Real Unlikely Pairings (And One Not So Unlikely One)

by rayshant_bestopt

Summary

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It had started out innocently enough: Thea and Felicity hanging around the Arrow Cave (*why was he using that name? They did not call it that*), hovering over the computer while he was training. Giggling at random moments from something innocuous that had been said. Mysterious calls to Cisco with darting glances over to Oliver as if to make sure he wasn’t paying attention to them (which he hadn’t been until they started doing it more and more often). It got a little weird.

Eventually Oliver couldn’t stand being out of the loop any more. He usually respected his team’s privacy (*sort of, more or less-- he respected its existence, how about that?*) but if Cisco was involved he worried that there may be a problem in Central City as well, which usually meant unbelievable weirdness like metas or time travel or aliens. And the fact that Barry hadn’t raced over or even *called* to ask for his help made him more nervous than he liked to admit. So he cornered Felicity, feeling a little guilty, but also knowing she’d be the easiest to crack, unless he wanted to drive over to Star Labs and tower over Cisco for answers.
When she’d told him, Oliver didn’t believe her. When the blonde showed him how serious she was...he felt a little nauseous.

It wasn’t like Oliver wasn’t aware that people did stuff like this. He and Tommy were tabloid fodder from prominent families growing up, and so he’d stumbled across the concept long before the island. But what the three companions had created-- a running pool, complete with subgenres, rules, and a Big Board to keep track of placings (that Felicity made him swear on pain of death not to tell anyone about)?-- was just mind boggling.

Felicity insisted that he should feel flattered: acting as both the reformed player-billionaire Mayor Queen and Green Arrow, he was a top pick for most of the categories. In fact, six of the top ten Star City pairings included one or the other, and two of them included both (which was weird). Despite her fierce blush and awkward rambling, Felicity insisted that it was just a game, and that none of them actually encouraged or contributed to any of the fiction they’d found online: some of it could be very icky if you knew the relationships of those beneath the masks. And while that apparently didn’t stop them from keeping “Mayor Arrow” up on the Board, Oliver was immensely grateful that “Arrow Queen” and “Kid West” were both automatically disqualified. He told Felicity that the three of them spent too much time online and he never wanted to see any of this trash on the screens again.

Unfortunately, it’s always the taboo ideas that take root into a person’s brain and tempt them, eventually dooming them into pursuing a mess. Oliver found his fingers itching as he played with his smartphone, during long lines or jammed up traffic or even just quiet moments at home. Just one glimpse, he told himself. Just one fic, to see just how bad it was, and then he’d know, and move past it. Just one.

He found the site that Felicity had showed him easily enough-- the fact that they used real people on these things was just creepy as hell, even if they were mysterious superheroes. Well, not all of them: Oliver could see his real name listed quite a few times, as well as Quentin and Thea and Felicity. The fact that people wrote about him and Felicity getting back together was...weird. There was a time that he would have loved for something like what the summaries described-- a reconciliation and bond reformed-- but even though he still cared about Felicity, their relationship had long since moved past that point, and as people they were just too different to even want what they had any more.

But the really popular stories, of course, were the team. The Black Canary seemed to have some traction, and Spartan and Speedy. But for the majority of Star City’s vigilantes’ adventures, Felicity was right-- it was all about the Green Arrow.

Either for sick curiosity or hubris-- who really knew which-- Oliver clicked on one that featured both his monikers. He argued to himself that it felt safer seeing himself in a situation with himself rather than however they’d envisioned him with someone else; but that really didn’t make the story any better.

About a third of the way through the RPF, with Mayor Queen in nothing but his tie and on his knees in his office as he begged to “reward” the Green Arrow for saving the city again, Oliver closed out the browser, feeling somewhat mortified. What the hell was wrong with people? Not that the use of his bisexuality bothered him at all, or that people assumed it of him, but the language, the descriptions-- neither man sounded or acted like him in the slightest, and the whole thing just needed some cheesy porn music in the background to really sell the idiocy of the scene. How the hell did Cisco, Felicity, and Thea stomach even looking at any of this?

Shaking his head, Oliver made sure to erase his browser history before turning off his phone and putting it away. Consider his curiosity satiated, and he was definitely never going to look at any of that again.
A few days later, Barry actually did call, asking for his help with a former-Queen Consolidated employee now possessing metahuman powers and a serious grudge against the upper class. Oliver didn’t really know the man, but Team Arrow still came, of course. Felicity and Cisco doing computer stuff, Dinah and Wally doing meta-stuff, Dig and Iris and Joe doing tactical stuff, and Barry and Oliver taking point, because Oliver trusted Barry to follow his lead and have his back, just like he had Barry’s. And besides, if this guy had a grudge against the elite, he knew Barry would worry about him (even if the bad guy didn’t know that), and it was safer for the Teams just to put the speedster somewhere where Oliver could keep an eye on him in case he decided to get recklessly heroic.

Some impressive strategy and speed and shooting later, the guy was down, and the two teams retreated to Star Labs to celebrate. Barry was thrilled, grinning brightly as his gaze kept flickering over to Ollie, suggesting as the rest dispersed that maybe they could go grab a beer or something before the Mayor of Star City headed back. Which, really, it was useless in Oliver’s experience to argue with Barry about stuff like this, so he gave an obliging twitch of his lips and collected his leather jacket, hopping on his bike to meet the speedster there, and feeling a slight niggling in the back of his mind at the situation-- What did this remind him of?-- before pushing it aside completely and resigning to coming back to it later.

The next day with his late evening cup of coffee and an almost empty government building, it finally hit him like a ton of bricks. The vigilante had completely dismissed the whispers and the glances of the tech pair as they celebrated with the group, retreating slightly from the rest and checking their phones. Now, however, he pulled up the Central City Picture News on his screen, which-- of course-- had an article on the meta, and how he’d been taken down in a team up between Central and Star City’s heroes. Oliver usually didn’t usually give these much thought, besides when Iris wrote them-- being the vigilante, the Hood, the Arrow, and now the Green Arrow, he was well-aware of how the slant of public opinion worked. But without thinking, he found himself pulling his keyboard closer as he opened a new tab over the article, glancing cautiously over toward the door before typing in a search.

The first time he’d only checked Star City RPFs, he rationalized in his head. And of course those were disturbing. But if Cisco was part of the pool, then surely there was one for Central City too? And hadn’t Felicity said something about “West Queen?” What was that? He definitely wasn’t going to read any of them, he affirmed resolutely in his mind-- he just wanted to check really quick.

In the time it had taken for the article to be published to the moment Oliver had originally considered wrapping up his work and heading home, the internet seemed to have gone into a frenzy. Page after page of entries appeared, with cliche titles and vague summaries, all revolving around the two teams interacting with each other.

Scolding himself, Oliver slid the mouse up to click on one. Last time he’d picked his own, and he’d regretted it-- a lot. This time he thought maybe it’d be safer to avoid either of his identities, and so he chose a pairing between the Flash and Black Canary, despite the coupling seeming a bit odd.

It wasn’t a bad story. It was still a little off, as the author obviously had no idea about either person’s mannerisms or humor. They obviously had picked up Dinah’s rough nature and Barry’s sweetness though, and made an interesting case for the two of them. This one had no begging, or description of the Flash’s dick as a some sort of delicious treat, thank god. And they got his eyes all wrong, which to Oliver proved they had never seen the hero in actuality. Because once you saw that green gaze light up in your direction, you never forgot it. But still, he didn’t feel sick about the thing, even if it felt completely unrealistic and out of character for both of them.
After that...well, Oliver found himself drawn back to the stuff, again and again. The crossovers were really much more diverse, so it wasn’t just weird sexual fantasies. And he argued to himself that he wasn’t actually supporting or encouraging the stories, which would be disrespectful and creepy of his friends and colleagues. He didn’t leave any notes or likes or markers that had shown he was there-- he even only used his phone to check the site, skimming the titles every few days.

The ships themselves really were worth checking in for. Felicity was right: the Green Arrow was very popular, although so was The Flash. Supergirl, he realized with surprise, was by far the most widely shipped, which he found mind-boggling, since she’d only come to Earth-1 once and had disappeared just as quickly; but apparently aliens left a big impression, because the Girl of Steel had a fandom with just about every hero the two cities had to offer (not to mention the Legends). Normal humans seemed to be narrowed down to the key players: Quentin, Oliver, Thea, and Felicity from Star City, and Singh, Joe, and Iris from Central. A lot of Iris-- as far as normal humans went, the journalist that created The Flash was basically Mayor Queen’s only real competition. Oliver wondered if Barry would feel weird about all of the Westflash fics out there-- especially since they usually retconned Eddie’s existence to put him there, or just pushed all three together for a polyamorous grouping. Considering everything Barry had gone through with his best friend, Oliver kind of hoped the younger man never came across all of those.

Mostly though, Oliver couldn’t help but be kind of suckerized into the Flash/Green Arrow fiction-- “Flarrow”, as their fandom apparently called them. It’s definitely the top superhero pairing that didn’t involve Kara, which Oliver supposed made sense since they spearheaded their two teams and worked together most often. He’s much more careful about looking at ratings and warnings now, but he admitted it’s kind of cute to see the two caricatures of themselves teaming up on a more regular basis, with some interesting banter that Oliver is positive would never happen in real life. And, if it played into his quasi-self-acknowledged fantasies about himself and the other man, well...it didn’t really hurt anyone, did it?

By this time, unfortunately, Oliver was hooked, and so while he shoots stern glances at Felicity when he catches Thea lingering at her desk (though to be fair, he has to be careful, since sometimes that is actually about work), he also can’t help but catch snippets of their conversation, which seep into his mind for him to turn over when he’s bored on rooftop patrol.

Why do so many people assume the Flash is blonde, for example? Or that Speedy’s real life name was Mia? And why is the Green Arrow always a top, but Mayor Queen is usually a bottom?

Most importantly, why do people spend so much time considering the logistics of speed powers in respect to how that affects their sex life? After all, Oliver has been working with Barry (and by extension Wally and Jesse) for years, and he has never put as much consideration into the mechanics of any of their libidos as these stories have. Okay-- maybe he’s thought a little about the vibration thing once or twice (or every time he’s getting off in the morning or swept up in a sex dream that he obviously has no control over); but how long Barry’s refractory period is; or whether his healing power allows his rim muscles to tighten back up to “first time” status every time? Oliver is half-disgusted, half-awed by the arguments people come up with to support their stance about sex with Flash or Kid Flash.

And then there’s the sex itself. For about a month, Oliver successfully avoided anything with a warning of NSFW, but after slowly wading back into the works, he allowed a few decent writers to sway him back into the more explicit pieces. He still avoided Mayor Arrow stories, and most of the ones involving other members of his team (although he rationalized reading White Canary pairings was okay so long as Sara never found out about it), but apparently he wasn’t an honorable enough person to keep from clicking and seeing what kind of sex people thought the Flash and Green Arrow had.
Cisco must be horrified, Oliver thought with a chuckle-- the sheer number of times that the Green Arrow caused the Flash to cum in his suit (that people mistakenly referred to as leather) was insane, and even the archer was well-aware of how possessive of that thing Cisco was. Or the fact that apparently the Flash’s secret lair (which more than one fan had concluded had to be in an unaffected subbasement of Star Labs) often doubled as a sort of Team Flash sex mansion. Why did the entire team have their own room? Plus guest rooms for when Team Arrow or Team Legends (or Supergirl) came to visit? Were they saving their cities or running a leather-fetish group orgy? (Not leather-- they weren’t wearing leather, dammit.)

And yet some of the fiction, as awful as they were, were addictive. Not that Oliver would ever admit to even looking at the site, much less that he tended to click on the “Flarrow Date Night”-themed stories more than any other themes. He definitely wasn’t going to admit that he smiled a little as he read about his and Barry’s alter-egos hanging out on rooftops during stakeouts getting distracted with talks of the future; or the Green Arrow having to reassure the Flash that nothing was going on between him and Mayor Queen as the heroes spooned in bed after angry-jealous sex. The vigilante one hundred percent never would concede that he’d come back more than once to a story that included a drunken Flash racing around the city sending videos of him singing badly punned love songs on rooftops. Not that Barry could even get drunk, but the idea of the Green Arrow having to chase down his inebriated speedster boyfriend as he raced from rooftop to rooftop singing Pat Benatar and Bon Jovi like some sort of romantic scavenger hunt...well, it wasn’t a bad story, was all. Plus there were some less-than suitable for the office scenes that Ollie liked to think back on some nights. But it was all innocent fantasizing-- he definitely didn’t follow any of it closely, and the rest of the team was completely in the dark, because there was nothing to tell. Certainly not the tiny discrete links that he put into a vaguely labeled folder in his phone.

And then there was one night that Oliver got poisoned.

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He really hated that term, poison, because it made it sound like a much bigger deal than it was. As a seasoned vigilante, Oliver had been injected with worse things, after all-- the whole team had at one point or another, it felt like. And this wasn’t even liquid-- just some biohazardous gas that he’d inhaled a little bit of chasing after some random criminal. Unfortunately, he had collapsed, and-- since he’d done it as Oliver Queen in a building full of people, he’d ended up in the hospital, hooked up to tubes and wires that were inhibiting his work. All because it was "poisonous".

He did manage to get released fairly quickly, albeit against medical advice. But he had herbs to keep him on his feet, along with Barry, who raced over the minute Felicity had said “Oliver” and “hospital”. Just to help catch the bad guy, obviously, since the archer wasn’t exactly at his best. But it had worked out fine: bad guy caught; city safe; Oliver not-dead.

Considering how hard Oliver had argued that he was fine, he probably should have protested harder about Felicity kicking him out of the Arrow Cave (not that they called it that) to get some rest, or Dig driving him home, helping him to his bed. Or Barry sticking around to look after him. Probably especially that one.

But Barry was stubborn when he wanted to be, and right now he was dead set on keeping an eye on Oliver until he was back to one hundred percent. He could help with patrolling Star City, he insisted. Wally and the others could take care of Central for a little while. And he hadn’t used up all of his vacation time at work in Flash-related activities, so he could swing the absences.

Star City’s vigilante grumbled, but relented. It wasn’t like Barry was the worst company, after all.
Of course, basically living in close quarters, with Barry sleeping on the couch and zipping around the place at any given minute-- obviously there were some downsides. Like the fact that apparently those damn fics had dumped Oliver’s brain into the gutter.

When they were both relaxing on the couch, watching some random show, Oliver had to check himself as his arm almost reached out, half-expecting the other to swing himself over, either laying his head or his feet in the archer’s lap.

When Barry asked through the door in the morning if Oliver needed help with anything, the older man squeezed his eyes shut to block out the snatch of dialogue that reverberated through his brain with the Flash asking that very same question in a very different context.

And Oliver realized very quickly that he’d read way too many stories that involved the speedster being pushed up against hard surfaces, because watching him idling in front of the refrigerator, or cleaning off the counter, or just leaning against a wall caused his cock to twitch with trained interest, which felt humiliatingly awkward, even if Barry had no idea what he was doing (since he really wasn’t doing anything).

So yeah, the days were more than a little problematic, and what he could tell was Barry trying to make a comfortable amount of time on bedrest so Oliver could heal instead became the older man treating the other to random moments of stiffness and cold shoulder in between their normal ease and understanding. Oliver wondered whether Barry would call him out on his weirdness, or attribute it to weird side effects of the poison.

One afternoon while Oliver was dozing (not because he was still feeling weak, obviously-- Barry had insisted on it, since Oliver had spent all morning doing emails for his day job), he vaguely heard Barry’s phone buzzing, and softly smiled as he listened to him quietly answer.

Another minute, and a gentle hand was on his shoulder, shaking him awake just enough to let him know Felicity had sent some files to his phone, and what was his password? Oliver was still half-asleep, and mumbled off some numbers that he hoped were the right ones.

Not that he was sure why his boyfriend didn’t remember them-- he could have sworn he told Barry ages ago for convenience’s sake.

Apparently it worked out okay, because Barry was back on the phone with Felicity affirming that he was in Oliver’s phone. A dulled alarm in the back of the man’s mind for some reason sounded when they started discussing his “personnel” files, although he couldn’t connect why it was causing his stomach to twist.

The room was suddenly quiet, and Oliver’s eyes flew open in realization. He’d been thinking about Barry as his boyfriend. He’d given Barry his password to his phone. And Barry was looking at his “personnel” files (which at the time seemed a smart title because while people would definitely go through “personal” files, “personnel” seemed less likely). He bolted to a sit, head whipping around to stare at the brunette that was staring down at his phone, green eyes frozen wide, Felicity’s voice coming through the speedster’s phone, asking if he was okay.

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It had been five minutes since then, and now it was Barry sitting on the couch, and Oliver watching him with concern, having given up on trying to get him to drink the glass of water and just setting it on the coffee table. Oliver had taken back his phone, but the younger vigilante still had his hand curled in his lap, eyes staring unseeingly downward. Oliver felt like he should try addressing the man, but had given up after the initial three times he’d said Barry’s name and been unable to think of something else to follow it up with. He was honestly feeling awful-- guilty as hell about Barry
finding that stuff. Why had he even saved those links? He shouldn’t have looked into that stuff in the first place. He should be apologizing, saying something that could make him sound less like a perverted scumbag fantasizing about his best friend. But shame had left his throat constricted and his chest tight.

It was Barry who finally spoke up-- after sputtering slightly while attempting to string words together coherently in that awkwardly endearing way that Oliver forced himself not to focus on. He was in hot enough water as it was, his friendship hanging in the balance.

Oddly enough, Barry wasn’t as clueless as Oliver had been-- at least, he didn’t ask what the hell this shit was. Oliver mind fleetingly wondered if maybe Cisco and Company weren’t as secretive with their Big Board as they seemed to think. Instead, the Flash, face as red as his vigilante suit, fumbled as he asked if Oliver had written those, to which the other vehemently denied. God, no-- that he hadn’t had some of his own fantasies, own ideas; but he’d never put them in writing, much less post them online for others.

Barry nodded slowly, processing, and Oliver felt the need to explain himself-- that yeah, he’d read a couple, but it was just because of Felicity (no, he had no shame throwing the blonde under the bus for getting him involved in this whole mess). He would erase all of it-- hell, he’d get her to plant a virus and kill the whole site, if that was what Barry wanted. The speed with which Barry shot the idea down was so fast that at first Oliver didn’t think he’d heard it right. He watched as the speedster’s face burned, but still gave a short shake as he assured Oliver he didn’t need to do that-- that this wasn’t a big deal. The archer’s expression must not have looked convinced, because Barry bit his lip hard, sighing before rising from the couch and grabbing up his laptop, pulling up a folder labeled “Frontiers in Chemical Sciences”.

Oliver’s expression morphed from puzzled to shock to incredulity as his eyes trailed down the contents, flitting back to his friend who had suddenly become very focused on an itch on the back of his neck as his ears flamed. The mayor of Star City couldn’t help it, finally letting out a low chuckle, which, after drawing Barry’s attention, was returned by the other as they both reflected on the ridiculousness of the situation.

The archer couldn’t say he was surprised at all to find that Barry loved fluff: coffee shop dates and soulmate AUs and movie nights, although he admitted some of the choices people pictured for him were a little cliche-cheesy, even for him. He liked reading about The Flash showing Supergirl the sights of Central City, and Heatwave trying to impress Firestorm with marshmallows and small explosives. It seemed Barry made more of an effort to find the stories that were completely OOC, which Oliver guessed was probably to assuage his conscious for reading weird stories about his friends being in relationships with each other.

Oliver couldn’t say he wasn’t intrigued that he and Barry read some of the same pieces though-- they got into a discussion about a couple of them, actually: talking about how weird the depictions of Flarrow was, and how Barry wished with a chuckle that he called the shots as much as people seemed to think when they teamed up. They both smiled and sat comfortably on the couch, drinking the beers that Barry had grabbed for both of them at some point.

Barry went home the next day-- he had a day and night job, after all, and Oliver was back on his feet for his own. But they talked more often; the mayor driving over to Central City to grab a coffee with his friendly CSI to chat about random things, and sometimes some cliche words or situation would occur and they’d both look at each other and smile at their secret joke. Oliver gets random “coded” emails when Barry finds a story that he likes, and after intense scrutiny, the other man carefully sends his own recommendations. It’s sweet, and nice, and maybe a little frustrating because if this was one
of those fictional realities then they’d be dating by now or having a drunken one night stand that leads to an impossible pregnancy or something. But instead they’re just friends with weird shared interests, and Oliver convinces himself he’s okay with that.

He’s wrapping up a correspondence to a judge when his phone pings. Oliver glanced at the screen and quickly emails off the letter before unlocking his phone to see what Barry sent him. He leans back in his chair to glance out the door, making certain he’s alone, before settling back with a smile and clicking on the link.

Oliver doesn’t recognize the author name, but Barry tended to branch out more than he did, so he doesn’t think much of it. His lips tug up further as the tags reveal the story is Flarrow romantic, and he settles to take a look.

Soon his eyes start to furrow curiously. It’s a story about the Flash and Green Arrow living in a world of superheroes, so it’s completely normal for them to be walking around the street in costume. They obviously live far away from each other, but the speedster can race to Star City in no time, so the fact that they aren’t dating really is because one’s awkward and the other stubborn. However, as luck would have it, one day while fighting crime they discover a magic book that reveals both of their feelings— except both men are still hesitant to do anything. The Flash wishes he had the courage to tell Green Arrow, but he doesn’t want to ruin what they have.

The story ends on a cliffhanger, but Oliver is just staring at the screen, eyes flickering back up to the screen name.

There’s a rustle that a normal person would confuse with a breeze, but by now Oliver knew it too well. His eyes can’t quite lift to meet the emerald gaze, is Barry the author? only just audible from his numb lips.

The speedster dug his toe shyly into the carpet, shoulders shrugging. He attempts to joke his way out of the situation, but quickly folds, offering instead to erase the work. The sandy-haired vigilante forces his eyes upwards, anxious and yet desperate to put that trademark obstinacy to good use as he points out that the piece has already got a few hits, as well as a request for an update. It doesn’t seem quite right to disappoint his fan base by leaving them without closure, right?

He stands and steps slowly to close the space between them, calloused fingers trailing up the lean man’s biceps as he adds that he’s actually pretty curious himself to see what happens. Barry’s wide-eyed hope completely crushed any further restraint he could have managed, and Ollie just chuckles softly, leaning forward to press a chaste kiss against Barry’s lips; relishing the gentle intake of breath by the speedster, his pulse thrilling at the feeling of the speedster’s more exuberant reciprocation.

Oliver turned to grab his coat, and suggests they leave, although he couldn’t help but mock Barry slightly about the account. Because seriously? 2ArrowsntheBack?

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