell? Were they tormenting him on purpose?

All the tension that had released sprang back into Oliver’s muscles. He felt like he was going to jump out of his skin when…

Oh wow.

As one, every sailor on deck snapped their feet together, the sound sharp and loud as they moved from parade rest to attention.

Then, before Oliver could process, the wall of seamen blocking his view of the elevator marched in one impressive line, pivoting and giving Oliver a perfect view of the massive lift as it ascended.

Felicity and Lance stood in the center. Alone.

Oliver would swear his heart stopped beating. Then jump started, roaring in his ears as he watched Felicity appear, like an angel coming to save his soul.

Except angels descended and Oliver would swear Felicity had saved his soul long ago.

God, Oliver was every bit the sap Felicity accused him of being but… Christ, he wished she wasn’t so far away. He couldn’t get a good look at her beautiful face and he really wanted to see her expression. He wanted…he needed to see that smile.

Oliver could tell that her hair was down and curled, that her dress was soft and flowy in that ocean breeze Felicity had wanted (and he would have been so pissed if the weather gods had not provided). Quentin held her arm, keeping her steady as they moved from the lift to the main aisle.

When Felicity had asked Quentin to escort her down the aisle, Oliver had, frankly, been nervous. Not that Lance would say ‘no.’ Who could say ‘no’ to Felicity?

But, well…Lance, himself, said it best when he’d responded, “Looks like it’s always been my fate to give a beautiful brilliant woman to this nimrod.”

Of course, there was a whole additional layer of uncomfortableness because Oliver knew, and Quentin knew, that Felicity’s mom was (hopefully) going to be there when the time came. But Felicity did not. So they let her go through the farce of asking as if Felicity actually needed a parental figure to walk her down the aisle.

Maybe Oliver should have told Felicity about her mother then but then he wouldn’t have gotten to hear Quentin say, “You were a spoiled, selfish prick when you got onto that damn boat ten years ago, not fit to clean this girl’s shoes. But for some reason my daughters saw something in you and
they must have been right, because the man that stands before me is someone else entirely. If I
didn’t think you were worthy of her, I wouldn’t be doing this.”

Oliver didn’t think it would have meant more to him if it was his own father that said it. No, this
meant *more* because it was Quentin Lance and he was a good man. Had *always* been a good man
and always would be. Oliver wasn’t his son and he didn’t have to care about him. He didn’t even
have to put up with him. Hell, after everything Oliver had done to his family it was amazing he
spoke to him.

But having Quentin *approve* of him…Oliver could finally admit (to himself anyway) that it was
something he had always coveted. That it meant the world to him.

When Felicity was finally close enough for Oliver to get a good look at her face, his breath
caught. She looked about a million times more beautiful than she had the night of their travesty of
a fake wedding (and Oliver would swear it broke his heart how beautiful she’d been that day).

It wasn’t the way her hair curled loose and free around her face or the way dress hugged her curves
perfectly, somehow modern and classic at the same time, elegant and original in a completely
Felicity way.

No, it was because *today* Felicity radiated happiness in a way that was simply breathtaking.

Literally. Oliver was having a hard time breathing.

That day last year, Oliver hadn’t realized it (and maybe that was half the problem) but Felicity had
been cloaked in a blanket of misery.

This…this was what a bride should look like on their wedding day.

“Breathe, man,” John whispered.

And Oliver dutifully sucked in a breath. Then he just…

Everything was going to be okay. Felicity was walking toward him and she had never looked
happier and everything was going to be…*fantastic*.

Oliver could feel his face dissolve into a love-sick smile and he was powerless to stop it. All the
worries, all the doubts disappeared, leaving only giddy anticipation in its place.

Judging by Thea’s muttered, “Samantha better be getting this,” his expression must be
spectacularly dopey, but as long as it let Felicity know how much he adored her, he didn’t care if it
was plastered on every magazine in the western hemisphere.

“I got you,” Curtis whispered back. To Thea he assumed. And Oliver had the insane urge to
demand Curtis point every one of those damn cameras on Felicity.

But…

Oliver’s eyes met Felicity’s and…it didn’t matter. Oliver would never forget this moment as long
as he lived.

Felicity bit her lip and her smile widened and Oliver almost took off down the aisle to meet her
half-way.

Yet, at the same time, he wanted nothing more than to savor every single step she took. Because
each step was one that Felicity Smoak chose to take. To bring her closer to him. Oliver Queen, former playboy, worthless rich kid turned soulless vigilante and now…

Now he was a man who was devoted to spending every day becoming the man that Felicity soon-to-be Queen deserved. And she deserved the world.

So Oliver savored. He stayed. He didn’t jog down the aisle and meet Felicity in a JJesque way. He smiled and took in every aspect of her appearance to commit it to memory.

The way her curls caught in the breeze, reminding Oliver of how it looked standing on the beach in Bali. How the flowers in Felicity’s hair made her look like a princess or an earth goddess, too beautiful to be real. The sky was just starting to have that orange-pink glow she’d wanted and it turned her hair to spun gold.

A gentle wind caught Felicity’s skirt as she walked, revealing a slit that had Oliver sucking in a hissing breath and rubbing his fingers together, fighting the need to touch.

Her shoes sparkled like diamonds in the setting sun and made Oliver’s blood hum because he could just imagine the pleasure she felt picking them out and pulling them on and…how much more pleasure he planned to give her when he peeled them off.

Felicity was close enough for Oliver to feel her. Yet still so far away.

“Dad…”

Oliver didn’t even realize he had started to move until his son…his ten-year-old son, fisted his jacket and pulled him back, murmuring a very grown-up, “Breathe, Dad.”

William’s command had the entire team chortling behind him and Oliver would have sent a warning look (or even a growl) if it was anyone but his son and…

Oh.

Donna stepped away from her small group, meeting Felicity and…Oliver suddenly understood exactly why his son didn’t want him to meet Felicity. He rocked back on his heels and let out a breath, forcing himself to relax.

Donna reached out her hand and Felicity took it, her smile making Oliver’s eyes burn.

They paused for a moment and the restless energy in Oliver’s muscles ticked up and he clutched his hands until his knuckles were white to remind himself to stay still. His patience was reaching its breaking point.

Quentin leaned in and whispered something into Felicity’s ear that had “her nodding and kissing his cheek. Lance returned the soft cheek kiss, then smiled and stepped back.

Looking up, Quentin met Oliver’s eyes, giving him a cheeky grin and an eyebrow wag. As if to say, ‘Ha! Got away with not giving you the girl after all.’

It had Oliver chuckling to himself and shaking his head as he watched Felicity turn to her mother and lace their fingers together. The hand holding her bouquet fell loosely at her side as Felicity swayed toward her mother and leaned her forehead against hers. Both woman smiled. Identical expressions. Sunshine personified. As they took the moment to breathe each other in, having a whole conversation without words.
This was the picture he wanted blown up in his living room.

And one day, Oliver wanted one just like it with Felicity and their daughter.

Christ, he was getting ahead of himself but…God, Oliver wanted that so badly he could taste it.

He could see it so clearly, Felicity on her knees with their daughter’s small forehead pressed to hers, two sets of blonde curls dancing in the breeze and shining in the setting sun…it felt more like a premonition than a fantasy.

Dear God, please. Let it be a premonition. For once let him have a happy glimpse of the future.

Together, the two women pivoted their heads, turning the full power of those matching smiles on Oliver and, in that moment, he couldn’t imagine a dark shadow in his soul they didn’t light up.

Mother and daughter took those last two dozen steps together and the need to meet them was gone. Oliver had no desire to steal a millisecond of this from them.

Oliver missed his own mother more than…more than he had in a long time. And his father. He hoped they were together, watching somewhere. That they forgave each other. That they were proud of him today.

He didn’t take a step forward, but he did reach out his hand. Felicity’s smile broadened but it was Donna who put his bride’s hand in Oliver’s, lying her palm on top of his. And when Felicity’s fingers curled over his, he felt a sense of rightness he had never felt before. Their eyes met and it was…almost too intimate to be shared in public.

Donna covered their hands with both of hers and said, “Treasure each other.”

Oliver forced himself to break eye contact with his bride (an act that was physically painful) and smile at his almost mother-in-law. “Always,” he swore and watched the corners of Donna’s eyes crinkle as they filled with tears.

Before she could let go, Oliver was startled by Captain Mitchell’s voice ringing out loud and clear from behind him, “Who gives this woman today?”

And for a moment Oliver was surprised, until he remembered…

“She gives herself. With my blessing,” Donna returned, her voice thick and horse, reminding Oliver of the choice they had made so many months ago and he smiled at the flawlessness of the words.

Lifting their entwined hands, Donna pressed a kiss to the back of Felicity’s before stepping back, releasing them to Felicity’s soft, tearful, “Mama…”

Donna lifted her head and gave Felicity a look of such love…how had Oliver ever doubted bringing her here was the right thing?

“I love you, Mom,” Felicity whispered and Donna blew her a kiss, before hurrying back to stand next to Quentin (who had a handkerchief at the ready).

Oliver turned toward his bride and…oh wow, she was gorgeous. And he couldn’t even look beyond her eyes. Oliver yanked her towards him, until they were almost touching, and smiled down at her.
Felicity tipped her head up with a breathless laugh and a soft, “Oliver…”

He caught her other hand, cupping it where she still held her bouquet and grinned, whispering, “You look so…” Oliver shook his head. It was bad to say ‘fucking’ at his own wedding, right? Especially with his ten-year-old son and three-year-old godson just feet away? “So incredibly beautiful.”

Felicity’s happy laughter bubbled out, filling the air, surrounding him. She tipped her head further back and slightly to the side (in a perfectly Felicity way) to meet his eyes, murmuring, “You don’t look so shabby yourself.”

Oliver’s eyes caught the light bouncing off her necklace as it lay at the base of her throat and his breath caught. “Is that…?”

That certainly wasn’t the necklace Felicity had been wearing when she was kidnapped. Oliver had grown up amongst enough quality to know real diamonds when he saw them, to be able to recognize an heirloom. And the sight of this one filled him with pleasure.

Oliver couldn’t say expensive things meant that much to him anymore but…his bride deserved to wear diamonds. To be showered in jewels. Jewels steeped in history and heritage. Jewels worthy of a Queen. His Queen.

“Mmmhmm,” Felicity nodded, looking a little giddy. “My grandmother’s necklace.”

“It’s…” Oliver shook his head, trying to find words that could even begin to express what he was feeling. He knew what the necklace meant to her. And seeing Felicity now, with his mother’s ring on her finger and her grandmother’s necklace around her neck… “It’s perfect. You’re perfect.”

He said it quietly, just for her but…ah the hell with it. Oliver couldn’t care less who heard. Not when Felicity was blushing and biting her lip and, God, he wanted to kiss her. Did he really have to wait until the end of the ceremony to kiss her?

He wasn’t going to make it.

Oliver was able to curb the impulse for the moment though, settling for squeezing her hands and telling her softly (and fervently), “That was the longest aisle in the history—”

“What’s a couple hundred steps if it gets us here,” Felicity whispered back just as passionately and it was so perfect and so poignant that it brought back the tears Oliver had just barely been able to keep at bay.

“Who’s a sap, now?” he teased and Felicity shrugged, her enormous smile not wavering. Her eyes were glistening and Oliver knew his were no better. He pulled her free hand up and held it to his chest. Her lips looked so incredibly kissable.

“Eh eh. Not yet, young man.”

Captain Mitchell’s reprimand snapped Oliver back to reality. He should probably at least wait until the ceremony started to throw tradition to the wind and kiss his bride. He started to apologize to the captain but then the laughter rang out and all he felt the need to do was send all of them his best death glare.

But before Oliver could even turn back to his bride, Captain Mitchell shocked the glare right off his face, calling out, “Who gives this man?”
Oliver’s eyes flew to the captain, then to Felicity, because he sure as hell didn’t remember that being in the original wedding. Who would…? Was this something William…?

Felicity shook her head, looking as surprised as Oliver was but then, out of the corner of his eye, Oliver saw Nyssa step forward…

Oh hell no.

Instinctively, Oliver yanked Felicity toward him, wrapping his arm protectively around her waist. He could feel her bouquet caught between them, but his narrowed eyes stayed vigilantly on Nyssa as she sauntered toward him that damn grin on her face. If she thought she was going to put her hands (or her lips) on his bride—

“Ana ‘atlaq sarahik.” Nyssa’s words were a thick, clear Arabic and for a moment they yanked Oliver back to those dark days in Nanda Parbat. His arm tightened around Felicity. “Ana ‘atlaq sarahik.”

Maybe that was why it wasn’t until he heard Felicity murmur, “What’s she’s saying?” that Oliver’s brain even attempted to translate.

“Ana ‘atlaq sarahik.”

They weren’t difficult words. One simple phrase. Repeated three times. “I release you,” Oliver breathed.

Felicity sucked in a sharp breath. Oliver pulled her closer and dropped a kiss on the top of her head (he didn’t give a damn if that was against the rules or not) as they both watched Nyssa walk… Right past them.

Up to the very edge of the aircraft carrier.

For one tense (and slightly terrifying) moment, Oliver actually thought Nyssa was going to step off the edge. Requiring an ex-wife to hurl herself to her death to make room for a new bride seemed exactly like something The League of Assassins would do.

And it was also the least romantic thing Oliver could imagine. He was about to call out, to tell Nyssa to stop, to order Slade and Rene to restrain her or…

Nyssa stretched her arm out over the water, then pivoted her fist until it faced the sky and opened her fingers. She looked for all the world like she was releasing a butterfly or…

There was something in her palm, something Oliver couldn’t see. The breeze picked whatever something it was and it fluttered out over the ocean. Felicity let out a shocked laugh and he looked down at her. “What…?”

“Her hair,” Felicity whimpered, a sound that was somewhere half-way between a laugh and a sob. “Oh my God. She just divorced you.”

Oliver’s eyes flew back to Felicity’s and he whispered, “I thought it wasn’t legal.” Which was stupid, because that wasn’t the point at all. He was really slow on the uptake today because, of course, Nyssa was divorcing him. In her weird League way. What else could ‘I release you’ mean?

“It wasn’t. Not in the US,” Felicity breathed but it was clear that she was incredibly pleased at the
gesture anyway. And Oliver couldn’t say he wasn’t pretty fucking glad there would be no more ‘sister wife’ crap.

Oliver tried to catch Nyssa’s eye to thank her (it seemed the polite thing to do when someone you were forced to marry lets you out of an illegal marriage on your wedding day) but Nyssa strolled back to her spot, her face serene, without even a glance their way.

Then Captain Mitchell pulled Oliver’s attention back to the matter at hand, asking kindly, “Are we ready?”

Was Oliver ready to be done with this seemingly endless build up and get married all ready?

Fuck, yes.

Taking a deep breath, Oliver looked down at his bride and…

Felicity gave a happy little nod, her eyes connecting with his in a way he felt deep in his bones. Any lingering tension in Oliver fell away. “We’re ready.”

“Just a sec…” Thea stepped up and grabbed Felicity’s bouquet from where it was being squeezed between them. “I better take this.”

There was more laughter…

Oh wow…

Were those ferns? Felicity found ferns to put in her bouquet? How could Thea have understood the significance? Crap, Oliver was really gonna cry now.

Felicity squeezed his hand, then fumbled for the other hand, the one still clutching her waist (and though Oliver liked it there, it wasn’t exactly standard wedding protocol so he allowed it).

Looking deep into her eyes, Oliver found himself struggling to keep himself together. So many emotions, right there on the surface, and he knew Felicity could see every one. She took a shaky breath and nodded, acknowledging…or telling him she returned whatever overwhelming feelings he couldn’t even begin to put to words.

It gave Oliver the strength to take a step back, so they weren’t right on top of each other. If he was keeping his lips to himself for the rest of (any of) the ceremony, a little distance was necessary. He adjusted their hands so they were laced together and breathed (without even having to be told to. Progress).

“We are gathered here today…” Captain Mitchell began, his voice ringing out loud and clear in the open air.

Though Oliver really hoped the sailors stationed around the length of the ship couldn’t quite make out the captain’s words. He preferred to think of them as decorations. But, as Oliver looked down at the giddy smile dancing across Felicity’s face, he realized it didn’t matter. If she didn’t care, neither did he.

“…to celebrate the love of these two incredible people, Felicity Smoak and Oliver Queen.”

Felicity flushed and her eyes flicked to Captain Mitchell at his rather…enthusiastic introduction. She sent Oliver a questioning look and he just shrugged. She was an incredible person. He might just be basking in the glow but she deserved the praise.
“…on board the *USS Phoenix*, the crown jewel of the U.S. Navy. Now some might disagree with that assessment but don’t listen to them.” The captain paused for the soft laughter. Oliver was starting to think he was quite the showman. “Some of you might not know this, but you are standing aboard the oldest aircraft carrier in the Navy.”

Oliver’s eyes flew to the captain. Seriously? They were going to get a lesson on Naval History? First the ten-mile hike down the aisle and now *this*?

“Hold your horses, son. I’m just giving you some background.” Captain Mitchell gave Oliver a knowing look. He was either extremely perceptive or Oliver was doing an especially terrible job of hiding his impatience. “It’s relevant, I promise you.”

Oliver couldn’t see how the history of an aircraft carrier could possibly be relevant, but he bit his cheek and tried to not *look* irritated. Put on something like the serene expression Felicity wore as she watched the captain with nothing but curiosity in her intelligent eyes. If she appreciated this horse-crap, he supposed that was all that mattered.

Though Thea was snickering into her and Felicity’s combined bouquets and that just left him suspicious. Oliver wouldn’t put it past his sister to put the captain up to a long and rambling speech just to torment him.

“The *USS Phoenix* has seen more battles and saved more lives than all of those fancy Nimitz class ships combined.”

Or maybe Captain Mitchell was just infatuated with his ship.

“Actually, she fought right here in the Battle of Manila Bay in 1948. She was called the *USS Eleanor Roosevelt* then and this great ship should have been retired long ago, but she wasn’t done yet. She was refurbished and modernized and reborn as the *USS Phoenix*.”

Oliver was trying valiantly to keep his mind from wandering when Captain Mitchell turned his head and caught his eyes. The captain smiled and Oliver felt the first tingle of anxiety.

Holding Oliver’s gaze, Captain Mitchell continued in a booming voice, “And isn’t it appropriate that the country’s most combat worn carrier, born anew, should sit in this bay, overlooking *this* city, which is in of itself a testament to human resilience and play host to the joining of these two heroes.”

Oliver felt as if he had been sucker punched, the breath knocked clean out of him. Felicity let out a soft squeak and he turned his head to see her staring at him with wide, shocked eyes. He shook his head, just enough to tell her he was as in the dark as she was.

But they were probably over reacting. Just because the captain used the word ‘heroes’—

“Now, I can’t claim to know Oliver and Felicity well. I’m not that fortunate.” The captain sent them a kind smile that couldn’t be anything but genuine and it just made Oliver feel even more light-headed. “But I, as well as everyone gathered here, knows that three days ago we ran a rescue mission because these good people were trapped on an exploding island by a mad man.”

Oliver watched Felicity’s eyes jerk to her mother because…yeah, there had been *one* person who hadn’t known that. Fuck.

Donna’s face was confused and…understandably concerned. Oliver winced but when Felicity turned back to him he managed to give her a reassuring smile. It would be okay. Right?
“And that man they fought and conquered…”

A bit dramatic…

“…was responsible for dozens of deaths. Had he not been stopped by these people gathered here today, he would have undoubtedly been responsible for dozens, if not hundreds, more,” the captain continued and there didn’t seem to be any stopping him now. What was more, it was his ship and his men, so there was nothing Oliver could do except stand stock still, the tension creeping back into his muscles as he tried not to crush Felicity’s fingers between his own. “But as I understand it, that is just another day for these young people.”

Actually, it hadn’t been. God help them if exploding islands were the norm. Felicity bit her lip and Oliver could tell she was trying to smother a hysterical giggle.

“Like this ship and its name sake, Oliver Queen was shipwrecked on that same island ten years ago and he, too, rose from the ashes.”

Okay, so the captain was really going full out with the phoenix analogy then. Talk about romanticizing something that was anything but. Shit. Did they have a contingency plan for a fainting groom?

And Captain Mitchell was still talking, looking at Felicity now. Oliver thought he might have missed a phrase or two as his heart roared in his ears and he forced himself to pay better attention.

“…joined by this amazing young woman, Felicity Smoak, they have succeeded in doing what every man and woman on this ship have dedicated their lives to. Protecting the innocent. Fighting evil. Saving the world.”

The Captain paused at the last phrase, letting the significant sit, heavy in the air.

Oliver was wrong. He wasn’t going to faint. He was going to cry. It was just too much. Felicity let out a disbelieving laugh, lifting their hands to try to catch her own tear before it fell. Oliver stretched out a finger to help her.

“But while we aspire to save the world, these two have done so.”

What the…? How the hell would Captain Mitchell know that?

“Six months ago, our planet was invaded by aliens. And they were far more Independence Day than E.T.”

Captain Mitchell was smiling, looking both amused and proud of his clever reference. Was he insane? Were they being married by a mad man. This was completely out of control!

“Oliver and Felicity were both instrumental in sending them packing.”

“Oh…my…God…” Felicity breathed and both of them looked to Lyla. ARGUS had been pretty damn careful about keeping the whole ugly incident quiet, why was Mitchell going on and on like it was common knowledge?

But Lyla just smiled and shrugged, allowing Oliver to avert a full-on panic. If the director of ARGUS wasn’t worried about the information being leaked to Felicity’s mother and Five-hundred sailors then why should they?

Right?
Felicity was smiling again, a little deliriously sure…

“And six months prior to that, this planet was almost destroyed in a nuclear holocaust. Most people have no idea how close we came to annihilation. And that is only because this young woman, Felicity Smoak, stopped it before it could start.”

Holy fuck.

Felicity’s mouth dropped open and Oliver must be becoming numb to the shock because all he could do this time was beam at her with all the intense pride he felt. If they were going to be outed on their wedding day, at least it was with the respect and recognition his bride deserved.

Oliver knew the last thing Felicity thought she deserved over that incident was praise, but she did. All she ever thought about was Havenrock and not the fifteen thousand cities that avoided that fate because of her. Felicity had reduced the casualties from billions to tens of thousands. That was anything but a failure.

Oliver squeezed her hands, drawing her eyes back to his, and he did his very best to convey every drop of the considerable pride he felt in her. Felicity deserved this. Her mouth trembled and she sniffed a little but she managed to smile back.

“Those are just two examples of all these two have done. How they, without knowing us, have saved us, saved our families. And I, for one, am grateful and honored to have you both here today.”

Then…apparently, the crew could hear the captain just fine, because there was a sudden roar from the crowd as five hundred men and woman broke attention to stomp and clap and hoot and it…

It was quite possibly the most incredible, most overwhelming thing Oliver had ever experienced.

Felicity pulled her hand from Oliver's and it fluttered up to cover her mouth. Her eyes darting around as tears fell freely down her flawless cheeks.

Oliver stepped forward just as Felicity started to sway on her feet, grabbing her hips and steadying her. Her hands came to rest on his chest and she looked up at him. “Did you have any—?”

“No idea,” Oliver assured, because as beautiful as this was, there was no way he would have agreed to it. He hadn’t been thrilled with the idea of the 500 guests and that was when he thought they were having a normal wedding.

“Wow.” It was just a soft breath of a sound. Felicity leaned against him, looking about as overcome as Oliver felt. He found himself glad she got to hear this at least. She deserved it and… it felt damn good. Reminded him what all the sacrifices they made were for. That it was worth it.

“Okay, okay. At ease,” Captain Mitchell called out, a huge grin on his face as he motioned for his crew to fall back. They settled into parade rest, this time facing the couple. There was no way this wasn’t planned, if not practiced. “It is only fitting that two such people should also have a great love…”

Christ. Just when Oliver thought there couldn’t possibly be more…

“…and anyone who has stood in their presence can see, can feel the deep and abiding love these two have for one another.”

Oliver smiled (deliriously) down at Felicity as she got that melty look in her eyes. He covered the
hand that lie on his chest with his.

“I am deeply honored to help Oliver and Felicity celebrate, solidify, and sanctify that love today in the bonds of matrimony.”

Felicity gave another tiny snuffle and, God, Oliver wanted to kiss her so fucking badly.

Captain Mitchell paused. He must have been waiting for their attention to focus back on him, because as soon as it did he smiled and said, “Though, right now, I’m pretty sure they are both more than ready to move this along?”

*Hell* yeah.

Oliver grunted his agreement (which was better than blurting the words aloud), pulling chuckles from most everyone, even his bride.

“I understand you, two, have prepared surprises for each other?” Captain Mitchell asked and Felicity nodded.

Thank God. As wonderful as this was, Oliver was beyond ready to move on to less *unpredictable* parts of the ceremony.

“I understand we now have a song.”

“A song?” Felicity echoed, her eyes searching Oliver’s face, as small smile curving her lips.

Well, maybe this wasn’t something *Felicity* had predicted and that made Oliver preen a little. They had agreed to pick a reading the other wouldn’t know about for the ceremony, a plan that had been born of the time constraint as much as anything else.

Oliver shrugged, trying for nonchalant. (He didn’t think he was succeeding. If the paparazzi could see their suave playboy now). “I don’t know a lot about music, but I know a hell of a lot more about that than I know about poetry.” Or the old testament for that matter.

Felicity laughed, asking, “Who’s singing?”

“That would be me, blondie.” Rene stepped forward and winked at Felicity, whose expression quickly dissolved from delighted to concerned. “And take it as a compliment. I don’t do this for just anyone.”

“Rene?” Felicity leaned in to whisper and it was almost a hiss, the disbelief in her voice evident as the man in question went to stand with the band.

“He had the best voice,” Oliver whispered back. He didn’t tell her that he had made every one of the guys audition.

Felicity turned to watch as the band cued up again, shifting so that she was leaning back against Oliver’s chest. He grinned, his arms sliding around her middle and pulling her closer, allowing her whole body to rest against his as Rene began to sing.

“What would I do without your smart mouth?
*Drawing me in, and you kicking me out*…

For a moment, the nerves kicked in again. Maybe this wasn’t the best choice.

“You've got my head spinning, no kidding, I can't pin you down
What's going on in that beautiful mind
I'm on your magical mystery ride
And I'm so dizzy, don't know what hit me, but I'll be alright…

“Wow,” Felicity breathed, glancing up at Oliver, tears and so much love in her eyes…

“My head's under water
But I'm breathing fine
You're crazy and I'm out of my mind

’Cause all of me
Loves all of you
Love your curves and all your edges
All your perfect imperfections

Yeah. This was the right choice. Now he remembered.

“Give your all to me
I'll give my all to you
You're my end and my beginning
Even when I lose I'm winning
’Cause I give you all of me
And you give me all of you, oh oh…

Felicity nodded, wiping her eyes as Rene started the second verse.

“How many times do I have to tell you
Even when you're crying you're beautiful too

And then she let out a soft laugh at the irony…or maybe the perfection. Oliver leaned down to whisper in Felicity’s ear, “You are,” and press a kiss to the corner of her eye, tasting those tears.

“The world is beating you down, I'm around through every mood
You're my downfall, you're my muse
My worst distraction, my rhythm and blues
I can't stop singing, it's ringing, in my head for you…

“Stop making me cry,” Felicity reprimanded in a soft murmur.

Oliver just smiled. When Rene got to the end of the verse, Oliver softly sang the chorus along with him, but for Felicity only, “Cause I give you all of me.”

And Felicity let out a soft sob, elbowing him as she laughed, “Sto-op.”

So, of course, Oliver kept singing.

“Give me all of you
Cards on the table, we're both showing hearts
Risking it all, though it's hard…

“You're killing me here,” Felicity murmured and Oliver hugged her tighter. His throat closed in so he let Rene take the final refrain alone, burrowing his face into her neck instead.

As Rene finished the final words, the captain must have signaled the crew because there was a roar of applause.
Felicity was trying to discretely wipe her eyes when Rene passed, walking back to his spot, and she reached out to grab his hand, murmuring a soft, “Thank you.”

Rene gave Felicity a wink that was surprisingly un-sleazy before stepping back into position between John and Slade.

“And now we have a poem,” Captain Mitchell announced and Lyla stepped forward, handing her flowers to Dinah and pulling a slip of paper from her neckline. JJ had been passed from person to person and was currently sitting happily atop Curtis’ tall shoulders.

“I’m not expected to sing, right? Because I didn’t sign up for that,” Lyla muttered as she smoothed her paper.

“Oh, I think you should definitely sing it,” John teased, somehow managing a leer that was more adoring than lascivious.

“Unless you’re scared,” Rene threw out, because he couldn’t let people think that maybe he wasn’t an asshole. Not for one full minute.

“You do not have to sing,” Felicity cut in, sending Rene a withering glare. “And this is not a competition.” She side-eyed Oliver. “Right?”

“Right,” Oliver echoed immediately. “Of course.” It hadn’t even occurred to him it might be. Though if it was, wouldn’t a song beat a poem every time? Sending Lyla his best mayoral smile, he added, “We appreciate this, Lyla.”

Lyla’s look told him she knew Oliver was at least 60% full of shit (she always did get him), but then she cleared her throat and began:

“To love is not to possess,
To own or imprison,
Nor to lose one's self in another.
Love is to join and separate,
To walk alone and together,
To find a laughing freedom
That lonely isolation does not permit.
It is finally to be able
To be who we really are
No longer clinging in childish dependency
Nor docilely living separate lives in silence,
It is to be perfectly one's self
And perfectly joined in permanent commitment
To another--and to one's inner self.
Love only endures when it moves like waves,
Receding and returning gently or passionately,
Or moving lovingly like the tide
In the moon's own predictable harmony,
Because finally, despite a child's scars
Or an adult's deepest wounds,
They are openly free to be
Who they really are--and always secretly were,
In the very core of their being
Where true and lasting love can alone abide.”
As Lyla finished, Oliver let out a shaky breath and Felicity tilted her head up to ask in a whisper, “How’d we do?”

Swallowing, Oliver buried his nose in Felicity’s hair and rasped, “Perfect.”

“Well, it’s no *song*,” Felicity teased, reaching back and running her nails over the nap of his neck.

“*Perfect*,” Oliver insisted, his voice hoarse, pulling Felicity closer. He felt like he should have some follow-up comment about their not-competition but it felt irreverent to even try.

Turning in his arms, Felicity curled her hand behind Oliver’s neck and looked up at him, her eyes seeming to want to tell him something she couldn’t find the words for. He knew the feeling.

Oliver vaguely registered the crowd cheering again as he leaned his forehead against Felicity’s and —

“Still no kissing, my boy.”

_Dammit._

“Since our groom is *very* eager to get to the kissing part,” Captain Mitchell called out (rubbing salt in the wound) and Oliver couldn’t hold back his frustrated groan, so he buried it in Felicity’s hair, breathing in the sweet smell of her flower crown. “I think we had better move on to the vows.”

Oh thank _God._

Since moving on was exactly what Oliver wanted, he ignored the tittering (he was getting used to it by this point) and forced himself to pull back and put a whole eighteen inches between him and his bride. So they were once again facing each other, holding hands.

“Oliver and Felicity have chosen to repeat traditional vows,” the captain announced.

It was actually Felicity who had made that choice. She’d said she couldn’t imagine Oliver improving on the vows from the fake wedding (which translated into: she didn’t want to be reminded of them) and he’d acquiesced. Oliver honestly didn’t feel he had the right to object given the circumstances.

Besides, as Felicity had been quick to point out, they hadn’t exactly had a lot of time to write something new.

“Felicity, you may repeat after me: I, Felicity Megan Smoak, choose you, Oliver Jonas Queen to be my husband.”

“I, Felicity…”

As Oliver listened to Felicity repeat her vows, words that would join them as they had joined couples for centuries (with a little modernization), he couldn’t say he was disappointed.

“I am proud to become your wife and join my life with yours. I vow to support you, push you, inspire you, and above all, love you. For better or worse. In sickness and health. For richer or poorer. As long as we both shall live.”

As words poured from Felicity’s lips, meaningful and heart-felt and they just…they filled Oliver with awe. Awe and love and an intense gratitude.

The captain turned to Oliver. “Oliver, you may repeat after me: I, Oliver Jonas Queen, choose…”
But when it was Oliver’s turn to repeat the very same words, “I, Oliver Jonas Queen…”

He couldn’t help but feel they were woefully inadequate. Oliver tried to put inflection into the words the way Felicity had, to convey the emotion behind them. But still…

There were so much more Oliver needed to say to her. That he needed to promise. It felt wrong to leave those words unsaid. To slide that brand-new diamond band next to her engagement ring without saying everything.

But this was what Felicity wanted. Oliver had to respect that. Didn’t he?

Oliver didn’t even realize he had finished until Captain Mitchell asked, “Now who has the rings?”

Fuck.

And then…

Oliver panicked.

It wasn’t enough. It wasn’t even close to enough.

“Wait,” the word flew out of Oliver’s mouth before he could stop it.

Then it was too late. Oliver couldn’t take it back if he wanted to. Felicity’s eyes were questioning, curious…but not upset. Maybe that was the permission he’d been waiting for.

Oliver took a deep breath. “I have something to say. Something more.”

All eyes were on him now. No one protested. No one teased. Even the breeze seemed to have quieted.

There was perfect silence.

As they waited. All five-hundred and sixteen of them plus one blushing bride. For Oliver to.

Double fuck.

Now Oliver had to figure out what to say. Quickly.

And it had better be good.

Chapter End Notes

After all this time, I suppose I better make it good.

(Don’t) Let Me Go has exactly three chapters left. There are one more chapter for the wedding, one for the honeymoon, and William’s epilogue.

I have/had more for the honeymoon but decided this worked better (plus it’s finished) and I could always write more as a small companion fic if I was so inclined. Or inspired.
The Song Rene sings is *All of Me* by John Legend. (*Ireland1733* gets credit for the suggestion). There is a lovely Fanvid of Oliver and Felicity to this song by *kaosara83* at [http://kaosara83.tumblr.com/post/162319275021/happy-this-is-my-new-olicitys-video-hope-you](http://kaosara83.tumblr.com/post/162319275021/happy-this-is-my-new-olicitys-video-hope-you). Check it out.

The poem Lyla recites is by James Kavanaugh. I couldn’t actually find a title. :-/

I chose Rene to sing it before the 6B NTA issues and decided to keep it because I love the image of him auditioning to sing in front of Oliver. Originally, Dinah (not Lyla) read the poem but I switched that.

In this wedding (which I swear I put more blood sweat and tears into than my own), *Ireland1733* was my extremely supportive matron of honor. *Imusuallyobsessed* was the sister who always told be exactly what she thought even when I didn’t want to hear it (she was usually right). And *mariposablue9* was there supporting.

And on a last historical note, I chose Manila Bay as the setting for Oliver and Felicity’s wedding forever ago, based purely on it being in the right geographic location and that it was a port for US aircraft carriers (and maybe from the pictures of its beautiful sunset). I had no idea of its historical significance and, at first, I thought it a fault of the American Education system until I did some more research and realized as horrific as the Battle of Manila Bay was it was far from the worst of the World War II atrocities.

I don’t recommend looking up the battle (or the Massacre of Manila) unless you have a very strong stomach. It was truly a crime against humanity. In 1945 100,000 Pilipino civilians were brutally murdered and the city was decimated. Today it is a beautiful and thriving metropolis. Risen from the ashes.

Hope you return next week.

Happy reading!

Emmy
Chapter Twenty: (Beyond) Everything.

Chapter Summary

![Image](image.jpg)

Chapter Notes

This story is now **finished**. I will be posting the last two chapters on consecutive Sundays.

Please forgive the rewind. It’s short. The chapter is not. Hope you enjoy it.

(For summaries of Chapters 1-18 see Previously on (Don’t) Let Me Go [here.](#)

See the end of the chapter for more notes
It was a dream.

Not an actual dream. Well, it was, it just wasn’t an asleep dream. It was a real dream. A Dream Come True sort of dream. The Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Once Upon a Time, Disney Princess, Felicity-had-stopped-watching-after-seven sort of Dream Come True.

Only real. It was hard to believe, but it was real.

So very real. Actual, corporal, honest-to-goodness, genuine, here in technicolor, opposite of fantasy. Real.

And Felicity prayed she would remember every breathtaking moment. Thank God for Curtis’ drones. She had never been so grateful for him and his amazing tech (which was completely ridiculous since that tech had saved lives and was helping her walk…okay, maybe she was exaggerating but the sentiment was there.)

And Oliver…her wonderful Oliver. He had promised perfection and he had delivered. Wow, had he delivered.

Not in a perfect spread in an expensive wedding magazine way. No, in a perfectly them way.

In the way John Jr. wriggled and had to be passed from person to person to keep him occupied. In the comments the team made (not so quietly) under their breath. In the way Oliver kept forgetting himself and pulling Felicity in for a kiss. In how she couldn’t seem to keep her eyes dry and didn’t even care.

It was so much more than Felicity could have imagined. And, as crazy as it sounded, so much better.

And Captain Mitchell’s speech…dear God, Felicity was surprised she hadn’t fainted. (Not that she had ever fainted. Not once. Even around needles.)
To say Felicity had been (and still was) shocked at the things the naval captain said would be a massive understatement. But if she ignored the obvious it-might-get-them-all-arrested thing (and, wow, did she wish she had taken a minute to tell her mother Oliver was the Green Arrow before the ceremony), Captain Mitchell’s speech could not have been more perfect. And from a stranger.

But perhaps it meant that much more coming from someone they barely knew. For this man, a high-ranking member of the US Navy to acknowledge everything they had done as Green Arrow and Overwatch it was…

It was an entirely new experience. So much so Felicity had no idea how to react.

It wasn’t that they had never been thanked. It wasn’t uncommon for someone they’d saved to express gratitude to the team. Oliver even received the occasional positive news coverage. Oh, and the president had thanked them all for repelling the Dominators.

But when it came down to it, most of their validation came from each other. Very few people even knew the scope of their accomplishments. And that was okay. They worked in secret. Did what they did because it was the right thing to do, not to receive praise. Which was why Felicity felt really weird admitting...how fantastic it felt.

Acknowledgment of heroism was something Felicity had always wanted for Oliver. He had so much guilt and self-doubt, gave so much of himself to help others. He deserved every word Captain Mitchell said. And, God, it made her so proud.

But when Captain Mitchell started to honor her...not just as a member of the team, as the Green Arrow’s tech support, but as a hero in her own right, Felicity didn’t even know what to feel.

Outside of her own team and friends no one had ever...ever acknowledged Felicity’s contribution. Yet, she had never really felt slighted. Maybe it was a tribute to how incredibly appreciated Oliver made her feel. All the way back to her days in QC as Oliver Queen’s ‘Personal Internet Researcher’. He made her feel special. Valuable. Important.

That was all the praise she needed. Oliver (and John) gave her enough. Besides, it wasn’t like Felicity was risking her life on a daily basis. She wasn’t hitting the streets like Oliver and the others. She was more...hero-support than hero. Having a codename didn’t change that.

But in that moment, this one shining moment, Felicity felt like a hero. Standing there, in front of the love of her life, surrounded by the people Felicity cared for most in this world...as five-hundred members of the US navy, all heroes in their own right, cheered for her.

Not just Oliver. Her. Felicity Smoak.

Soon to be Queen.

Because now they all believed she had saved them all from a nuclear holocaust. Which...Felicity had made great strides in forgiving herself after Havenrock. Rory had helped a lot. But how could she take credit for saving anyone when her mistake had killed tens of thousands?

But the way Captain Mitchell framed it...the work they had done that night, the work Felicity had done, not only saved the millions in Monument city, or even the hundreds of thousands in Star City, but billions of people. 15,434 missiles were launched that day. One landed.

If it were Oliver who fixated on the one failure and ignored the fifteen-thousand successes, what would Felicity have said?
It was a rhetorical question (even in her head). The answer was just *that* obvious. So Felicity acknowledged she was a hypocrite and miraculously for the very first time since it happened, she felt proud of what she’d done. They had stopped Genesis and without her they probably wouldn’t have.

**Wow, *that* was a terrifying thought.** It left her not only feeling proud and important, but…heavy.

And Felicity finally understood….**really** understood why Oliver carried the weight of the world on his shoulders. As soon as she believed she had the power to save lives, she accepted responsibility for those lives. Now she really had walked a mile (or a thousand) in Oliver’s shoes.

But maybe that was what they’d needed to bring them there today. Together. On this most perfect day.

By the time Oliver was finishing up his vows Felicity felt so light and free, so in love, she could float, drift away in a cloud of happiness…and, wow, Sappy Oliver was rubbing off on her.

The rings were next and her fingers tingled in anticipation. There were few things in life Felicity wanted as much as she wanted to slide those rings they bought yesterday on their respective fingers. The understated arrow designs hidden amongst the platinum was just one more gift fate had bestowed on them.

One would have thought that after everything, after all the revelations and surprises these last forty-eight hours had brought, Felicity was well beyond shock. Certainly nothing Oliver could say could throw her.

One would have been wrong.

Because all it took was a blurted, “Wait,” to send her reeling. Again.

Felicity’s eyes had only just left Oliver’s. She’d turned away only slightly to retrieve his ring from Thea, but she jerked back around so violently that she very likely would have tripped over her crystal studded feet if Oliver wasn’t holding her hand in his firm grip.

Oliver looked even more astounded than Felicity.

So **clearly** this hadn’t been planned. In fact, Oliver looked borderline terrified, staring at her with wide, pleading eyes. As if he needed Felicity to tell him what to do. Or give him permission to keep going.

Maybe it was a testament to the trust they had finally built, but Felicity never considered, for even a moment, that this was Oliver getting cold feet. And if he wasn’t having second thoughts about getting married than there was **nothing** to be afraid of.

Squeezing his hands, Felicity sent Oliver an encouraging smile.

Oliver’s eyes became wide (panicked almost) and he sucked in a deep breath, before blurting out, “I have something to say. Something *more.*”

Of **course**, he did. Felicity should have known the big sap wouldn’t be satisfied with pre-written vows.

But after his little outburst, Oliver just stared at her, still wide-eyed in a not un-cartoonish way. Looking overwhelmed and more than a little freaked-out.
It was so adorable, Felicity wanted to cry (*again*). She was going to be dehydrated by the end of the ceremony and prompted, “Oliver?”

Swallowing, Oliver gave a small nod and readjusted his grip on her hands. “Sorry, I…Felicity, I just,” he hesitated but then the words seemed to pour out, getting faster and faster. “I know we agreed to these vows and it’s not that I don’t love them. They’re really great and meaningful and steeped in tradition and…” The runaway words stopped as abruptly as they started and he took a deep breath. Then, “It’s not enough.”

Of *course*, not. Felicity should have known the big sap wouldn’t be satisfied with pre-written vows. Maybe she had. When she’d suggested…well, *told* Oliver she wanted more traditional vows, he looked like he swallowed a lemon. She should have said something then.

She *would* have if…if the idea of writing their own vows hadn’t *terrified* her. It reminded Felicity too much of that stupid fake wedding and she was afraid parts would inevitably sound recycled and trigger bad memories and…well, going the (pseudo) traditional route was safer.

But since when did they go the *safe* route?

If there was anything that was *less* them, it was safe. And besides, in that moment, Felicity couldn’t imagine a single thing Oliver could say she didn’t want to hear.

“Go ahead. If you *must,*” Felicity teased, with a playful eye-roll (though it may have come off more as an eyelash flutter), her lips twitching as she fought the big dopy smile that threatened to take over her face. “You never could resist the chance to give a speech.”

Oliver gave a breathless little laugh, but still he was quiet, gazing at her, shuffling his feet and running his thumbs over the back of her hands. Felicity was happy to let him gather his thoughts but…

“Any time now, Hoss,” Rene prodded and it probably wasn’t as loud as it seemed, but it was enough to trigger a trickle of laughter and Felicity had to bite her tongue to keep from joining in as Oliver blushed and lowered his eyes. If he was trying to butter her up by being extra adorable, it was working.

Finally, Oliver looked up, peering at Felicity through his lashes (because he was *trying* to kill her) and admitted, “I didn’t prepare anything.”

Prepared or not, Felicity certainly wasn’t going to give him an out if that was what he was hoping for. Now she *had* to know. Oliver knew how she felt about mysteries. She was pathologically curious.

Luckily, William leaned in and elbowed Oliver in the ribs. “Just speak from the heart, dad.”

God, she loved that kid.

Oliver pressed his lips together and nodded, his eyes on her shoes and a smile on his face. He turned to William and said gruffly, “Thank you son, that is excellent advice. I’ll um…” He glanced back at Felicity and his smile broadened. “I’ll do that. Just…” Gulping nervously, he sent his son another quick look. “If you have any idea where to start, let me know, okay?”

This time it was William who turned tomato-red, twisting up his face and grunting, “Da-*ad.*”

Ten-year old boys switched from bold to embarrassed on a dime it seemed.
“Right. Okay then…” Oliver drew himself up to his full height. “Felicity Megan Smoak, I… Felicity, I need to…I need to promise that I will never lie to you. That I will never hide anything from you. That…”

Felicity was a millisecond away from breaking down in sobs when Oliver shook his head, looking uncharacteristically frustrated with himself. “No, that’s not right.”

An incredulous laugh burst from Felicity’s mouth, her mouth falling open.

Amusement echoed from their guests as well and Oliver turned a disgruntled look at, first their team, then the crowd and grunted out, “Hey, give me a minute. I’m getting there.” With everyone sufficiently cowed (or at least pretending to be) Oliver refocused. Totally and completely on Felicity. Wow. That never ceased to take her breath away. “If I’m going to promise, to vow honesty in this marriage, I need to start now, right?”

All Felicity could do was nod. She didn’t trust her voice, not with tears slipping free and trailing over her cheeks. But she trusted him. Completely.

“I swear,” Oliver took another deep, lung filling breath, “to be as open an honest as I can be. This might surprise you, but I’m not the most open person.”

There was more laughter and, at this point, Felicity just wanted them all to shush. Oliver was talking here.

“Even before I was marooned on that unfortunately not deserted island I…well, we weren’t exactly encouraged to be open and honest with our feelings in the Queen household.” Oliver’s eyes briefly drifted to his sister and he gave her a small sad smile. “In fact, a Queen never showed the world anything they didn’t want to show.”

Then Oliver seemed to realize what he’d said and he pivoted, saying pointedly to his son, “That is very unhealthy. We are not doing that any more.”

Felicity laughed, giddy, along with the rest of the group, squeezing Oliver’s hands tight as she watched (through blurry eyes) William flush and grin, shuffling his feet in a very familiar way.

“I’m not doing that anymore. I don’t want to be that way anymore,” Oliver continued, his eyes back on hers and those eyes…somehow they said even more than his words. “I can honestly say I have been more truthful and open with you than I have with anyone. Ever. Because I…” his voice crackled and… “Because I trust you.”

Felicity’s eyes fluttered shut and she swayed a little on her feet, from the shear impact of those words. She managed to force back a sob but a whimper still managed to escape.

“I trust you. Implicitly. Instinctively,” Oliver continued and Felicity just let the words wash over her, but she forced herself to open her eyes. She didn’t want to miss a thing. “More than I have ever trusted anyone and you make me want to tell you everything, to show you everything. It’s not easy. Actually, it’s so…fu—damn hard. And I know I’m not doing a good enough job—”

“Oh, Oliver, you are. You are,” Felicity breathed, unable to keep quiet. Right then she couldn’t possibly ask for more.

But Oliver shook his head. “No, it’s not but I’m going to do better and keep doing better so you never,” his voice cracked again and he gave a frustrated grunt, then began again in an even more raspy voice, “so you never have reason to doubt my love or my trust. Because I do. I trust you with my life. With my heart. With my son.”
Wow. Okay. That was...something.

Felicity’s eyes met those of the beaming boy over Oliver’s shoulder and...at some point soon she was going to need to let go of his hands to wipe her face.

“I trust you far more than I trust myself, but I...I’m going to do better at that too.”

Taking a shuddering breath, Felicity nodded, her eyes drawn back into the fathomless sincerity in Oliver’s eyes. God, she wanted that for him. More than anything she wanted Oliver to learn to trust and love himself. As much as she did. He was such a good man.

Then a smile bloomed across his face and Oliver suddenly looked a million times lighter, even as he said the contradictory words, “You know I don’t think I deserve you—”


Oliver’s eyes somehow brightened even further and he teased in a low, husky voice, “I don’t think you’re supposed to speak during my vows.”

“I’m pretty sure you were supposed to be done with your vows by now,” Felicity tossed back, happiness bubbling up and becoming hard to contain. “If you’re going to bend the rules then don’t complain when they stay...bendy.”

Oliver gave her a single acknowledging nod as if to say ‘touché’. “I’m almost done, I promise.”

Felicity sucked in her bottom lip, tasting tears. She was in no hurry. She could listen to Oliver talk forever. Right then, she didn’t care of they stood there until the sun came up tomorrow morning.

“As much as I know you disagree,” Oliver sent her a warning look, letting Felicity know he didn’t want another interruption, “I don’t know if I will ever deserve you because...well, I know I’m not supposed to reuse any of my previous...other...speech...”

Oliver finally gave up trying to find a suitable euphemism and winced. Yet Felicity was amazed to find the reference to their pretend wedding didn’t cause...anything. Not even a flicker of negative emotion. Not the slightest dampening of her joy.

Felicity wasn’t sure how she’d managed to portray that, but Oliver seemed reassured and pushed forward. “But I guess I’m already in deep so...it will never not be true that you are the light that led me out of the darkness. But even more than that, somehow, along the way, you taught me how to keep that light burning, all on my own, and...I can’t even express how grateful I am.”

Okay...wow...that was unexpected. And almost too much. Felicity had to evert her eyes and blow out a breath. Tears were bad enough but now her sinuses were starting to clog up...not good.

Oliver raised their joined hands to brush the tears from her face and Felicity gave him a grateful smile and a soft chuckle. She glance behind him to try to gain control. Only to catch sight of Curtis’ beaming face drenched with tears. Even John’s eyes were watery. Okay, that wasn’t helping.

“I know you’ve asked me not to put you on a pedestal,” Oliver began again after he was satisfied that her face was (temporarily) dry, “and I’m going to try...”

Felicity couldn’t not laugh because that was the first thing Oliver said that didn’t sound 100% sincere. The almost worshipful look in his eyes didn’t help sell it either. Points for trying though.
“But what I can swear is that I will spend the rest of my life doing everything I can to be the man you deserve, the man you see me as…” Oliver shook his head and the look on his face said it all.

Oliver didn’t understand, was still baffled that she saw him for the amazing man he was. Felicity wanted to explain it to him but, well, it would take awhile and her turn was coming. Oh yes, it was.

“But that man…that is my best self. The person you bring out in me is the person I want to be.”

Oliver fell silent and Felicity could hear her mother weeping softly. There were sniffles all around them, actually.

A throat being cleared brought the focus back to the captain as he asked, “Are you done, son? I don’t want to stop you if you were gearing up for more, but you did choose to get married at sunset and that’s not going to last forever.”

“I uh…” Oliver swallowed, instantly back to being the flustered bridegroom. “I think that is all I need to say.” His eyes were so deep and open Felicity felt like she could drown in them. And she wouldn’t mind in the slightest.

“All right then. Shall we move onto the ri—?”

“No! Sorry. Not done. I…” Oliver burst out, throwing first, Captain Mitchell, then Felicity an apologetic look. “I’m sorry, I forgot…I almost forgot the most important part.”

Felicity bit her lip, shaking her head in disbelief as one of those stupid giggles (which apparently weren’t reserved for alcohol anymore) threatened to spill over. What on earth could there be left to say, never mind be more important?

Captain Mitchell let out an amused sigh. “Well, then by all means. But you had better hurry, my boy.”

The captain motioned behind him to where the sun was now touching the horizon, but Felicity couldn’t care less.

She was currently watching the love of her life swear to give her…everything. Everything Felicity had always wanted and hadn’t even known she needed, all in the beautiful golden glow of the setting sun, and if the moon was high by the time they walked back down the aisle that would be perfect too.

Felicity shrugged, sending Oliver the silent message she was in no hurry and his answering smile was blinding. Taking a subtle step closer, he shifted his grip to surround her hands with his, bringing them up to lie against his chest.

“Felicity Smoak, I need to…this is something I know I’ve promised you before and you could probably argue it has been covered in the traditional vows but…” Oliver took another deep breath and when he spoke it was like they were the only two people in the entire world. “Felicity, I swear to you, right here, right now, on everything that I hold dear that I will never ever leave you.”

She didn’t know what she had been expecting, but clearly it wasn’t that. The sobs Felicity had thus far contained burst free and she wobbled on her beautiful four-inch heels.

But Oliver was there to catch her, as he always was, his hands moving to her hips as Felicity fell forward, her hands braced on his chest. He waited until she was able to look at him again before
he kept going.

He kept going.

Because apparently Oliver wasn’t going to be satisfied until Felicity was a puddle on the ground.

“And nothing you do, or I do, nothing the world throws at us will make me leave you. Ever. And if…” Oliver’s words stumbled as the emotion became just that heavy.

Felicity was starting to have trouble breathing she was crying so hard.

But Oliver just held her tighter. His head fell forward so it was almost touching hers and he vowed, “And if someone, or something, takes me from you, I will fight with everything in me, to my last breath, to get back to you. If someone takes you from me,” he shook his head, “God, help them, because I will always come for you. Nothing will keep me away. I will come for you. I will get back to you. I will stay…so help me God.”

Felicity didn’t even believe this moment was real. That he was real. But she knew Oliver was the only thing keeping her upright. Her eyes fell closed and her forehead met his chest. She waited for the captain to tell her that wasn’t allowed and was fully prepared to fight him for the right.

Just when Felicity thought, maybe, she’d escape collapsing into a sobbing mess on the floor, Oliver gently cupped her cheek and tipped her head up until their eyes met. Only then did he whisper, “Do you understand?”

Felicity managed a tremulous smile and maybe something resembling a laugh as she whispered back, for Oliver and Oliver alone, “Yes.”

And that was how they came full circle.

Oliver pressed a kiss to her forehead and ran a soothing hand over her back. “Now, I’m done.”

And why that made her erupt in joyous laughter, Felicity really didn’t have a clue. But she’d been through an emotional ringer and she hadn’t even had her turn yet.

“Well, then,” Captain Mitchell announced, “will someone get the lady a handkerchief already?”

Felicity laughed with everyone else, as John produced a handkerchief, holding it out over Oliver’s shoulder. Oliver tried to grab it first, but she wrestled it away from him, laughing. She dried her cheeks, her eyes…her chin. Then, delicately wiping her nose, she turned and asked Thea, “I’m a mess, aren’t I?”

“Not even close,” Oliver answered for his sister.

“I didn’t ask you,” Felicity threw back without thought, triggering a round of shocked (and delighted) laughter. It made her feel the need to clarify, “You won’t tell me the truth.”

Oliver made an indignant noise, “Excuse me, I believe I promised complete honesty.”

Felicity sent him a disbelieving look, but really the banter was just what she needed to regain her equilibrium. Thea snatched the handkerchief out of her hand before Felicity could protest it was far too gross for anyone besides her to touch.

“You look gorgeous,” Thea swore, dabbing under her eyes. “I told you, I know my make-up.”

Thea had clearly been crying too and there wasn’t a smear and that was more reassuring than
either of their words.

Felicity wasn’t able to do more than give her almost sister a grateful smile because Captain
Mitchell pulled focus, asking, “Now are we ready for the rings?”

“Nope.” Felicity’s voice was surprisingly steady. She tuned out anyone who wasn’t Oliver and said, “There is no way I’m letting you give vows like that and not take my turn.”

“You don’t have to,” Oliver whispered, leaning in, as if to give them privacy.

A quelling look and a gentle shove was the only response Felicity deemed necessary. Lip quirking, Oliver stepped back, recapturing her hands in wedding stance and (wisely) giving her the floor.

“That seems only fair, my dear, but,” Captain Mitchell sent another meaningful look at the horizon, “just remember—”

“A setting sun never stopped us before, it’s not going to stop us now,” Felicity interrupted firmly, giving Oliver a saucy smile. “We do our best work at night.”

Oliver gave her an approving grin and the captain chuckled, giving in with a, “Yes, ma’am.”

Damn Skippy. It was her wedding. No orchestra was playing them off! Her and her groom could take as long as they damn well wanted. After all the blood, sweat, and tears (so so many tears), they had earned that at least.

Okay then.

Felicity took a deep (shaky) breath. Wow, uh…that was a really hard act to follow. Wrinkling her nose, she muttered, “You know, I was supposed to go first. Now I need to come up with something that compares to like,” she flicked her wrist, “the most beautiful vows ever. Not fair.”

Oliver flushed, his eyes diverting to his shiny brown loafers. But then he sent Felicity a pleased smile and murmured, “I don’t think you’ll have any trouble. No one is better at words than you.”

Reaching out with the hand Felicity had dropped when hers started its anxious fluttering, Oliver ran his thumb down Felicity’s cheek and she wasn’t sure if it was to catch the remnants of her tears or just because.

“You may not care about the sun, my dear,” Captain Mitchell said, leaning toward Felicity and lowering his voice conspiratorially, “but I don’t know how much longer your groom can wait to kiss you.”

Felicity laughed and Oliver jerked back, shooting the captain a disgruntled look. He was so damn cute.

Then as everything Oliver had said, not just now but over the last few days, raced through her head at lightning speed Felicity….suddenly, she knew exactly what she wanted to say. No, what she had to say.

“Oliver,” Felicity began, surprised at how strong and sure her voice sounded. She needed to hold onto that confidence. Before she thought too much about her rapidly forming plan and started to panic. “You’ve told me, more than once, that you walked into my cubical and I…I brought the light back into your life but I…but what I never told you…”

Wow, Felicity had never told him. Who was the one holding back? Keeping themselves safe
behind walls?

Felicity took a shaky breath. Into the breach. “Once I told you that you changed my life that day, that you made it better, inspired me to be more. But what I never said was that the first time I saw you…I don’t want to say it was love at first sight because that cheapens what I feel for you now and everything we’ve been through to get here, but there was something…from the first time I saw you…”

“There was,” Oliver whispered his agreement and God bless him for knowing exactly which two words Felicity needed just then.

Letting out a small whimper, (yup, already the calm was disappearing) Felicity nodded. “I knew there was something,” she lifted their entwined hands, squeezing his fingers, “a connection and…” Here came the hard part. The part her pride didn’t want anyone to know. “And about ten seconds after I felt it, I dismissed it. I brushed it off as…my own fool reaction to someone so very out of my league.”

Oliver scoffed. Instantly and with abject disbelief. Eye-roll and all.

Hadn’t Felicity known he would? It was one of the things she loved most about him. Oliver’s humility was as attractive as his confidence. If that IT girl had any idea the sweet insecure man that lie under that fraking spectacular surface, she would have been in even more trouble.

“Oh Oliver…I don’t know why you find it so hard to believe. You met me back then—”

“Yes,” he interrupted, almost indignant. “You were gorgeous and brilliant and—”

“Okay, your vows are done, mister,” Felicity admonished. It was either that or sob. “And I was awkward and shy and had a terrible track record with men. It was a very long time before I thought we were anything but…unthinkable.”

This time Oliver’s face fell, because the second her sweet man accepted what she said as truth it devastated him. He couldn’t handle her being in pain, even if it was years ago. “Fe-li-ci-ty…”

Felicity could see the wheels turning behind those fathomless blue eyes. He was already beating himself up for letting her feel that way. It was exasperating. “See, and this is why…well, part of why I never said anything.” The other part being it was humiliating. “You always find a way to blame yourself.”

Thea gave a deep, “Umm hmm,” behind her, reminding Felicity it wasn’t just the two of them standing there. God, was she really saying this in front of…everyone? Felicity had felt a hell of a lot less vulnerable when the captain here outted them as vigilantes.

Swallowing a hysterical giggle, Felicity kept going (the only way out was through, right?) “I know you’re thinking you should have done something different, treated me differently or…oh who knows. But what I need you to understand is it wasn’t your fault. Never once did you make me feel…less. That all came from me. Because you were Oliver Queen. Gorgeous, rich, mysterious, survivor of a not-so-deserted island and every woman’s,” Felicity couldn’t help but send a side eye to Curtis, “and some men’s, fantasy come true.”

Curtis nodded, completely unapologetic and, again, Felicity swallowed a the giddy giggle teasing the back of her throat. But looking back at Oliver and seeing the disbelief in his eyes…any amusement disappeared in a poof.

“And then I found out…” Felicity started again, then hesitated. Oh the hell with it. It was no
worse than anything Captain Mitchell had said. “Then I found out your secret, then you trusted me with your secret…” Because she saw it now. It had been an act of immense trust, the first of many. “I found out that on top of everything else you were a hero. And I saw you without your shirt.”

Finally, Oliver smiled. Good. Because…

“And then I really felt out of your league.” It was so true. But there went the smile. “Because I was just odd nerdy awkward-as-frak Felicity Smoak—”

“What?” That seemed to be the last straw for poor Oliver. Now he looked downright offended. “No—”

“Shush,” Felicity warned with a finger point of her own. They were never going to get through this if Oliver started looking for something to put an arrow in every time she said something he didn’t like. “My turn. And, also, yes that was very much how people saw me. I’m not blind. Well, not with my glasses on.”

Oliver didn’t so much as crack a smile at her joke. He just pressed his lips together, struggling with the not arguing thing. Or perhaps trying to figure out if there was someone corporeal he could put that arrow in.

Best to get to the point. “I know exactly how people saw me, because that was how I saw myself. Brilliant, sure. Funny, in a quirky way. Cute…maybe.” Felicity was a little worried Oliver was going to turn purple with the effort to keep his mouth shut. “But I only ever saw myself as more after I met you. No, I think I became more after I met you.”

Oliver’s face scrunched up and seeing the emotions cascade over his face made Felicity’s eyes burn but…no. Nope. She was not going to start crying again. Not yet. Too far to go.

“I’ve said you inspired me, but it’s…” Felicity’s voice broke. Frak. She blew out a breath and cleared her throat. “It’s so much more than that. I’ve always known I’m smart, cause obviously.”

Felicity finally earned a chuckle from her groom. Thank goodness. His wet, shining eyes were killing her here.

“But I never felt quite as smart…no, as brilliant as I did when I was with you.” And just remembering how that felt, how addictively wonderful, Felicity’s throat started to burn. Oliver had to understand. This was so important. “No one had ever…listened to me like you did, considered everything I said with so much weight and respect. Even when I was babbling and making almost no sense.”

“I love your babbles,” Oliver swore, his voice so low and raspy she doubted anyone else heard. It helped Felicity pretend this was just between the two of them.

Smiling, Felicity kept speaking. There was no stopping now really, these words needed to be said. “Even if it was technobabbling and you barely understood, you listened and you made me feel important, worthwhile, and just really smart.”

Oliver drew in a breath and it sounded suspiciously like a sob but it made Felicity think he understood. And he was the only one she needed to understand.

“Working with you, doing what we do…I think you know how good it makes me feel. But I don’t think you know, don’t think you have any clue…just how…”
Okay, this part was really, really hard to say. Borderline impossible. Because the strong independent woman Felicity had always tried to be kept telling her it wasn’t important. That it shouldn’t matter.

And it shouldn’t. But it didn’t make it any less true.

“I never…” A tear slipped free, catching on the side of Felicity’s nose. “Not once in my whole life did I feel beautiful until I met you.”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Oliver barely mouthed it, his eyes glistening, but she heard the reverence just the same.

“I didn’t,” Felicity admitted and her voice was soft and raspy too. “I didn’t even try to be. Didn’t see the point. But something happened. Just being around you…I wasn’t even trying to impress you. I didn’t think I had a chance. I certainly wasn’t trying to get your attention. I was happy with the attention I had.” Okay, not really, but that would muddle her point just when she was starting to make one. “But I…you made me feel like shining.”

Oliver sucked in a breath and a fat tear tracked down his face and why that made Felicity’s face stretch in the biggest smile, she’d never know.

“You made me want to let…me out. The me I wanted to be but wouldn’t dare admit to. The me I didn’t know I could be. And I….God, Oliver, I really liked that girl, that woman. The one I grew into in a basement with no natural light. Guess I’m like a fern that way.”

Finally, Oliver laughed. Really laughed, his head tilted back as he tried to gain some control.

Felicity really thought it was a futile endeavor. Her control was pretty much shot and knowing what was coming didn’t help at all. “And I liked how I looked. It felt like I’d found me. The outside and the inside finally matched and I liked…no, I loved them both. And that was because of you.”

Oliver bit his lip but Felicity heard the whimper that escaped regardless.

“And then…and then you loved me…” Her throat closed and Felicity had given up trying to hold back her tears by this point, but could her damn body let her finish at least? Her voice was deep and horse but she managed to force out, “And somehow, I don’t know how, but I let myself see me the way you see me and that’s when I truly felt beautiful.”

“You are,” Oliver croaked, letting go of her hands to cup her face, his thumbs catching her tears as he shook his head. As if he couldn’t imagine anyone thinking anything else and it just made Felicity feel…more. All most too much.

But she had to finish. Oliver had to know. Felicity clutched his wrists, holding his hands to her face.

“You say I’m the light that lit your way but before…before I met you that light was buried so deep inside I didn’t even know it was there. But, somehow, without even trying, you reached inside me and you pulled it out…” A hysterical laugh burst out as Felicity heard herself. “And, wow, that sounds both filthy and kinda painful.”

Oliver let out a similar, hysterical laugh and took one hand back to quickly and roughly wipe his own face, before fumbling to grab both of her hands again. Seeing her incredibly coordinated man fumble made her laugh anew. With sheer happiness.
“And you know what? Maybe it was,” Felicity admitted. She might be delirious at this point.

But, incredibly, Oliver nodded. “Yeah. Yeah.”

Felicity gave him a grateful smile and clutched his hands, their tangled mess of fingers, tight. “So don’t you ever think I give you more than you give me!” How the hell did she manage to turn a sweet declaration into a demand? But Oliver laughed and it was okay. Everything was so much better than okay. “Because we make each other better. There’s no one-way anything here. It’s an equal…together…”

She struggled to end that sentence. Dear God, now Felicity ran out of words? Seriously?

“Partnership,” Oliver supplied and…

Breathing a sigh of relief, Felicity nodded. “Partnership. Exactly.” Then she found herself sniffing again. “God, I’m a mess.”

“Never,” Oliver (perfect man that he was) vowed. “You are so gorgeous.”

“Even so,” Thea pipped up, offering Felicity the handkerchief again.

But Oliver got to it first this time, snatching it out of his sister’s hands and wiping Felicity’s cheeks before she had a chance to object. She wrestled it back to wipe her nose, though (she had to draw the line somewhere), before balling it up in her fist.

Oliver took her hand again, handkerchief and all (not seeming to care how gross the thing must be). But…Felicity tried to think. She was forgetting something.

“Oh right…these are vows. I’m supposed to promise stuff,” she really was off her rocker today, “not just go on and on speechifying—”

“You give the most beautiful speeches,” Oliver whispered. “Much better than mine.”

“You’re biased,” Felicity reprimanded. Gently, because that bias was perhaps the most wonderful thing in her life. “I’m supposed to make promises so…”

Okay, crap. This was why Felicity had wanted traditional vows, so she wouldn’t have to be so vulnerable.

Which was exactly why she needed to do this.

“I have promises I have to make and, like you, I need to start with trying to be more open and trusting.” Starting now. “Because I…sometimes, I think…” Felicity’s voice cracked and frak…again? Seriously? “For the really important stuff, or maybe just the really personal stuff, I’m just as shut down and bottled up.”

Oliver’s face spasmed. Felicity knew he wanted to argue, but they both knew it was true. And if he didn’t, her mother was right over there (sobbing loudly) prepared to give an affidavit.

“And I don’t have the excuse that I was taught to be that way as a child because my mother…” Felicity turned and tried to catch Donna’s eye. She was holding a handkerchief to her face and clutching Quentin’s hand. “My mother is one of the most amazing and emotionally open people I have ever met.”

Donna lowered her handkerchief and mouthed, “I love you.”
Felicity smiled and took a deep breath, turning back to Oliver. “But, unfortunately, I take after my dad…or maybe it’s just because of my dad that I…I learned to turtle up. When things get tough…” Oliver shook his head and she gave him the look until he stopped. “Emotionally tough, I close down. But I don’t want to do that anymore. I can’t do that anymore. Not with you…”

Oliver pulled her hands to his face, pressing a reverent kiss to her fingers.

Felicity let out a whimper and swore, “I promise…I vow that I will work every day on…not shutting down. On not running or…” she shook her head, “at least letting you catch me.”

“I will,” Oliver swore, a beaming smile breaking free. “I will always catch you. I will always come after you.” Then he added quickly, doubt lingering in his eyes. “Now that I know you want me to come after you, I will. Always.”

“I do.” Felicity nodded (frantically) because not running was going to be so fraking hard. “I always want you to come after me and…and I think that’s a really good plan because I don’t know if I can promise to never turtle up. All can promise is to try. And to always come back to you.”

A sob tore free. This was worse than couples therapy.

“Shhh…shhh…” Oliver hummed, unlocking her fist and taking back the handkerchief the wipe her cheeks again.

But, in the end, Felicity was so glad Oliver had pushed the issue. These were the vows they needed to give.

Okay.

Okay. Felicity took a deep breath and straightened up. In through her nose, out through her mouth.

She smiled at Oliver. A smile he returned in spades. He held out the handkerchief. Felicity didn’t see who took it but it disappeared.

“Oh, let’s get this thing rolling before we lose the sun and what’s left of my dignity,” Felicity announced and just about everyone laughed. It was a good thing she was so beyond caring at this point. She turned to her maid of honor. “Thea, ring.”

“Okay, let’s get this thing rolling before we lose the sun and what’s left of my dignity,” Felicity announced and just about everyone laughed. It was a good thing she was so beyond caring at this point. She turned to her maid of honor. “Thea, ring.”

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Okay.
“Hand…please.” Yup, Felicity had definitely used up her word quota. She tried to make up for the lack with a gesture, but her hand just ended up fluttering frenetically. It matched her heartbeat.

Oliver chuckled and gave Felicity his left hand. His breath was shaky and his eyes glassy. So, nice to know they were on the same page with this too.

Taking Oliver’s hand, Felicity placed it on top of her left, steadying his wrist as she began, “I, Felicity Megan Smoak, take you, Oliver Jonas Queen, to be my lawfully wedded husband, my love, my soulmate, my everything,” her voice broke (but she’d managed a whole sentence before it did. So win) and Oliver’s lip trembled. “But you’re already my everything.” That last part came out as a barely-there whisper.

Felicity only knew Oliver heard because he breathed out a soft, “Fe-li-ci-ty…”

And it gave her strength.

“But officially, forever, across dimensions and time and…” Felicity laughed out loud. She was definitely delirious now. “And forever.”

With that, Felicity slid the wide band, the one with the symmetric arrow design etched in platinum, onto Oliver’s strong, life-roughened hand and he let out a relieved sigh.

As soon as it was in place, Oliver’s fingers curled, holding the ring in place as if he was already vowing vengeance on anyone who tried to take it off.

Oliver was still staring at it when John leaned in and gave him a gentle shove, “Hey, man.”

But when Oliver turned for the ring, John handed it to William. William handed the ring to his father and Oliver breathed a shaky, “Thank you.”

Taking another deep breath, Oliver turned back to Felicity and gave her a heart melting smile that just skewered her. Skewered her. His eyes were a little swollen and she really hoped hers weren’t because now she realized the camera had been snapping pictures all along. Now that the sun was starting to sink under the horizon the flash was on, making her all too aware of each time it was aimed at her.

Oliver lifted Felicity’s hand, holding it like it was the most precious, delicate thing he’d ever touched…which was absurd for so many reasons.

He pressed a kiss above her engagement ring before starting, “I…Oliver…” He broke off with a breathless laugh. “God, I think I just forgot my own name.”

That may have gotten the loudest laugh of all. Well, until William leaned in and said, “It’s Queen, Dad.”

“Right. Thank you, William,” Oliver murmured (ignoring the guffaws all around them). It did seemed to bring him back to himself. He met Felicity’s eyes and suddenly he was the strong confident man that led a city by day and saved it by night. “I, Oliver Jonas Queen, take you, Felicity Megan Smoak, to be my lawfully, officially…eternally,” he said the last fiercely as if he was daring someone to disagree, “wedded wife. My soulmate. My love. My everything. In every world, in every universe and every time, until forever. And If you think death will keep me from you…”

There was more laughter and Felicity didn’t think many of them understood just how serious Oliver was.
He slid the new ring to join her diamond, entwining their hands and…Felicity just stared at them, all three rings safely nestled on their fingers and suddenly she understood Oliver’s fascination.

Oh wow.

Oh wow oh wow oh wow oh wow.

This was real.

Oliver reached out and cupped Felicity’s cheek and, without taking his eyes off hers, he asked (okay, maybe he demanded), “Can you pronounce us married now?”

And…more laughter. Apparently, this was the funniest wedding of all time. Felicity wished she’d gotten the memo cause she seemed to have wept through the entire thing.

“Oh wow oh wow oh wow oh wow. This was real.”

Oliver’s eyes snapped to the captain and Felicity’s followed.

Captain Mitchell gave them a sympathetic look. “I believe you had one more surprise,” he said gently, his eyes on Oliver.

Recognition flashed in Oliver’s eyes and he threw back his head with a long-suffering groan.

“What?” Felicity moaned, trying to catch up. “No. I don’t need any more surprises.”

They’d exchanged rings, said the longest and most beautiful vows in the history of marriage, the sun was crossing the horizon and Felicity just wanted to be married already.

But Oliver sighed. “Yes, you do.” He turned to his friends and made a sweeping gesture with his arm, the ‘get moving’ message crystal clear.

“I really don’t need any more surprises,” Felicity argued, pleaded actually. Maybe even whined.

But it only earned Felicity another sigh and an apologetic smile from Oliver as he repeated, “Yes, you do.”

He took her left hand in his, entwining their fingers so their rings touched, then swung her around, so his left arm surrounded her, lying over her shoulder and hanging across her chest as they faced their…audience.

Felicity could feel Oliver smiling as he nuzzled her neck from behind and whispered, “I can be patient.”

“And if I can’t?” Felicity countered, trying to infuse as much promise into her voice as she possibly.

It was a low blow. Oliver’s arm spasmed and he groaned into her ear. Still Felicity couldn’t regret saying it, especially when he leaned in and growled into her ear, “I want a word with whoever decided no kissing until the end.”

Felicity’s laughter rang out. That was her Oliver. Always looking for someone to put an arrow into. Tipping up her chin, she caught his eyes and teased, “Imagine if we abstained before the wedding.”

Oliver didn’t so much as send her a quelling look. He just scoffed as if that was the most
ridiculous thing he had ever heard.

Before Felicity could goad him further, her mother stepped forward, pulling a slip of paper from her bra (heaven forbid she get a dress with pockets).

Felicity rolled her head on Oliver’s shoulder, trying to catch his eye as she whispered, “What is this?” Maybe he would actually tell her this time.

“Well,” Oliver cleared his throat, avoiding her eyes as he said almost shyly, “since you couldn’t have a chuppah, I asked your mom what else we could do to represent your Jewish heritage. She came up with this.”

Before Felicity could question Oliver further, Captain Mitchell called out, “You may now bestow the Seven Blessings on the bride and groom.”

Felicity gasped, her eyes immediately filling with tears (God fraking dammit. Again?). The blessing wasn’t a common practice in Reform Jewish weddings (and they most certainly were not Orthodox), but Felicity had been to a few weddings with grandma Sylvia where they had them and had loved the tradition, the subtle beauty of it.

When her and Oliver had spoken to the rabbi last winter, their officiant had dismissed the idea as old fashioned and ‘taking too long’ (i.e. boring). Felicity had let it go, but now…her hand fluttered up to cover her mouth as Thea stepped over to stand next to Donna and took out her own paper (she had pockets).

When her mother began the recitation in Hebrew, Felicity’s eyes fluttered closed. The familiar rise and fall of the melodic Hebrew washed over her senses, conjuring up childhood memories of holidays and ritual and Bubbe’s hugs. Of a time before Felicity and Donna’s life became so hard.

“Thank you,” Felicity whispered.

Oliver’s only response was to press his lips against her temple and murmur a soft, “Anything,” that floated out and mixed with the melodic syllables.

Felicity only vaguely remembered the meaning of the Hebrew her mother spoke, but it didn’t matter. As soon as Donna’s voice came to a halt, Thea began the English translation, “May the life you share together be as sweet as the wine you drink today. Blessed is the Source of Life, who created the fruit of the vine.”

“Is there wine?” Oliver whispered in her ear.

Felicity did her best to swallow a hysterical giggle, whispering, “How would I know? It’s your surprise.” She didn’t remember wine being part of the Blessing, but that was well before her appreciation of a good red so she could easily have missed it.

“Once we decided on the Blessing your mom took over…”

Oliver’s whispered explanation died off as John carried JJ up to take Thea’s place next to Donna. Her mother recited the second blessing and John whispered something into his son’s, ear then…

The little imp grinned, calling out loud and clear (okay, so he yelled), “May yours wove for….” JJ paused his eyes narrowing in concentration as John whispered the next phrase in his ear. “One a-noter always…”

It was so fricken adorable Felicity wasn’t sure if she wanted to laugh or cry, but the fingers of her
right hand stayed firmly pressed to her lips as she clutched Oliver’s tight with her left. There was nothing so soothing as the way their rings caught and scraped against each others.

JJ let out a very grown up sigh, sending his father a very ‘Dig’ look. “Daddy, I can’t say that word.”

Everyone laughed and Felicity couldn’t blame them. Oliver’s chest was shaking as he buried his eyes in her neck.

John, who was valiantly trying to keep a serious face, looked about to crack. Shaking his head, Digg gave in, saying loud and clear, “Be a source of inspiration.” Then he turned to his boy, encouraging, “You can take the next part, little man.”

Again, John whispered in the boy’s ear and JJ’s smile grew. “And happiness!” he declared, throwing his arms wide for emphasis. Another wave of laughter only seemed to encourage him and he grinned as he leaned his ear into his father’s lips to get the last prompt. Then JJ yelled (even louder), “Bwessed is the Joy who makes dis wonderful bwilliant world.”

Felicity didn’t even care what the words actually were. She clapped (as well as she could given there was no way she was giving up Oliver’s hand) and whistled along with the others, making her godson bounce with pride.

Her brain mustn’t be working properly, because it took her until the third Blessing, when Dinah stepped up to take John’s place, to realize each one was being recited by a different person.

“May your journey together be blessed with generosity and forgiveness. May you enable each other to fulfill your dreams, and may you be committed to the paths of courage and hope. Blessed is the Source of Generosity who created such good, remarkable people…you two.”

Curtis followed Dinah.

“Wherever you travel and wherever life takes you, may the love of your family and friends always echo in your hearts, even across great distances and times. Blessed is the Source of Love who supports the edifice of love.”

When Lyla stepped up, JJ lunged for her and she sent a clear, “You had your turn, young man,” before pulling out her paper. Felicity couldn’t say she wasn’t relieved. As much as she enjoyed JJ’s turn, this would go on forever if the little attention hog usurped everyone else’s.

“With the strength of your relationship,” Lyla recited, “May you help transform the world in big ways and small ways. May your love for each other be a source of warmth and inspiration for your community. Blessed is the Source of Healing who brings wellbeing to the world through Her children.”

Quentin was next and Felicity didn’t miss the smile he shared with her mother before she recited the Hebrew.

“May you always find a refuge tucked within your love – a place to hide out and a place to reflect. Blessed is the Source of Safety, who brings joy to the brides.”

The words flowed over Felicity, filling her with warmth. She glanced up at Oliver and the happy look on his face…amazing was too weak a word. She saw how he was looking at Quentin and it occurred to her that the two people standing in front of them were the only parents either of them had left.
And unlike anyone else they’d called ‘parent,’ these two were nothing but good and loving. Felicity and Oliver were so lucky to have them.

Then Felicity saw William step forward to take Quentin’s place for the final blessing and she strained to watch Oliver’s face. And if she thought it was full of emotion watching Quentin, it was nothing compared to when he watched his son.

Donna finished the final blessing in Hebrew quickly, looking excited to watch her new step-grandson put the final flourish on this amazing surprise.

William shifted nervously, glancing briefly at his paper before crumpling it in his hand and looking up with a solemn maturity so far above his age. He recited his section from memory.

“Blessed is the Source of Life, who creates wonder, pleasure, song, and delight. May the bride and groom be filled with gladness, and rejoicing, love, harmony, and companionship. And may they be blessed with lots and lots of peace. Blessed is the Source of Life, who is the Source of Peace.”

By the end, Felicity could feel Oliver’s tears leaking onto her temple and she brought his hand to her lips. His wedding band was cool and…wow…oh wow oh wow oh wow….

Felicity waited for everyone to return to their places and was thrown when Nyssa stepped forward again. But it was only to hand a bottle of wine to John. An open bottle, it seemed.

“There is wine,” Oliver whispered to Felicity and even though a little lightness was a good thing she still pinched him (gently) for triggering those damn giggles.

Felicity was going to have to add long emotional weddings to her list of things that made her giggle. Maybe she was just punch drunk.

Thea and her mom stepped forward again, both with crystal wine glasses.

John turned to Oliver and Felicity, smiling at them with pride and deep affection. For a moment he too seemed overcome and Felicity held out her free hand to John and he took it.

“John,” Felicity murmured, trying to express with that one word how Oliver and Felicity coming together would never change the incredible bond the three of them shared.

He nodded, just the slightest wetness appearing in his eyes. Felicity took that as a sign he did, but she still intended to give him the words later.

Squeezing her hand, John met Oliver’s eyes, sharing something deep and wordless, before turning back to address the others. “I could talk forever about these two amazing people, the best friends I could ever have. But that will have to wait until after the ceremony.”

There was a mixture of relieved mutterings and soft laughter, but Felicity was focused on the way Oliver’s chest seemed to expand at John’s words.

Then, letting go of Felicity’s hand, John stepped back and lifted the wine. “This wine symbolizes the sum of your life experiences,” he announced, his voice deep and rich.

He turned and poured the dark red wine into Donna’s, saying, “This wine contains within it the sweet flavors of love, joy, wonder, and contentment.” Then John pivoted and poured the same into Thea’s glass, “And, at times, it holds the bitter taste of sadness, pain, and despair.”

The words made Felicity’s eyes burn and her chest tighten.
Then William stepped forward holding a small crystal bowl.

This wedding really was going to kill her.

Giving William an encouraging smile, John continued, “As your lives are now entwined so is the wine.”

Thea and Donna stepped up and poured their glasses into William’s bowl which looked just shy of too heavy in his slender hands. But William held it steady, a look of determination in his young eyes.

Once the wine was combined, John gently put a hand on William’s back, ushering him forward. “When you drink deeply of this cup of life, you invite the full spectrum of experiences into your life.”

This might be a tradition Felicity hadn’t experienced before, but she knew what was coming (they didn’t call her a genius for nothing). She pulled Oliver forward to meet William halfway. The sweet boy looked terrified to spill even a drop.

He didn’t. William smiled proudly as he offered the bowl to Felicity and suddenly she was just as afraid of spilling. It was dark red wine and this was her white wedding dress and she was rather a klutz.

But Oliver’s hands cupped hers, steadying them so she could bring it to her lips and sip.

John smiled and intoned, “As you drink from this cup, you accept the commitment to draw from your marriage all that you need to wash away the bitter flavors of life.”

Oh wow. Thank goodness for Oliver’s hands on hers because she was sure they trembled. Felicity drank and then carefully turned to Oliver, helping guide the bowl to his lips.

“And to savor the sweet flavors you may encounter on your journey together.” And with that, John lifted the bowl out of their hands, holding it up easily. “As you begin your journey together, your families, both born and chosen, are here to accompany and support you.”

Double wow.

Felicity didn’t know where they had found this part of the ceremony but she was so glad they had.

John drank from the bowl and turned to Felicity’s new stepson and offered him a sip. William’s eyes seemed to search out his mother, but she was very busy getting every angle of the ceremony, a camera covering her face, so he lifted nervous and questioning eyes to Oliver.

“You can have a sip,” Oliver murmured, his voice heavy with emotion.

William lifted the bowl and very carefully took a sip, spilling just a bit when he jerked back, his face scrunching up in disgust and producing a laugh from their photographer (who seemed to be watching after all).

Donna stepped up and took the bowl, drinking next, and handing it to Thea. As it was passed from hand to hand, Felicity turned to Oliver, whispering, “I can’t believe how beautiful that was. Thank You.”

Oliver’s lips spread and his dimples deepened. He leaned in until his nose rubbed against hers. “I want to kiss that wine off your lips so damn badly.”
On that note…

“Are we ready to wrap this up?” Captain Mitchell asked. And truly he was a prince among men.

Oliver let out a groan. “God, yes.”

Felicity laughed along with everyone else as Oliver unwound himself from around her. Once they were again facing one another in front of Captain Mitchell, Oliver took her hands again and she took a second to admire the sunset behind him.

They had made it. The sun was still there, painting the ocean in golds, even if it was a bare sliver on the horizon.

And it was beautiful.

“With the power vested in me…”

Felicity filled her lungs with sweet ocean air and fixed her eyes on Oliver, framed in beams of colored lights, love and adoration and happiness radiating from his every molecule.

He was beyond beautiful.

“…by the United States Navy as Captain of the USS Phoenix, I now pronounce you husband and wife!”

“Thank God,” Oliver breathed.

Felicity laughed with sheer happiness as Oliver lurched forward, not waiting for the captain’s permission as he cupped her cheeks and brought his lips to hers.

Felicity’s arms circled his waist, fisting the back of his jacket and whimpering into the kiss. She really didn’t think she was the only one.

Because when their lips touched…it was different.

It wasn’t exceptionally passionate or lustful (there was no tongue at all. Totally PG) yet it felt deeper, truer…oh it was beyond even Felicity’s creative vocabulary. It was just more.

And then…Felicity couldn’t stop smiling and laughing and then they were both smiling and laughing into the kiss. And still Oliver wasn’t letting her go.

Cheers, whoops, and hollers echoed around them, but it wasn’t until the noise had died down that Thea called out, “You still have the glass to break!”

And still they kept kissing.

“Plus, there are kids here,” William yelled from behind Oliver.

Of course, that meant Rene also had to add, “And big kids. No one needs to see all that.”

“Speak for yourself,” Curtis yelled back and Felicity laughed so hard she couldn’t keep the kiss going. She just wasn’t that coordinated.

Oliver lifted his head and beamed down at her. He completely ignored the peanut gallery as he asked, “Do you want to break the glass?”
Was Felicity smiling as big as Oliver was? She must be. “I think that’s the groom’s job.”

But Oliver shook his head. “It’s your heritage. You should get to do it.”

He was so sweet but...

“How big is the glass?” Felicity asked, picking up a foot to show Oliver the delicate, crystal encrusted shoes she was wearing. Not exactly a lot of surface area for glass smashing.

Oliver groaned, deep in his throat, his hand curving over her thigh as his eyes fixated on the glimpse of leg and ankle peeking through the sparkle. Felicity would bet all of last night’s poker winnings he wasn’t thinking about surface area.

When Oliver was finally able to pull his gaze from her foot, his pupils were blown and his voice hoarse as he suggested, “Together?”

Felicity laughed. At the insane perfection of it. Still, she pointed out, “That’s not traditional.”

Oliver shrugged a single shoulder. “And we are?”

“Touché,” Felicity agreed, smiling until her face ached.

Curtis produced the glass wrapped tightly in cloth napkins (green, of course). He threw them an almost giddy smile as he placed it on the deck before them.

Oliver gave Felicity a quick peck on the lips, hesitated then stole two more (slightly longer this time) before turning and wrapping one arm around her waist, pulling her snuggly against his side.

“Ready?”

“Guess so,” Felicity mumbled, feeling oddly nervous. “No, wait. I’m supposed to say something...” She wracked her brain. She had researched this. Ah, yes. “As this glass shatters, so may our marriage never break.”

Oliver sent her a bright smile and squeezed her waist tighter. Then he was calling out, “One. Two. Three.”

Together, Oliver’s shining brown loafer and Felicity’s sparkly sandal came down on the glass, shattering it far easier than she expected.

There was a loud crack and Felicity grinned with sheer joy as five hundred plus voices yelled out as one, “Mazel tov!”

Then Oliver was swinging her into his arms, up off the ground, holding her above him, his face buried in her neck. Felicity wound her arms around his nape and threw back her head as happiness bubbled over.

Then, when Felicity thought it couldn’t possibly get better, the crowd quieted and something caught her eye...

Bubbles.

Actual bubbles. Though it took Felicity a moment to be sure it wasn’t a physical manifestation of her joy.

They might as well have been. Because as the hundreds... thousands of bubbles floated up and
around them, they caught the colors of the sunset, bringing the bright colors out of the sky and scattering it around them.

Felicity turned wide, *amazed* eyes to her family and friends and…all of them were blowing bubbles.

*All* of them.

William and JJ, who sat high and John’s arms. Her mother and Thea. Rene, Dinah, Curtis, Quentin, *Nyssa*…well, not Slade. But then William sent him a disapproving glare and the hardened killer, rolled his eyes and snatched the bubble wand out of the boy’s hand and joined the rest of them.

Slade was the last hold-out.

Then it truly was *everyone*. All five hundred navy service men and women, all blowing bubbles until they filled the runway that serviced dozens of fighter jets, that had fought wars, ended lives and saved them, protected the world…until it was decorated with delicate ethereal bubbles.

It was magic incarnate.

“Oh my…” Felicity breathed, resting her cheek on Oliver’s temple, completely comfortable being held a foot off the ground. “It’s the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.”

“Yes, it is.”

Oliver’s whisper was soft, yet heavy with emotion, and Felicity looked down to see him staring up at her with the dopiest, most love-sick expression she had ever seen. And *that* was saying something.

For the ten-thousandth time that day, her eyes filled with tears. Felicity considered calling Oliver out on his sappiness, but instead she just breathed it in.

“Congratulations, Mr. Queen.”

His grin widened, making him look so young and so very happy. “Congratulations, my beautiful Queen.”

Now that was *beyond* sappy and Felicity really should say something, but then she was sliding down Oliver’s well-toned body, to the hoots and hollers of friend and family and hundreds of almost strangers and he kissed her and…

Felicity completely forgot what she was going to say.
Chapter End Notes

Felicity’s vows…that is absolutely how I see Felicity’s five season character arch from a insecure nerd who is confident in her intelligence and moral core but saw herself as socially inept and less than desirable to the opposite sex. I think there is a ton of cannon evidence of this and when rewatching the series watching her blossom is one of my favorite things.

I know there are plenty of people who interpret her character differently and don’t enjoy the way I write her. I honestly don’t know why they continue to read my stuff other than to spread negativity but I stand behind these vows and my Felicity, who is strong and complex, a deeply empathetic and emotional woman. I truly adore her.

I’d like to thank realityisoverrated for chatting with me and helping me understand Jewish traditions (though it was so long ago now she probably doesn’t even remember). Here are some websites I used to put together this ceremony:

https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-sheva-berakhot/

https://interfaithfamily.com/life_cycle/weddings/the_seven_blessings/

https://www.offsicianeric.com/wine-ceremony/


There are a million ways to put together the perfect wedding, each as unique as we are. I hope you enjoyed mine.

Next week will be the honeymoon, then William’s epilogue. And finally this story will be complete.
Thank you so much for reading.

Emmilyne
Chapter Twenty-One: (Heavenly) Rewards

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

(For summaries of Chapters 1-18 see Previously on (Don’t) Let Me Go here. :)

Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.
“Did you know that Purgatory is really about a second chance?”

The question was a little out of the blue. Oliver knew that. A soft musing breaking the comfortable quiet, over the soothing sounds of surf and breeze rustling the palm trees.

Felicity had been seconds away from dosing, lounging back against Oliver’s chest, her fingers drawing lazy circles on his knees as gentle waves rolled over their tangled legs. But at his question her eyes snapped open and she twisted to peer up at him with that adorable little V etched into her forehead.

Probably because when Oliver became philosophical, he generally wasn’t in a good place. So he sent Felicity a soft reassuring smile and rubbed his lips over her shoulder, tasting the salty combination of sweat and surf.

The problem was doing so made it so hard to maintain a thread of thought.

She was just so...distracting.

His wife.

Oliver breathed her in as he trailed his lips up her neck. His beautiful, intoxicating, adored wife. Certainly, it was better to forget what he was talking about than let Felicity believe for a second any darkness would dare step foot here, on his very favorite island.
Bali had an almost mystical effect on Oliver’s mood, where the world and all its stresses fell away. It had only been four hours since they arrived at the private villa and beach Lyla had arranged as a wedding present (apparently ARGUS was good for something) and he never wanted to leave.

Oliver was pretty sure Felicity felt the same way.

Her, “Can we just stay here? Forever?” as soon as her toes sank into the warm sand, was a pretty good indication.

But a week would have to do. One week exactly before Thea and William joined them for a single night before they all returned to Star City together. Oliver needed to be sure to take advantage of every solitary minute he had alone with his bride.

Not that they hadn’t already taken full advantage.

They’d explored their villa while sharing heated kisses and lingering touches, Oliver pulling out those rare sweet giggles he so adored. They tested various surfaces before settling on the swinging outdoor bed to make love until they were boneless and panting in the warm evening breeze.

God, it was beautiful here. The sun was just starting to sink, the beginning of the golden hour of sunset. Oliver’s new favorite time of day.

It would never not remind Oliver of his wedding and his wife.

His wife.

God, just thinking that word, knowing that it wasn’t a dream or hypothetical or even a plan. It was reality.

It blew Oliver’s mind. Maybe it always would.

Right then, his wife was staring up at him curiously. Felicity had shifted in Oliver’s arms, so her head lay on his bicep instead of his chest and she could meet his eyes.

It left her breasts on full display.

They were naked except for the bikini bottoms that protected his wife’s very delicate places from wayward sand.

God bless private beaches.

Never. Wanted. To. Leave.

“It’s limbo. The space between heaven and hell?” Felicity murmured and, lost in his musings of the flawlessness of this place and his bride, it took Oliver a moment to remember what she was talking about.

When he did, Oliver smiled. It wasn’t often that he knew more about a subject than Felicity. “Actually, it’s the place between heaven and earth,” he told her and she looked intrigued. He adored the deep intellect reflected in her soft blue eyes. “The Catholics believe…and Purgatory is entirely a Catholic concept so I’d say they’re the experts…”

“Indeed,” Felicity agreed, amused. She looked up at Oliver as if there was no place on Earth she’d rather be, lounging in his arms, listening to a college drop out wax poetic about a religion neither of
them belonged to. It was humbling. “I assume the distinction is important?”

Oliver’s lip tipped up in a half-smile. “Very. Because no one goes from Purgatory to Hell. If you’re irredeemable you go directly to Hell. If you have potential, but need a little work, you go to Purgatory.”

Felicity’s eyes brightened, because she got it. Immediately. Of course, she did. No one was smarter than his wife.

“So if you make it to Purgatory, Hell is out of the question? Like a video game you can’t lose? Except,” Felicity pierced her lips as her forehead crinkled in thought, “if you can’t figure out how to get to the next level, you’re kinda stuck?”

Laughing, because how could he not (no one made brilliance as adorable as Felicity), Oliver shook his head. “Uhhh…I think it’s more like, instead of having video games taken away forever,” Felicity gasped in mock horror, “you get one last chance to beat the game and win…all the games ever.”

Not being a ‘gamer’ Oliver didn’t actually know if that made sense, but he tried to go with Felicity’s metaphor (besides, as the father of a ten-year-old boy, he’d better learn quick). Judging by the way she was beaming, it entertained her at the very least.

“And look at you, Oliver Queen, crushing the Game of Purgatory. And now…” Felicity rolled onto her hip and ran her hand up the length of his arm. “You get your Heavenly reward.” She wagged her eyebrows at him, curling her hand over his nape and pulling him down so his laughter was muffled against her lips.

If his wife thought this was heaven, Oliver sure as hell wasn’t going to argue with her.

When Oliver lifted his head, Felicity hummed, tracing the outline of his beard as she mused, “Its too bad you didn’t know that when you were on Lian Yu. Probably would have made it a little less, you know, depressing.”

Would it have? Oliver didn’t know. That idiot boy who was marooned on Lian Yu probably wouldn’t have known what to do with the information.

Pressing one last firm kiss to her lips, Oliver straightened his back and pulled Felicity more tightly into his arms. Lying his chin on the top of her head, he watched as the light from the setting sun danced along the surface of the ocean as he thought about that.

“Fryers called Purgatory ‘the immediate state after death,’” Oliver finally said. “It wasn’t inaccurate but…I always thought of it as a sort of waiting room for Hell. A place to claw your way out of as Hell tried to suck you into its depths.”

“Hmmm…that’s far less hopeful. But I see why you felt that way.” Felicity pressed her lips to his chest before resting her cheek against his skin. “Feeling extra philosophical today?”

“I guess…” Why had he decided, after all this time, to research Purgatory? Oliver had no idea why the impulse hit him. “I did a little google search in the airport.” He tipped his chin down to watch her face as he teased softly, “While you were snoring on my shoulder.”

Felicity sent him a side-eye, wrinkling up her nose. “I don’t snore.” But then her eyes widened in something just shy of horror. “And if I do it is your duty, as my husband, to wake me up if I’m in a public place. So no one can hear me.”
Oliver was so busy basking in the ‘duty as my husband,’ he almost missed the rest of her sentence.

“You snore soft adorable snores. Kitten snores.” Oliver leaned over her and rubbed his scruff (well, beard. Maybe it was time for a trim) along her neck, in all her most ticklish places, until Felicity started to wriggle and convulse with laughter. “No body wakes a sleeping kitten. Especially her husband.”

The possessive growl that emerged in response to his own words was as involuntary as Felicity’s response to his tickling, but she didn’t seem to mind so neither did he.

Besides Oliver was busy soothing the skin he’d tortured with his tongue.

Humming her approval, his wife’s (God, Oliver would never get enough of that word) eyes fluttered shut. “So…are you claiming my kitten snores inspired my husband to seek enlightenment?”

That bought her a nipping kiss to the collarbone and Felicity moaned, arching her back when Oliver sucked the abused flesh into his mouth and brought a hand up to cup her sun-kissed breast. “Absolutely. But if you keep calling me that, your husband will be very happy to find enlightenment between those beautiful thighs. Say the word and I’ll carry you—”

“We’re not going anywhere until that sun is set and the moon is high,” Felicity reprimanded, gesturing a distracted hand to the horizon.

But even as she argued, Felicity shifted so she was lying more across his legs than between, her foot sliding over his calf, her hand kneading his bicep, her back arching, pushing her breast into his hands…so it seemed it was the venue and not the activity she was protesting.

“And given how much I love calling you ‘my husband’…” Felicity broke off in a chuckle as his cock responded to her words by bouncing against the small of her back, “you’re going to have to figure out a way to not drag me off to the bedroom every time I say it.”

“Absolutely,” Oliver agreed, grinning wide. “After our honeymoon.”

He was well aware that this trip to heaven was a temporary one.

So, surely, it would be sacrilegious to waste a second.

Oliver dove down and captured her nipple between his lips. Encouraging little moans told him how pleased she was with his game plan. He sucked as much of her breast as he could into his mouth as he considered his strategy. If his lovely wife wanted to enjoy the sunset, he’d have to be creative.

Once, in his misspent youth, Oliver had indulged in beach sex. Full-on, no plan, no blanket, come-on-it-will-be-sexy beach sex. It had taken months for Laurel to forgive him. (She’d said that was how long it took to remove all the sand).

But this wasn’t Oliver and Felicity’s first trip to the beach. They had their own set of work arounds.

The first time they’d traveled to Bali, Oliver and Felicity had stayed a month, not only basking in the sun, but treating his PTSD with the most pleasant exposure therapy ever imagined. It had taken awhile before his body had accepted he was safe here, that the only dangers on this island came from Mother Nature and, science and technology what it was, those generally gave fair warning.
In far less time than he’d expected, Oliver could sit on the beach, smell the salt water as it lapped at his feet, feel the sand between his toes and watch the ocean…at complete peace.

It had been so damn hard to leave. Maybe they shouldn’t have. The hell with Ivy Town. They should have settled in Bali. Bought a little piece of paradise and taken tourists zip-lining over a waterfall.

“Hey,” Felicity whispered, cupping Oliver’s cheek, sounding not nearly as out of breath as she had only moments ago. She tapped her fingers against his temple and asked gently, “What’s going on in here?”

Oliver hadn’t even realized his concentration had drifted and he gave the tip of Felicity’s breast a soft kiss in apology. Talk about bad honeymoon etiquette.

“I was thinking.” Oliver took another deep breath of the salt air, his eyes drifting to the ocean, “that I’m at peace.” He smiled. Maybe a little of that openness he’d promised would make up for his distractibility. “I was thinking about all the things that would have once transported me to the worst part of my life and how they now bring me nothing but happiness. And it’s all because of my incredible wife.”

The kiss he received over his heart told him Felicity liked his answer. Dragging his eyes from the sunset, Oliver looked down at his (even more) beautiful bride and what he saw in her eyes…

She took his breath away.

“You got all that from a Wikipedia article about Purgatory?” Felicity asked in a husky whisper.

Oliver chuckled, shaking his head. “No, I didn’t need Wikipedia for that. But…” Perhaps deep conversation was going to be their foreplay this evening. “But it helped me realize getting stranded on Lian Yu wasn’t my punishment, it was my chance at redemption. So maybe…maybe something good did happen in those five years away.”

It was a thought that deserved a whole lot more contemplation. But that could wait. His wife deserved his full focus and right then her fingernails were running gently along his chin, making Oliver want to purr.

“No one has taken more advantage of their second chance than you,” Felicity murmured and Oliver leaned into her touch. He didn’t even feel the urge to argue with her and wasn’t that a fucking miracle? She seemed to agree because her grin widened. “I think you’ve definitely earned your way into Heaven.”

Okay, that was maybe too far for Oliver’s healing self-image.

Tears pricked his eyes and his voice dropped when Oliver replied, “If not, I have plenty of time. Not planning to leave this earth any time soon.”

Felicity’s fingers faltered, a dozen different emotions flashing across her face before it settled into a wide grin. “Oh but, Mr. Queen, don’t you know? You’re already there. Surely this,” she gestured around to the sand and surf and multicolored sky, “is Heaven.”

Oliver laughed, more in wonder than anything else. Hadn’t he been thinking the exact same thing.

If Lian Yu was Purgatory…Bali was Heaven.

Their own personal Heaven.
“I stand corrected,” Oliver conceded, punctuating his words with a soft kiss. He had never had less of a desire to argue.

“Mmm,” Felicity hummed as he pulled back. “Look at you, already husbanding so well.” The hand on Oliver’s cheek gave him a gentle, teasing pat. “You must have taken John’s advice to heart.”

“John’s speech?” Oliver asked, then scoffed when Felicity nodded. If his wife wanted to tease he was only too happy to join in. “I know it was a damn long speech, but I think I’d remember if Digg said I should agree with everything you said. Maybe you’re thinking of Quentin.”

Felicity rolled her eyes (though Oliver was certain Quentin had said just that). “After all the Tagay you had, I wouldn’t be surprised if you forgot quite a bit,” she goaded, referring to the traditional Filipino shots they had all indulged in.

“I was no where near that drunk,” Oliver defended with a laugh. Or drunk at all. As if he would chance forgetting a second of his wedding day. Or night.

“Mmm hmm,” the imp taunted. “Well, then you will remember that John’s advice was to always admit when you’re wrong.”

Any (slight) offense Oliver was feeling melted away and he grinned. His best man had indeed given that advice and it had been far better than Quentin’s.

Then Felicity’s grin spread. “And we both know he was talking like…98% to you.”

“Ha!”

True or not (it was probably true), Oliver retaliated by flipping Felicity onto her back and tormenting all her most ticklish spots with his fingers and facial hair, making her laugh until she was breathless and pleading with him to stop.

And, excellent husband that he was, Oliver gave in. Pressing a final kiss to her belly, he relaxed beside Felicity in the sand, his head pillowed on her soft belly.

Hugging Felicity to him, contentment turned Oliver’s muscles to the consistency of warm bread dough as memories of the night before assailed him and he murmured, “It was an excellent speech.”

Felicity’s fingers began to card through Oliver’s hair, her laughter fading and her breathing returning to normal. “It was an excellent night,” she corrected, her voice as warm and as lazy as he felt.

It certainly had been. And not just the wedding night (which really had been more of a wedding morning), the whole evening. From the moment he met Felicity’s eyes down that ridiculously long aisle, until they passed out for what amounted to a quick nap before their flight to Bali.

After the ceremony, Oliver had expected to go back to the aircraft carrier’s lounge, maybe to the mess hall. He and Felicity hadn’t really thought past the ceremony…and, well, the honeymoon and wedding night.

He couldn’t speak for his wife, but Oliver’s brain had skipped straight from ‘I do,’ to naked and sweaty in the suite they had booked in the Manila Grand.

But luckily someone had made up for his oversight. Because Oliver hadn’t realized how much
celebrating with their friends and family would mean to...all of them.

Oliver and Felicity’s personal guests (even Slade), in all their finery, had been escorted by Captain Mitchell, his Executive Officer (Nyssa’s date?), and the ship’s Chief Petty Officer onto the streets of Manila to a restaurant a few blocks from the peer.

At first glance, it looked like a hole in the wall, but down the stairs was a richly decorated local bistro, steeped in Filipino culture, with a large dance floor, opening up to a patio with twinkling lights.

The Phoenix’s Chief Petty Officer was Filipino-American and kept up a constant, rapid-fire conversation with the staff and owners, resulting in a steady stream of of native dishes and drinks. Apparently the Filipinos weren’t into champagne, or wine in general, but liquor flowed freely.

In fact, their hosts insisted they start the night with a traditional wedding good-luck ritual. A shot of gin (the Tagay Felicity had teased him about) offered up to the ‘spirits.’ That single Tagay glass was refilled over and over and they had better hope the liquor killed any bugs they might have, because every single adult drank from that glass. Starting with the bride.

Oliver didn’t realize he was chuckling until Felicity tugged at his hair, demanding sleepily, “Watcha laughin’ about?”

The slight slur to her words was a sure sign Felicity was close to drifting off again. Not that Oliver could blame her. It had been a whirlwind of a twenty-four hours.

Good lord, had it really been only twenty-four hours?

A slightly sharper tug brought Oliver back to the question at hand. “I was just remembering when you took the first Tagay.”

“Ech.” Without looking, Oliver knew Felicity’s face was contorted with the memory. “It tasted like Pine-Sol. And it’s not nice to make fun of the bride.”

“I’m not making fun.” Not in the slightest. “You made the most adorable face.” Oliver turned his head so his chin rested on her belly and he could gaze up at her. “Not unlike that one.”

Oliver tapped her scrunched up nose and Felicity stuck out her tongue at him, making his grin widen. “Pine-Sol, I tell you. How could you take shot after shot of that stuff?”

“The point of shots, my wife, is to drink them so quickly you don’t taste it.”

All Oliver got was a half-hearted, “Hmph,” for that, so maybe his use of ‘wife’ softened the way it did him.

“Haven’t you ever had gin before?” For a girl who grew up in Vegas, Felicity would get trashed on Never Have I Ever…which could be very fun and they should totally do that while they were here. Responsibility free.

“Of course,” his adorable bride scoffed. “And it tasted like Pine-Sol.”

How could Oliver not laugh at that? “But you thought this wouldn’t?”

“I didn’t think about the taste, I just took the shot,” Felicity argued huffily. “It’s tradition. I’m the bride. I had to drink it or the Filipino spirits would haunt us.”
Oliver laughed harder, not even a little cowed by her annoyed face. She was so damn adorable.

“Seriously, Oliver, given our lives, we need all the help we can get. I’d prefer we get as many spirits on our side as possible.” He couldn’t argue with that, so he just nodded and pressed another kiss to her belly as Felicity added, “Plus, I was hoping it would be better quality stuff and would therefore taste less like hardwood floor cleaner.”

“That was the good stuff,” Oliver teased, chuckling. “It’s supposed to taste like pine. It’s made from juniper tree berries.”

“Blech.” Felicity shuddered. “I don’t understand people. I don’t understand you. How could you drink so much of that?”

He really hadn’t had that many shots. But instead of rolling his eyes, Oliver grinned and asked, “Is that judgement I’m hearing?”

Slowly, Felicity shook her head, looking almost as intoxicated as she had last night as she traced the whirl of Oliver’s ear. “I love seeing you like that. Relaxed. Happy.”

Oliver’s heart clenched and flipped over. It got him every time, seeing the intense love he felt echoed back in Felicity’s voice, reflected in her eyes. Every single time.

Pressing reverent kisses on the underside of Felicity’s breasts, kisses that quickly became more than just reverent…Oliver moved up her body, tracing the path with his lips until he was over her. He finished with a lingering kiss to his wife’s lips and smiled down into her eyes.

“I’m feeling pretty relaxed and…” Oliver sucked Felicity’s lower lip between his. It was too luscious to resist. “Happy,” though happy didn’t begin to cover it, “right now and that has nothing to do with gin.”

Humming her approval, Felicity stretched her arms out and wrapped them almost double around Oliver’s neck as she chased his lips.

Several long, slow kisses later Oliver was feeling rather intoxicated himself. “Actually, I’m damn sure it had nothing to do with gin last night either.”

Felicity’s happy laughter bubbled out. “So you’re saying that when you agreed to Tinikling, you were just high on life?”

Oliver reared back, shooting her a mock glare, and watched Felicity bite her lip to keep her laughter from overwhelming her. He was having a hard time suppressing a grin himself.

“First of all, I was high on my beautiful bride and second, don’t you ever…ever tell anyone I Tinkled at our wedding reception.”

There was no containing her hilarity then. Felicity convulsed with laughter, hiding her face in Oliver’s neck and fuck if he didn’t smile proudly as he held her to him. At that moment, he wouldn’t care if videos of him Tinikling set the internet on fire as long as it gave her joy.

When his beaming bride could speak again, she argued, “Okay, firstly it’s Tin-i-kling, not Tinkling. As much as I’m sure you would enjoy it if the dance shared it’s name with the toddler version of peeing, it does not. Also I don’t think ‘Tinikling’ is a verb. So if I said anything it would be, ‘Oliver danced the traditional Filipino dance, Tinikling—”

“Which you won’t say either.” Because it was close enough to ‘tinkling’ to remind people of the
The giggles were back. “But you danced it so well.”

“That wasn’t dancing—”

Felicity’s next bark of laughter was incredulous.

But Oliver kept arguing (for fun), “That thing William and your mother did with the fans and the lanterns was ‘dancing’—”

“That was actually two different dances—”

“Doesn’t matter,” Oliver asserted, dangerously close to dissolving into laughter himself. “The point is,” he waved his hand as he tried to find a word that wasn’t ‘Tinikling’ or ‘dancing’, “that was a contest of agility.”

“It was not a contest!” Felicity gasped.

Oliver gave her his best innocent look, setting himself comfortably in the cradle of her thighs. No place he’d rather be. “Felicity, they rhythmically move huge bamboo sticks faster and faster with the objective of trying to trip you.”

Even more incredulous laughter followed. “That is not the objective. What am I saying? It’s a dance! There is no objective! Other then to…to…to dance!”

It was true that when Felicity and William had tried Tinikling, the Filipino dancers holding the poles seemed to move them at a speed they could succeed at. But William was a kid (though impressively athletic) and Felicity the bride, with miles of gaudy fabric to hold up, so Oliver was sure they were being kind.

“Tell that to Slade.” Oliver grinned widely as he remembered the Australian falling flat on his ass. Deathstroke, taken down by bamboo dance sticks. He hoped someone had a video of that.

It gave him such joy.

“They indulged Slade and your insane competitive streak. Not because that was what the dance was about, but because it was entertaining.”

Oliver had no issues with that. “Hey, the number of times Slade knocked me on my ass during training…let me have this.”

Because while Slade, Curtis, and Rene had been bested by those sticks, Oliver hadn’t tripped once. And, yes, he was smug.

Which also might be why Oliver was perfectly okay with the videos going viral. No matter how ridiculous the name of the dance.

“I’ll give you that it was impressive—”

“Thank you.”

“You are a wonderful dancer.”

Okay. Oliver really should have seen that one coming.
“I’ll give you dancer…” Oliver mock growled as he once again attacked.

Oliver had barely resumed his tickle assault and Felicity was laughing so hard she couldn’t speak. By the time he took mercy on her, she had wriggled herself a cavity in the sand and impressive erection from her husband (if he did say so himself).

He let her catch her breath, his hands moving to stroke instead of tickle as Oliver trailed kisses over Felicity’s cheekbone.

But unfortunately, Felicity took that as an opportunity to say, “It’s too late.” She weaved her fingers into Oliver’s hair, completely uncaring of the sand. “You can’t put the cat back in the bag. Now that I know you’re a good dancer, I expect you to take me dancing.”

Okay…what?

Oliver froze, sending her a concerned look. Maybe he shouldn’t have been quite that merciful. “Felicity, that wasn’t dancing—”

Felicity’s eyebrows shot up. “Even if it wasn’t, you danced with me for hours. Are you claiming someone else—”

“Hell no.” As if Oliver would have let Felicity spend the night in another man’s arms.

“Thank you. Since I wasn’t the one who emptied several bottles of gin and rum, I was positive my dancing partner was my husband.”

And the use of ‘my husband’ was a low blow and, judging by the look on Felicity’s face, she thought it was the winning jab.

But dancing at his wedding was one thing, making it a thing they did? In public? Nah uh.

Oliver’s best bet might be to move away from the dancing topic. His ability to say ‘no’ to Felicity was at an all-time low (and it wasn’t very high on the best days).

“I had a lot of help emptying those bottles of rum and gin,” Oliver argued. “In fact, I was far from the chief culprit—”

“But you’re not denying—”

“And there was plenty of alcohol in that fruity concoction you were drinking.” And given relative tolerances, Oliver was pretty sure they’d been equally intoxicated.

Her mouth snapped shut and Oliver threw her a triumphant smirk before moving back to the more pleasurable task of tracing her ear with his tongue (and that was saying something, since winning a verbal battle with Felicity was one of life’s greatest pleasures).

But his bride didn’t seem quite ready to concede, arguing (rather lamely), “Not all the pitchers of juice were full of booze.”

That wasn’t even worthy of a rebuttal. He had succeeded I distracted her from dancing. Now he just needed to seal the deal. Oliver sucked her earlobe into his mouth and when she arched into him, he thought they were finally moving onto—

“You had better hope they weren’t all full of booze given the amount your son was drinking.”

Fuck. Never underestimate Felicity S—Queen.
Felicity *Queen*.

But even the thought of her new name wasn’t enough to keep Oliver’s relaxed, playful mood from evaporating.

Oliver’s head jerked up, his eyes wide. “I knew William was having too much fun! Samantha said—natural childhood high my ass.”

He was a horrible father. Ten year-old! Fuck, not even Oliver had been drinking at ten. Samantha had been right—

But Felicity was laughing and—

What the actual fuck?

“This isn’t funny, Felicity. William is a *child*…”

Oh God, Oliver was going to have a panic attack.

And *still* Felicity was laughing. “*Relax,* Oliver—”

Oliver opened his mouth to protest. Loudly. But Felicity slapped her hand over his mouth, effectively stopping the flow of words.

“It wouldn’t be funny *if* a ten year-old got drunk,” Felicity agreed. Her eyes were still dancing but her words were sincere and it had the tension starting to bleed out of him. “The only thing William was drunk on was life and sugar. From the *non*-alcoholic juice.” Oliver sagged with relief.

“Mostly.”

“What!”

Was she *trying* to give him a heart attack?

More of that damn laughter. “Oh my God, your face—”

“Felicity!”

“You are going to be such a high-strung dad—”

“Fel-ic-*ity*!”

“Oh, okay…” Felicity ran her hands over his neck and down his shoulders, obviously trying to soothe him, but she’d better do better than *that,* because Oliver was starting to worry she was going to be a little too laid-back a mom. “I know for certain William wasn’t drunk on alcohol, because I was right next to him when he *accidentally* drank the wrong punch.”

Oliver’s eyes widened. Fuck—

“And I watched him spit it out. Seconds before he demanded to know why someone put Christmas tree and rubbing alcohol in the punch.” As soon as she got the words out, Felicity once again convulsed with laughter. She’d clearly been looking forward to sharing this story.

And honestly Oliver was too relieved (dizzy with it actually) to say anything more than, “*Thank God,*” sending his wife into new waves of hilarity. She really needed to take this more seriously. “Felicity, Samantha just agreed to move to Star City. This is just what she needs to change her mind—”
“Honey, Samantha was there the whole time. If William got into the alcohol, it was Samantha’s fault as much as any one else’s,” Felicity argued, though she did look sympathetic. “And the fact that William was having such a great time was what made her decision for her.”

Okay, maybe Oliver was over-reacting. And maybe William spitting out spiked punch was a little bit hilarious.

It allowed Oliver to smile down at Felicity as the last of her laughter faded. “I think we can thank your mother for that.”

Donna really had been wonderful with William, coaxing him onto the dance floor, getting him to try new dishes, making sure he never felt out of place. William had looked happier than Oliver had ever seen him.

But this time it was Felicity who winced, her breath hissing and her hands covering her face. “Oh my God, William…my mother…”

Oliver didn’t have to ask which memory had elicited that reaction.

But he decided to anyway.

“What’s wrong, honey? It’s not because William asked Captain Mitchell, loudly, ‘Does everyone know my dad’s the Green Arrow,’ is it?” Felicity’s groan only spurred Oliver on. “No, you must be talking about when your mom turned to you and said, ‘Yes, hon, does everyone know my new son-in-law is the Green Arrow?’”

“It’s not funny!” Felicity moaned from between her fingers and Oliver knew he’d hit the jack-pot. Turn about was fair play, after-all.

Granted it wouldn’t have been funny at all if the Filipino locals knew (or cared) what they were talking about. Or if Lyla hadn’t explained that the Phoenix was the ship assigned to work with ARGUS and, as such, every person on it had been vetted and had a high-level security clearance.

In fact, if any man or women aboard leaked so much as a word of anything that happened…from the rescue mission on Lian Yu to the wedding itself, they could be tried for treason. It was both an incredible relief and remarkably humbling.

“Laugh it up.” Felicity scrunched her nose at him. “I’m gonna make you sit next to me when my mother lectures me on safety and honesty and blah…blah…blah—”

“Wait,” Oliver interrupted. Was she serious? Had Felicity really managed to avoid Donna for the rest of the evening. “You didn’t talk to your mother about it? We were there for hours.”

Felicity shrugged and Oliver thought she might have been trying for innocent, but it came off mostly as guilty. “It was my wedding.”

As excuses go, it wasn’t a bad one. Plus, the way Felicity was chewing on her lips made it impossible to be annoyed. And he wasn’t but…

“What happened to being more open and honest? To not running?” Oliver teased, as gently as he could manage.

“Hey. I made those vows to you, not my mother.” The way Felicity said it was more sassy than defensive so Oliver felt justified in his eye-roll. “Besides,” she gave in impish smile, placing a nibbling kiss on his chin (because apparently she too was willing play dirty when it came to
diversionary tactics), “I was dancing with my devilishly handsome, incredibly coordinated, not-at-all-bad-at-dancing husband.”

Damn it.

Looked like his diversionary tactics had failed. Also, Oliver knew where she was going with this and Felicity wasn’t going to win. Compliments and husband-calling wasn’t going to make him cave.

“No.”

Best to cut this off at the quick. No repeat performances. Nope. Uh uh. No way.

Felicity’s innocent look was uncomplicated this time as she blinked up at Oliver with wide blue eyes. “Don’t be so hard on yourself. You are an excellent dancer.”

Oliver huffed. Please. “You could tell that by all the swaying in place, could you?”

“I could tell by the way my husband moved to the music, with me, over the floor. Which is, by definition, dancing.” And the grin Felicity gave him…she knew damn well Oliver found it almost irresistible.

“I don’t like dancing, hon.” There was only one card left to play. Oliver pulled out the full puppy-dog treatment.

Usually that worked.

This time, Felicity rolled her eyes and gave him an indulgent half-smile (which ironically meant there was a very low chance of Oliver getting what he wanted).

“You claim to hate swimming too,” Felicity reminded him and...Oliver had no idea what that had to do with anything. “Oh and look, the sunset’s over. The moons up.”

“Uh…” Eyebrows crinkling, Oliver turned his head to look over the ocean. Sure enough, the moon was starting to reflect on the ocean and the villa’s lights had come on, keeping them bathed in soft light. “As far as subject changes go, that rivals your most abrupt.”

Not that Oliver was complaining.

“I wasn’t changing the subject. Now, up.” Felicity shoved at him, trying to dislodge him. But even if she had caught him off guard (which she hadn’t), the sand and his body had her good and trapped there.

Oliver grinned down at her. Smug.


Fine.

Talk about no fun. Was Felicity actually upset that he wasn’t agreeing to take her dancing? If it meant that much to her…

Dammit!

Grunting, Oliver rolled over and watched his almost-naked wife stand and stretch. Damn she looked good in the moonlight.
Felicity caught him looking and sent Oliver a smug (and sultry) look of her own.

Not mad then.

Good, because this was a game Oliver knew the rules to. He was rather good at it, in fact.

Oliver stretched out, leaning back on his elbows, which he knew brought his abs into definition. Not to mention his cock. His erection had waned with the talk of (very) underage drinking, but rebounded quickly.

“As I was saying,” Felicity tried to sound in-control, but Oliver could tell by her breathing and the way her eyes kept straying that she was far from unaffected. “You claim to hate swimming and you claim to hate dancing, but on the occasions when you joined me in both, not only did you excel at them, but you enjoyed yourself. Don’t pretend you didn’t. You’re a terrible liar.”

He couldn’t. In fact, Oliver couldn’t find one good reason to try. But if he told her Felicity was right, he was done for.

“I enjoyed the company. Not the activity,” Oliver argued, since it was the only rebuttal he had.

It clearly wasn’t a good one, as Felicity’s confidence only seemed to grow. She sent him a saucy grin, walking backwards into the ocean, her breasts taking on a mouthwatering glow in the dim light. “Luckily, I’m not asking you to do either without me. So tonight, you are going to show off your outstanding swimming technique and tomorrow we can both enjoy your coordination on the dance floor.”

Okay, Felicity’s tone was a little too triumphant.

“You know being good at something has nothing to do with enjoying it, right?” Oliver called out as he uncurled himself from his comfortable spot in the sand. He was scraping the bottom of the barrel as far as arguments went.

But he had to try something, because he was already following her into the water like a moth to the flame. Oliver didn’t dislike swimming nearly as much as he disliked Felicity being out of touching range.

Shooting him a challenging look, Felicity continued to out-distance him (they had to walk pretty far before the water even hit her waist at low tide in this private cove). “Other than not wanting to look stupid, I can’t think of a single reason why anyone would not like swimming or dancing. And you, my love, look anything but stupid.”

Oliver couldn’t say the praise wasn’t affecting him. But still…

“How about the long hours every summer I was forced to spend with an Olympic swim couch or the years of ballroom dancing lessons so I could be paraded around at QC parties.” God, Oliver hadn’t thought about that for years but, yup, that was why he hated those things. “In fact, I think there is a direct correlation between being good at these things and hating them.”

Moira Queen might have meant well, but she was very good at sucking the fun out of childhood activities.

Felicity froze, staring at him with wide-eyes and Oliver wondered if he’d gone too far. If now she was feeling sorry for him and felt bad for insisting—

“Oliver, do you realize that you spent the first 22 years of your life living to spite your parents?”
Okay, he hadn’t expected that. Shaking his head, Oliver found himself sputtering, “No, I—”

“Yeah, I really think you did. Every decision you made. You didn’t choose you’re life’s direction based on what you wanted, you just went with the opposite of what they wanted.” Felicity shook her head, looking entirely too sure of her revelation. “And you were so damn charming no one realized you were just being obstinate. And stubborn. Which now that I think about it, makes complete sense, because obstinate and stubborn…kinda define you.”

Oliver didn’t hear the rest of her ramble, brilliant as he was sure it was, because he dove under the surface and used that Olympic level training. (Though he’d refused to compete after the forth grade, which may or may not prove Felicity’s point.)

When he emerged, Oliver didn’t give Felicity a chance to (continue to) out brilliant him. He just yanked her into his arms and slanted his mouth over hers.

It was quite awhile before she was able to say anything, actually. It was hard to speak with your spouse’s tongue in your mouth and vis versa.

When he pulled back, it was only enough for Oliver to breathe against her lips, “I’d like to offer a compromise.”

Chuckling and short of breath, Felicity gave Oliver a slow grin. “A compromise, huh?”

Waggling his eyebrows, Oliver countered with, “Isn’t that what marriage is all about?” But before Felicity could respond, he dove back in to suck her lower lip into his mouth until she moaned and dug her nails into his shoulders.

When he was certain Felicity’s brain was clouding and her focus entirely on him, Oliver pulled back and offered, “I’ll agree to play in the water with you,” he hadn’t gotten to do that much as a kid, but he’d like to learn, “as much as you want.”

Then before she could answer (or process), Oliver gave her one more hard kiss and he lifted her high…

“Oliver!” Felicity let out an adorable squeak as her lips tore from his and she fumbled for his shoulders.

Grinning wide, Oliver warned, “Hold your breath.”

He didn’t give her a chance to do anything but comply. Oliver just threw her with all the power the awkward angle allowed. Felicity gave a muffled yelp that was quickly followed by a splash.

Oliver tried not to laugh as he watched his gorgeous wife go under only to emerge seconds later with a gasp, whipping her wet hair from her face. All he could do then was beam at her.

And get a face full of salt water.

Not that Oliver expected anything less. His wife wasn’t one to surrender easily.

Or at all.

“I really don’t see how my being manhandled is a compromise,” Felicity argued, following up the hair whip with a full on splash attack.

Oliver kept a hand up to block the worst of the spray, his face turned away (but his grin didn’t
waver). “You wanted to play. Besides, you love being manhandled.”

Not that Felicity had ever admitted that. But Oliver didn’t need her to explicitly tell him what she liked and didn’t like. His body knew hers.

There was a temporary pause in the splashing, where Felicity just blinked at him, clearly not expecting to be called out like that. It was kinda adorable. “I—”

Oliver didn’t make her (let her) come up with a response, witty or otherwise. He dove for her, making Felicity squeal and swim out of reach. He could have caught her easily (and she knew it) but it was more fun if he let her wiggle out of his grasp a few times first.

It didn’t last long. Oliver didn’t have that kind of willpower. Soon he was pulling his wife, breathless and laughing, into a firm grasp from behind. One hand splayed low on her belly. The other cupped a breast as his mouth fell to her shoulder to lap at salt water and skin.

“Got you,” Oliver murmured, dragging his lips up the curve of Felicity’s neck to her ear, where he let out a smug chuckle. “Knew I would.”

Felicity gave an adorable huff, even as she pressed back into him. This was the way Oliver wanted to spend his time in the ocean. Always.

“Arrogant as ever,” Felicity murmured but there was no insult or reprimand in her voice. It was low and raspy as her head lolled back, rolling over Oliver’s shoulder. “And I would like to point out that this is not a compromise. This is a foregone conclusion. The item up for consideration is you taking me dancing tomorrow night.”

Ugh. His wife was tenacious.

It was nothing new. In fact Oliver loved that about her, but he’d really hoped to distract her from that particular plan because now…he wasn’t in the best position for negotiation.

The way Felicity was wriggling in his arms, her bikini clad ass pressed to his very naked erection in the warm ocean…ten more seconds and he would agree to whatever she asked for. Oliver couldn’t even claim ‘duress’ given he had used the same tactics.

But Oliver had one more play left. And it was a good one.

“Fine,” Oliver muttered between laving kisses to the crook of her neck. “I’ll agree to take you dancing tomorrow.” Felicity’s excited squeal almost made him feel guilty. “Slow dancing. The type that requires zero skill and a whole lot of swaying, all pressed up against my gorgeous wife.” And he couldn’t say that sounded half-bad, even though he was still angling to get out of that as well. “All while I glare at anyone who so much as looks your way.”

Oliver proceeded to demonstrate by spinning her in his arms, pulling her in tight and swaying in the water while Felicity laughed, stretching her arms out and around his neck. “No Samba or Mambo. Check.”

“No Waltzing or the Fox Trot.” God, Oliver hated the Fox Trot.

Felicity’s grin turned naughty and maybe Oliver should have been concerned, but he couldn’t bring himself to. If he was in trouble, it was the very best kind.

“I can agree to that,” Felicity murmured, tipping her head back and playing with the wet ends of Oliver’s hair. “But I should tell you, I have this fantasy about us dancing in one of those dark
clubs.” She broke off with an eyelid flutter and tiny moan that made his cock jump and he pulled her closer. “Pressed together…so tight…moving to the beat…”

Oh yeah, Oliver knew exactly what Felicity was talking about. The dancing that was practically semi-public sex. But while his cock was saying ‘hell yes’…

“As incredible as that sounds, the problem with those places is they tend to have a lot of people. Very close together.” Once upon a time, Oliver had spent ridiculous amounts of time in those places. Misspent youth and all that. Now they just made him tense and uncomfortable, but more importantly, “If anyone so much as brushed up against you I would have to break their wrist.”

Or anything else that dared touch his wife.

Oliver’s possessiveness when it came to Felicity completely overwhelmed any illicit thrill from exhibitionism. Unfortunately.

Felicity’s eyes widened, a choked sound emerging from her parted lips, and Oliver wasn’t sure if it was from amusement or shock…or arousal.

Whatever it was, Felicity quickly turned it into a pout. A fucking sexy pout. “That’s too bad. I’ve had that fantasy since you owned Verdant.”

Now it was Oliver’s turn to groan. It had been a long time since he’d owned Verdant. Just the thought of Felicity having fantasies back then…

“Verdant might be empty but Thea still owns it. I’m sure I can arrange a…date night once we get back home.” Oliver’s voice was a husky rumble as he made the promise, already coming up with all sorts of delicious plans. It was inspiring really.

A gleeful sound fell from Felicity’s lips and she bounced in the water, sending ripples around them. “You’re the best husband ever.”

The look on her face made Oliver feel like he’d hung the fucking moon. He’d refurbish the entire club for a single night for that look.

Oliver leaned down to recapture her lips, but he’d barely gotten in a nibble when Felicity whispered, “And we’ll go slow dancing tomorrow night at that bistro on the south side of the island.”

That made him pause. Just for a second, before Oliver got back to the business of a slow, tasting kiss. He knew exactly the place Felicity was talking about and it wouldn’t be awful taking her there. He could stand a little swaying to the music if it made her smile.

Felicity melted into the kiss, moaning and rubbing her nipples against his chest. Undoubtedly thinking the conversation was over. That she had won.

But Oliver wasn’t done. Not by a long shot.

A happy wife was worth a lot more than a little slow dancing, but Oliver had a much better plan in mind. One also guaranteed to make Felicity smile for days.

Oliver dragged his lips to her cheek, across to her ear, where he whispered, “You’re assuming you’ll be able to walk tomorrow night.”

He hadn’t been subtle, Oliver expected a reaction, but the groan Felicity let out…he felt that one in
his cock. Her eyes rolled back into her head and her fingers spasmed as she moaned, “Ol-i-ver.”

She got his meaning.

That didn’t mean it would hurt to drive the message home. So to speak.

“Even though our wedding night was…” Oliver trailed off, the memory derailing him for a moment, suddenly at a loss as to how to describe it.

“Beautiful,” Felicity supplied with a breathless sigh.

Yes.

Oliver hummed his agreement, pulling Felicity in tight and closing his eyes. Had it really only been hours ago?

By the time they’d stumbled into that giant bed in the Grand, they’d both been physically and emotional exhausted. Happy, deliriously so, but still so tired.

The industrious and passionate night Oliver had planned gave way to a slow and sleepy love making…and, yes, complete sap that he was, what he did with his new wife was always love-making.

Traditional and not very imaginative, their first time as a married couple was beautiful none-the-less, full of soft thorough caresses and endless gazing into each other’s eyes. Sleep beckoned but their love making was unhurried, lasting until the sun started to filter through the drawn curtains.

Oliver had to shake himself to get himself refocused on the present. And all the industrious and very imaginative ways he planned to spend the rest of their week.

Starting as soon as possible.

“It was beautiful,” Oliver agreed, “but…”

Felicity looked up at him with a single eyebrow raised. “But?”

“But we didn’t have the time…or energy…for all I had planned.” Oliver purposely dropped his voice as he said it and watched Felicity try to suppress a smile (and a shudder). “I had so many plans.” He sighed dramatically. “In fact, I’ve had nothing but plans since our kiss in your doorway. And we’ve had nothing but interruptions.”

Felicity swallowed, licking her lips. “I wouldn’t say we were interrupted every time—”

“There hasn’t been nearly enough time for…just not enough time.” Wasn’t that just the story of their lives. “For a proper reunion. To celebrate. To show you how much I love you—”

“Oliver…” Felicity started to argue, though her eyelids fluttered and her head fell back as she took in his words.

Nipping her ear, Oliver grinned against the soft skin of her neck. “To bask in being alive and in love. Being together. Forever.”

He hadn’t meant to growl the last part but he did. And he swore Felicity’s knees gave out.

Oliver looped an arm under her ass and pulled her up. Felicity took the cue to wrap her legs around his hips, running nails down his back and meeting his glaze with unfocused eyes.
“Well, if I know my husband,” Felicity grinned as Oliver let out another involuntary growl, “he’s going to use the time we have now to full advantage.” This time she leaned in and gave his neck a nip. “No worries, I’m prepared for a marathon to end all marathons.”

“Mmm mhm…” Oliver shook his head, even as he tipped his head to the side so Felicity could run her teeth along his throat. “Not a marathon. The Olympics. A marathon implies only one event and that’s not nearly enough. I was promised the Orgasm Olympics.”

Felicity seemed to lose her focus. She gave Oliver’s neck an uncoordinated nip before burying her face there. He moved his hands to her ass, pulling her closer until his erection was trapped exactly where he wanted it. One hand on each butt cheek, he massaged the warm muscle and rolled her hips against him until incoherent sounds started to fall from her lips like rain.

“In fact,” Oliver rasped against her cheek, “I was promised an entire day between your thighs. A promise I’ve been waiting oh so patiently to fulfill.” He licked up her neck and around the whirl of her ear, before finally sucking the lobe into his mouth. “But now we have the time. So sun up to sun set tomorrow I’m collecting. And if you still want to go dancing after…then by all means—”

Felicity interrupted by yanking Oliver’s head back and shoving her tongue in his mouth. Yeah, that was more like it.

Because seriously they had an insane amount of time to make up for.

Felicity’s kiss was wild and intense and, God, Oliver loved it when she got aggressive. By the time she decided oxygen was important her nipples were hard pebbles against his chest and his back stung from the ravages of her nails. Fuck, he swore his wife had just sucked any sense he had clean out of his head.

“Um…yeah…so we can go dancing later. Another day. After tomorrow,” Felicity babbled, nodding as she said it. “After…”

Oliver grinned and he had no doubt it was wolffish. “Oh, honey, if you think there is ever gonna be an after in this marriage…”

He let his sentence hang there, allowing his better half’s vibrant imagination to fill in the blank.

Felicity’s needy little whimper told him it had and her nod became even more frantic. She even gave his chest a little pat. “You’re right. Of course, you’re right. What was I thinking? Not after. During. Intermission. Or half-time. Whatever they have during the Olympics. They have something like that during the Olympics, right? For a short…a very short…rest?”

Oliver wanted to laugh. He really did, but he didn’t have the breath. “Did I say sun up to sun down? I meant sun down to sun down. I need a full twenty-four hours to—”

“Well, then you’d better get started.” Felicity’s grin took up her entire face, insanely bright in the moonlight. “The sun’s been set for minutes already. You’re way behind.”

God, he loved this woman.

“Yes, ma’am.” Except the ‘ma’am’ came out more like ma—gghhhh, because Felicity reached between them, her hand ghosting over his cock and balls. It took Oliver a moment to realize what she was doing and he smiled. “Checking for sand?”

Felicity’s only response was a huge smile. One that wiped Oliver’s off his face when her light touch turned firm and her hand closed around his length, stroking him from base to tip. “Fuck!
“Time to put your money where your mouth is, hon—”

“That’s not where I want to put my mouth,” Oliver quipped right before he slanted his lips over Felicity’s.

That wasn’t really where he wanted it either, but that wouldn’t be easy out here in the ocean.

But not impossible.

Actually…maybe not even difficult.

Oliver stroked his tongue deep into her mouth as he fisted the hem of Felicity’s bikini bottoms, pulling them tight so the fabric applied pressure to her clit and slit and between her ass and she spasmed against him, moaning into his mouth.

God, yes.

His fingers slid through her folds, teasing her opening. This was where he wanted his mouth. Oliver had so much kneeling to make up for.

And the salt water should help her float.

But before Oliver could act on that little piece of inspiration, Felicity pulled his cock forward and, brushing his hand away from her folds, she notched him into her opening. Then, tearing her mouth away, she demanded “Make love to me, Oliver. Fuck me in the moonlight!”

Then Felicity punctuated her words by tightening her legs and grabbing his ass.

As if those words needed punctuation.

It actually short-circuited Oliver’s brain and all he could do was comply, pulling her to him and thrusting up until he was fully seated inside her. He was actually surprised he was able to find the words, “so bossy.”

“You bet your sweet ass.” Felicity’s sassy reply was breathless and ended in a moan as her head fell back.

Oliver didn’t have a whole lot of traction out here, making love to his wife, standing in the middle of a private ocean cove. But it was warm and languid and she was fucking exquisite under the moon and stars. It wasn’t hard to move her body in the water, getting her the friction and fullness she needed. Manipulating her bikini bottoms added another layer of sensation and it wasn’t long before Felicity fell apart, her cries drifting over the quiet water.

All Oliver needed was Felicity.

It wasn’t until much later that he finally came. Not until after Oliver had finally feasted between her legs, long and slow as Felicity floated in the ocean, giving her a pleasure that went on and on.

It was on the shore, the tide rolling in over his legs as Felicity rode him with abandon that Oliver finally let go.

For Oliver the Orgasm Olympics was about endurance and stamina. For Felicity…well, frequency and intensity were the goals.
After the beach, they fully enjoyed the detachable shower-head, making sure no way-ward sand was left. Then the hot tub for good measure.

The games were off to a fantastic start.

And one thing was for certain, there was no way either of them would be walking straight at the end of those twenty-four hours.

And if that wasn’t Heaven, Oliver didn’t know what was.

Chapter End Notes

Author’s Notes:

Almost two years since this story was begun and we’re finally at the end of the journey. There was a lot more to this honeymoon, but the rest is in disjointed pieces and this felt like the end. Maybe one day I’ll feel inspired to post the rest in a separate story but who knows.

Next Sunday, I’ll post the Epilogue which is written from William’s pov. This William, who has deviated vastly from cannon William. I really love this spirited young Queen and I hope you do too.

The inspiration for where Oliver and Felicity had their wedding celebration was a place called Barbara’s in Manila. You can see more of it here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WO44hcZ-FvY

And since I’m sure you would all like to see the dance Oliver and Felicity were discussing, here’s Tinikling: https://youtu.be/_WLfqDMwA_o

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bPXaryKuyY

My everlasting gratitude to Ireland1733, Imusuallyobsessed, mariposablue9 and everyone else who has supported me throughout this journey.

I especially thank anyone who has taken the time to sign in and/or join AO3 to leave a comment. I hated taking away anonymous comments but I wasn’t left with much of a choice. I recently figured out how to respond by gif so I’m trying to respond to all comments that way (but probably not until tomorrow because my home computer sucks).

I hope to see you all next week for the epilogue.

Thank you!

Emmy

P.S. I’m sooo close to 1000 kudos. If you haven’t already left some I’d really appreciate help getting over the hump. 😊
P.P.S. I’m hoping to go from posting this every Sunday straight to posting *To Sacrifice the Sun*. I should have at least four chapters. And if the Muse is with me at least two chapter of *Another Kind of Island* later this spring. Keep you fingers crossed, throw a penny in a well, have a Tagay…I can use all the luck I can get.
Epilogue: Wil(liam)

Chapter Summary

When I first started this story, in May 2017, at the end of Season 5, this was always going to be the epilogue. It was always going to be from William’s POV with the idea of, what if this kid was a willful, obstinate, hero in the making? What if he had an actual personality with faults instead of just being a prop for the adults on the show? At the time, this idea excited me almost as much as rebuilding Olicity’s relationship.

Though I wrote the first draft of this after the beginning of Season 6 (you will notice a few digs at some of the things that bothered me most about cannon characterization of him), my William doesn’t really resemble the one you see on your screen.

I hope you enjoy him anyway. Sometimes you may find him to be a little snot, but ten year-olds often are.

See the end of the chapter for more notes
Adults were…

William didn’t even know, but he was pretty sure he was never going to understand.

Yeah, yeah, William knew ‘one day he’d be an adult bleh bleh…’

Whatever.

Thankfully that was forever from now. Since William was *not* looking forward to it. The older someone grew the less they seemed to… *make sense*.

Adults… they just made everything way too complicated, overthinking and ignoring things like *logic*. William didn’t even think *they* knew what they were doing half the time. Felicity had even admitted it, which just showed that she was the smartest among them. Not to mention the most honest.

Oh their intentions were good. Most of the time. But the thing was, while Adults were trying so hard to ‘protect’ kids from the truth, all they were doing was making it impossible for kids to trust them. Because kids *knew* the truth. *William* knew the truth.

The world was a scary, terrible, dangerous place. With pitfalls around every corner.

And that was just the school playground.
Though, William supposed the school bullies he’d had to deal with looked like gnats next to the gargantuan poison spider who was Adrian Chase. He made his first kidnappers, the black leather/mechanical arm guy (who William referred to as Not-Bucky in his head because he was so not that cool) and creepy white hair dude, look like Swiper the Fox.

The first time William had been kidnapped it was scary because he was away from home and his mother, but he was never really afraid he was going to die or anything. And the creepy white hair dude’s daughter was nice.

But that Chase guy…the things William had seen on Lian Yu…that was real terror. And that was before the psychopath shot himself in order to blow up an entire island and everyone on it.

Evil was real. William had seen it. He couldn’t unsee it. Pretending it wasn’t just left him unprepared. And William was done being unprepared.

Know what else he was done with? Caring what other kids thought. About the name calling and whispering and insults. He was done trying to get kids who didn’t know anything to like him. More than that, William was done being a no-body. And he was so done being weak.

And now that they were headed to Star City, William was going to have to figure out how the hell he planned to do that. Frak.

It had been easy not to think about it while he was helping to plan his new dad’s wedding, while Aunt Thea and Grandma Donna were dragging him around a cool foreign country on one adventure or another. Just the fact that he suddenly had an aunt and a grandma and they were cooler (and prettier) than any aunt or grandma he’d ever seen was enough to keep William distracted. In the best possible way.

Then he got to spend a day and night with his dad and new step-mom on a private beach in Bali. Bali. William had never even met anyone who’d been to Bali before. Now, he’d spoken to Balinese people and eaten Balinese food and visited Hindu Temples that were so beautiful they didn’t even seem real.

It was hard to worry about stuff when it felt like William was living a dream. It didn’t hurt that he knew his dad and his aunt Thea could kill anyone who tried to hurt them with their bare hands.

And this whole dad thing…as in his father was Oliver Queen and the Green Arrow…it still blew William’s mind. Talk about a dream come true. Literally. It was so close to his childhood fantasy that it was scary.

Or destiny.

William thought maybe it was destiny. That maybe a part of him had known all along that his dad was out there. That he was special.

When William was little, he would day-dream that his dad hadn’t died it a boating accident. That he had been rescued by a shady government. Sometimes it was the Russians or the Chinese. Sometimes it was a shadow government or even ARGUS. But whoever it was, they rescued his dad and experimented on him and turned him into a super soldier. And those experiments wiped his memory.

Kinda The Bourne Identity meets Captain America, two movies William had watched so many times he could recite them.

One day his father would start to have shadowy memories of his kid and come to find William
and…

Well, William had about a million scenarios. The truth had been different. Yet…oddly not.

It was true that Oliver hadn’t lost his memory and he was in love with Felicity and not William’s mother. But the important stuff was all there. And weirdly accurate.

Oliver had survived the shipwreck and a deserted island and torture and a shark attack. Felicity told William so. He even had the scars to prove it. God, they were so cool. William wished he had better scars. The one from falling off the monkey bars when he was five was so lame. After being kidnapped twice, one would think he’d have something cool to show for it.

But maybe his dad was what William had to show for it and he was a lot better than scars. He was a superhero. He might not have superpowers, but he was a superhero. He was crazy strong and fast and could fight and shoot a bow better than anyone.

And not because of a particle accelerator explosion or government experiments, but because he’d trained super hard.

Which meant William could do it too.

Because William was his son and he planned to work just as hard, to train and learn everything there was to learn about fighting. No one would ever be able to hurt him, his mom, or anyone he cared about ever again.

And one day he was going to be a hero too.

It was his destiny. William just knew it.

Now, they were on their way to Star City. They’d flown from Bali to Jakarta to Tokyo in a commercial flight. First class. Then they’d stopped for a while in Tokyo to shop before getting on a private jet for the last leg, because apparently the media knew all about William and dad’s marriage and all sorts of people cared a lot.

Dad was about as famous as someone could get without doing a reality tv show, so they were afraid of who would approach them on a flight to the states.

Aunt Thea said it was easier to control…stuff with a private jet. William figured he’d learn all about this ‘stuff’ soon, whether he wanted to or not.

He was wearing a suit. With a tie. The whole deal. It was William’s first ever suit (not counting his dad’s wedding since that was really just a jacket so it didn’t count) and it was expensive. Like-his-mouth-fell-open his-mother-would-faint expensive.

A man had measured him and tailored it while they all went to lunch, all because Aunt Thea said every Queen needed one good suit. Even a ten-year-old. Then she smiled at William like he belonged. Like he was important.

William really loved his Aunt Thea.

His dad had rolled his eyes, but William hadn’t been insulted. It wasn’t because Dad didn’t think he was a real Queen. It was because his father had lived in the wilderness for years and didn’t think suits were important. Because he wanted William to be happy and dress like a kid. He’d said so.
It was cool. That Dad thought that. He was wrong, but it was cool.

Aunt Thea was right. William’s life had changed. He wasn’t an ordinary kid any more (thank God) and he should dress like it.

He’d only put the suit on a few minutes ago, because private jets had plenty of room to change and it didn’t make sense to wear their fancy clothes for nine fraking hours on a plane (even William slept on this one).

His dad was wearing a suit too and Felicity was wearing a new dress with heels that cost more than William’s entire video game collection and Aunt Thea was wearing a pants suit that looked like it had just walked off the page of some fancy magazine.

They all looked like they were going to dinner with the president.

Dad thought William would be fine (and more comfortable) in dockers and a polo, but that reminded him of when the kids made fun of him for being a mama’s boy and for showing up to the fourth grade with a Flash back-pack.

Nope. No way. Never again.

So what if the suit wasn’t super comfortable. William just loosened his tie (like his dad) and it was all good. Dad, Felicity, and Aunt Thea were all Queens and like hell was William going to stand out like a sore thumb. This was his fresh start.

Mathew George of Nowhere, New Hampshire was gone for good…God, William hated that kid. Hated his life. But William Clayton…that didn’t feel right either.

That was the kid before the first kidnapping. The kid who was kinda quiet and played action figures in his bedroom because the kids at school thought they were for babies. The kid who would never have dreamed of disobeying a grown up.

That was the kid who went with a robot armed freak just because he’d said his mom wanted him to.

Who had accepted it when his mother said her nice friend Oliver was just that. A friend. Not his dad. Even though this friend had been shipwrecked right after William was born and no adult except his mom had ever played with him and listened to him before. Not unless his mom paid them too. Grownups didn’t hang out with kids for no reason. It just didn’t happen.

William was sick of being that passive…stupid kid. He was ready to be someone else. Something else. And when he stepped foot into Star City that was exactly what he was going to do.

He just needed to figure out who that was.

“Hey, buddy.” His father dropped into the seat next to him. “You nervous?”

“No,” William answered automatically, trying his best to keep a straight face even though it may have been a lie. A tiny one. He was nervous, but given how much he’d been lied to William really thought he deserved a pass on this one.

Plus, if he wanted his dad to understand that he wasn’t a little kid, William couldn’t act like one.

Sighing, Oliver leaned back in his chair, his eyes straight ahead. William didn’t think his dad believed him, but instead of calling him out he admitted, “Well, I’m nervous.”
William’s eyes widened and snapped to his father’s. Maybe he was better at this honesty stuff than he’d thought. Or maybe…

A knot formed in William’s stomach and he forced himself to ask, “About me?”

Because his dad could be having second thoughts about inserting a half-grown kid into his already pretty full life and if that was the case, William wanted to know now.

Oliver’s eyes jerked back to William, his forehead creasing. “What about you? You mean…about being your father?”

Clenching his jaw, William nodded. He would not cry. Whatever happened, he refused to cry. Especially when Oliver nodded.

“Well…yeah.” Then Oliver leaned in and lowered his voice like he was telling William a secret and confessed, “I’m actually pretty terrified. I don’t know if I’ll be any good at this dad thing.”

The breath William had been holding left his lungs in a rush and for a moment he didn’t understand. Adults got nervous about that kinda thing? “That you don’t have time to be a dad, you mean? That I won’t fit into your life?”

Oliver jerked his head back, looking really confused now. “No.” He said it slowly, shaking his head. He tilted his head and put his hand on William’s knee. “Buddy, I’m…I’m completely certain that having you in my life will make it a hundred times better. It’s the other way around that I’m worried about.”

William laughed, he was so relieved. And kinda shocked. “Dad,” he looked around the jet…the private jet, at Felicity and Aunt Thea and thought about the life he had been living two weeks ago, “it’s already a whole lot better.”

This time, it was Oliver who laughed, though it was soft and slightly disbelieving. “Well,” he let out a deep breath, “I’m going to do my best to not emotionally scar you, okay?”

But scars were cool.

William decided to keep that thought to himself. He knew his father well enough to know he wouldn’t be all that thrilled if William told him he wanted scars just like him.

The kind that came with being a hero.

“It’s not always going to be fun being my son,” Oliver told him seriously, so seriously that William didn’t even roll his eyes (though he wanted to). “And, unfortunately, as soon as we get off this plane you are going to have to deal with some of that. The paparazzi.”

Oh. That’s what his father meant about being nervous.

William swallowed. Yeah, he had to admit the paparazzi were kinda scary. “Are they as bad as they say?”

His dad met his eyes and said, “Worse.”

Well, William had said he wanted honesty.

“Oliver!” Felicity gasped, pulling both of their attentions as she came next to William and laid a hand on his shoulder. “Are you trying to scare him?” Then before William could protest that he
didn’t want to be coddled (even if he was starting to freak out just a little), she turned to him and said, “Look, as... obnoxious as the press can be, it will be fine. Because we have your back. And also, I can ruin them digitally. Sure, they are a bunch of blood sucking vultures. Except I don’t think vultures can suck—”

“Hon,” Oliver redirected, his eyes stern but his lip twitching with amusement. “Not sure that’s helping either.”

“Oh. Right.” Her eyes opened wide and her mouth pursed. “Sorry, my point *is* we know how to handle them,” Felicity tried again. “Because of airport security, the press should only be in one spot, between there and the car—”

“There should only be about two dozen,” Aunt Thea added, dropping into the seat across from William. “Though it will feel like more.”

“Two dozen?” William asked and, unfortunately, he didn’t think he was fooling anyone about being nervous at that point. That sounded like a lot of people shoving microphones in his face.

“It’s going to be fine,” Oliver repeated Felicity’s words and William couldn’t help but feel it was to appease his new wife. “The press release Quintin gave last week answered their most pressing questions. I will go first and say a few words, ask for privacy—”

“Which they will ignore,” Thea muttered.

Oliver sent her a irritated glare before turning back to William. “All you need to do is stay behind me and stick close to Felicity. Keep your head down. Thea will bring up the rear. We’ll be in the limo before you know it.

Okay, if William hadn’t been nervous before, he sure the hell was now.

“Hey,” Felicity put her hand on his knee and shook it a little, giving him one of her huge smiles. “We’ve got your back. We’re a team, right?”

That made William feel better. A little. “Right.”

He wasn’t thrilled with how tiny his voice sounded.

“And you know what else?” Felicity asked and William shook his head. “You’ve already faced down two Big Bads, which is more than *any* of those clowns have ever done. And you are you’re father’s son.” Warmth filled William’s chest and he glanced over to see his father smiling. “A few reporters... they’re nothin’.“ She waved her hand as if she were brushing them away. “We’ve got this. You’ve got this.”

William’s smile spread and he wondered if he looked like his father, who was staring at Felicity as if she walked on water. She had this way of making someone feel like they could do anything.

“Just stay away from the Dragon Lady.” Aunt Thea threw out that ominous piece of advice and then leaned back, smirking.

It seemed kinda contradictory, but them William saw how she was looking at his dad like she was expecting some sort of reaction.

She got one.

“Thea,” Oliver snapped. “Why would you even say that? William’s not going to talk to *any*
reporters. So why—"

"Who’s the Dragon Lady?” William interrupted, his eyes darting between them.

“She’s this massive bi—”

"Thea!” His father roared, almost coming out of his seat.

William opened his eyes wide, because he knew what Aunt Thea had almost said and that wasn’t a word a lot of adults said around him, but his aunt looked unrepentant. This Dragon Lady must be something else.

His need to know the story behind this was growing by the second.

Felicity pulled William’s attention by squeezing his knee as she rose to perch on his father’s knee. "She’s a reporter. And your father’s ex-girlfriend.”

See this was why Felicity was his favorite. She got to the point.

But his father snorted, his arm winding around Felicity’s waist. “That’s an exaggeration.”

Because he liked to make things unnecessarily complicated.

“Really?” Felicity challenged. “How so?”

His dad didn’t seem to have an answer for that. He just opened and closed his mouth. Clearly, this Dragon Lady had been his girlfriend. Why he couldn’t just admit that and move on, William had no idea. Though it did make him think dating her must have been an epic fail since Dad was so embarrassed about it.

Aunt Thea certainly thought so. She scoffed and kept her eyes on Oliver as she said, “She certainly thought she was your girlfriend. And now that you’ve released the story that you and Felicity have been ‘secretly’ dating again for months…when you only broke up with her a few months ago, she’s going to be out for blood.”

Oliver’s only response was to glare at his sister. As if that would make it all go away. He had a lot to learn.

Felicity rolled her eyes and turned back to William. “Let us handle the Dra—Susan Williams,” her voice was calm, a sharp contrast to the bickering siblings. She didn’t seem bitter or jealous.

Which showed Felicity was a superior human being.

Though, maybe it was because Felicity had won. William had found winning made all sorts of things palatable.

“You don’t have to worry about her. At all,” Felicity insisted, but William’s dad and aunt’s body language told a different story.

His father looked worried and kinda guilty. Someone might even say he was pouting. Aunt Thea looked irritated and pretty annoyed at his dad. Clearly Aunt Thea hated this woman. The reporter. Who Oliver had dated just a few months ago…

And given Fad was a secret superhero in love with another woman (because obviously he’d been in love with Felicity for like ever) dating a reporter was pretty dumb.
“So you think this…reporter lady…” William wanted to call her the Dragon Lady but didn’t want to upset his dad (he looked pretty upset as it was). “You think she’ll be extra mean because she’s jealous you married Felicity?”

“Yes.”

“Probably.”

“No!”

The three grownups answered at the same time. And, see, this was the problem. How could adults tell the truth when they couldn’t even agree on what the truth was?

“Look, William…” His dad turned to him and gave him his firmest voice, pointedly ignoring his sister. “Susan Williams is a nice woman, who just happens to be a reporter.” William didn’t miss how Felicity and Aunt Thea’s eyes met in a collective eye-roll. “And who I broke up with months ago.” He said that as if ‘months’ was a long time. “We were never that serious and we ended on good terms.”

Aunt Thea scoffed. Again. It was her loudest one yet.

Were all brothers and sisters like this?

If Oliver and Felicity had a kid, William might actually find out. That would be so cool. He’d always wanted a little brother or sister.

But he had to say, he was with Aunt Thea on this Dragon Lady thing. William was starting to learn that his father (ironically) could be a little too trusting and tenderhearted, so he tried to be gentle as he told his dad, “It makes sense that now she’ll be hurt. She’ll think you were in love with Felicity while you were with her.”

Which he was. Duh.

Squeezing his eyes closed, Oliver sighed. “That is a possibility. Susan may interpret this as I broke up with her for Felicity.”

“Which you did,” William clarified. Wow, his dad was the king of over complicating things.

“No, I—”

“You were in love with Felicity while dating this Dragon—Susan person, weren’t you?” Maybe Oliver needed William to spell it out for him. His dad was a smart guy, but he could be rather dense sometimes.

Oliver looked a little trapped. “Well, yes. Of course, but—”

“So you broke up with this lady because you weren’t in love with her. You were in love with Felicity. That’s the truth, whether she likes it or not.” His dad looked a little green around the gills so William leaned over and patted his knee. “It’s okay, Dad. Breaking up with her was the right thing to do.” Aunt Thea sniggered behind them, but William decided to ignore her. “But really, dating a reporter while in love with someone else probably wasn’t your best idea.”

Aunt Thea laughed out loud and Felicity turned and hid her face in his dad’s chest. But Oliver just nodded, hanging his head in shame.
At least, his father could admit when he was wrong. Not many adults could.

“Ollie, your kid is smarter than you are,” Aunt Thea called out.

William rolled his eyes because that just wasn’t necessary, but Dad sighed and said, “Seems that way. You are absolutely right, buddy. Luckily your old man is done dating, so I won’t be making any more of those mistakes.”

“Amen and Hallelujah,” Aunt Thea chimed in. She did like to drive a point home. (Or rub salt in a wound).

Shaking her head at both of them, Felicity straightened up, telling William, “The only thing that matters now is that you don’t have to deal with Susan Williams. Ever. If she approaches you—”

“We’ll kick her ass.”

Aunt Thea’s promise made William feel more confident, even if it made Dad bury his head in his hands and groan.

It was at that moment the captain came on the loud speaker and announced they should prepare for landing.

Then William’s nerves went nuts. Like butterflies in his stomach learning to tap dance, nuts.

They landed soon after and the butterflies were still going strong. Even when they walked down the stairs directly onto the runway like they were the president or Tony Stark or something.

William half expected to see a camera crew or a reception (or at least Pepper and Happy) but it was only the airport staff.

Their bags were whisked away (Dad said they would go through customs and be delivered to their apartment) and a pair of security guards escorted them through the airport. Then they got to ride on one of those little carts William thought were only for old people or if you broke your ankle or something.

They were escorted went down this VIP hallway (and was William a VIP now? ‘Cause that would be cool, but also crazy weird). Then they were outside and all they had to do was go down the stairs and meet Dad’s bodyguards by the limo.

William really didn’t understand why his dad (or any of them really) needed a bodyguard, but when he’d asked, Oliver had rolled his eyes and said the city insisted. Then he whispered that sometimes they had to play along and gave William a wink, which for some reason made Felicity smack him on the shoulder, which made dad laugh…

It was a thing. Married people were weird.

Their antics distracted William for about five seconds. Until he got a good look at the sea of reporters they’d been talking about.

It looked like a lot more than two dozen.

There were six news vans with satellites. And so many camera men. There were people with microphones and recorders, videocameras and hand-held cameras with freakishly long lenses. They were all just kind of standing there, looking kind of bored.
But then someone must have noticed them, because the crowd came together like the blob, moving toward them and forming this huge growing mob. A very loud mob.

And Dad’s so-called bodyguards…they just stood there, leaning against the limo, their arms crossed. Behind the crowd. Fat lot of good that was going to do anyone.

Dad should fire them. Seriously.

“Show time,” Oliver murmured, drawing himself up tall and straightening his jacket.

He started down the stairs, completely transformed into that guy. The one William had seen giving speeches on YouTube back when he’d obsessively researched him after they’d met in Central City and…

Wow.

That guy up there...he was important. People cared what he said.

And he was William’s father.

Holy crap.

William might be a tiny-bit in awe. The way Oliver walked and talked and…held himself. The way he was in complete control. The way everyone was staring at him, ready to hang on every word. Wow.

Felicity’s arm snaked through William’s and she gave him a sunny confident smile, saying, “Here we go. Just stay with me, put a smile on your face and don’t make eye contact. You’ll do great. ‘Cause genetics.”

Yeah. Genetics.

Sure.

Letting out a breath, William forced a smile. God, he just hoped he didn’t embarrassed them all.

Felicity said something else but William couldn’t make out the words. It was kinda hard to hear her over the questions being screamed from the mob below. But maybe that was just his heart beating in his ears.

Nodding, William…he did what his father did. He straightened his jacket and lifted his chin.

He was going to make his dad…to make all of them proud.

William walked down the stairs with Felicity, but he refused to keep his head down (it felt cowardly).

Wow, that was a lot of tv cameras. Was his mom watching from Central City? If she was she probably wasn’t happy about it. William really needed her to see he could handle this. That she had no reason to worry.

Were any of them from national news stations? World-wide ones? William had seen newspapers and magazines in Tokyo with his dad and Felicity’s wedding pictures on them (they’d released them to try to control the ‘spin’) so there was a good chance people all over would see this.

People like his old friends in Central City. And the kids who tormented him in New Hampshire.
No way William was gonna let them see him cower.

Half-way down the stairs, Oliver paused and held up his hands. Felicity pulled William to a stop too and he watched, disbelieving, as the questions stopped and the blob turned (on mass) to his dad.

“I’m sure that my Deputy Mayor has shared all my good news, yes?” Oliver asked the crowd and there was a hum of laughter. “Good. You’ll be glad to know that we all had a lovely time…after we were rescued from the Throwing Star Killer.”

Their was another smattering of chuckles (after his dad mentioned a serial killer. What was wrong with these people?)

Oliver raised a hand and again the reporters quieted. “Adrian Chase is now dead and Star City is safe. My staff has set up a Press Conference at City Hall, 10am tomorrow morning. But now my wife and I are taking our son home to get settled and we would appreciate being given the space and privacy to do that.”

His ‘mayor’ voice wasn’t the sort that left him open for arguments, but that didn’t stop the vultures. Aunt Thea was right. They didn’t give a rats rear end about his dad’s request for ‘space’ and ‘privacy.’

They started yelling questions, one on top of the other. About Felicity. About Chase. About the Green Arrow.

About William.

Dad ignored them all. He just turned and made eye contact with Felicity, nodded, and pressed ahead, heading toward the limo. It looked like he was trying to make a path, but instead of parting, the crowd just seemed to swallow him up.

Then they turned, on mass, to William and Felicity and…

William froze.

He just couldn’t make his feet move. His heart was beating so fast and…he couldn’t even imagine walking into that mob of crazy people.

“William, you okay?”

Felicity’s concerned voice was in his ear and Oliver turned back. He was tall enough that William could see the worry in his eyes, but there was nothing he could do. The people…the press…the paparazzi…they’d turned on William.

Flashes went off in his eyes and William heard Aunt Thea and Dad yelling at them to give him room. The bodyguards were finally moving but…

William looked down at the group in front of him, the microphones pointed at him, the tv cameras in his face.

How many people were watching him? Right this second? How many people he knew?

Then the questions started.

“William, how does it feel to have Oliver Queen as a dad?”

“William, are you going to live in Star City?”
“William, where is your mother? Are you on speaking terms after she lied to you your entire life?”

“William, were you scared when Adrian Chase kidnapped you?”

“William, are you taking the ‘Queen’ name?”

It was the last question that snapped William out of his daze and he turned to the tall, dark-haired guy who asked it.

All the noise in William’s head quieted. His heart went back to a…normal fast.

Then his thoughts sped ahead.

William was tired of being controlled.

He was tired of hiding, of running.

He wanted to be strong. Like his dad. Not weak like William Clayton.

Felicity was trying to move in front of him, to block out the reporters. She was saying… something. William didn’t know what.

But William didn’t want Felicity to protect him. He wanted to protect himself.

His father was screaming at everyone to back away and it was amazing that no one listened because he sounded damn scary. Maybe Aunt Thea was right. Reporters were a whole different species. William could hear Aunt Thea too and she seemed to be trying to get to him.

But William was looking at the guy with the black hair. He leaned forward and said into his microphone, “Yes, I’m taking the ‘Queen’ name.”

And…

Everybody stopped.

It was kinda freaky actually. The press went silent. Felicity and Dad and Aunt Thea too. It was a weird feeling.

William liked it.

Anyone who wasn’t facing William, turned to him and anyone already facing him inched closer. His father’s eyes went wide and Felicity’s arm moved across his back to squeeze his shoulder and William…

He looked at the press and smiled.

Not a wide, happy smile. The small, confident smile he’d seen his dad give. William stopped thinking and let instinct take over.

He looked back at the dark-haired reporter, who seemed to take that as his cue. “Has the paperwork been filed?”

Yeah, there was probably paperwork wasn’t there? And lawyers and courts?

But if someone said something out loud, on tv it was as good as being true, right? Everyone would think William was a Queen, would call him ‘Queen’. Wasn’t that more important than a piece of
“Eh, not yet. We haven’t actually been back in the country for a whole hour,” William answered, because really when would they have had time?

The press laughed.

And not at him. But…as if they found William genuinely funny. Like they had with his father.

Whoa!

His mom was going to be so proud.

His mom…

Uh oh.

His mom was going to be sooo mad.

But, on the other hand, now that William had announced on live tv that he was changing his name, it was going to be pretty hard for his mom to stop it, right?

His mom had gone through a lot of trouble to keep William from being a Queen.

It was that thought and the anger it spiked that made William add, “But we’re putting in for the name change as soon as possible.” He didn’t want to give his mom any wiggle room.

William thought maybe, Felicity ‘eepped’ next to him, but he wasn’t sure, especially since another reporter was calling out, “Are you living with your dad full time now, Mr. Queen?”

Mr. Queen? Wow, they were talking to him.

This was so cool.

It was like he said something out loud and it…just happened. A little like a super power.

“I’ll be living with my father half-time,” William answered. He wasn’t sure what the final arrangement was or would be, but since they were asking him and he was on a roll, he was going with it. Might as well see how far this new superpower would take him. “My mom’s moving to Star City, so I’ll be going back and forth.”

“Where’s your mom now, William?” was yelled out before he’d even finished speaking.

William shrugged. “Packing, I guess?” Were they looking for an address? Cause they weren’t getting one.

“Were you angry at your mom when you found out she’d lied to you your entire life?”

The guy who asked that one was way too thin and had bleached blonde hair. Were these the kind of questions normal reporters asked? Or was this guy from one of those cheep tabloids? William didn’t really watch the news much so he didn’t know.

It kind of made William want to say, ‘its none of your business,’ but instead he found himself saying, “At first. But we all worked it out.”

Felicity squeezed his shoulder and William met his father’s eyes across the crowd. He still looked
stunned but he wore a proud smile that made William feel ten feet tall. He thought even his mother might like that answer. Maybe if he did really good for the rest of the interview she’d let the whole ‘Queen’ thing go.

“William, were you scared when the bad man took you?”

Okay. What?

William’s eyes went to the reporter who asked the question and he suppressed the urge to roll his eyes. A blond woman this time with too much makeup.

“Okay, first of all,” William began, feeling emboldened by the look in his dad’s eyes and the smiles from the crowd, “‘bad man’? Really? I’m ten, not five.” There was more laughter and the blonde looked embarrassed, which did make William feel a little bad but he hated when he was treated like a little kid. No way was he letting someone do it on live tv. “And second, if you are talking about Adrian Chase, of course I was scared. Anyone with sense would be.”

William didn’t think the blond reporter had a lot of that, but maybe she just didn’t know any kids. There was only a little laughter at that, then the first reporter called out, “Are you still worried about Adrian Chase?”

William frowned. This guy didn’t seem as stupid as the others. What was he getting at? “My dad just said he was dead.”

“But are you sure he’s dead? Did you see the body? How did he die?”

Images of Chase’s dead body flashed in his head and Felicity started to pull him away, whispering, “You don’t have to answer that.”

His dad yelled, “That’s enough. He’s just a kid.”

But William didn’t want to be rescued and he was not ‘just a kid’. William looked the jerk reporter in the eye, clenched his jaw, and said, “He shot himself in front of me. He’s dead.”

Stunned silence followed.

Yeah, take that. Blood sucking vultures.

“William…” his father called, but William put up a hand, hoping it let him know he was good. He had this. After that last question, what could they possibly throw at him?

Turning, William pointed to another reporter, and watched his father’s eyes widen out of the corner of his eye. Surprising Oliver was fun.

The new reporter was a little older and she smiled in a friendly way. “Hello, young man. Did you get to meet the Green Arrow during your adventure?”

William smiled back. “Yes. And he was even more awesome than you’d think. He’s the greatest hero ever.” There was a soft wave of laughter and he watched his father smile, shaking his head. William thought he might be blushing.

Grinning, William leaned forward again and added, “After my dad, of course.”

This was so fun.
Oliver’s eyes widened and Felicity pressed a kiss to the top of his head. Surprised (it didn’t seem like Press Conference etiquette), William turned to meet her eyes and she was smiling at him proudly. He couldn’t help but smile back just as wide.

“William, how do you feel about having a new stepmom so soon after a new dad?”

Felicity stiffened and William’s eyes flew to the dark-haired woman who had asked the question. She was pretty. In a Mean Girl way.

His eyes scanned the crowd until he found his Aunt Thea and she mouthed, “Dragon Lady.”

Yup. William thought so. Who else would be rude enough to ask that question when Felicity was right the frak there?

William put back on his press smile (he had a press smile! He really was getting the hang of this. Maybe it was in the genes) and looked the Dragon Lady in the eye. “Well, I didn’t understand why they weren’t already married since they clearly loved each other so much.”

Okay, maybe he was laying it on a bit thick.

Aunt Thea covered her face with her hand and the Dragon Lady went all stony. Whatever. William had faced down two Big Bads. He wasn’t scared of her.

“But mostly I was really excited to be part of the wedding. The party was lit.”

Everyone laughed at that (well, everyone except the Dragon Lady) and seemed genuinely delighted.

“It looks like you and your new stepmom get along?” William had to hand it to the Dragon, she didn’t back down.

William leaned closer to Felicity and wound an arm around her waist. “Yeah, she’s awesome. Who doesn’t like Felicity?”

Dragon Lady didn’t look pleased with that answer, but what did she expect? That William would throw the woman who was holding his arm and kissing his head under the bus? It made no sense.

“How does your mother feel about the new Mrs. Queen?”

Okay, was she one of those gossip magazine ‘reporters’ or was she just trying to settle a grudge? If it was the second, William hoped she got fired, because this was just not professional.

But no way was William letting his mother be painted with the same brush as this particular crazy ex-girlfriend. “Other than being a little jealous that Felicity knows more about Marvel and Star Wars than she does, they’re pretty good. My mom did take the pictures at their wedding.”

“Your mother took the photographs that were released?” a different reporter yelled out, sounding impressed.

William turned to this new person, relieved to be done answering the Dragon’s questions. Some people just didn’t know when they’d been slain.

“Yup, sure did,” William answered the new man, meeting his eyes and grinning wide.

“Is she a professional?” the man asked.
“She’s an Accountant,” William answered without thinking. Then he might have blushed, because that wasn’t exactly what the reporter had asked but the crowd was laughing again, smiling and they seemed…charmed or something.

Was he…charming? William would never have described himself as charming but…it would be a pretty cool thing to be.

“Okay, William. I think it’s time to go now,” Oliver called out, his voice ringing out over the crowd as he sent William a look that made it pretty clear he was going to be in trouble if he didn’t wrap things up.

Since he was probably all ready in trouble with his mother and he really didn’t want two parents mad at him (three if Felicity took his dad’s side) William turned to the reporters and said, “Sorry, guys, Dad says it’s time to go home.”

There was more laughter, which he expected, but William was surprised when no one protested. There was just the one nice reporter lady who had smiled at him, calling out, “Just one last question, young man. What is it like to have Oliver Queen as a father?”

Everyone got quiet again. William wondered if they thought it was a hard question.

It wasn’t.

“It’s a dream come true,” William said simply.

Oliver cleared his throat and put out his hand and waved him forward. “Come on, son.” This time the reporters cleared a path.

Felicity’s hand settled on his back and William had started to step toward his dad, when the first reporter he’d talked to caught his attention, “Thank you, William. For talking to us.”

The man put his microphone under his arm and held out his hand. William took it. It would have been rude not to, especially since he sounded sincere.

Then suddenly there was clapping and…everyone wanted to shake his hand. William was walking forward and shaking hands, giving high-fives and fist bumps and feeling a little like he’d just won the kids choice awards. It was…

Awesome.

Dad looked shell-shocked, but he stood at the limo door (William had never been in a limo before. God, this was cool), holding it open and waving them in.

Aunt Thea climbed in first and Felicity pushed him forward, but William had stopped to shake the older woman’s hand and she didn’t let go, trapping it between both of hers and leaning in to ask, “What do you like to be called, young man? William or Will or Billy…”

Wow.

It had been a long time since William had been asked that question. The simple, ‘do you have a nick-name question?’ It had been even longer since he felt like it was his choice. Had it ever been his choice?

In that moment, William realized he could be anyone he wanted. William or Will or Billy or…something else.
Because he did have a choice. Maybe legally William needed his mom’s permission and a judge to sign some papers, but he could be called anything he wanted. Be anything he wanted. He could be someone new.

Someone who held press conferences and was on tv, who rode limos and was related to Superheroes.

Someone a hundred and eighty degrees away from boring, mama’s boy William Clayton.

“Liam,” He said impulsively. “I’m going by Liam Queen now.”

Felicity let out a muffled (and slightly hysterical) laugh from behind him, but the lady holding his hand smiled. “Well, thank you, Liam, for talking to us. You remind me so much of your grandfather.”

“Okay, buddy,” his dad called, his voice a little higher than usual. William turned to look at him and Oliver gave him a very firm look. “In the limo.”

Nodding, William climbed inside. But not before he turned one last time to smile and wave. It seemed the thing to do.

Wow, was this what it felt like to be royalty?

Than he heard his father mutter under his breath, “Before you say anything else that gets me in trouble with your mother.”

William pressed his lips together, since he was pretty sure his father wouldn’t think a laugh was the proper response. He flopped down into the seat next to Aunt Thea. And, wow, it was all soft black leather and how was this even his life?

Felicity climbed in next, sitting across from him, then finally his dad, slamming the door shut behind him. And…

William let out a loud whoop.

He just couldn’t hold it in. William threw his hands up in the air and yelled, “That. Was. So. Awesome!”

Felicity’s eyes got really wide and Dad’s jaw dropped, but Aunt Thea laughed, throwing an arm over his shoulder, “Well, that’s one point for nature over nurture.”

“We sure don’t need a genetic test, do we?” Felicity sighed, shaking her head, still looking dazed. But she also looked like she was trying really hard not to laugh.

But his dad…Oliver rubbed his hands over his face, muttering, “Your mom is going to kill me.”

Felicity put a comforting hand on his back and he looked up and met William’s eyes. “Liam Queen? What the—?”

“I like it!” William interrupted. He didn’t even feel defensive. He felt…energized. Like he could do anything.

“It’s a very good name,” Felicity said gently…unfortunately William could see the ‘but’ coming a mile away. She leaned forward and put a hand on William’s knee. “But,” there it was, “don’t you think we should have talked to your mom first?”
“No.” And, okay, maybe *that* came out defensive. “It’s *my* name. Shouldn’t *I* get to choose what it is?”

Felicity sighed again, her eyes were sympathetic but still she frowned. “I don’t think the government agrees. Not until you’re eighteen at least.”

God, that was so unfair, but it wasn’t something William…Liam…that was his name now…

*Liam* argued, “It’s a nick name. ‘Liam’ is short for Wil-liam. Even a kid,” with no rights what-so-ever it seemed, “should be able to choose their own *nick-name*.”

Opening and closing her mouth, Felicity didn’t have an answer for that one (Cause Liam was *right*). She turned to his father for help, but let’s face it, he was even more clueless than she was.

But maybe not, since Oliver looked William directly in the eye and said, “And ‘Queen?’ Asking people to call you by a new nick-name is one thing, announcing you’re changing your *last* name, when you know your mother won’t like it, is another thing all together.”

And…Dad was completely correct.

His mother was gonna be really, *really* angry and William couldn’t help but feel a stab of guilt, but that was overwhelmed by the completely involuntary (and he knew irrational) hurt.

“Don’t you *want* me to have your name?” And, dammit, William hated how weak and babyish he sounded.

Oliver seemed to deflate. “William…of course, I want you to have my name. Nothing would make me prouder—”

“Then what’s the problem?” Both because William really wanted to believe him and because if his dad wasn’t on his side with this one he was sunk.

“Your mother—”

A phone went off.

Oliver groaned, closing his eyes and muttering, “Speak of the devil…” The phone rang again and he shifted, pulling it from his pocket. When he looked at it, he winced. “Yup.” His head fell back against the seat with a ‘thump’ as he answered, “Hello, Samantha.”

*Frak.*

His frown got deeper and William shifted uncomfortably in his seat. He hadn’t meant to get his dad in trouble. He hadn’t *meant* to hurt his mother’s feelings either.

*Liam* chose the new name because he needed a change, not because he was…*rejecting* his mom or anything. He loved her, more than anything really. She was a pretty great mother.

*If* Liam ignored all the lying about his dad thing.

“No…” Leaning forward, Oliver braced one elbow on his knee and rubbed his forehead. “No, Samantha…I *did not* put him up to this…”

This *so* wasn’t good.

“Look we’ve never even *talked* about him taking my name. I was as shocked as you were…”
“Don’t worry,” Aunt Thea whispered in William’s ear. “Your dad can take care of himself.” Swallowing, Will…Liam turned to look at her (it was easier than watching his dad squirm) and his aunt lowered her voice even further, “Ollie’s just salty because now Star City is going to want to elect you mayor and he’ll lose his job.”

William couldn’t help but giggle at that, even if it was ridiculous.

“You know he has a mind of his own…” Oliver was saying, leaning back again, his eyes fixed on the ceiling.

But Thea didn’t let William get caught back up in that, saying, “You did good, kid.” She held out her fist and William bumped it.

“Thea,” Felicity groaned, her voice low, casting worried glances between Oliver and Liam. “I don’t think encouraging him is the best tactic here.”

Rolling her eyes, Thea shrugged. “Don’t tell me you weren’t impressed?” Liam felt himself swell up a little. “How many ten-year-olds could do that? Hell, how many adults could do that?”

“I told him to keep his head down and get to the limo…”

Felicity rubbed Oliver’s leg, but she leaned forward and caught Liam’s eyes. She said softly, “That was incredible, William. You did an amazing but…please, you need you talk to us before you hold anymore impromptu press conferences?”

How come the nice things she said leading up to it made Liam feel even more guilty. “I wasn’t planning on it,” he defended. “It just came out.”

Before William could say more, his dad caught all of their attentions with a loud, “How is it my genetics fault?”

Thea chuckled, whispering in William’s ear, “Because that was one hundred percent Queen.”

William couldn’t keep his smile inside. Because that was exactly what he had been going for.

“Fine!” Oliver barked, then before William knew what was happening his father was holding out his phone. “Your mother wants to talk to you.”

Oh damn. Frak and double frak.

Pressing back into the seat, William shook his head frantically. Oh no…no…no…no….


Yeah. Okay. No one says no to that.

Green Arrow or no.

Oliver might be getting a hang of this dad thing faster than Liam had hoped (he really thought he’d get a little leeway before Dad learned the whole discipline thing). Swallowing, Liam braced himself as he took the phone.

“William?”
“Hi, mom.” William decided to go with a super extra-cheerful tone and said before she could yell at him, “Did you see me on tv?”

His mom’s sigh was very loud. “Yes. Yes, I did.”

“How did I look?” Maybe if he could keep her talking she wouldn’t be able to yell at him.

“Very handsome but—”

“It was so fun, Mom!”

There was another sigh. Deeper and more frustrated. “William, why did you tell them your name is ‘Liam Queen’?”

The disappointed voice. No, it was worse than that. It was his mom’s hurt disappointed voice.

“She asked me what I wanted to be called. That’s what I want to be called,” Liam defended. Calm and logical sometimes worked with his mother. Then for good measure, he offered, “You can still call me ‘William’.”

The noise his mom made then…not good. So not good.

“William Alexander Clayton, you can’t just—”

Okay, maybe that was why William…Liam didn’t want that name any more. Ugh.

Swallowing, Liam kept talking (anything to interrupt the lecture), “I’m sorry, mom. I know I should have talked to you first but I… I just really want a new start.”

“Baby…” his mom groaned, actually sounding sympathetic. But then she started in with, “I don’t want you getting caught up in all the flash and glamour of your father’s life and forgetting who you are…”

God, not this again.

Samantha settled into the lecture Liam had heard a minimum of ten times since they’d been rescued from the island.

He held the phone from his ear as she droned on and on and on…

Oliver leveled him a glare and Liam put it back up to his face.

“…people like the Queens feel entitled, like they aren’t like regular people…”

Liam wanted to shout, ‘He was a Queen!’ and he didn’t want to be a ‘regular person.’ He wasn’t even sure he liked regular people.

“I want you to have a normal childhood…”

Too late for that.

“…maybe it was a mistake—”

That was it. Liam couldn’t take one more second.
“Shhh…chhhshh….” Liam pulled the phone from his ear, raising his voice, “Can’t hear….chh… Can’t hear you, Mom. Shhhhhhhh. We’re going through a tunnel. Shhh. Oooo kkkk. I love you…talk to you later…”

Stabbing at the phone, Liam cut his mother off mid-rant and threw it back to his dad. He’d never wanted a phone less in his life.

Then Liam did his very best to look innocent as Oliver and Felicity stared at him as if his head had just popped off.

Ooops.

“William,” his dad barked and it was almost worse than his mom’s, “you did not just hang up on your mother! After lying to her!”

Ummm…

Aunt Thea’s loud laugh was quickly muffled by her hand and Liam’s lips twitched.

Dad threw a darker, even more incredulous look at his sister, and Liam thought it was only Felicity squeezing his knee that kept him from biting her head off.

“William…Liam,” Felicity said calmly (he knew there was a reason she was his favorite), “if you want people to be honest with you, you need to be honest with them.”

Well, great. Not even two weeks and Felicity was already a master at the guilt.

“I think you need to call your mother back,” Dad told him, holding out the phone.

But Liam crossed his arms over his chest, knowing he was acting like a child but not able to stop himself. “She was insulting our name. Going on and on about why it’s better to be ‘normal’ and boring than be a ‘Queen.’”

The arm holding the phone out fell and Oliver sighed, “William—”

“Liam,” Felicity corrected and, God, Liam adored her (even with the guilt). Oliver’s frown deepened, but he corrected himself, “Liam, you need to respect your mother—”

“Come on, Ollie, give the kid a break.” Aunt Thea to the rescue. Maybe Liam adored her even more than Felicity at the moment. “It was a harmless white lie, so he didn’t have to listen to a lecture. Do you remember all of Mom’s worthless lectures? Did they ever do any good?”

Thea leveled her brother a stare and when Oliver didn’t argue, Liam jumped in and offered, “I’ll call her before bed and apologize. She’ll have calmed down by then.”

Then Liam gave him his very best puppy-dog eyes an finally his dad caved, saying, “Fine. But if she calls back you’re answering.”

Damn. Liam should have put the phone on silent before tossing it back to his dad.

Aunt Thea threw an arm over Liam’s shoulder. “I for one think this guy deserves a trophy for how he handled the Dragon Lady alone.”

Oliver groaned and Felicity laughed. And Liam…the pride he’d felt came creeping back, pushing away all the yucky feelings his mom had brought up.
“Slain, I tell you,” Thea continued, seeming to enjoy her brother’s discomfort. “Ooo, we should call you ‘Dragon Slayer’. It can be your code name.”

Liam felt himself smile. He liked that. He like that a lot.

“He doesn’t need a code name!” his dad barked and if looks could kill, Aunt Thea’d be on the ground.

“Well…” Felicity mused, her head tipping to the side and Oliver turned his betrayed gaze to her. But his wife was even less intimidated by it than Aunt Thea. “‘Green Arrow, we need to wrap this up. Dragon Slayer needs to be picked up by 11…’ Just saying.”

Before Oliver could find an argument for that, the limo pulled in front of a giant (expensive) high rise downtown. (Thank God).

When they got out of the limo, Liam had to remind himself to play it cool. To not stand there staring up at the building like a he’d never seen a building so tall and fancy (he had totally seen one before. He just hadn’t been inside).

Dad told the driver/bodyguard to go home and ushered them into an even more impressive lobby. Liam figured his best course was to keep quiet and hope the whole press-slash-mom-call blew over all blew over.

He made it to the elevator. Then Felicity pressed the ‘down’ button.

“You live in the basement?” Liam asked before he could stop himself. Because that was…not what he expected.

“We live in the penthouse, but that’s not where we are going at the moment.” Felicity wagged her eyebrows, her eyes practically twinkling and, hopefully, that meant the storm had passed. If Liam was lucky he could avoid talking about this again until he had to talk to his mom tonight (maybe by then he’d figure out what to say.)

The elevator opened to a parking garage and they stepped out. His father immediately turned to Felicity, asking, “Keys?”

Felicity scoffed, “The keys to my car?”

Dad gave her the puppy-dog eyes (which William had to say were a lot like the ones he’d used earlier) and Felicity rolled her eyes, but she rifled through her purse and threw him her keys. Oliver caught them in one hand and gave her a huge grin.

Liam followed the adults to a shiny black Lexus. “Why aren’t we taking Dad’s car?”

Felicity gave him a side-eye. “Your Dad doesn’t own a car. Just motorcycles and limos.”

“And technically the limos belong to the city,” Aunty Thea added. “Wow…” she paused, her hand on the handle to the back door. “Motorcycles and limos, could anything scream ‘Bachelor Playboy’ louder?”

Oliver rolled his eyes as he got into the driver’s seat. He waited until everyone was seated before turning around and piercing Thea with a glare. “Neither of which I have been for a long time.”

“Oliver, honey,” Felicity’s voice was sweetly teasing, “you were a bachelor up until a week ago.”
Dad sent her a love-sick look and Liam was starting to realize that was gonna get old fast. Aunt Thea must have thought so too, because she said in a sing-song, syrupy sweet voice, “I think Ollie is saying he hasn’t been a bachelor since the moment he met you.”

“Shut up, Thea.”

Huh. Did Liam really want a sibling? It seemed to be a mixed bag.

Wow. If Dad and Felicity had a baby soon, there would be almost the same number of years between them as with Aunt Thea and Dad.

Starting the car, Oliver turned around to back out, flicking his eyes to Liam as he did. “Apparently, I need to buy a car. What do you say, buddy? Want to help me pick out a car this weekend. Maybe a nice big shiny truck.”

“Yeah!” Liam answered instantly. There was no other answer.

“Something to assert your masculinity,” Felicity drawled. “Because you need that?”

Dad sent her a zero-remorse grin, then finished pulling out the car.

“I think you should buy a minivan,” Aunt Thea argued, winking at William. “You’re a family man now.”

Without hesitating, his father called back a cheerful, “Over my dead body.”

“Ha! Wait until a couple of Olicity babies join William. You’re going to need the room,” Thea argued, just as cheerfully. “You’ll be happily driving a cranberry red minivan.”

Instead of addressing his sister, Oliver just said, “William, remind me we need a really big truck.”

Felicity gave a choked gasp. “Oliver!”

It sounded like Liam was getting those siblings whether he wanted them or not. He might as well get used to the idea. Maybe he should get some pointers from Aunt Thea.

They pulled out onto the street and Liam finally thought to ask, “Where are we going?”

Felicity turned and gave him the big beaming smile that made his father melt. “Home.”

Liam frowned…cause he was pretty sure they’d said they lived in this high-rise. He looked at Aunt Thea, but she just grinned.

Luckily, Liam didn’t have long to wait. They turned into another parking garage just a few blocks down. Really they could have walked. But maybe rich people didn’t do that. Even when they stopped being super rich.

They drove to the bottom level. Straight into the wall…

Oh.

Wow.

Oh wow oh wow oh wow…

The wall started to open and…
“Oh my *God!* We’re going to the Green Arrow Cave!"

Liam was pretty sure he screamed it. Okay, maybe he even squealed. But it was the Fraking Arrow Cave!

“Uh…it’s the *Team* Arrow Bunker,” Aunt Thea corrected.

“Does that mean you’re returning to the team?” Dad asked smoothly as he pulled the car through the *fricken wall*.

“Nope,” Thea responded just as evenly.

Dad shrugged. “Then you don’t get a say.”

Felicity turned and met Liam’s eye. “Mostly we call it ‘The Bunker.’” Dad hummed his approval and she kept going, “The *Arrow Cave* was the old hide-out that got raided—”

“Fe-li-ci-ty…” Oliver cut her off with a groan.

“What?”

His father put the car in park and the wall shut behind them. Inside, it was all chrome and green lights. Liam couldn’t get out of the car fast enough.

There were no less then *four* motorcycles parked in that garage, all shiny and sleek. It was on the tip of Liam’s tongue to ask his dad to teach him to drive one, but he just knew he’d say it was up to his mom. Especially with the *press* incident so fresh.

Thea ran her hand over a compact bike with dark red trim. “This one’s mine.”

But Dad called behind him (he was already halfway out of the garage), “That’s *Speedy’s* bike. It’s only yours if you become Speedy again.”

Rolling her eyes, Aunt Thea turned to Liam and mouthed, “Mine.”

And Liam was thinking that if he wanted to learn to drive a motorcycle without his mom finding out, Aunt Thea might be the place to start. Or maybe Slade. He wondered if Slade had a motorcycle.

Liam followed his dad and Felicity out of the garage because as cool as it was in here, out there…*that* was the *Arrow Cave…sorry, Bunker.* Which might just be cooler…

*Whoa!*

Yup. Much cooler.

So, *so* much cooler.

“Epic,” Liam breathed, turning in a circle, trying to see everything at once.

Epic wasn’t a strong enough word for how cool this was.

Felicity let out a little whimper and hurried ahead of them. “My babies. Come to mama.”

Liam turned to his father, but before he could ask, Oliver laid a hand on his shoulder and told him with all seriousness, “First rule of the Bunker: that,” he pointed to the raised platform where like
over a dozen computers formed a huge circle, “is Felicity’s Lair. *No one* touches the computers in Felicity’s Lair without Felicity’s supervision. Except Curtis, but *only* in an emergency.”

Liam’s eyes flew to Felicity to see if that was a joke or not, but she was already seated in a rolling chair, flying from computer to computer, one hundred and ten percent focused on her, ‘babies.’

Yeah, Liam wasn’t thinking that one was a joke.

Grinning, Oliver squeezed Liam’s shoulder. “I’ll give you a tour—”

“Hey, boss.”

They both turned and saw Rene sauntering over, a half-smile on his face.

“Rene?” Dad sounded pretty surprised to see him. “What are you doing here?”

Shrugging, Rene shoved his hands deep into his pockets. “ARGUS delivered the team gear. Someone had to make it all pretty again for when you got back.” He turned and gestured to a wall of…

“Whoa!”

Okay, Liam was wrong. *That* was the coolest thing he had ever seen.

It was a wall of…*super suits*! Honestly, he thought he might faint.

His dad shot Liam a small smile, before turning back to Rene, “But you were supposed to be with Samantha.”

Liam had forgotten about that. He got a little nervous for a minute there, until he remembered that Mr. Terrific was with her too and he had *T-spheres*, so she was totally safe.

“Yeah…” Then Rene bit his lip and looked down and…that was weird. Liam hadn’t known him long, but he was pretty sure that was out of character. He looked almost…*bashful*. It was even strange enough to distract him from the *most awesome display he had ever seen*. “Samantha convinced me that I needed to come home right away and explain to the judge what happened…”

“Hi.”

It was quiet and shy and it came from a…*girl*.

A *pretty* girl.

A girl with a light pink sweater and long brown hair. She came up and stood next to Rene. And… of all the things Liam had expected to find in a secret hide-out, a pretty girl was *not* one of them.

Well, a pretty girl Liam’s age anyway.

“You brought Zoe to the Bunker?” his dad hissed at Rene, clearly as surprised as Liam was.

“You brought William to the Bunker,” Rene fired back and really it was an excellent point. But Liam was too busy trying not to stare at this Zoe, (or do anything else humiliatingly awkward) to point that out.
Grunting at Rene, Oliver turned his head away and frowned at the wall (he did that sometimes). But when he turned back to look at the girl his entire demeanor changed. He smiled and put out his hand. “Hello, Zoe. I’m Oliver. It’s really nice to finally meet you.”

Wow. Liam wished he was that good at talking to pretty girls. How come it was easier to talk to jerk reporters than pretty girls?

Zoe (which was a really nice name, by the way), blushed and took Oliver’s hand, flicking a look at Liam and saying, “Hi,” again.

“And this is my son, William—”

“Liam,” Felicity called out, correcting him from her Lair and making Liam smile.

“Sorry, he wants to be called ‘Liam’ now,” Oliver said, sounding a little strangled as he said it. But Liam understood, his mom could be pretty scary when she was mad.

“Hi, Liam.” Zoe smiled and put out her hand…and, oh crap, it was his turn and there wasn’t even time to wipe his palm before he took hers.

“Hi.” Did he squeak? Frak, he squeaked. Liam knew he did.

“And I’m Felicity.” Liam’s new stepmom popped up over the computers to wave at Zoe.

“My wife,” Oliver added. For no reason whatsoever, except he seemed to enjoy saying it. Also it made Felicity give him this sappy kind of smile. They didn’t even notice Rene and Aunt Thea rolling their eyes at each other.

“Yes, his wife,” Felicity repeated, for even less reason. “And I’m really happy to meet you Zoe, but I need to borrow my husband for a minute.” She gestured Oliver over, her eyes already on the computer and Dad was immediately taking the steps two at a time, Rene and Aunt Thea hot on his heels—

Oh crap.

Liam was alone with Zoe.

Frak.

Now what?

They stood awkwardly, just looking at each other for what felt like forever. So much for genetic charm.

Finally, Zoe cleared her throat. She had freckles and they were awfully cute. “So,” she asked, because she was clearly braver than Liam, “what grade are you in?”

“Fifth,” Liam answered right away, happy she had asked him an easy question.

And apparently it was the right answer, because Zoe gave him a bright smile that made Liam feel really weird, all warm and flustered. Maybe he was getting sick.

“Me too.”

Liam found himself smiling back. “Cool.” He had no idea why, but that made him irrationally happy.
“What school are you going to?” Zoe asked, looking eager and excited.

Damn. “Um…Felicity is going to home school me for the rest of fifth, since school’s almost over. Then Dad says they need to figure out what school is safest.”

Zoe bit her lip and looked down. “Oh.”

Double damn.

“Actually,” Felicity called out from behind the computers. “Rene, as soon as we figure that out, we should look into transferring Zoe there too. We’ll want to beef up security and it makes sense to have both of them in the same place.”

Zoe’s smile was back and she turned it on Liam and…that dizzy feeling was back. But it was better than when she looked disappointed. That was just upsetting for some reason. Also, she didn’t seem at all unhappy about the idea of changing schools, which was really cool of her. Liam went to smile back, only to find he already was.

Liam had pretty much decided that he wasn’t going to give a rat’s rear-end what the kids in Star City thought about him. He’d decided he was perfectly happy with his new family and that he wanted to spend all his free time hanging out with Team Arrow instead of a bunch of immature idiots.

But…Zoe didn’t seem immature. And he really didn’t think she was an idiot. Also, she was Rene’s daughter, so really she was Team Arrow too. As much as Liam was.

They should probably stick together.

“So…your family is…”

Zoe gestured to the row of super hero suits and Liam finally did what he’d wanted to do since he realized they were there. He went over and stood in front of the glass cases, looking over each and every one of them carefully.

They were amazing. Everything Liam had ever dreamed of.

The Green Arrow. Spartan. Mad Dog. Mr. Terrific. The Black Canary. Aunt Thea’s old Speedy suit, next to another red suit. Liam didn’t know what his name was, but he knew he was Dad’s first partner.

Liam wondered how long it would be until he could fit into that suit.

“Yeah. My family,” Liam said with the confidence of knowing when something was just *right*.

This was William…no Liam Queen’s family. A family of Superheroes.

And one day Liam was going into the family business.

It was his destiny.

Chapter End Notes
Huzzah! After two long years this is the end. I’ve written a decent amount of fan-fiction, but this is the longest I’ve completed. (Fingers crossed that To Sacrifice the Sun soon takes that honor away. New chapters posting in two weeks!).

I’m marking this as complete, because this is the end. I do have a short ‘Afterward’ that I’m going to post next Sunday, containing my head cannons for our favorite characters’ happily ever after.

Now on to all the people I need to thank for helping me on this long journey:

To laurabelle2930, your art continues to astound me every time I look at it and I am still so honored that made me the gorgeous title page(s)!

To Imusuallyobsessed, you pushed me on this one and told me things I didn’t want to hear and I couldn’t be more grateful. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You are so talented and I can’t wait to see your books up on the shelves of Barnes and Nobel.

To Ireland1733, I don’t know if I would still be involved in this fandom, never mind writing and FINISHING this fic without you, my friend. I know for sure I never would have gone to Atlanta or Nashville or met all those other wonderful people. I have so very much to thank you for, you’ll never even know.

To mariposablue9, you came aboard two-thirds of the way through this story and breathed new life into my Muse (and God knows it’s been on life-support for much of this year). You have been such a good friend to me this past year and I’m so grateful to have connected with you.

To Fairytalehearts, lageniuswannabe, and Noelle, thank you for the support, the advice, and the feedback, for coming forward and offering help when I asked.

To the cast of Arrow, for creating characters that live and breathe for me and the rest of the fandom, for making them so real, so flawed but lovable that they live on beyond you and inspire someone with a very full life to spend hours upon hours giving your characters more adventures.

To the writers of Arrow, for bringing to life these characters, for making me (and so many others) love them, and then leaving big giant holes to inspire this story and so many others.

To everyone who left a comment or kudo to support me and the story, many authors have said that you feed the Muse and that is so true, but more than that you are who kept me glued to the computer for the hundreds (maybe thousands) of hours of writing and editing, especially (the painful) editing, so I can bring you the best I am capable of. The stories come, they fly around my brain, but if it weren’t for you and the lovely ladies I mentioned I would never find the motivation to reign them in and get them out and (God forbid) force them into some sort of grammatical order. Thank you!!

Emmilyne
Welcome to my bonus chapter.

I have about a million headcannons for this universe and I doubt I’ll ever have time to write them out, so this is a quick summery of the most important ones.

It’s definitely a season 6 fix-it along along with everything else. (But I’ve only watched the Olicity clips of Season 7 so my knowledge of anything that has happened this year is limited).

Liam and Zoe did go to Middle School together. It was the newest and largest public school in Star City, rebuilt on the edges of the Glades after the old school had been destroyed with the collapse of HIVE’s underground city.

Freedom Middle School had a top notch security system, provided by none other than Queen Innovations.

For her company’s first project, it was an enormous endeavor and Felicity found herself recruiting the only person she trusted to run the business end of QI. Star City’s other powerhouse Queen, Thea.

Initially feeling incredibly under-qualified, Thea was eventually persuaded her experience running
Verdant and, first, Oliver’s campaign then the mayor’s office made her more qualified than either Felicity or Oliver had been when they became CEO.

Still, six months later, Thea decided their growing company needed someone with more expertise and she enrolled in Business School at Starling University. Being both a full time student and a full time CEO was remarkably manageable after being both a vigilante and running a political campaign. And having her mind occupied proved to be exactly what she needed after a tumultuous several years.

Ten years later, Thea Harper-Queen had a first rate MBA and QI had grown under the Queen Women’s careful guidance until they’d managed to snatch up every business that had once belonged to either of Thea’s fathers.

The day she moved into Robert Queen’s old office (across from Felicity’s) Thea was pregnant with her second daughter and she finally understood the power of Legacy and, finally, she felt worthy of hers.

* * *

By the fall after Liam came to live in Star City, calling Zoe his best friend would have understated their relationship.

They did just about everything together and had very little need for other kids their age, all of whom seemed oblivious to the war against evil going on right under their noses. They went to school together, to martial arts lessons together every afternoon. They managed the complex (and often chaotic) mix of childcare, without batting an eye, both happy to have their father’s back in their lives.

Samantha got a job in Star City almost immediately and was so busy she barely had time to unpack, never mind hunt for the perfect home. Rene helped her get a temporary apartment in his building while she house hunted. In the end, it was so convenient to live only floors above the Ramirezes it was almost four years before they finally moved to a house.

On the first day of middle school, most kids gave Liam and Zoe a wide berth, which suited them fine. Then Liam spotted a familiar face being picked on by a group of eighth graders. The girl was dressed in all black, had a chip on her shoulder the size of the grand canyon, and was holding her own quite well. Too bad most of the idiots bullying her were too stupid to catch the majority of the insults she hurled at them.

The girl was called ‘Emily,’ though she said the name with a sneer of disgust. She wasn’t particularly interested in Liam and Zoe’s protection or their friendship. Zoe recognized her from the foster care system but Liam knew her from when her name was Nora Darhk.

Liam and Zoe sat with Nora every day at lunch, despite the fact that they did understand the insults being hurled at them. Besides, they gave as good as they got. It became a game they never did grow out of.

But Nora’s (substantial) guard stayed securely up. Until Zoe noticed the bruises her dark hoodies hid. Zoe agreed to keep it between the three of them. As long as Nora agreed to Zoe and Liam’s help with her Foster mother’s abusive boyfriend.

The trio hatched a scheme to convince ‘the Asshole’ that Nora had all the otherworldly powers her father had. The Asshole cowered and served Nora’s every whim from there on out.
After that, Nora was still prickly and her sarcasm unparalleled, but her loyalty to Liam and Zoe was absolute.

She followed along on Liam and Nora’s adventures in ‘Middle School Heroism’ as she called it. Not because she cared about their silly causes, but because they needed her more devious mind to keep them from getting ‘their asses kicked’. The self-righteous pair had a lot to learn about subtlety. Though, it was kinda fun humiliating the school bullies and unveiling the vice principle who was embezzling from the school.

When they poked their noses into Team Arrow business (which Liam tried to do as often as he could), Nora swore she wanted nothing to do with it. Yet it was her casual insight that Ricardo Diaz was such a ‘prick’ that even her father wouldn’t work with him (dangling upside down on Rene’s arm chair while they were studying for a history exam), that led the team to Cayden James’ son’s killer and saved them from a boatload of trouble.

Zoe liked to call their trio Tween Team Arrow. Liam didn’t understand why they couldn’t just be Teen Team Arrow. Weren’t they close enough to teenagers? Tween was so Disney Channel. But Nora referred to them as Teeny Team Arrow. Mostly because she enjoyed the color Liam turned when she said it. And, btw, she was not a member.

Liam and Zoe knew better.

* * *

Samanda Watson arrived in Star City that first October. The day after a photograph of Oliver in the Green Arrow suit was broadcast on national television. It was the first real threat to the newly formed Queen Family’s happiness.

Liam argued loudly (and often) against Oliver stepping down as the Green Arrow (and Oliver was a sucker for the pride in his son’s eyes). They all (Team Arrow big and small, prior and current), however, came around to the idea that perhaps there should be more than one Green Arrow.

John got a Green Arrow suit and a shiny new cross-bow, but all big decisions were made the way they always were. Oliver listened to what everyone said, considered all sides, then let Felicity make the call.

But in all seriousness, they fell into a pattern that may have been written in stone by the time the next generation got their own masks. In the Bunker, it was a democracy. But in the field, whoever wore the Green Arrow Suit was in charge. All ties were broken by Overwatch. No exceptions.

John and Oliver sharing Green Arrow duties served to, both, make it hard for the FBI to build a case and to let them have more time with their wives and sons. And when Oliver and John needed to appear together, or they needed a Non-Oliver Green Arrow who could actually shoot a bow, Thea was happy to wear the Green and pinch hit for something other than Aliens.

Over the years many Queens, Diggles, and Harpers proudly wore the Green.

* * *

When Agent Watson threatened to take his freedom and his daughter, a torn and distraught Rene confessed the entire affair to Samantha behind the studio where their children took Martial Arts classes together. She encouraged him to go to his team for help.

They found another way.
Oliver was still brought up on charges and Rene was terrified that he was next, but when the Anti-Vigilante referendum was defeated (by a rather large margin), Liam again voiced his (rather loud) opinion, this time advocating for cutting the FBI off at the knees. With the truth.

They requested a list of the crimes Oliver was charged with and realized the worst (by far) of the crimes were perpetrated by the Hood.

After a long and exhaustive debate, Oliver confessed to being *a* Green Arrow, but denied being the Hood. The Team wanted to claim Tommy Merlyn was the Hood, but Oliver refused to allow it.

But Thea was adamant that her brother was not the boss of her and took matters into her own hands. She produced a letter Tommy had (supposedly) left her, confessing to being the Hood. Oliver was livid at the ruse but Thea held firm. Tommy would have done anything he could to protect Oliver, even beyond the grave. And so would Thea.

To the small number of deaths that could be contributed to the Arrow or the Green Arrow, Oliver pleaded innocent by reason of Justifiable Homicide.

Oliver was still brought to trial and the prosecution sought to sway public opinion to their side by putting on the stand the daughter of the man the Green Arrow had killed on live TV. Damian Darhk.

Maybe they hadn’t done their homework. Maybe they just counted on Nora telling the jury that Damian was a loving father, who she still grieved. On her admitting she was devastated by his death, that her life had imploded after he was killed.

And Nora said all of that.

*She also* testified that if Oliver hadn’t killed Damian, he *would have* killed again. Hundreds or thousands if given the chance. Nora went on to attest that, while Oliver was not her favorite person, at least he tried to help and protect the ‘ungrateful morons’ who populated this city, chief among them the DA who questioned her and every other ‘hypocrite’ that perpetrated ‘this idiotic trial’. (She had sworn to tell the truth, not to be respectful to people who didn’t deserve it).

Obviously, Oliver was acquitted. But more than that, it came to light the conditions Nora was living under in her foster home.

There was a moment of chaos when it became obvious that no one responsible for the child was even in the court house. Rene immediately stepped forward to offer Nora stay with Zoe until something more suitable could be arranged. It was during the commotion that Donna Smoak turned to Quentin Lance and reminded him that they had some experience raising brilliant and angry young women. And they’d turned out pretty damn well.

That was how Quentin Lance found himself foster father to the daughter of the man who killed his baby girl.

Anyone who made the connection, either looked at him like he was nuts or with abject pity. Quentin didn’t bother to explain what he didn’t really understand himself. It felt right. It felt like a second chance. For all of them.

Four years later, Donna and Quentin Lance adopted Nora and she joined the legacy of bad-ass Lance woman. Lance was the only last name she used from that moment forward.

***
Felicity hadn’t even left the Court House after her husbands acquittal before she was on the phone with her GYN scheduling the removal of her IUD.

Unfortunately, they barely had time to celebrate before being summoned to Washington for a secret meeting about the formation of a ‘League’ of government sanctioned superheroes and vigilantes…which, well, wouldn’t really be vigilantes anymore if they were government sanctioned, but semantics.

Then Oliver and Felicity stepped off the plane in Star City to a shit storm with Cayden James, which was quickly turned on Diaz. Cornered and furious, Diaz and Black Siren disappeared for a few weeks only to return to Star City and take Freedom Middle School Hostage.

Actually, Diaz planned to take three specific kids hostage (or failing that, kill them), but they were too resourceful for that. And QIs security system made it impossible for him to be in the room with a single child. Or set the whole place on fire. It was rather infuriating.

So Diaz and the small army he had acquired held siege to the building. Not allowing anyone in or out.

It lasted for three days and ended with Diaz looking very much like a pin cushion. Black Siren was handed over to Gypsy for interdementional crimes and never again seen on Earth 1.

No child was harmed, the schools staff survived without life threatening injuries, and no one was brought up on charges for the death of Diaz and his cronies.

Demand for QI products quadrupled over night.

***

Given everything, it was understandable that the whole birth control thing (or lack there of) slipped both Oliver and Felicity’s minds. They weren’t trying per sae, but they were hardly abstaining.

So it wasn’t exactly shocking when one year after Oliver’s acquittal, Jacob Smoak Queen entered the world (two weeks early and screaming bloody murder).

Felicity had the IUD replaced in the delivery room. She had a budding teenager, a company growing faster than she could keep up with, and a crime fighting group to manage, one infant was all (more than) they could handle.

So it was a surprise when Thomas John Queen arrived eleven months later in a warehouse on the edge of the Glade’s (three weeks early because Jake and TJ were nothing if not competitive. From minute one). Despite many jokes to the contrary, TJ did not arrive with the IUD in his tiny fist, but it was only the first of so many rules that he didn’t feel applied to him.

Brilliant and athletic, hyperactive and strong-willed, the boys lived and breathed trouble. Many an unsuspecting adult was left in tears. And Oliver and Felicity were left exhausted.

They had high hopes that Miss Sara Destiny Diggle (she was meant to be after all) would be a good influence. Born a week before TJ (little Dessie was damn competitive too), the youngest Diggle certainly influenced the boys. Unfortunately, she was more ring leader than anything, though only those closest to them knew she was usually the mastermind of the boys’ antics. Between Dessie’s angelic smile and the boys fierce need to protect her, they almost always took the fall (gladly).

Given they had a trio of toddlers trying to take over Star City and a trio of Teenagers who refused to hear they were too young to save it, Felicity was certain Oliver was insane when he told her he
wanted to try for a girl.

But he was relentless. Oliver wanted a picture in his living room to match the one of Felicity and her mom at their wedding and he wouldn’t be dissuaded. Stubborn thy name was Queen.

It wasn’t until both boys were in school (one that could handle them) that Felicity agreed to try for one last child. With the iron clad promise that after the child was born, Oliver would get a vasectomy. Girl or boy.

Felicity had resigned herself to her life being over run with Queen men, but when the doctor announced they were having twins, she had a flashback to TJ and Jake’s terrible twos and she almost had a panic attack. She managed to hold back the tears long enough for the doctor to announce that both of the newest Queens were girls.

It was Oliver who cried.

* * *

Liam and Nora officially joined Team Arrow after high school graduation, attending Star City University. But Zoe got into Yale and couldn’t turn it down. She was planning to go to Law School. Star City needed an honest DA even more than it needed masks.

At first, Liam and Nora were lost without their third, but after months of fighting crime at night and each other all day, they woke up one day and realized they were in a relationship. It was unconventional and Nora had abandonment issues and intimacy issues and…you-name-it issues but he was happy.

So Liam was completely devastated when he returned from bringing Zoe to the airport (it was Harvard Law now) to a letter from Nora telling him she was gone. After seeing Liam and Zoe together, she realized they were meant to be and she wouldn’t make him choose.

Liam was crushed, but there was nothing he could do. Nora had already hailed her adopted sister, Sara, and was centuries away on the Wave Rider.

It was ten years before Liam saw Nora again. By then, he and Zoe had been married for five.

Nora didn’t intend to be away for ten years. But then again, she intended to hail her Sara, not a much younger Sara, who was expecting to find a sullen High School Freshman and not a college graduate.

Never the less, Nora found a home on the Wave Rider. A place where no one cared who her birth parents were.

She was thirty-four when she returned home and Sara wasn’t much older. Donna and Quentin were very busy with a pile of Queen grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Nora never had children of her own, not biologically anyway. There were too many lost, parentless children and teens in the multiverse. Nora and Ray Palmer seemed to…collect them. When the Wave Rider couldn’t accommodate them any more, they took their rag-tag group and settled outside Star City. Raising their own band of heroes.

* * *

Physically, Mia and Sophia Queen were completely identical. Only their father could reliably tell them apart 100% of the time. But internally, Sophia was all Felicity and Mia all Oliver. More so
than any of his boys.

And, in contrast to the boys, they were easy children, mature and independent. *Until* they hit puberty.

Then Felicity wasn’t the only one muttering “Karma” under her breath. Oliver swore he would never have needed Blood Pressure medicine if not for the girls and every one of their brothers claimed they were responsible for their first gray hair. Quentin Lance laughed his head off (then gave their boy and girlfriends the shovel speech).

* * *

Every one of the Queen children chose public service. Zoe *did* become the DA and eventually Liam gave up the mask to become Mayor of Star City (Oliver hadn’t run for a forth term and there hadn’t been a decent mayor since). Zoe and Liam ran Star City for more than 20 years. With that and Queen Incorporated employing at least a third of the city, it was said across the country that Star City was more a Kingdom run by one family that happened to be in America than an American City.

But Star City had gone from being second only to Gotham in crime to one of the safest cities in the country and grown twice the size since the Undertaking. No one in Star City was complaining about their ‘ruling family’.

Well, except the Queen/Diggle clan.

Star City had become so safe it was boring. So said the progeny anyway (and much to OTAs dismay). JJ was the first to leave, joining the Navy Seals. Then Destiny set her sights on the Air Force Academy and Jake followed as he always did (his Des always had the best ideas and flying a fighter jet was her best yet).

Jake got a masters in Aeronautical Engineering. He started off flying jets and moved on to various space craft, but he was never quite satisfied with the machines he flew. So he built his own. He became the foremost designer of space craft on this planet. When an Earth ship first made intelligent contact on alien soil it was aboard a Jake Queen ship. With Destiny Queen in the captain’s seat.

TJ had a simpler answer to being a trained hero in a city with a low crime rate. He moved to a city with a *high* crime rate.

Gotham was a shit-hole but it never lacked a Supervillian to fight and, damn, did it have it’s share of dark, gorgeous, brooding men. And Bruce Wayne’s gaggle of angry young men…hardest thing Teej ever had to do was pick.

Now, as talented as their boys were, it was Sophia and Mia that showed so much promise it terrified their parents. Mia’s need for adventure started at puberty and only grew. Sophia would probably have been content to keeping most of her adventures on the dark web (as if that wasn’t dangerous enough), but where Mia went, Sophia wasn’t far behind. They traveled the world, worked freelance for various Super-hero and Humanitarian groups. Ventured across dementions and space and time, wherever they were needed.

In the end, it *was* a surprise when they settled back in Star City. Though it was *not* when the twins took over the mantle of Overwatch and Green Arrow.

And if Star City was sometimes a little dull, there was always the Justice League.
So there you have it, the highlights of the (Don’t) Let Me Go universe.

It’s pretty clear what I disliked from Season 6. I fully acknowledge that I have the luxury of not having to keep the conflict high for 23 episodes (though I personally think a middle school siege would have been better conflict than anything we’ve gotten since Adrian Chase).

As I’ve said, I’ve seen little of Season 7 and it influenced me in only one way (I swear QI was going to start with security systems for over a year now). I changed the twins from Sophie and Sylvia after Felicity’s grandmother and grand aunt (who saved her grandmother from the Holocaust) to Sophia and Mia. The reason is obvious.

I am aware that William is now gay in cannon, but by the time that was revealed I was so invested in Liam/Zoe and the love triangle of my NTA, that there was no going back. So it’s Oliver and Felicity’s youngest son that’s gay. It’s up to you to decide which of Gotham’s bad boys the rebellious TJ eventually tames. ;-) 

Obviously I skimmed over quite a bit in this. If you have any questions about what happens to any of the Arrow characters in my universe, feel free to ask me in the comments. If I don’t already have something in my head (I probably will), I’ll make something up for you. ;-). It’ll be fun.

Thank you for reading! If you liked this check out my other stories. To Sacrifice the Sun starts updating again next week!!!

Author’s Note: (edited 1/1/2018)

(Don’t) Let Me Go should have 21 chapters (20 plus an epilogues from William’s pov). I’m finished with the first draft and hope to post the last seven chapters weekly. I plan to post every Sunday, late afternoon/evening. (BTW feedback definitely keeps me motivated to stay on schedule ;-) )

I do have an offshoot, a two-shot, smutty off-shoot piece called Best Birthday Ever, that’s now up.

The first five chapters weave in and out of Arrow Season 5, episodes 20-23. If you want a fun hiatus project, I invite you to rewatch them while reading (I did. Many, many times).
This story does NOT mean I am abandoning *Another Kind of Island* or *To Sacrifice the Sun*. My fickle Muse aside, I would prefer to finish this one before going back to other projects because having the two huge WIPs is stressful enough.

HUGE thank you’s to my Beta team. *Fairytalehearts*, who never shies away from the tough critic and this (among other reasons) is why I love her! *Imusuallyobsessed*, who is always around to suss out idea and talk character and plot with. And my lovely, *Ireland1733* whose endless love and support makes it all worthwhile.

Visit me on Tumblr at http://emmilynestill.tumblr.com/ and Twitter, also Emmilynestill. Sneak Peeks to the next chapter there every Thursday. Stop by to chat if you'd like.

I appreciate all comments and kudo and respond (eventually) to all. I seriously cannot wait to hear what you all think!

Happy Reading,

Emmy

http://emmilynestill.tumblr.com/

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