The Accidental Boyfriend
by javajunkie

Summary

When Felicity gets invited to her college friend's wedding she asks Oliver to go with her. Add unresolved sexual tension and the fact that all of Felicity's friends believe Oliver is her boyfriend, and you have the making for a memorable wedding weekend. Felicity x Oliver

Notes

This is just a random idea I had. I'm sure it's been done before, but hopefully I can make it my own! Enjoy :)

See the end of the work for more notes
Chapter 1

It all started with a wedding invitation.

Please join us

in celebrating the blessed union of

Taylor Lemmings and David Rothstein.

Felicity had gone to MIT with Taylor, and the two of them had been part of a tight knit group of friends that remained close post graduation. While they all settled in different parts of the country, they kept tabs on each other through phone calls, emails, and the occasional visit. Over the years, Felicity had gone to nearly all of their weddings. They'd spend the weekend sharing stories about their lives and, somehow, among the stories of husbands, babies and affairs, one question was always raised.

"Felicity, are you seeing anyone?"

For a while she told the truth. No, she wasn't seeing anyone. She hadn't met anyone she liked enough to invest the time for a relationship. Work kept her busy. They poked and prodded, trying to get down to the seemingly inexplicable roots of why such a smart and charming girl couldn't find herself a man. Finally, fed up with the relationship inquisition, Felicity told a small white lie.

"I have a boyfriend," she'd said, stunning them all into silence. Naturally, questions had followed, and as she struggled to answer them on the spot, she did the best thing she could think of and began describing someone she knew.

She began describing Oliver Queen.

Since her friends never seemed to make their way to Starling City she felt there was no harm in casually dropping his name. It seemed like a foolproof plan. They didn't know Oliver and their nonexistent visits to Starling City meant there was no chance of them running into him and accidentally mentioning the fake relationship. It was the perfect facade; and for the first time in a very long while, Felicity's relationship status was not everyone's favorite topic.

And then Taylor insisted she bring Oliver to her wedding.

Felicity stood outside of Oliver's office at Queen Consolidated, trying to psyche herself up for what would be one of the more uncomfortable conversation in recent history. She reminded herself that Oliver was a decent guy, and decent guys took pity on people who needed them. But then she reminded herself that she'd been pretending he was her boyfriend for a good year.

Yeah, this was going to be an unpleasant conversation.

She took a deep breath and then walked into his office. Oliver sat at his desk, going over some stack of papers, and he glanced up at her wearily.

"Please don't tell me the board wants another meeting. I'm still recovering from the one this morning. You know, we should have coffee and bagels at those meetings. It'd make them feel less like a death march."
"Noted," she said, nodding her head, "And, the board doesn't want a meeting. I'm here on strictly personal business."

"Oh, okay," he said, leaning back in his chair. "What's up?"

"I have sort of strange request," she said, stepping forward. She stopped a proper distance from his desk, clasping her hands behind her back. "You see, I have this wedding coming up and I don't have a date. And, I was sort of hoping you would go with me?"

"Go with you to a wedding?" he repeated, the tone of his voice not making her feel too confident about the next part of the story she had to relay to him.

"Usually I wouldn't ask you to go to a wedding with me. Because, hello, boundaries. But, you see, I have this group of friends from MIT, and they kept pushing me about if I was dating someone, and then why I wasn't dating someone. And then they started going on about how I better find someone soon because, hey, you're allergic to cats so being a cat lady is out of the question." She paused to take a breath. "So, I finally broke down and told them I was dating someone. And, I kind of sort of told them my boyfriend was you."

"You told your friends I was your boyfriend?" he repeated.

She nodded quickly as she bit her bottom lip nervously. This was bad. She could tell this was very, very bad. But she made her bed months ago and now, dammit, she had to lie in it.

"You can be mad at me," she told him. "You have every right to be mad at me. But-"

"There's a but?" he asked incredulously.

"What we do down here, fighting crime and all that jazz, is kind of the reason that I don't have an actual boyfriend to take to weddings. So..." she trailed off, giving him a meaningful look.

"You're not actually blaming me for being single, are you?"

"No," she said loudly. "But, I'm just, you know, pointing out that you – " she gestured around them " – and this whole operation are a contributing factor."

He laughed humorlessly, shaking his head. "This is unbelievable."

"Look, I understand if you don't want to do it. And I won't push you. At least not a lot. But if you could just find it in your heart to help me out this once, I would be eternally grateful. Like, buying your lunch every day for a month grateful."

"I'm a billionaire," he pointed out. "I don't need you to buy me lunch."

"And the minute the wedding is over I'll concoct some breakup story," she promised. "Or, you know, a week or so later. It would look weird if we broke up immediately after the wedding. But, we will break up! And then this will all be over, I promise."

He shook his head, running his fingers through his hair. She could tell he was reluctant, and who could blame him? She'd gone ahead and done one of the craziest girl things you could do, but he knew her. He knew her and respected her, and she was banking pretty heavily on that now.

"Please, Oliver. I don't ask you for a lot, but I'm asking you for this. I can't go to that wedding alone."
She knew if she went alone they'd figure out she'd been lying. Then, she'd be the pathetic girl who made up a fake boyfriend. She could just imagine the pitiful looks on their faces mixed with tempered relief that they weren't in her position.

"No Spice Girls for a month," he finally said. She looked at him in confusion, wondering how in the world her begging had led to the Spice Girls.

"What?"

"I'll go with you if you won't listen to the Spice Girls at your desk down in the foundry for one month. It'd be nice to give my ears a rest."

"What do you mean give your ears a rest?" she countered without thinking. "The Spice Girls are one of the greatest bands to come from the 90s, and...I really shouldn't be arguing with you when you're agreeing to do something for me. Yeah. Stopping that right now. No Spice Girls for an entire month. Got it."

"When is the wedding?"

"This weekend," she said softly, fully expecting the surprised look he gave her.

"This weekend? But-"

"I already put you down as my plus one," she admitted sheepishly. "Not that I knew you'd say yes. There was a strong possibility you'd say no. But, you know, wishful thinking?"

He smiled slightly. "I'm guessing the wedding isn't in Starling City."

She shook her head. "Chicago. I already booked our tickets."

"You thought of everything," he noted wryly.

"I called a taxi service and he's picking me up at 9 o'clock in the morning, which means we'll probably swing by your house around 9:20."

"That's fine. Anything else I need to know?"

"Not really," she said slowly, pressing her lips together. "I think that's about it."

"Alright," he said. "Well, I guess I better make sure my tuxedo is clean."

"Thank you for doing this," she said. "It means a lot to me."

"What are friends for if not to play your fake boyfriend at weddings?" he asked rhetorically. "Besides, it'll be nice to get out of Starling for a few days."

She nodded, turning on her heel. When she reached the door she glanced back and quickly said, "Oh, by the way, we've been dating for about a year."

She slipped out before she could hear his reaction.

Oliver sparred with Diggle in the foundry, fielding jabs and ducking under uppercuts as he told Diggle what happened with Felicity earlier while she was conveniently out of the lair. Diggle laughed, jumping back as Oliver aimed a kick at his chest.
"This isn't funny," Oliver said.

"Yeah, it sort of is," Diggle said. "I mean, you have to hand it to the girl. She has dedication."

"What do you mean?" Oliver asked, reaching up and blocking a punch with his hand.

"To keep that charade going for a year? That's dedication."

"How much dedication can it take?" he asked. "They ask, 'Oh, how's Oliver? He's good. Good.' End of story."

"You live with two women," Diggle pointed out. "Have you ever seen a conversation about men go by that easily?"

Diggle had a point.

"So, do you know your story?" Diggle asked. He landed a punch into Oliver's side.

"What story?" Oliver asked, rubbing his side unhappily. He was getting careless on the mats. It was time to step up his game.

"You know, how you guys started dating?" Diggle returned easily. "That's the first thing someone asks when they meet a boyfriend or girlfriend. Besides from how you met, but I'm pretty sure you have that one covered."

"If it's been going on for a year, I'm sure they know."

Oliver launched into a roundhouse kick, and while it was executed perfectly Diggle easily deflected the kick.

"Yeah, her friends might, but they're not going to be the only ones at the wedding."

Oliver frowned, realizing that this wedding might be more work than he initially thought. He didn't mind spending the time with Felicity. He genuinely liked her, and she was good company. In fact, when he first returned from the island she was one of the few people who could make him actually smile. He liked her rambling and how in the beginning she'd been one hundred percent on to his bullshit tech stories, but let him think she believed them, anyway. He hadn't anticipated this second part of the weekend, though.

"You'll be fine," Diggle said, reading into his silence. "If anyone's good at lying under pressure, it's you."

Oliver chuckled. "I suppose you're right."

Felicity came down the stairs then and Oliver glanced over at her, completely missing Diggle's stealth approach as he grabbed a hold of his arm and threw him down onto the mat. Felicity dropped her purse on her chair and called out, "Take it easy over there. I need him for this weekend."

"Don't worry," Diggle told her with a grin, reaching a hand down to Oliver. He helped him up and said, "He'll still be in fine dancing form. So, I was wondering, just how far did you go with this whole relationship thing."

Felicity froze. She thought Diggle had just been talking about her taking Oliver to the wedding. She didn't know Oliver told him about the other part.

"You told him?" she hissed.
"What?" Oliver said, shrugging. "I didn't know it was a secret."

"For the record, no judgment over here," Diggle said. "Although I do find it pretty funny. Hey, I was wondering, what's your story for how you guys started dating?"

Felicity reluctantly said, "We, uh, kissed under the mistletoe at the Queen Consolidated holiday party. One thing led to another and then, you know, hello relationship."

Diggle had the courtesy to hold back his laughter, but she could see the side of his mouth twitching.

"I had to make up all of this stuff pretty quickly!" she explained unhappily. "You try coming up with a story like that when you have six much-too-eager-women hanging on your every word!" She glanced between Oliver and Diggle. "It's very nerve wracking!"

"Well, I wish you two nothing but the best for this weekend," Diggle said. With expert control he added, "Who knows, maybe the next wedding will be your own?"

"Oh my God," Felicity groaned, covering her face with her hands. "Can we please stop talking about this?"

"I second that," Oliver intoned, walking over to the side of the mats and picking up a towel to wipe his face.

Diggle snorted and said, "Whatever you two lovebirds want."
Felicity and Oliver sat on the 10 am flight from Starling City to Chicago. Oliver sat in the window seat, because when they boarded Felicity had quickly launched into how she had some minor claustrophobia problems on planes, and unless he wanted her clawing at him halfway through the flight to get to the aisle, he better let her sit on the outside. Joking that he had enough scars without her adding more, he took the window seat without argument.

Felicity was well prepared for the flight. She brought TSA-approved snacks for both of them, as well as picking up a few bottle of water at one of the airport convenient stores before boarding. She also provided their inflight entertainment in the form of a stack of notecards she'd drafted the night before with random little tidbits about herself for him to study.

"These are the things that a boyfriend should know about his girlfriend," Felicity said reasonably, flipping through the cards. "I might have gone a little too in depth with some of them, but at this point I really don't think there's a such thing as being over prepared."

"I still can't believe you made actual notecards," Oliver said.

"I couldn't sleep last night," she said dismissively. "Anyway, you need to learn all of this before we get to Chicago."

He shook his head in bemusement, stretching his legs out in front of him as much as he could. He swore the rows were getting smaller on planes. If they got any smaller he'd be sitting with his knees up to his chest. Felicity gave the notecards a little wave in front of his face.

"Aren't you going to look at them?"

"I don't need notecards," he told her simply.

"What?"

"You're not some stranger, Felicity. I don't need the notecards."

She narrowed her eyes, sensing a challenge in his words. She turned toward him, crossing her legs, and said, "Okay, let's test that." She glanced down at the first notecard. "What is my favorite color?"

"Purple," he said immediately.

"Okay, you got one" she said with a nod, shuffling that notecard to the back and glancing down at the next question. "What is my favorite movie?"

Oliver considered the question for a moment. "It depends on your mood. If you're happy, I'd say something by Disney. If you're sad, Forrest Gump, because you told me that movie always makes you cry. And, if you're pissed off at Digg and I, definitely one of those old Hollywood musicals you
love so much."

Felicity pressed her lips together, holding back laughter. She turned the notecard around for him to see the answer. His eyes widened and he blurted out, "Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory? That's your favorite movie?"

She nodded. "I like the oompa loompas. But, you were right that Forrest Gump makes me cry. I'm surprised you remember that."

"What about the old Hollywood musicals?" he asked.

"Oliver, when am I ever pissed at you and Digg?" she asked innocently. He laughed, shaking his head.

"I want to say about every other day, but I feel like that will get me slapped."

"You feel right," she said crisply. "Alright, next question. What is my favorite pizza topping?"

"This one's easy," he said. They ordered pizza fairly often at the foundry and she always made them get a quarter of the pizza just for her. "Black olives."

"You're right, that was an easy one. Let's see..." she shuffled through the notecards, trying to find some more difficult ones. "Ah, here we go. This is a good one. What was I wearing the first time we met?"

She fully expected him to be stumped on this one. Guys didn't notice clothes, especially not guys like Oliver Queen. Besides, their first meeting had been pretty brief. He came in with a bullet ridden computer, charming smile in place as he spun a story so unbelievably fabricated that she'd be surprised if a five year old bought it. He was in and out of her office in less than five minutes.

He still hadn't spoken, and she was about to call him out triumphantly on his silence, when he said, "A light pink button-up tucked into a black skirt. You had your hair in a low ponytail. It was curled," he continued, reaching forward and touching her straight ponytail gently, "or at least different than how you wear it now. And your lips were the color of fruit punch."

"Strawberry margarita," she said softly. "The, uh, lipstick color was strawberry margarita."

He grinned slightly. "So, how did I do?"

She blinked rapidly, sitting back a bit in her seat. His eyes were on her lips, scrubbed of any lipstick now, and she could feel her pulse quicken. The airplane hit a bit of turbulence and she careened forward, hand landing heavily on his thigh. For one horrifying moment she was frozen, body thrown forward and hand planted firmly on his leg. She could feel the heat of his leg through his sweatpants and she idly wondered what his skin would feel like against hers.

"Oh my God," she stammered, pulling away rashly as her senses returned to her. "I'm so sorry. The turbulence made me feel you up. I mean, not that I actually felt you up. I think feeling someone up requires intent, and, you know, I didn't intend to grab your thigh. I was thrown forward, and your thigh just happened to be there, and-"

"Felicity, please stop talking about my thigh," he said, laughing. "It's fine."

She nodded quickly, thinking to herself that if this weekend was going to work she was going to have to stop freaking out when there was any physical contact between them. She reached up instinctively to smooth down her ponytail.
"So, let's see how good you are at this game," he said, plucking the notecards from her hand. "What's my favorite color?"

She took a moment to calm herself down, happy that there was something tangible to distract her from what just happened.

"Green," she joked, thinking of his vigilante getup.

"Ha ha," he said drily. "Very funny."

"Um, I'm going to say black. Because you wear a lot of it."

"Black is right," he told her with a grin. He glanced down at the notecards and began flipping through them. "We're going to skip favorite movie because I don't have one-"

"You don't have a favorite movie?" she interrupted. "Everyone has a favorite movie."

He shrugged. "I don't. I wasn't really big on them before the island. And then afterwards I sort of had more important things to do than watching movies."

"Didn't you watch any growing up?" she asked.

"I guess." He thought about it for a moment. "Actually, yeah, I liked the Indiana Jones movies. Those were good."

Felicity grinned. Of course Oliver Queen, Hood in disguise, grew up watching Indiana Jones films.

"Alright, next question," she said.

Oliver glanced down at the next notecard. "Favorite pizza topping?"

"Pineapple," she said, wrinkling her nose. "Which is disgusting, by the way."

Both Oliver and Diggle liked pineapple on their pizzas, and she could never understand it. Pineapple belonged nowhere near marinara sauce.

Oliver flipped through the notecards more, reading through the questions, and then he paused on a notecard.

"Hold on, we went to Italy?" he asked, glancing up from the notecard.

"Oh, yeah, I also threw in some notecards about the stories I told the girls," she returned easily. When he gave her a look she said, "Well, what was I supposed to say all these months? We take romantic trips to the Queen Consolidated cafeteria? I had to give them something!"

Oliver went to say something but then stopped, his eyes sliding to the side as he seemed to realize something. He turned his gaze back at her and said, "You didn't happen to make, um, pictoral proof of these trips, did you?"

She swallowed hard. "What is your definition of pictoral proof?"

He gave her a look.

"Okay, yeah, I mocked up a few photos," she admitted. "There was one of us at dinner. You in front of the Vatican-"
"That random picture of me in front of the Vatican was you?" he said loudly. A few months back a picture of Oliver standing in front of the Vatican had surfaced and Oliver, who had never been to the Vatican, was understandably confused. Felicity had quickly dismissed it, saying it was someone having too much fun on photoshop. Sara Lance returned a few days later, and the Oliver-Vatican-gate was forgotten.

"It was really harmless," Felicity said. "And, besides, I destroyed the source of that photo after you guys saw it. Problem solved!"

"What other photos did you make?" he asked, narrowing his eyes.

"Just a few," she said carefully. "Nothing major."

"Show me," he said, voice holding no room for argument. She reluctantly obliged, reaching into her bag and pulling out her laptop. She logged in and clicked on the photo drive, pulling up the folder labeled "O-F".

The number of pictures she'd made for their various trips popped up and she glanced over at him nervously. His jaw was clenched – not a good sign – and she turned her direction back to the computer, wishing this moment would end. Preferably soon.

"How did you get these to look so real?" he asked after flipping through a few of the mock-ups.

"I'm a tech person, remember?" she returned. "We're good at this type of stuff." He didn't say anything, continuing to go through the photos, and she asked, "You're not mad, are you? Because I really never thought these would get out. And when that one with you in front of the Vatican surfaced, I did a sweep of the net for any of the others and I came up with nothing. I promise you, no one will see these except for you and I. And, you know, my friends at MIT. But I made them promise to not show anyone, because I sort of insinuated that with you as my boss our relationship is a little taboo, and-"

"I'm not mad," he interrupted, clicking out of the file. "Believe me, if I were to have been mad about all of this, it would have been a lot earlier than this."

She let out a breath she hadn't realized she was holding.

"I know this is all sort of crazy, but…"

"Thankfully, because of the life I lead, I have a very high threshold for crazy," he said. "Although I'd appreciate it if you didn't make any more fake photos for the duration of our relationship."

"Sure thing," she said quickly, closing her laptop. "My photoshop career is officially over."

"Now, let's get back to these notecards. Because I'm pretty sure you don't know the answer to some of these."

She smiled softly and murmured, "Bring it on."

She knew them all.

The plane landed right on time and the pair took a cab to the hotel where Felicity had booked their reservation. The reception was being held there, and the bride and groom had gotten a block of rooms for their guests. Felicity snagged one of the last rooms available.
She'd done some research on the hotel before, but the pictures did not do the hotel justice. The Drake was one of Chicago's oldest hotels and it sat just off Lake Michigan. It was in the heart of the shopping district, expensive stores housed not only in the building, but on seemingly all adjacent streets, as well. Felicity had never seen so many expensive stores in one place before, but when she looked over at Oliver he was oblivious. It occurred to her that this was probably the sort of thing with which he was accustomed. Billionaires were not unfamiliar with the finer points of life.

They walked into the hotel and Felicity couldn't keep the wonder out of her voice as she murmured, "This place is beautiful."

The lobby was grand, like one she'd see in those old Hollywood movies she watched. A fountain sat at the center of the room, with plump goldfish and other exotic creatures gliding through the water. The air smelled of perfumed water. The concierge was to the right of the lobby and to the left was an entryway to the grand dining room where lunch was just beginning to be served.

They walked up to the concierge and Oliver said, "Let me pay for this."

"I prepaid," she told him.

"How much was it?"

"Don't worry about it," she said dismissively. "Let's just say I have a very nice bonus from Queen Consolidated coming my way."

Oliver glanced over at her. He looked like he was about to question her and then stopped himself with, "You know, I really don't want to know."

They stood in line behind an expertly coiffed elderly woman in a trim tweed suit. Felicity thought to herself that when she grew older, she wanted to look exactly like the woman.

One of the windows opened up and Felicity and Oliver walked over. They checked their information, collected their keys, and then they were whisked into an elevator that took them up to the seventh floor. Even the elevator was beautiful, the metal all polished and buffed. Felicity looked at her reflection in the elevator door, smoothing down her hair.

The doors slid open and they stepped out, Oliver letting her out first as she led him toward the room. The paperwork said their room was 708, and sure enough the key worked. Felicity walked into the room, dragging her suitcase behind her. She stopped short when she saw that something was wrong. There was only one bed.

"What's going on?" Oliver asked, peering over her shoulder. "Oh."

"I specifically asked for two beds," Felicity said unhappily.

Oliver put his hands on either side of Felicity's arms, gently moving her to the side as he slipped past her into the room.

"It's fine," he said, glancing on either side of the bed. "There's enough room for me to sleep on the floor."

"I can't make you sleep on the floor," Felicity sighed. "I forced you to come here with me. I'll sleep on the floor."

Oliver shook his head and he hoisted his bag up onto the bed. "No, you will not."
"This is my fault. I –"

"Felicity," he interrupted, voice smooth. "Do you really think that I am going to let you sleep on the floor?"

She frowned. "By that question, I'm guessing the answer is no. But, I don't want you sleeping on the floor, either. There could be bugs."

He laughed. "Have you seen this place, Felicity? There are no bugs."

"Even very nice hotels are still subject to the same sort of city infestation problems as any other hotel," Felicity argued. "Do you know when there was that bed bug outbreak in New York, the Four Seasons was one of the places hit the worst?"

He frowned. "Okay. Now you're making me want to be in the bed, either."

"I don't want you on the floor," she repeated.

"Okay, well, then I guess we can share the bed. If that's okay with you?"

"You won't hear any complaints from me," she returned without thinking. When she realized what she said she quickly added, "Because, then neither of us will be on the floor. Which, you know, is what we were going for."

"You think you can keep your hands off of me for the night?" he teased, stepping past her as he moved to hang his tuxedo up in the closet.

Felicity swallowed hard. "The real question is can you keep your hands off me?"

"Of course I can," he said from the closet. "I have remarkable self control."

She didn't miss the insinuation that there would need to be some control enacted on his behalf, and she suddenly found the contents of his suitcase very interesting.

"Good, you brought your blue tie," she said. "We'll match now."

"I figured that was your intention when you called me at eleven o'clock last night insisting I bring it," he said with a grin. "You really couldn't sleep last night, could you?"

She shook her head, moving over and sitting on the edge of the bed.

"I was nervous. I'm always a little nervous before weddings, and then…well...you know."

"Why do you get nervous about weddings?" he asked.

She hesitated, splaying her hands on her knees and leaning forward a bit. Why did she get nervous about weddings? Maybe because she was getting more and more sure it would never happen to her. Or maybe because the thought of a bouquet toss made her want to yack, and not because of the tired pomp and circumstance of it all, but because each time her fingers itched to catch that damn bouquet, and she wanted it; she really wanted it.

But she couldn't tell him that because it was pathetic, and she'd already been pathetic enough the past few days divulging their fake relationship and forcing him to go to the wedding. She wouldn't add one more thing to the list.

"Too many people," she lied. "I get a little...ahhhh…in crowds."
"Really?"

"And the food," she said, the lie snowballing as she found herself unable to stop talking. "I'm always afraid of getting food poisoning. Because when you hear of food poisoning outbreaks it's always from banquet food. It probably has something to do with the amount they make for a given event. They can't oversee everything as tightly, or something."

"Well, now I'm not looking forward to dinner," he returned with a slight grin. "Anyway, the ceremony starts at one o'clock, right? We probably should get ready."

Yes, they should get ready. She needed to get dressed and then mentally prepare herself for an entire day where she'd be calling Oliver Queen her boyfriend. She took a deep breath and rose from the bed.

"I'll change in the bathroom," she said, grabbing the garment bag with her dress from the bed. She walked to the bathroom and stepped inside. As she closed the door she caught Oliver pulling his shirt over his head. Her eyes travelled from the tattoo on his chest to the ripples of his abdomen, and down to the light dusting of hair trailing down-

She stepped back suddenly, closing the door with a loud clap. She turned to the mirror, noticing how her pupils were dilated and cheeks flushed. Leaning forward, she turned on the faucet and splashed cold water on her face. Her eyes met her reflection and she murmured, "Oh boy."

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be the wedding ceremony!! Leave me some reviews, and you might just get it tomorrow :D
Chapter Three

Felicity stood in front of the bathroom mirror, leaning forward slightly as she tried to get a straight line of liquid eyeliner at the base of her lashes. She pulled the lid to the side with one hand, while she slowly dragged the tiny brush across the lid. It was almost done when there was a knock on the door and her hand jerked, leaving a jagged line of eyeliner just to the right of her eye. She frowned, sighing as she turned and glanced at the closed door.

"Yeah?" she said.

"Are you dressed?"

"Yeah, I am."

He opened the door and stepped in, wincing when he saw the smudge black line drawn from her eyelid.

"Did I do that?" he asked, gesturing toward her face.

"No," she said, turning her attention back to the mirror and wiping at the line with her fingers. "I mean, yes, technically your knocking caused it, but I suck at liquid eyeliner anyway." She continued to wipe at it, frowning when the small smudge seemed to grow of its own accord. "Be happy you're not a girl and you don't have to wear makeup."

"I thank my extra y chromosome every day."

She snorted, shaking her head. She turned on the faucet and wet her finger before getting off the last bit of the eyeliner smudge. Oliver was watching her reflection, tie hanging undone around his neck.

"Are you in here for me to do you?" she asked. Realizing that perhaps she had not chosen the best words, she quickly added, "And by you, I mean your tie. Because it's undone."

He laughed. "No, I've got it. I just wanted to bring you your phone. It's been buzzing like crazy."

She noticed her cell phone in his hand then and she took it from him, glancing down at the screen. There were a number of texts from her MIT friends, and she didn't have to open them to know what they said.

"Thanks," she said.

"Are you almost ready to go?" he asked, facing the mirror as he began to fasten his tie. His fingers worked deftly, looping and tucking the tie.

"Yeah, I just have to fix this," she said, pointing at her smudged eyeliner. "And with no sudden movement, it should be done in a jif."

He smirked. "Is that a subtle way of telling me not to mess up your eye makeup again?"

"Yes, it was."

She screwed the cap off the liquid eyeliner and leaned forward, biting her bottom lip absentmindedly as she drew a straight line. Oliver watched her casually, eyes travelling down from her face to things below her neck. Her position gave him a straight view down the front of her dress in the mirror and he averted his eyes, clearing his throat.
"Hm?" she said, straightening and glancing over at him.

"Nothing," he said quickly. "I'll wait for you outside."

Felicity nodded, returning her attention to the mirror. He walked out into the bedroom and strode over to the small table and chairs where his suit jacket was draped over one of the chairs. He picked it up and slipped it on, moving his arms in front of him to loosen it a bit. He heard her leave the bathroom and he turned, blinking rapidly as he took in the full sight of her. Sure, he'd seen her in the bathroom but she had been curled up against the bathroom counter and he didn't get a good look at the dress. He did now, and it was stunning. It was dark blue silk and it hugged her curves. She'd added a jeweled clip to the base of her high bun, and it glowed beneath the hotel room's fluorescent light.

"You look beautiful," he murmured, grinning softly as he watched her cheeks redden. He didn't think he'd ever met someone who blushed more easily than her.

"We should go," she returned. "If we're late and Taylor finds out she will skin us alive."

He raised an eyebrow and she said, "Well, not literally. Don't get your arrows in a quiver. But, she will be very, very mad."

"That sounds terrifying," he teased. "We should leave immediately."

She walked past him and picked up her silver beaded purse from the table. She hit him lightly on the arm.

"Are you going to mock me all night?"

"I thought that could be one of the defining characteristics of our relationship," he explained with a grin as they walked out of the room.

Felicity's nerves kicked in the moment she spotted the church across the street. She realized that it was entirely her fault that this was happening, and Oliver was being more than a good sport being there, but all she wanted to do was turn around and run. Why did she ever think she could pull this off? Oliver and her had to look like a couple – really look like a couple – and she was pretty sure that involved more than just cheeky banter.

Oliver sensed her anxiety and glanced down at her. "Are you okay?"

"Oh yeah," he said, nodding quickly. "I'm fine. I'm just..." she trailed off as a pressure descended on her chest. She stopped walking, breathing becoming erratic as she stammered, "I...I feel like there's an elephant on my chest. Oliver..."

"Hey, it's okay," he said. He took a hold of her arm and gently tugged her over to the side of a building. People passed, a few giving them curious glances, but the majority ignored them.

"Tell me what you're thinking," he said, hands sliding up and down her arms in what she assumed was a comforting manner, but the contact only made her chest tighten further.

"I'm thinking that this is ridiculous," she said. "I mean, lying to them by myself was one thing. It was just telling stories. But this?" She gestured between them, laughing bitterly at the absurdity of it all. "This is crazy. This is certifiably insane."
"Felicity-"

"You know what, you should just go back to the hotel," she said. "I bet the room has a pretty nice cable package. It looked like it would. Go back and watch some cable. Hit up the minibar. I'll just tell them that I was pathetic and made up a boyfriend."

"Okay, listen to me," Oliver said slowly, hands sliding up to rest on her shoulders. "I came here to go to a wedding and help someone that I care a great deal about. And I fully intend on doing both of those things."

"So, you don't think it's insane?" she asked quietly.

He laughed. "No, it's still pretty crazy. But, you were right before. You don't ask me for a lot. I can do this for you."

"I hope you know you're getting a whole lot of friends points for this. Like, an astronomic amount."

He grinned softly. "Now, let's put our best fake boyfriend and girlfriend foot forward and get to the church. I'm fairly sure they frown upon being late to this sort of thing."

Felicity breathed in deeply, the fresh air filling her lungs.

"Alright. Let's go."

They crossed the street, Felicity plastering on a grin when they almost immediately met one of her college friends at the base of the church's steps. Lydia was one of the first people who had befriended Felicity back at MIT. Bonding over their coffee addiction and absentee fathers, it was a fast friendship.

Lydia had her bright red hair in loose curls cascading down her back, and she wore a purple dress that was maybe a bit too short for an afternoon wedding, but she wore it well. With Lydia's long limbs, she wore just about anything well.

"Felicity!" Lydia said with a wide grin, pulling Felicity into a tight hug. "I feel like I haven't seen you in forever."

"It has been a while," Felicity acknowledged. "I think the last time was – what – October?"

"Well shit, you're right," Lydia said, nodding slowly. "It was October."

Lydia glanced at Oliver and asked, "So, is this that infamous boyfriend of yours?"

"Oh, yes," Felicity said, glancing over at Oliver. It occurred to her this was only the first of many introductions she'd go through that day. She felt exhausted just at the thought. "Lydia, this is Oliver Queen. Oliver, this is Lydia. We're friends from college."

"It's great to finally meet you," Lydia said, beginning to walk up the steps. Felicity and Oliver followed, and she glanced over at Oliver as she added, "We all were half-convinced she made you up."

"You guys what?" Felicity stammered.

"You just made him sound so perfect," Lydia said. "It's like he was fucking Prince Charming or something."

"Well, I can assure you I'm not perfect," Oliver interjected smoothly, noting the deep flush on
"Felicity's cheeks. "But, I am, in fact, real."

"I can see that," Lydia returned, grinning slightly. She turned her attention to Felicity. "Anyway, Sadie texted me that she was saving us seats inside. Do you-"

"Found her," Felicity said, pointing at a diminutive brunette near the front of the church.

"She got the good seats," Lydia said happily.

"Are there really bad seats in a church?" Felicity mused. "I mean, in theory, God should be everywhere. If you believe in that sort of thing."

Oliver smirked.

They walked over to the pew and the small woman grinned up at them, a baby bouncing on her knee. The baby gurgled happily when she saw Felicity and reached out toward her.

"Your favorite aunt is here, huh?" Sadie murmured to the baby, kissing her cheek. "Do you see Aunt Felicity?"

Lydia snorted, stepping around Sadie to get to their seats and said, "Um, what about Aunt fucking Lydia?"

"Lyd!" Sadie hissed.

"Oh please, like she can understand me. She's nine months old."

Sadie shook her head, turning her attention back to Oliver and Felicity. She turned out toward the aisle for them to get past her more easily.

"Oliver, it's great to finally meet you," she said. "Although, Felicity's told us so much about you, I feel like I already know you."

"It's wonderful to meet you, Sadie, right?"

"Yep, that's me," she said with a soft grin. "And this is my daughter Skye."

"She's cute," Oliver said in a stilted voice. Felicity smirked at his word choice.

"So, where's Eric?" Lydia asked, leaning forward to see Sadie.

"Oh, he's with David. The groom requested his presence."

"You know, I feel a little slighted that Taylor hasn't asked for us," Lydia said. "I mean, it's bad enough we aren't bridesmaids. The least she could do is give us a pity viewing before the ceremony."

Felicity snorted, shaking her head. Taylor had regrettfully told them all that they wouldn't be in her bridal party right when she'd gotten engaged. Taylor came from a large family with four other sisters. With David's two sisters, there were already six bridesmaids. Not wanting to cherry pick an extra bridesmaid from their friend group, she'd told them all that she thought the best thing was to have none of them. Felicity and Sadie hadn't cared, but Lydia had been less forgiving.

"You know, you're going to have to get over this eventually," Felicity told her with a small grin.

"There's still a good week or two left in this grudge," Lydia returned stubbornly.
The group chatted for a while, the church filling up around them. It was almost time for the wedding to start, and Sadie's husband was still missing in action.

"I think I'm going to go see if I can find him," Sadie said. She turned toward Oliver and asked, "Can you hold her for a little? I'll be right back."

Oliver went to object, but then Sadie was holding the baby out toward him, and all he could do was take the squirming infant and pray he didn’t drop her. He cradled her carefully in his arms, body tense and shoulders squared.

Felicity watched him and smirked when it dawned on her that Oliver, someone who had taken down countless criminals and assailants, was afraid of babies.

"You okay over there?" she asked, knocking her shoulder against him.

"Ah, don't do that," he said in a panicked voice.

He looked supremely uncomfortable sitting there with Skye in his arms, and she pressed her lips together, trying to hold back her laughter, before she said, "I can't believe you're afraid of babies."

"What? I'm not-"

"You know she can't hurt you. She doesn't even have full motor skills yet."

He gave her a look. "I'm not afraid of her. I'm more afraid of what I'll do to her. Babies are fragile. I'm not good with fragile things."

She laid a hand gently on his arm. "You're doing just fine."

"They're unwieldy," he continued. "And they have that soft spot."

"I'm pretty sure she's outgrown the soft spot."

He didn't answer, attention on Skye as she squirmed in his arms. She was reaching out toward Felicity, making little mewling noises.

"Okay, hand her over," Felicity said, scooping Skye out of Oliver's arms. Oliver happily obliged and he visibly relaxed when he became sans baby. Skye was pleased with the new arrangement, as well, gurgling happily as she reached forward and grabbed Felicity's nose. Felicity laughed, twisting her head out of the little one's grasp.

"Are you trying to get my nose?" she said. "You trying to get my nose, Skye?"

Skye giggled, reaching forward again, but this time she went for one of Felicity's dangling earrings. She got a hold of one and tugged.

"Ow," Felicity breathed out, hand flying up to the earring. She gently pried it out of Skye's hand and turned her around so she was facing forward, earrings out of reach.

"You're good with her," Oliver noted.

"I like babies," Felicity said with a shrug. "They're so easy to please. You just rock them on your knee and make some funny faces, and you're they're favorite person."

Skye twisted in Felicity's arm and looked up at Oliver with wide eyes. Felicity grinned, hugging her close, and said, "That's Oliver, Skye. Do you want to wave hi to Oliver?"
Felicity waved for show, grinning down at Skye as she murmured, "Wave hi to Oliver!"

Skye didn't exactly master a wave but she did reach out toward him, pressing her tiny fingers against the buttons of his suit jacket. He laughed, watching her begin to grab at the buttons. She had trouble grasping them, her fingers sliding around the round shape clumsily. He glanced up at Felicity and was struck by the beautiful serenity of her face. She was watching Skye play with his suit jacket button, soft smile pulling at her lips. She felt his gaze and looked up, smile faltering as she felt an increasingly familiar pull at the base of her stomach.

"You are never going to believe what was happening back there," Sadie said, slipping into the pew next to Oliver. Felicity broke her gaze away from Oliver's, clearing her throat as she said, "What's going on?"

"The boys were having a celebratory drink in the back, and David spilled scotch down the front of his shirt."

"Oh no," Felicity gasped. "Did he have an extra?"

"Nope, so after some panicking Eric swapped shirts with him."

Eric gave her a small wave from beside Sadie and said, "I will forever and always be an integral part of this wedding now."

Felicity grinned. "That you will."

Sadie reached over Oliver to take Skye back from Felicity. As she lifted her back to her lap, Sadie said, "She wasn't any trouble, was she?"

"She was an angel," Felicity cooed. "Like she always is."

Sadie glanced at Oliver. "Is she telling the truth?"

He nodded. "She was the best behaved kid I've ever seen."

"Well, I'll take credit for that," Sadie said with a grin. "It'll be a nice memory when she becomes a toddler and everyone blames me for her bad behavior."

The music started up and Felicity felt a thrill run through her. She always liked weddings. The ceremony was her favorite part. The reception was all about speeches and drinking, but the ceremony was about love. It was about a man and a woman pledging their lives to each other, and it made her cry every time.

The bridal party made their way down the aisle. Lydia leaned in as a particularly rotund bridesmaid passed and whispered, "I so would have worn that dress better."

Felicity snorted, patting her hand. "I'm sure you would have, Lyd."

The bridal party took its place around the altar, the groom standing in front of the altar with the priest, anxiously awaiting his bride. The wedding march began and the entire congregation stood, glancing back at the entrance to watch the bride make her way down the aisle. The doors opened and Taylor stepped forward with her father, smiling face just visible behind her veil. Taylor took the aisle slowly, her steps measured and careful. When she passed Felicity and them she glanced over, smile widening in acknowledgement. Felicity could see the tear tracks on her cheeks.

The bridal couple met at the alter and the congregation sat down, watching the pair exchange their
The vows always hit Felicity the hardest and she sniffed, wiping her nose with the back of her hand. Oliver glanced over at her and gently squeezed her knee. They were sitting close, shoulder to shoulder, and she thought to herself that if he really was her boyfriend, this was the type of situation she'd reach over and take his hand. She glanced over at Sadie and Eric and how he had his arm tucked around her shoulders, fingers drawing lazy circles on her arm. That was what a couple should look like.

Felicity looked at Oliver, and then down at his hand resting on his leg. She took his hand impulsively, holding her breath as she waited for him to respond. Watching him out of the corner of her eye, she saw him smile slightly and then he squeezed her hand gently. She relaxed and spent the duration of the ceremony trying to stave off the gigantic smile that threatened to spread on her face.

Taylor and David were pronounced man and wife, and they kissed, the entire church erupting in loud applause and a few well-timed catcalls. The newly married couple made their way out of the church and the congregation slowly shuffled out, sending them off to their limousine.

"Are you guys heading straight to the reception?" Lydia asked.

"When is it again?" Oliver asked.

"An hour from now," Sadie said.

"You know, there is this bar across from the hotel," Lydia said leadingly. "And, I did see some good drink deals in the window."

Felicity glanced up at Oliver. "What do you say?"

"Sounds good to me," he said with a shrug.

"What about you, Mom and Dad?" Lydia asked sarcastically.

"I can't drink because I'm still nursing," Sadie said with clear disappointment. "But, I'm sure Eric would be happy to drink for both of us."

"That is accurate," he piped in.

"Alright, let's get going then, people," Lydia said heartily. "Drinks await us!"

They headed down the street toward the hotel, and it was then, in the middle of a crosswalk, that Felicity realized Oliver was still holding her hand.
Hi folks! I hope you enjoy this one!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The bar was dark and dank, some Journey song playing on the jukebox as the group settled at a corner table. Felicity always liked bars like this. She'd been dragged to her fair share of flashy, hip bars, and she always felt like a poser at them. Felicity knew she was attractive, and when she put in some effort she could even be beautiful, but she wasn't hip. She wasn't cutting edge. She didn't know the hot drink to order or whether they were loving, hating, or love-hating Katy Perry that weekend.

She preferred the good old dank bars where the soles of her shoes stuck to the floor. There was no pretense there, no endless quest to grasp the ever elusive 'cool'. You just ordered a beer, sat down on a stool that probably hadn't been cleaned in years, and had a damn good time.

Lydia sauntered over to the table, a waitress behind her with a tray of shots. Felicity couldn't help but grin. They'd been there less than five minutes and Lydia already ordered them shots. That had to be a new record.

"It is practically a rule that you can't go to a wedding reception without at least one shot in your system," Lydia said, passing around the full shot glasses. Felicity grabbed hers and the strong scent of cinnamon hit her nose. Oliver sniffed his.

"This smells like Big Red," he said, the expression on his face hinting that perhaps that was not a good thing.

It occurred to Felicity, then, that he didn't know what they were drinking.

"Do you seriously not know what it is?" she asked incredulously. "Didn't you own a club or something?"

He laughed. "Yes, but believe it or not I haven't tried every liquor known to man kind."

"Actually, considering the stories I've heard, I do find that hard to believe," she deadpanned.

"It's Fireball whiskey," Lydia filled in, leaning in between them. She clapped Oliver on the shoulder. "If you didn't have chest hair before, you'll have it after this."

"Oh, well, that's something," Oliver said, nodding.

Lydia raised her shot glass for a toast, chin held high as she said, "To our dear friend, Taylor and her new husband David! May they enjoy never getting laid by anyone but each other for the rest of eternity!"

"Here here," Eric said, lifting his shot glass. He grinned over at Sadie and clinked his glass against her imaginary one. Skye, who was sitting in Sadie's lap, reached forward, wanting in on the action.

They took their shots in unison, slamming the glasses down on the table. The liquor burned its way
down Felicity's throat, and it made her think about her MIT days and when they had at least three of shots of the stuff each weekend. It was practically a going out ritual. Before you left, one shot. When you got to the bar, another. When you left, just for good measure, squeeze in that last one.

Felicity turned toward Oliver and laughed when she saw the look on his face, eyes watery and red.

"Oliver, you okay over there?"

"That shot reminded me of just how much I hate cinnamon."

She tried to hold back her laughter as she patted his arm. "Do you want me to get you a water to wash it down with?"

"Water? Seriously?" Lydia said, looking between them. Her gaze settled on Oliver and she said, "My opinion of you is dropping steadily."

"Be nice to him," Felicity chided gently.

Oliver glanced over Felicity's shoulder and noticed an old dartboard set up beside the jukebox.

"Hey, they have a dart board over there," Oliver said, gesturing toward it. "Man, I used to play all the time before – " he stopped suddenly and Felicity knew full well what "before" he was referring to.

"Before what?" Lydia asked, reaching forward and grabbing a handful of the bar nuts she'd filched from the bar on their way in.

"Before he took over his family's company," Felicity filled in. She looked at Oliver and said, "You're stuck in the office a lot more now, right?"

He nodded stiffly, but she could see the relief in his eyes. While his time on the island was no secret - as least him being shipwrecked there - he still didn't like to talk about it.

"Yeah, I did. I was pretty good."

Lydia popped one more peanut into her mouth and then wiped her hands on the skirt of her dress.

"Alright, hot shot, let's see what you got," she said.

Oliver grinned slightly. "You want to play me in darts?"

"I want to play, too," Felicity immediately said. A game of darts sounded fun, especially after the shot.

Lydia snorted. "Well, I just won this game."

Felicity frowned. "I'm not that bad."

"You have the hand-eye-coordination of a drunken giraffe," Lydia said slowly. "But, you can play. Sadie, I need to borrow your husband."

Sadie nodded congenially. "No problem. Babe, I'm loaning you out to Lydia."

"Alright, I see how it is," Eric joked, leaning down and kissing his wife. "You just give me to the highest bidder."
"So, what do we want here?" Lydia began, walking toward the dartboard. "One game? Best out of three?"

"How about just one," Felicity said. "We do have a wedding reception to get to. Preferably before our best friend arrives."

"I only need one game to win," Oliver said smoothly, sending Lydia a goading grin.

"Oh, it is so on," Lydia said. She glanced over at Eric, who was standing with Sadie over at their table, and barked, "Eric, you can play with your baby any day! This is a once in a lifetime opportunity, so get your ass over here!"

Eric walked over to where they all were, Sadie and Skye following behind him. He went to Lydia and Sadie sat at one of the high top tables a few feet away.

"If we win this, she might cause you bodily harm," Felicity noted, watching Lydia stretch her arms out.

Oliver smirked. "I think I'll survive."

They flipped a coin to see who went first, and Lydia swore loudly under her breath as she gestured for Felicity or Oliver to go first. Felicity told Oliver he should start, and she watched from the side as he threw a perfectly executed dart. Of course it was perfect. If Oliver was good at anything, it was aiming a flying object.

"Lucky throw," Lydia said with a sniff, stepping into the center and preparing to throw her dart.

Oliver stood next to Felicity and she leaned in as she murmured, "Don't you think you have a bit of an unfair advantage here?"

"I'm just utilizing my hard won skills," he returned smoothly.

She looked up at him and returned, "Your hard won dart throwing skills? "It's a viable weapon alternative."

"Did they have rubber tips, too?" she asked with mock sincerity. "Or did yours explode or something?"

He went to respond when Lydia said, "Hey, love birds, there's a game going on, remember?"

"She's hostile in competitions," Oliver noted with a slight grin.

"Hostile is actually pretty much just her baseline," she returned softly. "You better go before she throws something at you."

He walked back to the center and executed another perfect throw, the dart hitting only a millimeter or two from where the last had landed.

"Dude, you are unreal," Eric said, shaking his head. "You weren't lying when you said you were good."

"Don't compliment the competition," Lydia told Eric.

"You know, Lyd, it's just a game," Sadie sing-songed from the table, laughing when Lydia sent her a glare.
Lydia went and her dart went a little more toward the center, but nowhere near as close as Oliver's. They finished out their round and then it was Felicity and Eric's turn. Eric went first, and he did decent, getting his dart on the board. Then it was Felicity's turn.

She stood in front of the dartboard, dart in hand as she moved it back and forth beside her in an experimental fashion. It had been years since she'd played – probably since MIT – and she'd never been very good. But, hey, she'd changed a lot since her MIT days. She was a crime fighting IT whiz. She was a blonde. She could throw a dart.

Her internal pep talk did little as she threw the dart and it rebounded off the edge of the board, falling to the floor. She just stood there for a moment, feeling disappointment settle. Lydia came up beside her and said, "Well, at least you hit the board this time. Back at MIT you didn't even get that close."

Felicity gave her a look and then said, "Eric, it's your turn."

The game continued, Oliver and Lydia duking it out while Eric and Felicity did their best to just get near the board. By the end, it was a close 28-25, with Oliver and Felicity in the lead. Lydia went, and scored an extra four points for her team. Oliver only had to score one point to win; literally getting the dart anywhere on the board would work.

And he missed.

"Yeah!" Lydia said loudly, pumping her fist in the ear. "29-28! Suck it!"

Oliver laughed, nodding his head. "Alright, you won. I was no match for your dart prowess."

"Good game," she said, slightly out of breath from her revelry. She held out her hand and he shook it firmly, nodding his head in affirmation. "Yeah, good game."

The group headed back to the table, Oliver and Felicity hanging back at the dartboard. She glanced up at him and said, "You missed that last one on purpose, didn't you?"

He shrugged. "You were right about me probably being at an unfair advantage. Besides, they're your friends and I could see that Lydia really wanted to win."

She smiled, touching his arm gently. "Thanks. I mean, I would have loved seeing you beat Lydia. But, that was very nice of you. I'm sorry that I sucked so much. Lydia's right. Anything with hand-eye-coordination really isn't my thing."

Oliver shook his head. "I've seen you type at lightening fast pace in the foundry. And, I've seen you in the field. There is nothing wrong with your hand eye coordination. Besides, it's your stance that was messing you up."

"My stance? There's a proper dart throwing stance?"

He smirked. "Set up like you're going to throw a dart."

"Okay," she said slowly, grabbing a dart of the table for good measure and standing in front of the dartboard.

"Okay, first thing, stagger your feet," he said, hooking the toe of his shoe on the front of her ankle and tugging it back. He gently placed his hands on her hips and she felt her pulse quicken. "And square your hips forward."

She swallowed hard. "Like this?"
"Yeah, just like that."

He was close to her. So close that she could feel his breath on her neck, and she wanted to look back and see exactly what he was doing, but part of her was too afraid to look back. She took a deep breath, reminding herself that he was just showing her how to throw a dart. There was no reason to go ahead and have a panic attack.

"Now, when you go to throw the dart don't turn your shoulders at all," he told her, hands resting lightly on the curve of her shoulders. "Just bring the dart back and then throw it forward."

She followed his instruction and while it fell a few inches short of the dartboard, it went perfectly straight.

"See? If you threw it just a little harder it would have been dead center."

She nodded, licking her dry lips. He wasn't touching her anymore, but she could still feel the heat of where his hands had just been. Taking a shaky breath she told him, "I'm going to get a drink. I'll meet you back at the table."

Felicity walked up to the bar, resting her palms on the counter. She examined the blackboard menu with its chalked in offerings as she actively tried calm down the fevered thrum coursing through her body. There had been nothing overtly sexual about that scene. He was teaching her how to throw a dart. That was a total Oliver thing to do. It would be no different than if they were in the foundry and he was showing her how to throw a punch.

She focused her attention on the menu. There were the usual beers there, which she passed over, but then several hard ciders were listed below. She liked sweet things, and the few occasions she'd had hard cider were largely pleasant. Her eyes widened slightly when she saw a listing for strawberry hard cider.

"Strawberry hard cider," she murmured to herself. "That sounds like heaven. And exactly what I need right now."

She settled her hip against the bar, waiting for the bartender who was taking care of a group on the other end of the bar. A man took the spot next to her, reeking of whiskey and cigarettes. She ignored him, her thoughts drifting back to Oliver's hands on her hips and the feel of his breath on her neck. He glanced over at her and she could feel his gaze on decidedly not polite places to look upon in public, particularly if you're a stranger. She straightened up, grasping the edge of the bar.

"I'm Mark," he said by way of greeting. His breath smelled even more strongly of the whiskey and cigarettes, and something else that she was moderately sure was tooth decay.

"Felicity," she said, sending him a tight smile and then turning away.

"You're a little overdressed for this old place," he noted. "What's the occasion?"

"A wedding."

"Well, I sure hope you're not the little lady getting hitched."

She looked at him strangely. "Well, considering I'm not in white, I'd say that I'm not the one getting married."

The man laughed uproariously, clapping his hand on the bar loudly. "Right you are. That would be a pretty funny looking dress to get married in. But you wear it well."
Felicity glanced back at the table, wanting for anyone – anyone – to come over and help her. But her friends were engrossed in energetic conversation, and Oliver was looking at something on his phone. She frowned, turning her attention back to the bar.

"So, Felicity, where are you from?"

"Starling City," she told him. "I just flew in for the wedding."

"It's a shame you aren't from around here," he said in a leading voice. "Because I was considering taking you out for dinner."

She thought to herself that dinner would require asking, to which she would in no circumstances say yes, but he didn't seem like the type that would be deterred by that.

She settled with, "Yes, it's a shame indeed."

The bartender came up to them and Felicity let out a breath of relief. This awkward conversation was finally at an end.

"What can I get you guys?" the bartender asked.

"A Strawberry Apple Redds," Felicity said quickly.

"Bud Light," the man said, looking down at Felicity and winking. She had a sudden urge to gag.

The bartender quickly got their drinks, and when he set them on the bar the man put his hand on Felicity's lower back and said, "I'll pick up hers, too."

"I don't think that's necessary," Oliver said, suddenly beside her. He slipped his arm around her waist, gently tugging her away from the man's hand.

He looked over at Oliver and said "Let me guess, boyfriend?"

"You guessed right," Oliver said, putting a ten dollar bill down on the bar. He glanced at the bartender and said, "Keep the change."

They walked back to the table and she distanced herself a bit from him as she said, "You know, you didn't have to do that."

"I can't have other men hitting on my woman," he teased. "What would your friends think?"

"That we have a mature and secure relationship," she returned in kind. "But, thank you. That guy was hard to shake."

They sat back down at the table, and Felicity noticed Oliver was sitting closer to her than before. Their arms touched and she felt a sudden urge to lay her hand on his leg. She shook her head slightly at that and took a long sip of her drink.

"So, we're taking bets for how long it will be until Taylor and David have their first big married fight," Sadie said, filling them in on what they had missed when they were up at the bar. "My guess is on their honeymoon. Because you know David will be running late before they go to some big fancy restaurant and Taylor will be all panicked they'll lose their reservations."

Lydia snorted. "That is so something she'd get upset over. Remember when we nearly missed our reservations at Soma on New Years Eve last year?"
"I thought she was going to kill us," Sadie said, laughing at the memory. "She really takes her restaurant reservations seriously."

"What about you, Felicity?" Eric asked, taking a sip of his beer.

"Oh, I think they've already had their first married fight," she said sensibly. "I mean, they've been married for what, about an hour now? That's more than enough time for Taylor to find something to yell at him about."

"He is a man, after all," Lydia returned.

"What's that supposed to mean?" Eric said, seemingly taking offense on behalf of all men.

"It means that you guys do stupid shit," Lydia said. "And when you do said stupid shit, we yell at you. It's a pattern as old as time itself."

"She does have a point," Sadie chimed in. Sending Lydia a pointed look she added, "Although, I'd appreciate it if the point had less profane language."

Lydia rolled her eyes. "Seriously, Sadie. She's not going to pick up any of it."

"You don't know that."

"Fine, I promise to spell out any swear words around her. Does that make you f-u-c-k-i-n-g happy?" Sadie smirked. "Yes, it does. Thank you. Anyway, Oliver, how often does Felicity yell at you?"

"And if you say never, we're not going to believe you," Lydia added.

"Let's just say, when she yells at me I usually deserve it," Oliver said.

"I stand by that answer," Felicity returned definitively. She couldn't deny that she gave him a talking to now and again. Sometimes he got so caught up in his vigilante dark place that he needed someone to snap him out of it. Considering the alternative, which was him just wallowing in the darkness, she was more than willing to be that person.

Lydia glanced between them and said, "You two are literally so cute together it makes me want to vomit."

"Thank you?" Felicity said uncertainly.

"If Jerry were here, he'd be making fun of your mercilessly," Lydia said, referring to her absent husband.

"Where is he, anyway? Working?" Sadie asked.

"No, we've actually had three weddings this month. Which is ridiculous, by the way. So I decided to give him a night off from the taffeta parade."

Felicity laughed. "How nice of you."

"It's nice for me, too," she said. "I originally RSVP-ed for both of us, which means I get an extra piece of cake."

"Guys, we probably should head over," Sadie said, looking down at her watch. "The reception started thirty minutes ago."
"Alright guys, roll out!" Lydia said, standing up. She picked up her vodka tonic and downed the rest of the contents. She winced and murmured, "Yeah, that was straight vodka."

The group grabbed their things and then headed out of the bar, gearing up for the next part of the night.

Chapter End Notes

And, the reception will be next! I hope you liked the large helping of UST you got in this one!
Chapter Five

Oliver remembered the first time he saw Felicity Smoak. It actually wasn’t when he met her. That was the second time he saw her. The first was only a few days after he’d returned home from Lian Yu. He’d visited Moira for lunch after Thea had hinted that maybe he wasn’t spending enough time with his mother after being presumed dead for five years. Thea had a point.

They’d gone to some French restaurant down the street with fifty dollar entrees he couldn’t pronounce. Unsurprisingly, it was his mother’s favorite restaurant. After he’d dropped Moira back off at the office he began his search for a cab. That was when he saw Felicity, sitting on a bench just outside of Queen Consolidated. It was one of the few benches out of the blazing sun, but even the shade from the overhanging tree couldn’t mute her bright coral lipstick. She’d just dropped a mini-muffin on the ground and he watched her pluck it from the ground and look around furtively before taking a bite. It was then that Oliver genuinely smiled for the first time.

They’d come a long way from that day. First, they’d actually met, then they became friends, and now…

Oliver glanced over at her, watching her talk animatedly with Sadie. They’d gotten to the reception hall a few moment prior, and he’d told her that he would get them both a drink. He took the opportunity to really look at her. She laughed at something Sadie said, nose scrunching. It was the same Felicity he’d met at Queen Consolidated. The same Felicity he spent hours with in the foundry, but now something felt different. It wasn’t her so much as his reaction to her. He found himself wanting to be near her, wanting to be a part of every conversation, even if it only involved him agreeing with her.

The line moved forward and Oliver stepped up to the bar, ordering himself a scotch and Felicity a glass of red wine. He left the bartender a tip and headed back to the group. Felicity grinned when he saw him approaching and something in his chest tightened.

“Pinot noir, as you requested,” he said.

“Hello there, gorgeous,” Felicity purred, taking the wine from him. She glanced up at him with a smirk and added, “Hello to you, too.”

“Did I just rank beneath wine?” he asked, laughing.

“Everything ranks beneath wine,” Felicity told him resolutely. “It is the nectar of the Gods.”

“I miss wine,” Sadie said despondently, Skye on her hip. She glanced down at her daughter and said, “It’s a good thing you’re cute.”

Felicity snorted and took a sip of her wine. Over the rim she spotted Taylor and David and she grinned wide. She touched Oliver’s arm softly and said, “I found the newlyweds.”

Oliver spotted them, too, the pair smiling so wide that he wondered if it hurt. They came over, Taylor letting out a sort of shriek before flinging her arms around Sadie and then Felicity. Arm wrapped tightly around Felicity’s shoulder she turned toward Oliver and asked, “Is this him?”
Felicity laughed. “Yes. Taylor, this is my boyfriend Oliver.”

“Well, hello there Oliver,” Taylor said, shaking his hand boisterously. She turned her head toward Felicity and murmured, “He is insanely hot! Seriously, if I wasn’t married I would try to steal him from you.”

“Friendly reminder that I’m right here,” David said, smirking as he gave his wife a small wave. He exchanged a bemused look with Oliver.

“I said if I wasn’t married, babe,” she returned.

Felicity laughed, thinking to herself how strangely comfortable it felt having Oliver here with her. People seemed to be buying it without them having to do extensive work, and Felicity couldn’t deny it was nice showing him off. He was a pretty fine specimen. Her gaze lingered on his face and his attention turned toward her. She quickly looked away, mouth going dry when her eyes landed on the last person she expected to see.

“What is he doing here?” she breathed out, licking her lips anxiously. Taylor followed her gaze and swore under her breath.

“He did not RSVP,” Taylor said unhappily. She glanced at her husband and asked, “Did you know he was coming?”

David shook his head. “No, last time we talked he had a conference in Vegas.”

“Aren’t you supposed to RSVP for weddings?” Oliver asked, glancing between all the parties involved as he pieced together what was going on.

“Kevin never really cared about what you were supposed to and not supposed to do,” Felicity said, voice strange.

It had been three years since she’d seen Kevin, but the sight of him still made her lightheaded. She felt like a nineteen year old girl again, drinking cheap boxed wine out of a red solo cup. But she wasn’t a nineteen year old anymore. She was twenty five, and the wine in her glass wasn’t from a box.

It shouldn’t have surprised her that he was there. Kevin was one of David’s closest friends. But when Taylor didn’t mention him, she thought that meant she was safe from having to be around him.

“And he’s coming this way,” Sadie said, taking a hold of Felicity’s arm. “This is time for our speedy exit. We’ll see you guys later.”

Sadie tugged Felicity away to a table at the far end of the room, Oliver following them. They sat down and Oliver gently put his hand on her shoulder and asked, “Are you okay?”

She nodded, taking a large gulp of wine. “Yeah, I’m fine. Totally fine. Why wouldn’t I be fine?”

He wasn’t convinced and gently said, “I’m assuming that was an ex of yours?”

Felicity took another large gulp of wine and Sadie filled in with, “That’s Felicity’s douchebag college boyfriend, emphasis on the douchebag. He better steer clear of Lydia. She said if she ever saw him again she’d knee him in the groin.”
“It’s fine,” Felicity said resolutely. “All of that was a long time ago. I’m over it - ” she gestured toward Oliver, " - obviously. So, it’s fine.”

Lydia stalked over to them, cheeks flushed, as she spat, “Can you believe that fucker had the balls to come? He knew you’d be here.”

“What exactly happened between you two?” Oliver asked, wondering what this guy had done to incite such vehemence in Felicity’s friends.

“It’s nothing,” Felicity said, shaking her head.

“It’s not nothing. So, they date for three years back at MIT,” Lydia filled in, ignoring Felicity as she tried to stop her. "And Felicity had this sweet gig set up at Stark Industries. And what does ass-hat-McGuire do? He goes and takes the job from her. If that wasn’t bad enough, he breaks up with her a week after getting the job and starts dating his Coding TA who – wait for it – he was fucking for an entire semester.”

Felicity covered her face with her hand shaking her head. When she dropped her hand the look on her face was drawn, eyes flashing with irritation. “Gee Lydia, thanks for that walk down memory lane.”

Eric joined them and asked, “Why do you guys all look so unhappy?”

“Felicity’s douche ex is here,” Lydia filled in. “We were getting Oliver up to speed.”

“Oh, is it that MIT guy?” Eric said.

Felicity gaped at him. “How do you know about Kevin?”

“Sadie told me,” he answered casually. “And, for the record, you getting him on the no-fly list afterwards? Hilarious.”

Oliver smiled slightly. That sounded like his Felicity.

“Look, guys, it really is fine,” Felicity said. “All of that happened a long time ago. I’ve moved on from it. I’m happy. So, while I appreciate the solidarity, please back down. I don’t need the cavalry.”

“Alright,” Lydia relented. “But if you want me to knee him in the groin, all you have to do is ask.”

Felicity smirked. “Thank you. I appreciate the offer, but I think I’m good.”

“I see bacon wrapped shrimp,” Eric said suddenly, craning his neck as he scrutinized a waiter across the room. “Yep, that is definitely bacon wrapped shrimp. I’ll be back.”

Eric rushed off, and Sadie and Lydia followed, apparently the allure of bacon wrapped shrimp too strong to pass up. It was just Oliver and Felicity then, and she glanced over at him sheepishly as she said, “I’m sorry about the ex thing. I didn’t know he’d be here.”

“Why are you apologizing?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know. It just adds another level to this…thing we’re doing. Another complication.”

“It’s not a complication,” he told her. “And for the record, what he did wasn’t fine. Not
even a little.”

“I know,” she said softly. “But, in a way I’m grateful he did it.”

“You’re grateful?” he said, not understanding how Felicity could be grateful for a guy screwing her over in every way possible.

“If he didn’t take that job, I would have never gone to Queen Consolidated. I would have gone to New York, and I would have never meet you or Diggle.” She paused, shaking her head. “I won’t lie and say it wasn’t hard then. It was. But all of that brought me my life now. And, yeah, I am grateful for that.”

He thought of a life without Felicity and murmured, “I feel like I need to go thank him now. Because without you, I’d probably have been dead by now.”

She smirked. “You handle yourself just fine without me.”

“But I’m better with you,” he said seriously. Her mouth dropped open slightly, cheeks staining with color, and she quickly shook her head.

“I think you give me too much credit.”

He went to say something when a boy who looked to be around nineteen or twenty, approached them and loudly said, “No way, it’s you!”

Felicity grinned slightly and said, “Tim, you win the award for most abrupt greeting, well, ever. Taylor will be so happy to hear about her little brother’s impeccable manners.”

Tim smiled sheepishly. “Sorry, I just…” he trailed off, gaze lingering on Oliver, “…you’re that island guy, right? The one who was stranded in the desert for all of those years?”

Felicity glanced between Tim and Oliver, feeling like she was watching a disaster happen in slow motion. Tim looked eager, while Oliver’s face was impassive.

“Tim, I don’t think –“

“Yes, that’s me,” Oliver interjected.

“I knew it.” Tim breathed out, a wide grin pulling at his mouth. “You were all over the news, even here.”

“It was a pretty big story,” Oliver agreed congenially. Felicity thought to herself that it would have been an even bigger story if the journalists knew what actually happened on the island. But only a handful of people knew, and even Felicity’s knowledge was spotty at best.

“This is so cool,” Tim continued, fawning over Oliver like a teenage girl meeting her idol for the first time. “So, what did you do for all that time on the island?”

“I’ve blocked most of it out, actually,” Oliver said casually. “I’ve been told it’s a coping mechanism of sort. Either way, I don’t remember the majority of my time there.”

Tim deflated a bit at that, but he brightened momentarily when he asked, “I’ve always wondered, do you remember ever having to drink your pee? Because they do that on Survivor all the time, you know?”

Felicity blanched. “Tim, seriously?”
“No,” Oliver returned with a tight smile. “From what I remember, I never had to drink my own pee. If you’ll excuse me, I’m going to track down that waiter with the bacon wrapped shrimp. It was nice meeting you, Tim.”

Oliver snuck away and Felicity sent Tim a scowl, slapping him hard on his arm.

“How was I supposed to ask that?”

“Everyone knows that!”

Tim seemed to realize then the potential severity of the situation and he glanced at the direction Oliver had gone and he quickly asked, “I didn’t upset him, did I?”

Felicity shook her head. Oliver had faced a lot worse things than overly inquisitive college aged boys.

“Probably not,” she told him. “But in the future, when someone has gone through a traumatic experience, try not to grill them about it. And, for the love of God, don’t ask them if they drank their pee.”

Tim winced. “Yeah, that probably wasn’t the greatest question.”

“You think?”

“It would make sense, though,” Tim said after a moment. “Being on an island that long.”

“And I am leaving,” Felicity said, standing up. She walked off to find Oliver. He was standing over to the side, small plate with shrimp in his hand, and she went to his side, laying a hand on his arm.

“I’m really sorry about that,” she said.

Oliver glanced down at her and shrugged, “It’s okay. People are curious.”

“I didn’t really think about people recognizing you. I should have.”

“It’s okay,” he repeated. “I’m actually pretty used to it. When I first got back that’s pretty much all conversations were comprised of. Questions I didn’t know how to answer. At least now I have a stock answer.”

Oliver’s phone buzzed and he reached into his pocket, pulling it out. Felicity glanced at the screen and saw it was a message from Diggle.

“Please tell me it’s not Arrow related,” Felicity murmured. “You’d think Starling City could behave for one weekend.”

Oliver swiped open the message and smirked. “It’s not Arrow related.”

Just checking in on my favorite fake couple.
“I’m going to kill him when we get back,” Felicity murmured. “I am going to take one of your explosive arrows and kill him.”

Oliver chuckled. “Should I let Diggle know about this serious threat against his life?”

“Ha ha,” she returned drily. “Very funny.”

Oliver spied carts being rolled into the banquet hall with stacks of covered plates. He leaned his head down toward her and said, “I think dinner is officially being served.”

Felicity picked a shrimp off of the plate and popped it into her mouth.

“Time to find our table.”

Chapter End Notes

Reviews are love - PLEASE LEAVE SOME!!!!!
Chapter Six

Chapter Notes

Hope you enjoy this!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It was strange. Felicity had never really thought about what it would be like to have Oliver with her at a wedding. And if she did think about it, she probably would have thought it would be awkward or some level of mild discomfort that would result in a lot of bathroom trips and burying her face in a large glass of wine. But, oh, how wrong she had been. Oliver was with her, arm lightly around her shoulders, and it felt like the most natural thing in a world. She couldn't imagine anyone more natural to be standing next to her, not Diggle or Roy or any number of ex-boyfriends who previously would have been prime wedding date material. No, none of them seemed quite as perfect as Oliver.

They stood on the side of the dance floor, Taylor and David walking out hand in hand to perform their first dance as a married couple. They'd just finished cake and the band made an announcement for everyone to make their way to the dance floor. It was cooler on the dance floor – being situated just under some rather large air vents – and when Oliver saw she was shivering he had slipped his arm around her shoulders. She wasn't cold anymore, but she didn't tell him that.

"Do you know what their song is?" Sadie asked Felicity.

Felicity shook her head and said, "No, do you?"

"No idea."

"I just hope it's not something embarrassing," Lydia interjected. "You know, like they do the choreographed dance from She's All That or something."

Sadie smirked and said, "Why would they do the dance from She's All That?"

"It was just an example," Lydia returned.

The music started up and Lydia gasped, grabbing Sadie's arm.

"No way. This has to be a joke."

Opening notes of I've Had the Time of My Life filled the room and David braced his hands on the center of Taylor's back, taking her into a deep back bend.

"Are they doing the Dirty Dancing dance?" Oliver asked in disbelief.

"Yes," Felicity breathed out, eyes wide. "Yes, they are."

Taylor and David moved around the dance floor, doing an authentic albeit slightly flawed rendition of the famous ending dance scene from Dirty Dancing. Lydia leaned in toward Sadie, Felicity, and Oliver, and said, "I take back what I said earlier. This is amazing."

"David has surprisingly fluid hips," Sadie noted, tilting her head to the side as she watched the pair...
dance. Lydia snorted and said, "Fluid hips? You want to maybe rephrase that? Or, you know, take it back completely?"

Sadie laughed, knocking Lydia’s arm with her elbow. Lydia looked over at Oliver and Felicity and said, "So, are you guys going to do something like this at your wedding?"

Felicity flushed, about to stammer some response, when Oliver said, "You know, I wanted to do the Dirty Dancing dance, but now that they've done it I think it's out of the question."

"Can't handle the comparisons?" Lydia joked. "Also, don't think Sadie and I will forget the fact that you implied you've thought about a wedding. If Felicity doesn't have a ring by Christmas, we will be bringing this conversation up again, complete with a transcript."

"Oh wow, this escalated quickly," Felicity said, laughing uncomfortably. She glanced up at Oliver, hoping he wasn't too freaked out by the escalated wedding talk, but he seemed unruffled.

"The lift is coming," Sadie said, attention now completely on the dance floor. "I hope he doesn't drop her."

Lydia snorted. "That would be an awful start to their marriage."

The group waited in silence as Taylor and David made their way to separate ends of the dance floor and prepped themselves for the lift. Taylor took a running start and then jumped, David taking a hold of her waist and miraculously raising her above his head.

"Oh! That's it!" Sadie said, clapping her hands together excitedly. "That's the lift!"

"I'd be great at that lift," Oliver noted, grinning down at Felicity.

She nodded and returned, "You do have remarkable upper body strength. I can attest to that from all the times I've watched you on the salmon bars. I mean, seen. I've seen you on the salmon bars. I don't watch you, because that would be creepy. And…yeah."

Oliver grinned softly – like he always did when she rambled – and she pressed her lips together, turning her attention back to the dance floor. The audience had begun to clap for Taylor and David and Felicity joined in, grinning when Taylor sent her a small wave.

The father-daughter dance was next, for which there was no movie dance performance.

"Is it just me, or is this sort of a letdown after that last dance?" Lydia said in a low voice.

Sadie channeled her motherly instinct as she chided her with a well-timed, "Lydia."

The father-daughter dance ended, and the band struck up a Frank Sinatra classic, inviting other couples onto the dance floor. Lydia headed off to the bar while Sadie went off to find her husband. Oliver glanced down at Felicity and asked, "Would you like to dance?"

"We don't have to," she said immediately.

"I know," he returned with a slight grin. "But I want to. So, would you like to dance with me, Felicity?"

There was nothing in that moment that Felicity wanted more. She nodded and he took her hand and tugged her out to the center of the dance floor. He slipped one arm around her waist and grasped her hand with the other. They were close, so close that she could smell his aftershave, and she wondered
idly if he caught notes of her perfume. She wondered if it made his stomach twist like his scent of oak and lemon did to her.

"I should warn you, I'm not the best dancer," she told him. "I sort of lack-" she stepped on his foot and winced, "-rhythm."

"You can dance, Felicity. Anyone can dance."

"Really? Because I've been proving that statement wrong at just about every dance since grade school."

He laughed lightly and told her, "Dancing is all about having a strong leader."

She raised one manicured eyebrow and said, "I'm assuming your referring to yourself there?"

"I went to several cotillions growing up, and each one required extensive dance lessons," Oliver told her. "So, in short, yes. I am referring to myself."

She smirked. "Alright. Lead away, dancing Queen."

He squeezed her hand and then began to move, nodding his head encouragingly as she inwardly rallied her feet to match his. Surprisingly, with her gaze trained on his, he was able to effortlessly take her around the dance floor. She tripped up if she paid too much attention to what her feet were doing, but if she just focused on him and trusted in his lead, her feet moved correctly of their own accord.

"See, I told you that you could dance," he said.

"Believe me, this is a first," she told him. "Usually men have given up on me by this point because I've abused their feet so much."

"They just weren't the right partner for you."

She grinned, choosing to let that comment hang in the air as he whisked her around the dance floor. Oliver really was a good dancer. She shouldn't have been surprised, since he excelled in just about every physical activity. There was another physical activity that edged its way into her mind but she quickly pushed it away, thinking it highly inappropriate to think about something like that with him literally inches away from her.

The song came to a close and the band struck up a slower tune. Oliver pulled her closer, bringing their interlocked fingers in to his chest as they swayed slowly to the beat. She rested her chin on his shoulder, smiling softly as she felt his thumb casually brush at her side. Their bodies were pressed together lightly and she could feel his breath on her neck. He was suspiciously quiet and when she stole a furtive glance up at his face, she was surprised to see the tension in his jaw. Thinking that maybe she had taken things too far by resting her chin on his shoulder she pulled away from him slightly, leaving an appropriate gap between their bodies.

Someone tapped Felicity on the shoulder and she glanced back, dread settling when her gaze landed on Kevin. Of course he would show up now. Kevin cleared his throat and turned his gaze toward Oliver as he asked, "Mind if I cut in?"

Oliver's eyes flashed, but he looked to Felicity and when she nodded slightly he dropped his arm from her waist and said, "I'll be over by the table if you need me."

The subtext in that statement wasn't lost on Felicity and she nodded and told him, "I'll be okay."
She watched him walk away until Kevin slipped his arm around her waist and she turned her gaze toward him. It was funny how only a few years ago dancing with him would feel like the most natural thing in the world. Now, it felt completely foreign. He held her just a bit too tightly and his hand was clammy.

"You look beautiful tonight," he said.

"Thank you," she said stiffly. "So, how's Stark Industries?"

"It's good," he said, nodding. "I'm surprised you're asking."

"Why? Because you stole the job from me?"

He shrugged. "Something like that."

"I'm not angry anymore," she told him truthfully. "I was. For a long time. If it was possible to make actual voodoo dolls, I would have made two of you. And used them extensively. But it ended up working out for the best. I ended up at Queen Consolidated. I met Oliver. None of that would have happened if you hadn't stolen my job."

"I expected more bitterness," he noted. "Some intentional stepping on my feet. Those shoes do look particularly spiky."

She shook her head, thinking just how wrong he was about everything. She wasn't someone to hold a grudge. Even if she hadn't ended up at Queen Consolidated, she wouldn't have made some scene at the wedding. The way Felicity saw it was that if she held onto the anger and bitterness from every time she was let down, her entire heart – her entire being – would be consumed by it. So, instead she chose to let it go. She chose the light instead of the dark. It occurred to her just how little he knew her in that moment, and just how little he knew her before.

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Oliver watched them dancing, trying to ignore the uncomfortable tightening in his chest. He hated that Kevin guy before but he hated him even more now. They had been dancing, and it had been nice, really nice. It was intoxicating having her so close. He'd partaken in his fair share of alcohol and other stimulants before he ended up on the island, but nothing was compared to the high that was having her in his arms. When she'd rested her chin lightly on his shoulder he had to physically stop himself from turning his face toward her hair and smelling her jasmine shampoo. The power she had over him was staggering, and the only thing more staggering was how little awareness she had about any of it.

"That little shit," Lydia hissed, coming to stand beside him. He glanced over at her and recognized the direction of her gaze.

"She said she was okay with it."

"Of course she did," Lydia said, shaking her head. "She hates making a scene. I swear, if he's doing anything to upset her right now I will take his balls off with a butter knife."

Oliver winced. "That was very specific. And graphic."

"A vague threat doesn't do anyone any good," she said off-handedly.

Oliver watched Kevin lean in close to Felicity and whisper something in her ear. His fists tightened at her sides and he gritted his teeth. He had no reason to be territorial, but jealousy rose in his chest.
"You have nothing worry about, you know," Lydia said, noting the tension in his body.

"What?"

"She's crazy about you," Lydia said. "Even when she was her most in love with Kevin, she never looked at him like she looks at you."

Oliver swallowed hard, trying to ignore the feelings rising in his chest at her words.

"I get you being pissed that she's over there with him," Lydia continued. "Because he is just about the shittiest shit that exists. He gives that Disick guy from the Kardasians a run for his money. But you don't have to worry about her."

"Thank you," he said, finding himself relaxing a bit at her words.

"Do you want a drink? I'll even buy you one."

"It's an open bar," he reminded her with a slight grin.

"Then I'll buy you two," she returned unceremoniously.

He laughed, gaze moving back to Felicity and Kevin out on the dance floor. They were farther apart now, Felicity's face serious as Kevin told her something.

"I think I'm going to wait for Felicity."

"Suit yourself," she said. Before she left she patted him on the arm and said, "But really, about what we said before, ring by Christmas or we start calling. I already stole your number from Felicity's phone so…" she gave him a meaningful look and then headed off toward the bar.

"I just wanted to let you know that I am sorry for what happened," Kevin said, voice earnest. "Especially with Cathy."

Felicity frowned, glancing to the side. Cathy was the coding TA that Kevin had been sleeping with for a good portion of their relationship. She'd tried to forget her over the years post their breakup, and she wasn't exactly thrilled to have the entire subject drudged up.

"It's fine," she told him levelly.

"No, it's not. It was pretty shitty. I know that. It was just easier. I know that's no excuse, but the feelings that I had for you…it was too much."

"What?" she said, cheeks flushing. She had a feeling where the conversation was going, and she so hoped she was wrong.

"I loved you Felicity," he said, and she wanted nothing more to run right then but his arm was tight around her waist. "I loved you and it was too much for me. I panicked and I turned toward something easy and familiar."

"Kevin-"

"I just need you to know that I regret what I did to you every single day," he continued. She glanced...
around helplessly, trying to find someone – anyone – who could save her from this situation. "You were this beautiful and intelligent woman who made me feel – " he paused, and her stomach twisted as she anticipated the next part of his little speech, " – makes me feel-

"No," she interrupted, shaking her head. She wrenched herself away from his grasp and said, "You don't get to do this. You don't get to come here and dump all of this on me."

"Felicity-"

"I don't want your apologies. I don't want your regrets. I don't want anything from you."

She stalked off the dance floor, heading out to the back courtyard for fresh air. Her eyes were stinging with frustration and she wiped at them irritably. She had been fine. She made peace with him, and then he had to go and start talking feelings. Someone touched her elbow and she pulled away irritably, poised to snap at Kevin, when she saw it was Oliver.

"Oh, it's you," she said, relief evident in her voice.

"Are you okay? I saw you leave the dance floor pretty quickly."

She nodded. "Yeah, I'm fine. I'm just…" she shook her head, wiping her palms on the skirt of her dress, "…I'm fine."

Kevin walked out into the courtyard and he started toward Felicity, but hesitated when he saw Oliver standing with her. After seemingly reconsidering his approach, he stepped forward and said, "Can I have a moment alone with Felicity?"

Oliver glanced at Felicity and noticed how she seemed to shrink away from him. Something had definitely happened on the dance floor. He didn't know what, but it was something, and he'd be damned if he left her alone with him again.

"That's not going to happen," Oliver said, voice firm.

"Come on, man, I just want to talk to her for a minute," Kevin pressed. "Felicity-"

"I think you should leave," Oliver said.

Kevin stayed rooted in place and Oliver said, "Let me rephrase that, you should leave."

Kevin hesitated for a moment but then sighed and headed back inside, but not before he told Felicity, "I meant what I said in there. I meant every word."

When Kevin had gone, Oliver stepped forward and covered the curve of her shoulders with his hands. She looked better than when he first got out there, but she still had this small crease between her eyebrows and her mouth was turned down in a frown.

"Do you want to talk about it?" he asked.

"Not really."

He nodded. "Okay. Do you want to go back inside? This seems like a moment for wine."

She smiled weakly and said, "I think I want to stay out here a little longer. I need a moment alone."

"Okay, sure."
He went to head back to the door when she softly called for him. He glanced back at her and she timidly asked, "Would you mind staying out here with me?"

"I thought you wanted to be alone."

"I can be alone with you."

Her words touched something deep inside him and he swallowed hard, nodding as he walked back and stood beside her. He braced his hands on the railing and they stood that way for a while, watching night fall on the city in comfortable silence.

Chapter End Notes

Feedback is LIFE!!! Okay, not really. But I would love to hear your thoughts on this chapter :)}
You guys absolutely blew me away with the feedback on that last chapter! Basically, you guys are the best. But I knew that already. I hope you enjoy this chapter - it is chock full of Olicity goodness ;)

They stood outside for a while, the sounds of passing cars and other wedding guests filtering in and out of the balcony serving as their dialogue. He didn’t say anything, and for that Felicity was grateful. There had been so much talking before with Kevin, and so much that she didn’t want to hear. The silence was a welcome change.

At some point he’d noticed the raised bumps on her arm and pulled his jacket off, draping it around her shoulders. It hung loosely off her slim frame and she pulled it tighter around herself, absentmindedly turning her nose in toward the fabric to catch his scent. The familiar notes of lemon and oak relaxed her further.

“Did you just sniff my jacket?” he asked with a slight grin, breaking the silence. She glanced over at him and nodded sheepishly.

“Yeah, I did.”

He laughed, shaking his head. “Does it at least smell good?”

She nodded slowly, thinking that she could bask in the scent forever. “It smells like you.”

His gaze softened and after clearing his throat he murmured, “Well, I will send Armani thanks for making my aftershave.”

“Yes, that is definitely something we should add to your agenda when we get back.”

“Are you better now?” he asked gingerly. “You seem better.”

“Yeah,” she said slowly. “I’m fine. It was just…”

“You don’t have to tell me what happened, you know,” he told her. “I just want to make sure you’re okay.”

“Yes,” she said softly, tilting her head to the side slightly. “You always do. But, um, the stuff with Kevin isn’t some big secret. He told me that he was sorry about what happened. You know, I never meant to hurt you. You meant a lot to me. And then he threw in the love stuff, but… um…present tense.”

“He still loves you,” Oliver murmured, not too pleased with the revelation. Thankfully, it looked like it hadn’t swayed Felicity at all. A moment later he thought to himself that he really shouldn’t have any opinion on whether it swayed her or not. She wasn’t really his, even if he had to keep reminding himself of that.
“That’s what he keeps saying,” she said with a shrug. “I don’t know if I believe him. And to be honest, it doesn’t matter. I mean, what we had was a long time ago. Even if everything he says was enough to make up for what happened, it’s too late. I don’t love him.”

“I’m glad to hear that,” Oliver thought aloud, realizing a moment too late what had just left his mouth. Felicity glanced up at him in surprise and said, “You are?”

“Well, yeah,” he said, cogs in his mind whirring as he tried to piece together a viable excuse for why he was glad to hear she didn’t love an ex-boyfriend. In the end, he went for a permutation of the truth. “You’re a remarkable woman, Felicity. You’re kind and loyal and unbelievably smart. You always try to be a good person and you push others toward being good, as well. You deserve to be someone’s first choice, not someone a guy just remembers years down the line.”

Felicity gave him a watery smile, his words affecting her more than she ever imagined they could. He slipped his arm around her shoulders and gave her a little squeeze.

“Thank you,” she murmured, wiping at her eyes. “It really means a lot to me to hear you say that.”

“I meant every word.”

She glanced up at him and took in a quick breath when she saw the tenderness and affection on his face. He’d always looked at her with a sort of bemusement at the foundry. It was like she was some mystery to him and he was wondering how he’d gotten mixed up with it. But there, standing on that balcony, the look on his face made it feel like a million little butterflies had hatched in her belly. His grip tightened on her shoulders and she felt a sudden need to run, but her body stayed rooted in place. His eyes darted to her lips as she licked them anxiously, the nervous thrum of her pulse alerting her that they were heading toward something, and somewhere in the back of her mind she knew that if they did it would never be the same. If he kissed her then, she didn’t know if she’d ever be able to stop kissing him back.

Two years of pent up feelings nearly came to a head as she finally made the decision to reach up to frame his face with her hands. Her palms tingled, and just as she went to lift her hands to his face, the doors opened noisely behind them and Lydia burst out onto the balcony with a loud, “It’s bouquet tossing time!”

The moment was gone and Felicity pulled away, cheeks flushing as she realized just how close she’d come to kissing Oliver Queen. Immediately, she felt relief flood her chest that it hadn’t happened. What was she thinking? He was Oliver Queen. He’d had probably hundreds of chances to put the moves on her back at Starling and he never had. He was one of her best friends - maybe her only best friend – and she had to stop this silly feelings nonsense before she inadvertently ruined everything.

She nodded – partially to Lydia and partially to herself – and headed indoors, Oliver following her. She glanced back at him and his expression was markedly different from before. He almost looked irritated, and she bookmarked that expression in her mind to analyze later. Lydia took a hold of her arm and tugged her toward the sizeable female crowd that had already gathered for the bouquet toss.

“Okay, so, we talked to Taylor and we all agreed that you need to catch this bouquet,” Lydia told her, tone businesslike as she wove through the crowd, Felicity behind her.

“What?”

“We all talked,” Lydia repeated. “Me, Sadie and Taylor – Eric and David, too, but they don’t really
count. Anyway, we agreed that since we’ve met your Sexiest Man Alive boyfriend and we approve – and by the way, we very much approve – it’s only fitting that we give you a little boost toward that wedding aisle.”

“In the form of catching the bouquet?” Felicity asked. Lydia nodded and Felicity’s eyes widened as she caught on to what Lydia was saying and she hissed, “You’re rigging the bouquet toss?”

“Oh please, don’t act so surprised.” Lydia glanced around at the other women around them. “All these bitches are lucky Taylor’s even throwing it. She wanted to just give it to you, but we convinced her it meant more if you physically catch it.”

“Right,” Felicity said slowly. “You guys do realize you’re certifiably insane, right?”

Lydia rolled her eyes. “So, here’s how it’s going to go down. We already told Taylor where you’re going to be so she’ll throw it towards you. Then, Sadie and I will play interference, blocking everyone else.”

“I have a feeling this is going to get violent,” Felicity murmured.

“Hey, a bloody nose for your marital bliss?” Lydia said. “That’s nothing.”

“What’s nothing?” Sadie asked, joining them.

“Lydia’s just telling me how she’s going to take people down like a linebacker so I catch the bouquet,” Felicity deadpanned.

Sadie smiled toward Lydia and told her, “I really admire you dedication.”

Felicity shook her head, glancing between them. “You guys are ridiculous.”

“We just want you to be happy,” Sadie filled in.

“And we’re willing to go the extra mile to maximize that happiness,” Lydia added. “What else are friends for?”

Felicity smiled at that, reaching out and taking both of their hands. Her friends might be insane, but they really did love her. Taylor walked out onto the dance floor, sashaying her hips as she waved her bouquet over her head.

“Oh, she’s coming!” Sadie said.

“Remind me to tell her after how stupid she looks right now,” Lydia said.

Taylor took her spot in front of the crowd and searched out Felicity in the crowd, sending her a little wink. Felicity couldn’t help but grin. Only her friends would work up a plan as ridiculous as this, and she’d be damned if she didn’t love them more for it. Taylor paid glances heavy with meaning to both Lydia and Sadie before turning around.

“Alright, this is it,” Sadie said.

“Felicity, you have one job and one job only right now,” Lydia told her, voice low and firm. “You catch that bouquet.”

Felicity nodded, feeling the same sort of grim determination that filled her at every other bouquet tossing. She might have thought they were crazy for rigging it – and she still thought that – but the bouquet toss was a serious affair. Many women steadfastly believed that catching the bouquet meant
that they would be walking down the aisle that year, and while Felicity didn’t exactly believe there was a direct correlation between the two, she did always secretly believe it upped her chances.

Taylor squatted a bit in her dress, prepping for a big throw. She glanced back once more before turning away and letting the bouquet fly over her head. It was a good throw, and Felicity reached up as she watched the bouquet make a perfect arch toward her outstretched hands. Beside her Lydia and Sadie were effectively edging people away from her.

The bouquet was coming. She reached up higher, poised to catch it, when something solid rammed into her side and she fell to the ground hard, her head smacking against the linoleum tiles.

The first thing Felicity heard when she regained consciousness was the shrieking cadence of Lydia yelling.

“What the hell is wrong with you? It’s a bouquet! You took our friend out for a fucking bouquet?”

“Lydia, calm down,” she heard Sadie—she thought it was Sadie—say. “Look, she’s waking up. She’s okay.”

Felicity opened her eyes blearily, her vision swimming. She went to sit up but a hand gently pressed her back onto something soft. When her vision cleared she saw Oliver kneeling above her. He wasn’t wearing his suit jacket and after a moment she deduced it was under her head.

“It’s nice to see your eyes open,” he murmured, smoothing a few stay hairs away from her forehead.

“Felicity, oh my God, are you okay?” Taylor said, getting down on all fours next to her.

Felicity saw the pristine white dress pressed against the dirty dance floor and said, “Taylor, your dress—”

“Screw my dress,” Taylor said immediately. “Are you okay? You scared the shit out of us.”

Felicity nodded and winced as pain seared through her head. She had vague memories of reaching out for the bouquet and then being knocked to the floor. She thought to herself that she must have hit her head on the floor.

“Don’t move, okay?” Taylor told her. “You just stay right there. I think we should call an ambulance.” Taylor glanced up at Oliver. “Do you think we should call an ambulance?”

“I would,” Sadie said. “She hit her head pretty good.”

“I’m fine,” Felicity said, forcing herself to sit up. Her head throbbed, but she was getting sick of being horizontal when everyone else was vertical. Oliver scooted closer and put his hand on her back. She turned her gaze to him and told him, “Really, I’m perfectly fine. I just hit my head.”

“Okay, let me see you,” Lydia said, crouching down in front of her. “Does your head feel fuzzy?”
“I just smacked it on the floor,” Felicity returned irritably. “So, I’m going to go with yeah.”

“Alright, no need to get snippy,” Lydia told her. “Is your vision blurry?”

Felicity shook her head slowly. “Not anymore.”

“Are you nauseous or dizzy?”

“No.”

Lydia stood up, wiping her hands on the skirt of her dress. “She’s probably okay. You watch her over the next day or so, Oliver.”

He nodded and asked, “Are you a doctor or something?”

“No, I work in marketing. I just watch a lot of Grey’s Anatomy.”

“I really am okay,” Felicity said. “Believe me, I’ve gone through a lot worse than this without going to the hospital.”

“Worse than this?” Lydia said. “What the hell are you doing in your daily life?”

Felicity froze, exchanging a look with Oliver when she realized she’d made a reference to their very much secret life. She quickly stammered, “You guys know how clumsy I am. I’m always knocking into things.”

They were all silent for a moment until Lydia snorted and said, “Isn’t that the truth. You couldn’t go a week in undergrad without some sort of cataclysmic story about falling up a flight of stairs.”

Felicity let out a brittle laugh. “Yep, that was me. Anyway, I think it’s time to get me off the floor. Taylor’s supposed to be the center of attention, remember?”

Oliver held her arm and helped her up, scooping his suit jacket off the floor. They walked toward their table and he leaned in and said, “Are you sure you don’t need to go to the hospital?”

She went to shake her head, but remembering how much acute head movement hurt, she verbalized her thought and said, “No, I really am fine. You know I’ve had worse.”

His brows furrowed together and he murmured, “Yeah, I do.”

They sat down and he turned in his chair to face her, gingerly reaching forward and touching where she had slammed her head into the floor. She winced, drawing away from his touch.

“You didn’t break the skin,” he told her. “That’s a good sign.”

“Yeah, I like this dress. I don’t want to get blood on it.”

He smirked. “You should probably put some ice on it. I’ll go to the bar and see if they can put some in a bag.”

“Okay.”

He walked away and Lydia came over, taking his seat. She reached forward and took Felicity’s hands in hers.
“So, congratulations on making Taylor’s bouquet throw possibly the most dramatic in the history of all similar throws.”

Felicity laughed lightly. “I’m sorry that I didn’t catch it. Have I dashed all your hopes and dreams of me getting married this year?”

Lydia’s mouth pulled into a slow grin and she shook her head. “Nah, as long as you’re still with Oliver you’ll be fine.”

Felicity smiled sadly. If only that were true. Sometimes she thought Oliver being there was the reason she wasn’t fine — the reason she couldn’t actually go out and find someone for herself. Every guy she met she compared to him. Sometimes it was intentional, but most times it was something she did without even realizing it. She’d meet a guy at a bar and think that his smile wasn’t quite right and the feel of his hand on the small of her back made her feel more uncomfortable than protected.

“Why do you look like that?” Lydia asked, eyebrows knitted with concern.

“Like what?” Felicity asked.

“I don’t know, like you’re sad.”

Felicity shook her head, wanting so badly to tell Lydia what was really going on. She could use a girlfriend’s advice, but that would mean revealing the truth about her and Oliver, and potentially the truth about other things that had to remain secret. But then she thought, maybe there was a way she could inadvertently get some advice.

“Sometimes I don’t think it’s going to happen with Oliver and I,” she said carefully.

“You guys getting married?” Lydia asked.

Felicity nodded, feeling relieved that Lydia had taken the bait. “Yeah. It’s just — things are complicated. They’re more complicated than I can even explain here. And sometimes I think…” she trailed off, tears filling her eyes as she finally admitted,”…I think he doesn’t love me like I love him.”

“Oh Felicity,” Lydia said, reaching forward and pulling her friend against her as she wrapped her arms around her. Felicity didn’t know if it was the stress of her head injury or from finally admitting her feelings, but she started crying. She realized it probably looked strange to be crying in the middle of a wedding reception, but she figured she could always blame it on the head injury. Lydia rubbed her back, murmuring comforting words as Felicity let out two years of pent up emotions. When she had calmed down, Felicity pulled back, wiping at her eyes.

“I’m sorry,” she said, shaking her head. “Tonight’s just brought up a lot of emotions for me.”

“It’s okay,” Lydia said, wiping a tear off Felicity’s cheek with the edge of her thumb. “Now that you’ve calmed down, I can tell you that you are being absolutely stupid.”

“What?”

“Anyone with eyes can see that man is ridiculously, stupidly in love with you. He looks at you like you’re the seventh world wonder or something.”

“Eighth,” Felicity corrected. “There are already seven world wonders.”

“Whatever,” Lydia said dismissively. “What I’m trying to tell you is that you do not have to
worry in the least if he loves you as much as you love him. I’d even go so far as to say it looks like he loves you more.”

Oliver walked over with the bag of ice and noticed the tear marks on Felicity’s cheeks. He crouched down, hand resting on her shoulder as he worriedly asked, “Is everything okay?”

Felicity nodded while Lydia said, “Don’t worry, I caused those tears. I was telling her how much I love her and Felicity, being the big softie she is, started to cry.”

“Guilty as charged,” Felicity said, raising her hand in front of her.

Oliver smirked, shaking his head. “I will never understand women.”

“You’re a man,” Lydia said in return, standing and clapping her hand on his shoulder. “And that is your curse. You guys play doctor, and I’m going to get another glass of wine.”

Oliver laughed, settling back in his seat. He handed the bag of ice to Felicity and she pressed it to her head, wincing and immediately drawing it away. Oliver reached up, laying his hand over hers and gently pressing the ice back to her head. It stung, but after a moment the pain dulled.

“I’m sorry this night ended up so crazy,” she murmured. “I swear, if I knew I would end up unconscious I would have left you at home.”

“I’m having a wonderful time,” he assured her. “Possible concussions and all.”

“I’m glad to hear that.”

“Besides,” he said, dropping his hand from hers. “I’m with you. And that generally promises a relatively good time.”

She laughed and then immediately winced as her head pounded.

“Sorry,” he said quickly, covering her hand with his again. “Laughing looks painful. I will try to be less amusing.”

She grinned slightly, shifting her fingers beneath his. “It’s okay.”

Chapter End Notes

I shamelessly took the knocking-out-Felicity storyline from 27 Dresses...with a little bit of a Spykid18 twist, of course! I hope you enjoyed this! Fair warning, I'm thinking this will only have two or three more chapters. I feel the natural end of the story coming, and I don't want to drag it out. I think the worst thing a story can do is extend past its natural narrative life. So, savor these next few chapters!
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

So, this is completed over on FF.net but I realized I probably should complete it here, too!! New chapters will be posted each day until the story is complete :D

Chapter Eight

Oliver sat at the table, idling sipping his goblet of water as he watched the couples dance. Felicity was over by Lydia, the latter grabbing Felicity's arm at something she said. Skye wiggled in Oliver's arm and he glanced down, hoping that this was just normal baby shifting and not something more – like a full diaper. He'd taken Skye to give Sadie and Eric a chance to dance a little, but diaper duty was decidedly outside the confines of his good deed. He was already a little uncomfortable with the kid, but he liked Sadie and Eric and figured they should have at least one dance to themselves. Felicity had been surprised when he offered to watch Skye, telling him, "You do realize you just offered to watch a baby, right?"

"It's one song," he said with a shrug. "I think I'll manage."

Felicity had smirked, glancing back at Sadie and Eric who were doing their best Michael Jackson impressions on the dance floor, and said, "Oh, it's going to be more than one song."

So far, it had been four and Sadie and Eric didn't look like they were leaving the dance floor any time soon.

"Please tell me your diaper is nice and empty," Oliver said, his voice drawing Skye's attention. She twisted her neck, gazing up at him. "This is a very expensive suit. So, no poop allowed."

Skye reached up and grasped his chin with her chubby hand. He chuckled slightly, twisting his chin away from her grasp. Undeterred, she reached up again, this time taking a hold of his tie just under the knot and tugging.

"All you girls like that move, huh?" he said, gently prying her hand away from his tie. Two tries appeared to be the limit for Sadie and she turned back around, settling the back of her head on Oliver's chest. He'd found that babies actually weren't half bad. All the twisting and moving had freaked him out at first, but once he saw it was just Skye's thing – or maybe just a baby thing – he'd relaxed. After a while, he actually found himself enjoying her company.

Oliver's gaze skirted over the dance floor, naturally landing on Felicity last and staying there. She was dancing with Lydia and Taylor, her movements a bit less exaggerated than the others due to her spill earlier – she'd promised him that she'd take it easy on the dance floor – but she looked like she was having a good time. He spotted Kevin a few groups over, gaze directed toward Felicity. Oliver hoped the guy would have the good sense to stay away. His hands were a bit full, literally, for another altercation.

"What do you think she saw in that guy?" Oliver asked Skye softly, bouncing his knee gently underneath her. "He seems like a tool. And did you see his suit? It's not even tailored properly."
Skye glanced up at him and then back at the dance floor.

"Yeah, I guess a suit really doesn't say much about a guy. Maybe he's changed. But, after what he did to her? She deserves better. She deserves someone who cares about her and respects her and loves her for being the incredible woman – no, remarkable woman – she is. She deserves someone like…"

Skye looked up at him again and he sighed heavily. "Don't look at me like that. I wasn't going to say me."

She continued to stare at him, big blue eyes locked on his.

"Okay, fine, I was going to say me. But, that could never happen. The two of us…I mean I've thought about it. Have you seen her? Of course I've thought about it. But, because of what I do – what I have to do – it can't happen. I already put her in enough danger as it is."

Skye twisted away from him, hands flapping in front of her as she squirmed in his arms. He tightened his grip on her as he lifted her a bit and scooted her further back so she sat more squarely on his lap.

"It's better this way," he said. "Keeping her at arm's length…it's the right thing to do. I mean, if anything happened to her…" he shook his head, thinking of just how close they had gotten to something happening over the years. Each time, he had felt as if his heart would beat itself out of his chest. There had been many people that he cared about put in danger – or worse – since the island, but something about her made everything heightened. Maybe because she seemed so defenseless to him, which he knew wasn't true. He'd seen her hold her own in countless dangerous situations, showing a bravery and resourcefulness that had surprised him. But still she seemed so fragile. Her delicate frame just so breakable, and he knew if that ever happened he'd be lost – more so than if Digg was hurt, or Thea or Laurel. In his chaotic world, Felicity Smoak had become his anchor, and without her he'd be adrift.

Felicity walked over, settling in the seat beside him. Skye reached toward her and Felicity grinned, taking Skye's hand and pretending to bite it. Skye shrieked with laughter.

"You know, a few hours ago I would have never believed I would see this," Felicity said after settling back in her seat. "You almost look comfortable with her."

He shrugged and said, "She's grown on me."

"I bet she has," Felicity said with a grin. "This one will steal your heart. She stole mine the moment Sadie texted me her picture." Felicity leaned forward and kissed the top of Skye's head. "Isn't that right? You stole your Aunt Felicity's heart?"

"How are you feeling?" Oliver asked, nodding toward her head.

"The Tylenol worked like a charm," she told him. "It's just a dull ache now. I barely notice it."

"Good," he said. "I'd still take it easy, though. No head banging on the dance floor or anything."

With a feigned sigh she returned with, "Oliver, you know that's my signature dance move."

He grinned. "You'll just have to save it for the next wedding."

"Yeah, I guess so," she said, propping her elbow on the table and resting her head on her upturned hand. She gazed up at him and murmured, "Will you be with me at that one, too?"
"If you ask me."

Her eyes shone and she murmured, "Really? You know, this could be construed as inferentially consenting to my continuing this sham of our relationship."

He smirked. "Couldn't we just go as friends?"

She considered this for a moment. "I guess. Crazier things have happened."

"So, I was curious, what are you going to tell your friends about us after this?" he asked.

"You mean what is my grand breakup plan?" she asked.

"Yeah."

"Well, I'm glad you asked," she said, straightening. "Feel free to provide feedback. I'd like us to be equally involved in the dissolution of our fake relationship."

He chuckled. "Alright."

"I was thinking that I would start planting seeds of our having trouble first. You know, stuff about us fighting a lot. You work too much. I leave too many lights on in the apartment. That sort of stuff."

"Good start," he agreed, nodding along with her.

"Next, we'll decide to take a break. Nothing permanent, just, you know, trying out a life apart. At first I'll miss you, but then I'll find it sort of liberating. I get the bed to myself. You get to go out more --"

"So, I move out?" he interrupted.

"Well, yeah."

"Is it my apartment or yours?" he asked. When she gave him a look he said, "I just want to get the story straight. What if someone asks me about it?"

"Who would be asking you about it?"

"Lydia already told me she took my number out of your phone. You really think I won't get at least one call when we decide to go on this break?"

"Fair enough," Felicity said. "Um, how about we were living at a place we both paid for, but considering that you're the billionaire, you have more options for the break. An IT girl probably can't afford a temporary break pad."

"Alright," he said, shrugging. "Makes sense to me."

"Okay, good," she said crisply. "Now, both of us will slowly realize that while we love each other, we're better off apart. We will officially end our relationship over an amicable dinner where you pay the bill as a final gesture of good will. We go our separate ways and live happily ever after. End of story."

"That's a well thought out breakup plan," he said, nodding appreciatively. Felicity beamed.

"I thought so."
"So, what's the time line for this?"

"About one month," she said decisively. "Like I said, we can't have it happen too soon after this. In case you haven't noticed, we're making a pretty good impression on everyone."

Oliver nodded in agreement. "Yes, I have noticed."

"People think we're a freaking dreamboat right now. We need time for things to happen offstage. Then, there is a basis for the fighting. A fabricated basis, but ultimately, still a basis."

"Well, if it means anything, I've enjoyed being your fake boyfriend for this brief time," Oliver said.

She thought to herself that his words certainly meant something, but as for what that something meant, she didn't have a clue.

"You've played the part incredibly well," she said carefully. Her eyes met his and she hoped she hadn't come off as flirty. He held her gaze as he returned, "We both have."

Felicity swallowed hard, feeling as if some sort of moment was happening, but not having the slightest clue how to react.

Sadie and Eric returned to the table, both of their faces shining with sweat and satisfied smiles on their faces. Sadie scooped up Skye from Oliver's arms and said, "We cannot thank you enough, Oliver, for giving us a little time on that dance floor. It was marvelous."

"I'm glad I could help," he returned smoothly. "Now that you guys are back I think I'll take my girlfriend for a quick turn around the dance floor."

He stood and reached his hand down to Felicity. She took it and followed him out to the dance floor. He slipped his arm around her waist and pulled her in closer like before. He didn't try any fancy dance moves, though, instead just swaying slowly with her in place. She told herself it was because of her head, but she couldn't ignore the fact that they were closer dancing this way.

"You know, I still remember the first girl I danced with," he murmured.

"Who was it?"

"Rachel Pemperton," he said. "It was at some charity function my parents dragged me to when I was thirteen. Usually Thea and I stayed home with Raisa, but my father got it into his head that it was time I started assuming some responsibility. I don't know why this amounted to going to society functions, but my father was the type of person that when he put his mind to something there was no dissuading him, so I went with him and my mother to the Starling City Museum of Contemporary Art. I was bored out of my mind until Rachel Pemperton came over and asked me to dance."

"This sounds like some life affirming dance," she teased.

"It wasn't," he told her, chuckling. "We only danced for about half a song because I kept stepping on her feet."

"That does tend to sour the dancing mood. I'm assuming this was before you acquired your dancing skills?"

He laughed, nodding. "Yeah, those came later. What about you? When was your first dance?"

"Um, I was eleven," she said, thinking back to her younger days in Las Vegas with her mother. "It
was at a bar mitzvah. I danced with the man of the hour himself – David Frankel. It was nice until he tried to kiss me. I kicked him so hard that I heard he had a bruise for a week."

"Poor kid was probably scarred for life," Oliver said with a grin.

"I'm of the firm belief that men should learn early where not to put their tongues."

"I've never been to a bar mitzvah," he mused.

"They're nice," she said noncommittally. "There's really good food. You've never tasted pot roast until you've had pot roast at a bar mitzvah."

"Hm, good to know."

The song playing came to a close and the band's lead singer announced, "This will be the last song before the newlyweds call it a night, folks. So, everyone to the dance floor!"

"They're leaving already?" Felicity said in disbelief.

Oliver glanced at his watch. "Wow, it's already midnight."

"No way," she said, grabbing his wrist and checking his watch herself. She let go of his wrist and murmured, "It really is midnight. I can't believe it."

The band struck up Taylor's favorite song, Benny & The Jets, and Felicity grinned as she watched the extremely inebriated bride dance with her new husband, loudly shouting along with her trademark incorrect lyrics.

"Those aren't the words," Oliver noted with a grin.

"No, no they're not."

At the close of the song, Taylor and David kissed messily, before waving goodbye and heading up to their room. Lydia ambled over to Oliver and Felicity and murmured, "I think Tay wins the award for most hammered bride."

"In her defense, she gets hammered after two beers," Felicity reminded her. Taylor weighed about one hundred pounds and her tiny frame didn't take much to get way, way past sober.

"That is very true. So, Sadie and Eric are calling it a night like the lame-o parents they are. But I have an idea. I also swiped a bottle of champagne that is currently underneath our table."

Felicity smirked. "What's the plan?"

"There's that snazzy beach right across the street from this hotel. I bet it's really nice at night."

"I don't know…" Felicity said, glancing up at Oliver.

"You need to stay awake because of that little tumble you took earlier," Lydia said, pleading her case. "And you can't let me drink all that champagne alone. On a deserted beach. That would be irresponsible and quite possibly the beginning sequence of an episode of Law & Order."

Felicity laughed. "You could just go to bed."

"Ha, you're funny," Lydia said drily. "Come on, guys, live a little. It's a nice night. The beach is just out there waiting for us. If we don't do this, it's practically like giving the man upstairs the big ol'
bird."

"How do you figure that?" Felicity asked gamely, tilting her head to the side.

"I'll go if you want," Oliver said, gaze directed toward Felicity. She hadn't expected him to have any interest in Lydia's plan, and murmured, "Really?"

"Yeah, it's not every day Lake Michigan is literally in your back yard."

"See, this is what I'm talking about!" Lydia enthused, gesturing toward Oliver. "So, you guys are in?"

"Yeah, I guess so," Felicity said, thinking that this day just kept surprising her. "Let's go to the beach." As they headed toward the table and their contraband champagne she murmured, "Those are five words I didn't think I'd be saying tonight."
Chapter Nine

The three of them – Felicity, Oliver, and Lydia – walked out onto the beach. It was a warm night with the slightest breeze coming up from the lake. Felicity slipped off her shoes, carrying them under her arm as they walked. Lydia took on the sand in full stilettos, stumbling as she took long drags from the champagne bottle.

"This, guys…this is life!" she said loudly, holding her arms out wide and spinning in a slow circle. Her heel caught in some sand and she careened to the side, nearly tumbling to the ground save for Oliver's arm slipping quickly around her waist. He helped her back to standing and Lydia laughed loudly, glancing back at Felicity as she loudly said, "You have a good one here, Felicity. Don't let him go."

"I'll do my best," Felicity said. Lydia took another sip of champagne and returned with, "That's shit. You do better than your best. Because you deserve someone good." She staggered over to Felicity and put her free hand heavily down on Felicity's shoulder. "Because you're fucking amazing. And you deserve someone who is just as fucking amazing. And Oliver…" she glanced back at him, "…he's not as amazing as you, but he's pretty fucking close. So, you hold on to him."

Lydia held the champagne out to her and Felicity shook her head lightly as she said, "Head injury, remember? I probably shouldn't be drinking."

"Ugh, but you guys were supposed to help me finish this," she said, raising the champagne a bit in the air. Oliver stepped forward and plucked it from her hand.

"Alright, that's what I like to hear!" Lydia said happily, rubbing her hands together as Oliver took a sip from the bottle. He actually only let the liquor moisten his lips – not wanting to get drunk when Felicity had sobered up and apparently would be remaining that way – but Lydia didn't notice. She beamed at him when he handed the bottle back, taking another hit from it herself.

"This is some good champagne," Lydia said, glancing down at the bottle's label. "It's probably the cheap stuff. You know how cheap Taylor's parents are. But, still, it's not half bad."

A warm breeze washed in from the shore and Felicity closed her eyes, getting lost in the moment and the sounds of the lake. She could hear the tide coming in and pulling out, and air whistling past them made her shiver. When she opened her eyes Taylor and David were walking toward them from the hotel.

"What are you guys doing down here?" Lydia called out loudly. "Please tell me it's not for a beach quickie. I know it sounds fun – but you get sand everywhere. Literally. Jerry and I tried it on our honeymoon and I was picking sand out of my you-know-where for days."

"That's something I didn't need to know," Oliver said under his breath. Felicity laughed.

"Lyd, you texted us that you guys were down here," Taylor said, wrapping her arm around Lydia's shoulders. "And David and I have already done the beach quickie. It's not our thing."
"What about you and Oliver?" Lydia tossed off toward Felicity. "We have two 'no's' here for beach quickies, do we have a yes?"

"That's, um, not something we've tried," Felicity said, glancing over at Oliver.

"I will count that as an undetermined," Lydia said after a moment.

"I can't believe you took an entire bottle of champagne," Taylor said, plucking the bottle from Lydia and downing a good-sized gulp. "If either of my parents find out they'll probably send you a bill for it."

Lydia snorted. "And I will promptly throw that out and pretend I never got it."

"It's really beautiful out here," Taylor said, lowering herself to a seated position on the sand. She reached up for David and he grinned softly, taking her hand and sitting next to her. He wrapped his arm around her waist, pulling her flush against his side. "Maybe we should have had an outdoors wedding. You know, down here by the beach or something?"

"Definitely not," Lydia said, sitting with them. "Outdoors wedding are the worst. First off, it's *always* windy. And then it usually gets too hot and you're sitting there sweating through your dress."

"Lydia likes her climate control," Felicity told Oliver, carefully lowering herself to the sand. Oliver stopped her with a hand on her arm, laying down his jacket on the sand for her to sit on.

"Didn't you say that was Armani?" she said in a low voice, crouched over the jacket. Oliver shrugged.

"Yeah don't worry, I have more."

She smirked. "Of course you do."

The champagne bottle passed around the group, Felicity and Oliver passing as the others held the bottle out to them.

"I can't believe I'm married," Taylor sighed, resting her head on David's shoulder. "It doesn't feel real yet. Like it's a dream or something."

"I can't believe it either," David said, threading his fingers with hers, her wedding band glistening in the moonlight. "I still can't believe you said yes."

"Neither could we," Lydia joked. "So, Taylor, let's hear it – when did you know David here was the one? Because we all were pretty sure you were holding out for Justin Timberlake."

Taylor laughed. "Um, I don't know. I guess it was a lot of little things over time. It wasn't some sudden realization. It was gradual."

"I knew the moment I laid eyes on you," David said.

"No you didn't," Taylor said, grinning up at him.

"Yes, I did," David returned. "I saw you waiting in line at Starbucks and I thought to myself I'm going to marry that girl."

"I knew it when Jerry sat through the entirety of Jersey Boys without a single complaint," Lydia said, smiling wistfully. "He hates all of that music with a vehement passion and I love it with *just* as vehement of a passion. So, for my birthday he took me to see it. Granted, he wore ear plugs for the
entire show, but still, I thought that a man who would do that for me is one that I could spend the rest of my life with."

Felicity forced a grin, the fabrication of her situation hitting her with staggering force. Here were her friends with real relationships – with partners for life – and she was sitting with her boss who she convinced to pose as her boyfriend.

"What about you guys?" Taylor asked, looking between Oliver and Felicity. "When did you guys know?"

Felicity was about to interject with something to steer the conversation away from the little walks down love-memory-lane, but Oliver surprised her by answering.

"We were at this place called Big Belly Burger with our friend Digg." He turned his gaze toward Felicity. "You were drinking root beer and when Digg said something you snorted and root beer came out of your nose. It was one of the grossest – and cutest – things I'd ever seen. You were so embarrassed."

"Mortified is more like it," Felicity said softly. She remembered that afternoon. It was an uncharacteristically normal day at the office for them, and they'd all decided to get lunch together.

"Anyway, yeah, that was it for me."

"That's disgusting," Lydia said. "And sort of perfect for you two."

"To finding the one," Taylor said, raising the champagne bottle. "And being lucky enough to be their one, too."

An hour or so later Oliver and Felicity walked back to the hotel with Lydia and the newly weds trailing behind them. Felicity had Oliver's coat around her shoulders and she was holding onto his arm as she walked tiredly in her heels. The five of them walked into the hotel and headed to the elevators. They all piled into one, Taylor and David pressed close as the elevator made its ascent. The doors slid open at Taylor and David's floor and they walked out.

"Don't forget about brunch tomorrow," Taylor told them all as the doors slid shut. "Eleven o'clock downstairs!"

"We'll be there," Felicity told her.

Lydia got off two floors later and then Felicity and Oliver were alone on the elevator. Felicity shifted her weight to the side, distancing herself somewhat from him. She thought about what he said before.

"I'm surprised you remembered the snorting root beer thing," she noted softly.

"It was pretty memorable."

"Yeah, I guess. It's just…you've had lots of memorable things in your life. And that particular moment seems to me to rank pretty low on the memory-totem-pole."

"Felicity, what are you getting at?"

"Nothing," she said, shutting down. "I'm just surprised, that's all."
The doors slid open and they walked toward the room in silence.

"Actually, it's not nothing," she said, stopping in front of their room. "Because you remember that, and the color of my lipstick, and you say things that make me feel like I'm in some Katherine Heigl movie-"

"Felicity-"

"But then I remember what you said after Russia. I remember you saying you can't be with someone you really care about, and I get that. I do. I get it, but you keep saying and doing things and..." she trailed off, shaking her head. She took a deep breath, and when she was ready she glanced up at him, eyes locking with his, and said, "I like you, Oliver. I like the way you only take your coffee black. I like your unflagging bravery and how despite having a secret identity you are just about the worst liar in existence. I like you, all of you, and I can't keep having this false hope. I know you don't mean to lead me on, but you are."

He reached out to her but she shrunk away from him, shaking her head.

"I keep falling faster and faster, and one of these days I'm going to crash and even you won't be able to save me. I need to stop this now, otherwise, I'll never stop it. Because I like it when you do and say those things you shouldn't. I like it when you touch my elbow or give me that look that makes me feel like a million butterflies suddenly hatched in my belly. But it's not good for me. And it's not good for you."

"I'm sorry if I've been a little much this weekend-"

"It's more than this weekend, Oliver," she said. "It's everything."

He was silent, and in that moment she recognized he wasn't refuting what she said. He knew exactly what he was doing, and she couldn't figure out if it made her angry or just sad.

"Felicity, what I said before about my not being able to be with someone I really care about...that still holds true. It's too dangerous."

Felicity swallowed hard and murmured, "So, when you say someone you really care about..."

"Yes," he murmured, eyes pained.

"Okay," she said, nodding as she felt her eyes moisten. Her bottom lip was dangerously close to trembling, but she took a deep breath and inwardly told herself that breaking down would be entirely futile. It would serve no purpose other than to embarrass her and bring on even more of Oliver's guilt complex. No, she had to think rationally right now.

In her silence she noticed him reach forward slightly to touch her and then pull back. She was glad he did that, because right now one touch from him would be enough for her to lose all control.

"Okay, so, just to be clear. You want to be with me. Or, you know, have considered being with me. But, we can't be together because you think it's too dangerous."

"You've seen what happens to the people around me," he said. "I mean, look at what's happened to you already. I can't..." his jaw tightened, "...I won't put you in more danger."

"I understand that," she said slowly. "But, you need to understand, that you're not the only person affected here. You're not the only one who gets a say."
"Felicity-

"No, I'm not finished," she interrupted firmly. She'd been on the receiving end of too many unilateral decisions throughout her life. This wouldn't be added to the list. "I know the risks with you. I live them every day. I'm already in danger, Oliver. It's happened."

"And that's exactly why nothing can happen between us. You're already in danger. It will just get worse. If anything happened to you...I don't know what I would do."

"Maybe that's a risk I'm willing to take," she said, stepping closer to him. He moved backwards, hitting the door with his back. "I understand your concerns – really, I do – but at the end of the day, I don't care. I don't. I want to be with you. I've wanted to be with you since the day you came into my office with some stupid story about spilling coffee on your laptop. I've had a lot of time to think about this Oliver. I've had time to weigh the pros and cons, and to consider my options. And after all of that, the only conclusion I've ever come up with is you."

She reached up tentatively and laid her hand on his cheek. He turned toward her touch, almost like a reflex, and she moved closer, watching him carefully as she slid her free hand around to the back of his neck and drew his mouth down to hers. She kissed him first, stomach coiled tight with nerves. She had no idea if he would kiss her back, but she reasoned that the fact that he hadn't pushed her away yet was a good sign. She let her lips linger against his for a moment, waiting for something to happen. After a few moments of inaction she began to pull away when he suddenly reached up and framed her face with his hands, kissing her deeply.

She stumbled forward and wrapped her arms tightly around his waist, two years of frustration coming to a head as they lost themselves in each other. His hand slid to the back of her head, pressing her mouth down more firmly against his. Her hands slid along the silky material of his shirt, his muscles hard beneath the thin fabric.

Felicity didn't know how long it was before they separated. It could have been five minutes, or fifty. She lost all concept of time with his mouth moving deftly against hers and then finding the sensitive spot just beneath her ear. When he finally did pull away she felt as if a part of her went with him.

"We should probably go inside," he said, breathing labored.

"Yeah," she said, feeling lightheaded when he slid his hand down her arm and took her hand. "Inside sounds good."

Chapter End Notes

Review! Review! Review!

New chapter will be up TOMORROW.
Coffee. When Felicity groggily opened her eyes that was the first thing she smelled – coffee and something sweet. She turned on her side, stretching her arm out across the empty side of the bed beside her. The shower pounded softly from the bathroom. Resting on his pillow was a sheet of the hotel stationary, Oliver's messy scrawl alerting her to the coffee and cinnamon rolls on the table.

She climbed out of bed and padded over to the table, lazily scratching at her shoulder through the thin material of her sleep shirt.

Yes, she was still wearing her sleep shirt. She was wearing all her clothes, actually, or at least those she wore to bed. Not that things hadn't been heading a different, less clothed, direction early that morning when they stumbled into the hotel room, exploring each other with such abandon that they knocked over a tall lamp. Things were chugging right along that route, careening toward things that Felicity had always strictly kept to dreams, when she had a sudden urge to stop. She knew they had to stop. Things were moving fast and while she was sober, she wasn't entirely sure he could say the same. She'd waited over a year for what was about to happen, and she wanted it to be perfect, not some drunken romp after a wedding. There was no need to go at full speed and do everything at once. They had time.

So, she laid her hands on his chest and mindfully put distance between them as she asked if they could slow down. And Oliver, the man whom she was moderately sure had never gone slow in his life, framed her face with his hands and told her, "Slow sounds good."

She slept in his arms that night and although there were layers of clothes and blankets between them, she'd never felt closer to him.

Felicity sipped her coffee quietly, thoughts lazily drifting in and out of everything that happened. Everything that could have happened. It was one of the more eventful weekends in her recent memory, and that was saying something considering what her and Oliver did on a daily basis in the foundry. She glanced at the alarm clock on the nightstand.

10:10.

They had fifty minutes until brunch. It was funny to think how there would be some truth to the charade her and Oliver were putting on now. How much truth was still up for debate, but still, something had happened. Something real, and wonderful, and –

The shower turned off.

She could hear him rustling around as he got dressed. Maybe this would be a familiar sound to her one day. His routine and habits settling so deep into hers that it barely registered anymore. She liked the thought of that – of them blending their lives. She'd always wanted that, even if she hadn't seen it in her own home growing up. She had this friend Tabby back in Vegas, and sometimes after school she'd go to Tabby's home and they'd watch TV or play games on their old Apple desktop. Secretly, Felicity's favorite part of going there was for Tabby's parents. They had this quiet contentment between them – like just being in each other's company was enough for them. Felicity always thought it was nice, how easy and simple their love seemed.

The bathroom door opened and Oliver walked out, wiping his hands on the back of his dark wash
"You're up," he said by way of greeting.

"I am," she returned. "Thank you for the coffee and cinnamon rolls. When did you get up?"

"About nine," he said, shrugging. His demeanor was flippant – cold even – and she knew what was coming without having to ask.

"Felicity, I –"

"It was a mistake," she interrupted, voice dull and lifeless. She pushed away the cinnamon roll that had looked appetizing a few minutes earlier, her appetite gone. Oliver looked at her in surprise and she said, "That's what you were going to say, right?"

"How-"

"I know you," she said bitterly, standing up and walking toward the bed. She grabbed her watch off the nightstand and slid it on, the clasp fastening with an angry click. "Which is why I should have seen this coming."

"Felicity, please, let me explain," he implored, stepping closer.

"No need," she said, walking over to the suitcase. She didn't have the stomach right then to listen to his excuses which in the end meant nothing. She crouched down and pulled the suitcase lid back, rifling through the clothes until she found her dress for the brunch. "I know every line, Oliver. Every word. You let things get out of hand. You care about me, but you're not willing to put me in danger."

She straightened up and stared him down as he just stood there in silence. He wasn't pushing for her to hear him out, and for that she was grateful.

"What I don't know, though," she began, "is how you fight for so much. You fought for your father and for this city, but you won't even try to fight for this."

Oliver shook his head. "It's not that simple –"

"That's the thing," she interrupted, voice pained. "It should be."

"I'm sorry," he said. "Please know how sorry I am, Felicity."

"You know what? For once in my life, just once, I would like to not be on the receiving end of an apology. Because that would mean people were done hurting me."

She saw him body strain toward her but he pulled back, clenching his fists. He was always the one comforting her – being there for her when the world was cruel – but now he was the problem and he couldn't see a way to fix it.

"Please find an early flight back to Starling City." Felicity said. "I'm going to the brunch by myself. I'd like you to be gone by the time I check out."

"Okay," he said, sounding just about as defeated as she felt. She knew she should probably edge more toward anger – he deserved it – but she didn't have the energy. She felt like she could barely get herself to the bathroom and pull the door closed.

She took her time getting dressed, listening to Oliver arrange his flight home outside. She heard him set up the family jet to fly to O'Hare. She hadn't even thought of that for the way there.
When she was dressed she walked out, Oliver glancing up at her from a chair facing toward her beside the table.

"I have a flight set for noon."

"I heard," she said.

"Felicity-"

"I'm going to go," she said quickly, picking her clutch from the bed and tucking it under her arm. He went to say something else, but she'd already made her way to the door, closing it noisily behind her.

Felicity spent some time before the brunch wandering around the city. She walked past the elaborate store windows without really seeing, her mind still back in the hotel room with Oliver. She should have known he would pull away. After everything he'd told her over the months – everything she'd seen – she should have seen it coming. The knowledge that his reaction was inevitable did little to assuage the pain in her chest.

She'd always thought that if he cared about her enough that he'd be able to overcome all the can't-be-with-someone-I-love stuff, but that wasn't the case. Or maybe he just didn't care about her enough. Love her enough.

She made her way back to The Drake and arrived at the dining room exactly at eleven o'clock. The group was already assembled at a table and she walked over, tucking her hair behind her ears.

"And now we have everyone!" Taylor said happily, waving Felicity over. Taylor noticed Oliver's absence and said, "Hold on, no we don't. Where's Oliver?"

"He's not coming," she said, settling at the open seat beside Lydia.

"What do you mean he's not coming?" Taylor said. "Is he upstairs?"

"No," Felicity said evasively, grabbing her napkin and draping it over her lap. "He took an early plane back to Starling."

"I don't understand," Taylor said. "Did you two have a fight or something?"

Felicity shook her head, pressing her lips together as her eyes filled with tears. Sadie noticed Felicity's tight hold on her composure and reached forward, laying her hand on her wrist.

"Felicity, whatever it was, it'll blow over. You'll see."

Sadie was so wrong that Felicity didn't even know where to begin. Things wouldn't blow over. They wouldn't get better. It was over. She realized then, sitting at the table, that her and Oliver would never have what they had again. And it was more than just the moment that morning. Their entire relationship was altered – she could feel it – and at the thought that one of her closest friendships was likely irreparably harmed she broke down.

"What the hell happened?" Lydia said, wrapping her arm around Felicity's shoulder. "You guys were fine on the beach."

"It's a lie," Felicity said, wiping at her eyes. "All of it. Oliver and I aren't dating. We never were."
"Wait, what?" Lydia said, pulling her arm back. "What are you talking about?"

"I made it up," Felicity said. "You guys were always after me about why I wasn't dating someone, so I made up the stuff about Oliver and I to get you guys off my back."

"Were we really that bad?" Sadie asked, voice concerned.

"No," Felicity said. "I mean, yeah. Kind of. But, I never thought it would come to anything, but then Taylor wanted me to bring him to the wedding…"

"I can't believe you were lying to us all this time," Lydia said. "I'm sort of impressed. You guys really sold it."

Sadie had been watching Felicity's expression as Lydia spoke and she said, "That's because it wasn't all a lie, was it? You like him."

Felicity sighed and said, "No, I love him."

At the words, Felicity felt lighter. It was as if she was carrying this heavy weight around with her – the weight of her feelings – and now she was finally free. Although she'd had that little talk with Lydia earlier about Oliver, she had never openly said she loved him. Part of her was afraid to say it because of what it meant, but after what happened there was no denying her feelings. She loved him, and now she was paying the price.

"Well, then, why don't you tell him that? I saw the way he looked at you last night," Sadie pressed. "I saw the way he was with you."

Felicity was silent and Lydia gasped.

"Something happened!" Lydia said.

The entire table – less Felicity – erupted into a chorus of voices as they demanded that Felicity tell them what had transpired. Felicity caved and told them everything. She already was in a sharing mood, and she found herself peppering in bits of her own thoughts and feelings on what happened, and how much Oliver had hurt her. She left out the parts about Oliver's secret life, covering it up with a suggestion that he was bad at relationships, and wanted to keep her safe from his shortcomings in that department.

"That ass," Lydia hissed. "He didn't want to hurt you? Maybe he shouldn't have been leading you on. Or, you know, shoving his tongue down your throat."

Felicity winced. "I did kiss him first."

"Yeah, well, he kissed back. And from the sound of it, he wasn't holding back."

"I thought when it happened that it meant he was past all his hangups," Felicity said. "I thought we were moving forward toward something."

"I'm really sorry, Felicity," Taylor said, reaching over the table and laying her hand over Felicity's. "And to think that I'm sort of the reason all of this happened. If I hadn't insisted you bring him…"

"Don't even start," Felicity said, grasping her hand and giving it a quick squeeze. "This was a long time coming, Tay. If it didn't happen now it would have happened later. At least now it's done and I can move on."
"So, what are you going to do?" Sadie asked. "I mean, he's your boss. That could be a little uncomfortable."

Felicity had thought about that. The foundry was going to be a difficult place to be in for a while, but she took her work there too seriously to let what happened get in the way.

"It won't affect my work," she said after a moment. "I love it too much. But, yeah, it's going to be difficult. Seeing him all the time. It won't be easy."

"Well, Queen Consolidated is a pretty big company," Sadie returned reasonably. "Maybe you won't see him that often."

"Yeah, maybe I won't," Felicity said, thinking of the actual three person office they worked in. Her thoughts turned to Digg. She wondered if he would be able to sense a shift between them. He probably would.

"Anyway, you don't need him," Lydia said. "Or any man, for that matter. You are fabulous on your own. And one day, if you are so inclined, you will find someone just as fabulous. I'm sure of it."

Felicity took an afternoon flight back to Starling City, catching a cab back to her townhouse once she'd grabbed her luggage and headed out of the airport. The cab driver was particularly chatty, asking her about her trip and then launching off on some story about his own trip to Chicago a few years prior where he'd spent the entire time trying to catch a sight of Oprah Winfrey.

"I never saw her," he finished glumly, parking in front of her townhouse. "But I did get a picture in front of Harpo Studios and the Hancock building. She lived there, you know. The Hancock building, not Harpo Studios."

"That's interesting," Felicity lied, because none of what he was telling her was actually interesting. She'd had a long day, and the last thing she wanted to do was to make conversation with her cab driver, as nice as he seemed.

"Do you need help with your bags?"

"No, I should be fine," she said, reaching in her purse and pulling out her wallet. She plucked a twenty dollar bill from the wallet and handed it over.

"You can keep the change," she told him, factoring in his tip.

The cab driver grinned and said, "Thanks. You have a nice night, now!"

"You too," she said, climbing out and pulling her suitcase behind her. It was then that she saw Oliver sitting on the front steps of the house. He was looking at her and stood when he saw she'd noticed him. She gave her suitcase an angry tug and walked toward him.

"What are you doing here?" she said.

"I wanted to talk to you."

"We have nothing to talk about," she said, stepping past him. She struggled to get her suitcase up the stairs and Oliver reached down and lifted it.

"I don't need your help," she said irritably, tugging the suitcase away from his grasp.
"It looked like you did," he argued lightly.

"Yeah, well, looks can be deceiving," she shot back. Reaching into her purse, she pulled out her keys and opened the door. When she glanced over her shoulder, he was still standing there. "Look, I really don't want to talk to you right now. It's been a long day. My flight was delayed and the airplane food was predictably awful, so I'm starving. Just…leave it for tonight, okay?"

"I can't," he said. His expression was pained, and she felt a flare of anger. He had no right to feel anything about all of this, and yet at the same time she knew that he did. She knew that he really did think he was protecting her. He really did think that this was all in her best interest. But it didn't make it any less painful or infuriating.

"Well, that's too bad," she said, grasping the doorknob tightly. "Because I can't do this right now."

"Felicity, please," he said. He moved up one step toward her. "I need to know you're okay." He paused. "I need to know we're okay."

She shook her head. "No, I'm not, Oliver. I'm not okay."

His eyes darkened. "And us?"

She crossed her arms over her chest. "I don't know yet."

He held her gaze for a moment and she felt heat rise on her cheeks. She broke their gaze and he cleared his throat before saying, "Okay, um, I'll let you unpack then. Will I see you tomorrow at the foundry?"

She nodded. "Yep. I'll be there."

"Okay. Good. So, I will just see you then."

She nodded. "Yeah."

He turned back toward the street and Felicity watched him walk away from the house. Impulsively she called out for him and he turned back, eyes hopeful.

"Yeah?"

"I just need some time," she said. "For us. I just need some time."

He nodded, stuffing his hands in the pockets of his jacket. Eyes travelling over the planes of her face he murmured goodnight and his voice caressed her name, making chills runs down her back.

"Goodnight, Felicity."

She grasped the door, wishing she wouldn't have to close it alone. "Goodnight, Oliver."
It took John Diggle all of one afternoon with Oliver and Felicity in the foundry to figure out that something had happened. First, they were cautiously polite to each other. It was all stilted casualties and averted glances – the slight charge that always seemed to accompany their exchanges absent and awkward banality in its place. Still, Digg told himself he was overanalyzing things. Maybe they were just tired from the weekend of travelling. Weddings were busy enough, and then you add a long flight on top of it.

But then he noticed how Oliver tensed up when Roy was over by Felicity, their shoulders touching as Roy looked at something on the computer screen. When Oliver felt Digg's glance he quickly found something else to look at, clearing his throat. Then later, Oliver took on the salmon bars with an aggression Digg hadn't seen since the early days when Oliver first returned from the island. And Felicity, who had always watched him with naked appreciation, wholly ignored the scene, typing away at the computer with an almost pointed determination.

When the day wound down – and Felicity headed home, giving Digg a warm farewell and Oliver a decidedly tepid one – Digg decided it was time to figure out what the hell happened.

"So, you going to tell me what happened this weekend?" Digg asked casually.

Oliver was reorganizing his arrows and he glanced up, features assembled in a visage of mild confusion.

"What do you mean?"

"You suck at lying," Digg returned blandly. "Don't forget that."

"Nothing happened," Oliver held. "We went to the wedding. We had a good time. That's it."

"I don't believe that for a second," Digg pressed, walking toward him. "You're all weirdly polite to each other. And she didn't even look at you once when you were on the salmon ladder. Something happened."

Oliver sighed. "Look, even if something did happen – which I'm not saying it did – it can't go anywhere. We both know that."

"And why is that?"

"It's Felicity," Oliver said, as if that explained everything. It didn't.
"What's that supposed to mean?"

Oliver slid the arrow into its leather strapped holster and set it down on the table.

"Do you know why I went to her car when I was injured that night?"

"Because you were bleeding out?" Digg deadpanned.

Oliver shook his head. "No, beyond that. Beyond the fact that I was injured and I needed help. I went to her because even then I knew I could trust her. I knew she was good. She's the best person I know. The kindest. The most loyal. And the one I would do anything to protect." He paused and added firmly, "Even if it means sacrificing my own happiness."

"And what about her happiness?"

"She'll get over me," Oliver said with a certainty that Oliver didn't share. "And then she'll find something better. Someone who can love her the way she should be loved. Someone who's not damaged. She deserves that."

Oliver's words laid between them and Digg realized, as he watched Oliver return his attention to the arrows with a tightly set jaw, that this was about more than protecting her from what they did.

"You don't think you're good enough for her," Digg murmured after a moment. "You're not just trying to protect her from other people. You're trying to protect her from yourself."

"Can you blame me?" he returned levelly, although his eyes were dark with pain. "After the things I did on the island – the things I did even when I returned. She deserves better than that. Better than me."

"Oliver, you did what you had to on the island to survive. And last year – I won't say you were always right, but you had your reasons."

"I was a killer."

"And she brought you back," Digg reminded him. "She saw all of that and chose to stay. She's still choosing to stay."

Oliver was silent, and Digg took it as a sign for him to continue.

"She's always had faith in you, Oliver. In you, not the Hood, not the billionaire playboy, in you. So, why don't you have a little faith in yourself?"

"I don't want to hurt her," Oliver said

"I know you don't. But do you really want to see her with someone else? Think about it. Really think about it, Oliver."

Reluctantly, Oliver imagined what it would be like when she found someone else. He imagined someone else walking beside her on some nameless street, his arm around her and Felicity smiling up at him. He imagined someone else kissing her, making her laugh and get that little crinkle between her eyebrows. He imagined her looking at someone else the way she'd always looked at him.

"It's not fun, is it?" Digg asked. "Imagining her with someone else. And now just think how bad it'll be when it's actually happening."

Oliver frowned, his chest constricting uncomfortably. The leap from imaginary and reality made him
sick to his stomach – even if the leap was only in theory.

He glanced down at his watch, swearing inwardly when he saw the time. He was supposed to meet Thea up at Verdant fifteen minutes ago, and he was not in the mood for the attitude he'd be getting from Thea for being late.

"I need to go meet Thea at Verdant," Oliver said.

"Okay."

Oliver went to leave but then said, "Do you think you can maybe check on her? Just make sure she's okay?"

"So, there's a reason she might not be?"

"Digg, please."

Digg sighed. "I'll stop by her place on my way home."

"Thank you." He paused and tacked on, "For everything."

Digg offered him a sliver of a smile. "You'd do the same for me, Oliver. It's only fair I return the favor."

Oliver nodded. He went to say something, but then stopped himself.

"What is it?" Digg said.

"Nothing. I'll see you later."

"Okay. See you later."

Felicity was already in her pajamas where there was a knock on her door. She'd been watching an episode of Doctor Who, and paused it before getting up and walking over to the door. She was surprised to find Digg standing there with a white paper bag in his hand.

"Digg, what are you doing here?" she asked, eyeing the paper bag.

"I brought you some froyo," he said, raising the bag. "Chocolate chip cookie dough. That's your favorite, right?"

She narrowed her eyes. "Oliver sent you, didn't he?"

"Yes, he did," Digg returned immediately. "Are you going to tell me what happened or just dodge the question like him?"

She plucked the bag from his hand. "There is not enough liquor in the world to make me tell that story."

"It's that bad, huh?"

"No," she said. "I mean, maybe. I don't know. I'm dealing with it in my own way."
"Which is…" he asked leadingly, shutting the door behind him.

"Binge-watching BBC shows. British accents always make things marginally better."

"Ah, so that's why you liked Walter so much."

Felicity laughed. "You don't have to stay, you know. I'm fine. You can report back to Oliver and say everything is peachy keen."

Digg smirked. "Peachy keen?"

"Uh huh, the absolute keenest."

"Well, despite you being peachy keen, I think I'll stay a while. There's no reason we should eat our froyo alone."

She looked at him in confusion and he took the bag and pulled out the two small Styrofoam cartons. "You didn't think both of these were for you, did you?" he asked with a small grin.

She shook her head. "I wouldn't have dreamed of it."

"Alright," Digg said, walking over to the coach and sitting down. He popped the top off of his container. "Let's get this show playing."

They settled on the couch and Felicity un-paused the show. She stuck a spoonful of froyo in her mouth and then glanced over at him. He felt her gaze and look at her with a soft smile.

"Yeah?"

"I'm really glad you're in my life, Digg," she murmured. He nodded slightly and reached over to gently squeeze her knee.

"Me too, Felicity."
Barry Allen returned on a Tuesday. The foundry was busy working on a new lead when Felicity heard footsteps. She glanced up, jaw going slack when she saw Barry Allen looking crisp and decidedly awake in a blue gingham button down and jeans. She grasped the edge of her desk tightly before standing up and murmuring, "Oh my God. You're here. And you're awake."

Barry didn't have a chance to respond before she rushed over to him and flung her arms around him. Her grip was tight and he laughed lightly as he said, "I just got out of a coma, please don't put me into another one."

She sheepishly loosened her grip on him.

"Wait, but no one called me. They were supposed to let me know if there was any change in your condition."

"Don't be mad at them," he said. "I asked if they could hold off on calling you. I figured I could give you the news in person."

"When did you wake up?" Oliver asked in a voice that obscured exactly what his feelings on the waking up were. Barry reluctantly moved his gaze from Felicity's face and answered, "Yesterday."

"I can't believe you've been up for an entire day and I had no idea," Felicity said. She frowned for a moment, the lapse in information reminding her how her phone calls to the hospital had dropped off in the last few weeks. But, he didn't need to know that. It's not like he knew she was calling in the first place.

"Well, we're happy to have you back," Digg said.

Barry smiled. "Thanks. It's good to be back."

Felicity beamed at him.

"So, I was hoping I could take you out for lunch," Barry said, his attention squarely on Felicity. The implication was clear that it was Felicity, and Felicity only, who was invited to lunch.

"We have that new case," Oliver interjected. "I'm sorry Barry, but it really needs to be our priority right now. I'm sure you understand."

"Oh, yeah, definitely," Barry said. His gaze slid to Felicity and the way she'd sucked in her cheeks irritably. "Another day, maybe?"

"Yeah," Oliver returned. "Another day."

"Actually, today works fine," Felicity said forcefully. "I already hacked into the Homeland mainframe and started the scan. It'll take an hour or so to finish up, so, today is great."

"What if we hit on something when you're gone?" Oliver argued.

"We can stay close," Barry offered.

Oliver clearly wasn't buying this suggestion, but Felicity jumped on it and quickly said, "Yeah, we'll
just go to Big Belly."

"But-"

"You both have my number," Felicity interrupted, glancing between Oliver and Digg. Oliver's expression bordered on murderous while Digg looked positively entertained. "If something pops up, you call me. There. Problem solved. Now, I'm taking my lunch – which I deserve, by the way – and I will see you both later."

She left without another word while Barry tossed back a congenial farewell to the boys before following her. Oliver stared at where Felicity and Barry had stood, jaw tightening.

"So, Barry's back. That was unexpected."

Oliver turned away. "Let's get back to work."

Felicity couldn't stop staring at him. It wasn't a creepy sort of staring, or even one based in attraction, it was just that she'd forgotten how animated he was when he wasn't comatose in a hospital bed. Expressions flitted over his face like a rock skipping on water, and his eyes – she'd forgotten how dynamic his eyes were.

"So, Oliver was sure quick to jump on this lunch," Barry noted casually, taking a bite of his burger.

"Yeah, he gets a little tunnel vision sometimes. It's all work, work, work."

"Did something finally happen there?"

"What?" Felicity stammered, cheeks flushing. "Why would you think that?"

"He was acting like a jealous boyfriend."

"He's just protective," she said off-handedly, wanting the subject to move safely away from Oliver related things. "You know Oliver."

"I do," Barry agreed. "Which is why it wouldn't surprise me if something did happen."

She stared at him. "But he was with Sara the entire time you were here."

"Yeah, but I could tell that he had a thing for you. I don't know if he knew, but there was something there."

Felicity shook her head, dragging a french fry through the blob of ketchup on the edge of her burger's wrapper.

"Let's not talk about Oliver," she said. "He's not what I want to talk about. What I want to talk about is you waking up. How does it feel?"

Barry grinned, leaning back in his seat. "It's different."

Felicity nodded. It probably would be pretty different going from being in a coma to suddenly being awake. The world kept moving forward and changing while you slept through it. She told him that and he shook his head, leaning in toward her.

"No, it's... it's more than that. I don't just feel different. I am different."
"I don't understand," she said. He looked the same to her. It was the same dark brown hair, same preppy-nerd clothes, same warm smile as his eyes travelled over the planes of her face. Same Barry.

Barry glanced around them, as if he were checking for something, and then said, "Pick up your fork."

"Okay," she said slowly, picking it up. "Now what?"

"Drop it."

"You want me to drop a fork? Why?"

"Just do it," he said softly. "Trust me. Drop the fork."

She held his gaze for a moment before holding the fork out over the floor and opening her hand. She blinked and Barry was holding the fork in front of her with a small grin. Felicity looked to the empty floor and then back to the fork held firmly in his hand.

"But, I just dropped that. I…I let go of the fork."

"Something happened to me when the lightening struck," Barry explained slowly, setting the fork on the table. "It changed something in me. No one knows why, but when I woke up I suddenly had the ability to move fast. Really fast."

"Like, super speed?" Felicity asked.

Barry winced. "I wasn't going to call it that, but yeah, I guess. We don't know a lot about it yet. I'm going back tomorrow to have some tests done. To see even what I can do."

"I can't believe this," Felicity breathed out.

"Tell me about it," he returned with a sliver of a smile.

"You should tell Oliver," Felicity said immediately. "Maybe he could help you."

"No," Barry said firmly. "No one can know."

"But-"

"Felicity, please," he said, reaching forward and covering her hand with his. "You cannot tell anyone about this. Not Oliver. Not Digg. No one."

There was a desperation in his eyes and she nodded, swallowing hard.

"I won't tell anyone."

He let go of her hand, relaxing into the back of the leather booth. "Thank you. I will tell them. One day. But I can't now. It's…it's too soon. I hardly understand what's happening. I can't even imagine trying to explain it to a bunch of people."

"You did pretty well with me."

"You're a particularly receptive audience."

She thought about it for a moment and asked, "Why did you tell me?"
"I don't know," he returned. "Maybe because I needed to tell someone. Because you're you. Because I know you won't treat me like some test subject to poke and prod."

Felicity frowned. "Is that what you're going back to?"

"Probably," he said. "Which is fine. I want to understand all of this as much as anyone else."

Felicity nodded.

"Anyway, I didn't mean for our lunch to take such a melodramatic turn. I just…I didn't want you to hear about this from someone else."

"I appreciate that."

"So, life altering part of the conversation over," Barry said gamely, plucking a French fry from her tray. "Tell me what's new with you."

They chatted amicably for the next forty minutes or so, reverting back to the same rhythm they'd had before everything happened. It was all so easy, and it made her ache even more for the ease she'd had with Oliver. They used to be like this. Now, she was afraid, they'd never get past the stiff banality that settled between them since the wedding.

Sooner than Felicity would have liked her phone buzzed and it was Digg telling her that they'd found a match through her mainframe search.

"Do you have to go?"

She nodded. "Duty calls."

"Well, thank you for taking pity on me and sneaking away for lunch," he joked, standing up. "It was really great seeing you."

She smiled, reaching up and adjusting her glasses. "It was great seeing you, too."

They walked out and stopped just short of Verdant's entrance.

"If you ever need me you call, okay?" she told him. "I mean it."

"I will, thanks."

He braced a hand on her outer arm and leaned in, brushing his lips against her cheek.

"I'll see you around, Felicity."

"Yeah," she murmured, feelings her face flush. "See you around."

She watched him disappear down the street and then turned, surprised to find Oliver in front of Verdant. His gaze was also following Barry, and she wondered if he saw Barry kiss her cheek.

(He did.)

"What are you doing out here?" she stammered.

"I was going to grab a Coke from Big Belly," he said.

"Don't you have some in the bar?"
He shrugged. "I like the stuff from Big Belly better."

She didn't believe him for a second, but was too eager to get back to work to question him.

"Alright, well, I'll see you down there."

She stepped past him into Verdant, her mind whirring.

The next day Oliver was late getting to the foundry and he walked in with a slurry of apologies, eyes landing on Felicity's empty desk.

"Felicity's not here yet?" he said.

"She's sick," Digg said. "She called me last night. Apparently some bad stomach bug got her. Anyway, it's just us today."

"A stomach bug, huh?" he asked. "Did she say anything else?"

"No, just that she wouldn't be in today."

"How did she sound?" Oliver asked, taking off his jacket and draping it over the back of a chair. "Did she sound sick or anything?"

Digg smirked. "You think she's lying, don't you?"

"No," Oliver returned. "I just want all the facts."

"Don't lie to me Oliver. I see right through you every time."

Oliver frowned, sitting on the chair. "Fine, I was wondering if she was with Barry. I mean, he was here yesterday. He's only here for a short time. I thought…"

"I know what you're thinking," Digg finished. "But would that really be so bad?"

"Yes, if she's skipping work," Oliver said indignantly. "What we do is important."

"This isn't about her skipping work and you know it," Digg returned calmly. "Would her being with Barry really be that bad?"

Oliver pointedly ignored the question.

"Isn't this what you wanted?" Digg pressed. "Someone nice and normal for Felicity? I'm not saying that she's with him. I have no reason to think that. But if she was…Barry's a pretty nice guy."

"It's just when I said she should be with someone else, I didn't think it was Barry. I didn't think it would be someone I know."

"You just thought it would be some nameless faceless person you never have to see or interact with?" Digg said. "That's not how it works, Oliver."

"Why not?"

"Because you're a large part of her life, Oliver, whether both of you like it or not. Regardless of what happened – which, by the way, both of you refuse to tell me – you are an important part of her life and likely will continue to be. In terms of getting to know the future guy, it's not a matter of if, but
when. It'll be the same for whoever you date next."

Oliver couldn't think of himself being with anyone after Felicity. There had been numerous women before – more than he Felicity even knew about, considering she didn't know him before the island – but now he had no interest in finding someone else. Before, it was like he was always searching for something that he was missing. Before the island it was something to fix the crippling disappointment he knew he was to his parents. After the island, it was something to make him feel normal again – to make him feel whole after so much had been stripped from him. And then he met Felicity, and it was like his world had leveled. He didn't realize it then, but she made everything lighter. She made him smile when he was convinced he would only feign a grin for the rest of his life, and she brought him not to his old self, but something better. She'd guided him to a person he was certain he'd never have become without her.

The police blotter they kept in the foundry went off and they listened to an officer report a kidnapping situation on the outskirts of the Glades.

"What do you say?" Digg said, raising an eyebrow.

Oliver was already striding toward his Hood getup, keen on the opportunity to hit something.

The kidnapping situation diffused relatively quickly with the police and the Hood's unexpected intervention. While they weren't exactly happy the vigilante was helping, the police force had at least stopped actively hunting Oliver. They ignored him, but let him do his job. The assailants were captured, having been strategically arrowed to the wall, and Oliver headed home for the day. He was changing into a pair of sweats and a ratty tshirt when his phone rang. The number was unfamiliar, but he picked up anyway.

"Hello?"

"Is this the douchebag named Oliver Queen?" a female voice asked.

It took him a moment before he recognized the voice. "Lydia? What-"

"Okay, so I wasn't going to call, but the more I thought about the wedding the more pissed off I got. So, here we go. You are an absolute asshole. Do you hear me? You are an asshole. And an idiot. And about eighty other awful words – throw in different languages, I don't care. All I want is for it to sink in just how awful you are. How could you do this to Felicity?"

She went on for a while, throwing in some swears that Oliver hadn't even heard of before, and every time he tried to interject she just yelled louder and he had to pull the phone from his ear.

"No, don't you even try to talk your way out of this. Felicity is wonderful, okay? She is the most fucking wonderful person I have ever met. And I don't know why in the world she chose to fall in love with someone as ass backwards as you, but she did. Fine. There's no changing that. But I can yell at you. I can yell at you because God knows she probably didn't do it herself."

"She did," Oliver murmured, a bit in a haze. "Wait, did you say she loves me?"

Oliver could practically hear the eye roll in response. "Of course she does, dumbo. You're just figuring this out now?"

And he was. Sort of. Part of him always suspected that she loved him but he pushed it away. She could never truly love someone like him. Her heart might lean one way, but at some point her logic would kick in and tell her in no uncertain terms that Oliver Queen was not someone deserving of a
love as pure as one from someone like Felicity Smoak. And then she would come to her senses, shaking her head to herself as she thought, *whew, dodged a bullet there.*

But that wasn't the case. She'd fallen in love with him, perhaps against all of her better judgment, and he realized that he'd done the same. He loved her too, had for quite some time, and he knew then with certainty that watching her fall in love with someone else wouldn't just be difficult. It was incomprehensible. She belonged with him. Even with all his flaws and all the reasons he should turn away, there was no other reality beyond her. He couldn't even comprehend something different.

"Lydia, I have to go," he said suddenly.

"What? I'm not done yelling at you yet!"

"I'll call you back tomorrow and you can yell at me all you want," he said, grabbing his keys from off the kitchen table. "And thank you."

"Why are you thanking me? I just reamed you out over the phone."

"I know," he said, stopping just short of his door. "And it's exactly what I needed to hear. Bye Lydia."

He hung up before she could squeeze in another word.

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Oliver drove to Felicity's townhome, stomach twisting uncomfortably because he was moderately sure that Barry Allen would be there, and this was not a conversation he wanted to have in mixed company. Still, though, the stomach bug story could be true, so he picked up a carton of chicken noodle soup on the way just to be safe.

When he parked in front of the townhome it took him three tries before he actually got out of the car. Each time he reached for the handle and then pulled back, fear getting the better of him. But then he thought about what could happen if he didn't do this, and that was enough to get him to open the door and climb out. He walked up to her door, taking a deep breath before he knocked.

It took her a few minutes to open the door, and when she did she was wearing an old robe that was pilling at the edge of the sleeves. Her hair was pulled up into a messy bun on the top of her head and her eyes were puffy.

"Oliver?" she said, wrapping the robe tighter around her. She looked so fragile there in front of him in her terrycloth robe that he wanted to step forward and wrap his arms around her.

He held back.

"Are you alone?" he asked tentatively, glancing over her shoulder. She frowned and nodded.

"Of course I am. I'm sick. Didn't Digg tell you?"

"Yeah," he said immediately. "He did. I was just…can I come in? I brought you soup."

He held up the paper bag and she nodded, stepping back. Oliver walked in, glancing around. He'd never been to her townhome before, at least not when he had such an opportunity to observe his surroundings, and he decided that the house was perfectly her. He could spot her little touches everywhere from the *Buffy* poster on the wall to the bunny slippers in front of the fireplace.

"What kind of soup did you bring?" she asked.
He glanced back at her. "Chicken noodle. With extra noodles."

She grinned weakly. "Just the way I like it. You can leave it on the counter. I'll have it for dinner."

"Let me heat it up for you," he said immediately. "You go sit down. You're sick, remember?"

"Oh, I remember," she said, padding over to the couch and sitting down. "And I'm sure if I forget, my body will remind me. I've been five for five since lunch."

"You've been what?" he asked, glancing back at her from the kitchen.

"Five for five," she repeated. "I've puked five times in five hours." She saw him searching for a bowl and said, "Bowls are in the cabinet next to the refrigerator."

He pulled out a bowl and poured half of the soup in, stashing the rest in the refrigerator. He put the bowl in the microwave and pressed start. Oliver looked back at her and noticed the tea mug set in front of her on the coffee table. "What about tea? Do you need more?"

She shook her head. "I'm fine. So, why are you here again?"

"I was worried about you," he said simply. "I don't think you've ever missed work in the time I've known you."

"Yeah, I also haven't had the flu from hell. This would knock Superman on his butt."

"Are you sure you can eat the soup?"

"I have to eat something. And if it doesn't stay down, well, it'll be in good company."

The microwave beeped and he pulled out the soup, stirring it a bit to make sure it was evenly heated. He pulled open a few drawers in the kitchen until he found the silverware and then brought her the soup. She looked at the bowl as if it were filled with eyeballs.

"Just try a few spoonfuls," he said gently. "What's the worst that can happen?"

"I throw it all up," Felicity returned, dipping the spoon in the bowl. "Which there's already a pretty good possibility of. So…" she stuck the spoonful in her mouth and swallowed, "…game on, flu."

Oliver laughed, watching her take another spoonful with determination. She went for a third when he reached forward and gently took a hold of her wrist.

"Easy now, don't go overboard. Let's wait and see how those settle."

She leaned back into the couch, rolling her head to the side as she closed her eyes. After a moment she opened them again and asked, "Are you really going to stay with me while I eat all this soup?"

He nodded. "If you let me."

"Why?"

"Because I want to," he said simply. "I want to be here for you."

She narrowed her eyes, and he knew what she was thinking. She was thinking that he was playing with fire again. He was being the person that he couldn't be after everything they'd gone through, but she was wrong. He could be that person again, because now everything was different. She didn't know that yet, but everything had changed in the most perfect and heart racing way, and he could
only pray that she'd be willing to jump with him, because if she said no he didn't know what he would do.

"I got a call from Lydia," he said casually.

Her eyes widened. "You what?"

"She yelled at me pretty badly. She swore a lot. Even made up a few, I think."

Felicity eyed him warily. "She sometimes does that if she gets mad enough."

"But, she said some other things, too," he said slowly. "She told me that you love me."

It was a conscious decision to keep it present tense, and he hoped it was still true.

Felicity blanched. "She did?"

He nodded. "Yeah, she did."

"She likes to make things up," Felicity stammered. "To, uh, bolster her yelling at."

"So, it's not true? You loving me?"

Felicity glanced down at the bowl of soup, unable to meet his eyes. He took that as a good sign.

"Because, you see, I was really hoping that you did," he began. "Otherwise, what I'm about to say is going to be really uncomfortable."

Her head snapped up and she stared at him, mouth slightly agape.

"I love you, Felicity. I know that I've kept saying that we can't be together, but when I saw you with Barry – "

"Nothing happened," she stammered. She didn't quite know why she was telling him that, but she wanted him to know.

He nodded. "Regardless, it gave me a glimpse of what it would be like if you were with someone else, and I didn't like it. I don't want to see you with someone else. I don't want you to be with someone else, to love someone else."

"Oliver," she murmured, eyes glassy. He nodded for her to go on, his heart thumping madly against his chest. "I…I'm going to be sick."

She ran from the couch, hand clamped over her mouth. Stunned, it took Oliver a moment before he followed her. She was crouched in front of the toilet, emptying the few spoonfuls of chicken noodle soup into the bowl. He kneeled behind her, rubbing her back as she retched. When she was finished she shakily sat back on her heels, turning around to lean against the counter. Her breathing was labored and her eyes were watery.

"I was going to say I love you, too," she murmured, resting her head back against the counter. "So… there's that."

Oliver grinned and reached behind her to rip off a few squares of toilet paper. He tenderly dabbed at her mouth, thinking that even with greasy hair and unfocused eyes she had never looked more beautiful to him.
"Let's get you back to the couch," he said, helping her up. She stumbled a bit on the way out of the bathroom and he slipped an arm around her waist to steady her.

"Will you stay with me?" she asked, glancing up at him.

He pressed a kiss to the top of her head. "Don't worry. I'm not going anywhere."
Chapter Thirteen

Oliver knew Felicity was the one about one week into actually dating. It took Felicity a little longer. It's not that she couldn't picture a life with him. She could. She could picture them in some nice suburban house with a white picket fence and three blonde children running around the backyard. She'd actually pictured it an embarrassing number of times over the months, but part of it always felt removed to her, like she was watching another life – a life with a different her and a different Oliver, and a different reality that didn't involve vigilantes and exploding arrows. Part of her always believed that she couldn't have both – the normal life with the foundry life.

But then one day she realized that maybe she didn't need both. Maybe they were really the same thing, and all she had to do was open her eyes and stop waiting for some idyllic perfect white-picket-life, when the one she had was pretty great. And one day she did. Her and Oliver were on their way to the foundry, Oliver at the wheel of his expensive sports car prattling on about nothing in particular. She loved how they held entire conversations about nothing. It's like they just liked the sound of each other's voice. Which was sort of true. She liked the way he said her name and how his voice would go up just a little at the end of questions.

As he talked – not really to her, more at her, he'd picked up a touch of her circuitous talking when they started dating – she studied his profile, warmth blooming in her chest. She was familiar with his profile, having woken up to it for the better part of the last six months. It was her favorite part of the morning, and when she fell asleep at night with her arm draped over his waist, it was her favorite part of the evening. He was her favorite part of everything – even the parts of him that she hadn't always liked – and she couldn't pinpoint exactly when that happened, but it had. She murmured his name without really thinking.

He glanced over at her. "Yeah?"

"Will you marry me?"

He nearly crashed into the car in front of him, braking just in time. Knuckles white on the steering wheel, he said, "Are you serious?"

She nodded. "I'm very serious."

"You're asking me to marry you while I'm driving?"

"It seemed like a good enough time," she reasoned, heart slamming against her chest. It wasn't that she was afraid he'd say no. That wasn't even on her mind. Her heart was racing because she'd finally let herself believe, and she was imagining their life together – a life as man and wife – and she could hardly catch her breath.
"You're really serious about this?" he asked again, pressing on the gas and hightailing it to the parking lot across from Verdant. She waited until he parked to respond.

"I never really thought I'd get married. My parents weren't exactly a shining example of matrimony, and then with what I do – what we do. I figured it wasn't for us, but then I thought why not? I love you. You love me. It seems like we have the most important parts of a marriage."

He grinned wide and leaned forward, pressing his lips against hers. She didn't know if she was technically kissing her fiancée yet, but she thought to herself that this was probably one situation where it was safe to jump the gun a bit. She threaded her fingers through his hair, stomach twisting as she repeated in her head, fiancé, fiancé, fiancé.

She liked the sound of that.

After a moment he pulled away and reached into the pocket of his suit jacket. Her eyes widened when he pulled out a ring box. Hands trembling she reached forward, fingers curling around the velvet box.

"Oliver," she murmured.

"I've been carrying this around with me for weeks," he said softly. "I was waiting for the right moment, but you beat me to it."

"Are you serious?" she said, echoing what he said earlier. He nodded, grinning slightly, and returned with, "I'm very serious."

He let her take the ring box and watched as she flipped it open. Nestled inside was the most perfect engagement ring she had ever seen. It was a simple ring – one cushion cut diamond surrounded by a delicate row of smaller stones. The band was lined with diamonds as well, making her wonder just how much of a small fortune she'd be wearing on her finger.

"Do you like it?"

She nodded emphatically and said, "Put it on!"

He laughed, lifting the ring from the box. He paused for a moment before asking, "Felicity, will you marry me?"

"Yes," she said, stomach fluttering as he slid the ring on her finger. She didn't even take a moment to admire it before wrapping her arms around his shoulders, pressing her face to the crook of his neck as she murmured, "Yes, yes, yes."

And so, they were engaged. The next few days were spent spreading the news to their closest friends, John Diggle being the first to learn as he'd caught them directly afterwards in the foundry. He'd barely been able to get a meager hello out before Felicity had yelled that her and Oliver were engaged. Her loud voice reverberating around the cavernous room, he'd winced before he congratulated them. The remaining announcements were less bombastic, save for Lydia's phone call where the red head responded with such fervor that Oliver was sure his eardrums would never recover.

Things settled down for what felt like a minute before the wedding plans began. Felicity had been excited for the wedding planning. She wasn't really one of those girly-girls growing up, plotting out her wedding gown with excruciating detail. Her mom had always railed against marriage, soured by the failed venture with her father, and she tended to gravitate toward friends who were more interested in the classics than wedding dresses and tablescape.
Still, she'd thought about it now and then over the years. It was little things – like how there would be a candy table at the reception and she refused to go strapless because she didn't like her shoulders. She was certain that when the time came she would find herself thrown completely into the planning – and she was, except it was nothing like she expected.

For starters, she wasn't good at it. She couldn't tell the difference between egg shell and ivory, and when Moira asked her what her preference was for cake she'd blanked and blurted out, "Edible?"

Every moment was torture as she tried to force herself to have more of an opinion – more of a bridal feeling – but came up short. All of the plans and minute details that didn't seem to make a bit of difference to her in the long run didn't click with her, and even more than that she just didn't like it. Increasingly she felt herself pulled toward a lavish spectacle that she could barely imagine attending – let alone being the center of – and while she didn't necessarily dislike what Moira suggested, it wasn't her.

"Tell that bitch to back off. She had, what, two weddings? She's had enough chances to wear the veil. It's your turn."

Felicity was having yet another conversation with Lydia where she vented her frustrations about the wedding planning and how she felt it was spiraling out of control. She appreciated her friend's support, but sometimes Lydia tended to vilify Moira a bit too much. Felicity secretly thought it was because Moira had assumed the role Lydia hoped she would play herself in the planning. Having witnessed many parties and events with Lydia at the helm, she had no doubt Lydia would have been just as bad, if not worse.

"I don't think she means to be overbearing," Felicity said. "And she's not even. Not really. I mean, someone has to decide what tablecloths we're going to use. You should see me at all the appointments. I'm useless."

"It can't be that bad."

"It is. I don't have an opinion on anything. It's just…none of it really matters to me. All I want is to marry someone I love, and I have that. The rest of it is just…fluff."

"Fluff?" Felicity could hear the smirk in Lydia's voice.

"Yes, fluff. Speaking of fluff."

"This can only be bad."

Felicity smirked. "I went in for another dress fitting today."

"And?"

Felicity sat down heavily on the couch, thinking back to that afternoon when her, Moira, and Thea had gone to one of Starling City's chicest wedding shoppes for her dress fitting. She'd chosen the dress about a month prior, answering the question if she had found her dress with an uncertain nod as Moira and Thea nodded fervently, Thea actually clapping appreciatively as she murmured, "Fair warning, I am stealing this dress for my wedding."

And it wasn't a bad dress. She could see why some people would like it with the fitted bodice and large full skirt with so much tulle that it probably would cushion a three or four story fall, but it wasn't her. That seemed to be the story of the wedding – it was nice, but not for her.

"I just want the wedding to be over."
"That's not how a bride should feel."

"It's how I feel."

"Well, why don't you say something? You usually never shut up."

Why didn't she say something? She definitely wasn't one to hold her tongue and there certainly were things she wasn't entirely on board with for the wedding, but she figured it was best to play it calm. She had an entire life ahead of her with the Queen family. She would choose her battles, not suit up for every little one, and since she didn't care that much about the wedding itself, it seemed like a fine battle to pass up.

"Well, ten years from now when you look back and hate your wedding, don't complain to me."

A dry laugh escaped Felicity's mouth. "I won't."

That night Felicity and Oliver were curled up on her couch, watching a Jurassic Park marathon on AMC. A blanket was wrapped around them to shield them from her overzealous air conditioning. It was always either too warm or too cold in the townhome, and when Oliver had complained one night about the chill in the air she'd told him in no uncertain terms that she'd rather be cold than warm. When he joked that his nose was turning pink she told him to put on a sweater.

"I don't understand why Jeff Goldblum keeps going back to these Jurrasic Park islands," Oliver said. "I mean, you think almost getting killed by a dinosaur once would be enough."

"Well, he's there now to save his girlfriend," Felicity pointed out. "That's something I'd think you'd appreciate."

Oliver smirked. "You should know if you end up getting mixed up with some re-engineered dinosaurs, you're on your own."

"We're not even married yet and you're already pulling back," she teased lightly.

A raptor lunged at Jeff Goldblum on the screen, nearly killing him. He cried out, rolling out of the way and grabbing a tool nearby and slamming it into the raptor's head. He escaped the raptor, but not without a deep gash on his arm.

"You wouldn't have that injury if you just stayed home, Jeff," Oliver said. Felicity rested her head on his shoulder and murmured, "At least it wasn't his face."

Oliver smirked, glancing down at her. "You like his face, huh?"

"Oh yes," she said, nodding against his shoulder. She turned her face up toward his and noting the amusement on his face murmured, "What? I live a Jeff Goldblum appreciation life. You should know that if we're going to be spending the rest of our lives together."

Oliver grinned and pressed a quick kiss to her lips. "I think I can live with that."

She snuggled against him, shifting her legs and pressing them against his. On the screen, Jeff Goldblum was chased yet again by some sort of dinosaur, and as they watched Oliver casually said, "So, Lydia called me today."

Felicity pulled away slightly. "She called you? What about?"

"We were just chatting."
"Since when do you two chat?" she accused lightly. "You usually actively avoid the phone when I try to hand it to you to say hello to her."

"That's because you always happened to do it when I was naked."

"I don't see the significance," she returned with a slight grin.

"The significance is that I don't want to talk to your friend when I am naked. It's weird and I'm pretty sure Lydia would know somehow."

Felicity snorted. "You're probably right. Anyway, why did she call you?"

"She told me that you're feeling a little smothered with the wedding planning," he began slowly. "That maybe my mother and Thea are being a bit overbearing."

"It's fine," she said automatically. After saying that for weeks she didn't even have to think before it came out. "They're planning a beautiful wedding."

"I'm sure they are," Oliver returned congenially. "But are you happy with it?"

"It's going to be a beautiful day," she said evenly. "The type of wedding girls grow up dreaming about. It's fine, really."

Oliver frowned. She was saying a lot of things, but not one of them was what he wanted to hear. He went to say something further but she'd pressed herself back to his side, wrapping her arm around his waist.

"I love you, you know," he murmured.

Her arm tightened around his waist. "I know."

"And I only want you to be happy."

She nodded against his shoulder. "I know. And right now watching Jeff Goldblum run would make me really happy."

He murmured okay and dropped a light kiss on the top of her head. He knew she wasn't being entirely truthful with the wedding talk, but he decided not to push her. When Felicity made her mind up about something she couldn't be swayed, and for some reason she'd made her mind up about being okay with the wedding. So, they watched Jeff Goldblum run, Oliver's mind whirring.

"You want to do what?" Felicity asked, staring incredulously at Oliver. He simply grinned in response, pulling a set of plane tickets from his pocket. All week he'd been secretive after they discussed Lydia's call, ducking out of rooms for phone calls, and now this?

"You can't be serious," she murmured. "I mean, really, you can't be serious. The Queen Consolidated leadership conference is this weekend. We can't go to Chicago."

"As the CEO of Queen Consolidated, yes we can. I made some calls and we shifted the conference to next month."

She stared at him. "You shifted a conference up an entire month for some impromptu trip to Chicago? Not to mention that we're getting married next month. Don't you think you'll be a little busy?"
He shrugged. "I'll manage. Now, let's get that bag of yours packed. The plane leaves in three hours."

"Three hours? What-

"Come on, I'll help you pack," he said over his shoulder as he walked to the bedroom. He opened the closet and rifled through her clothes. After a moment he pulled out a tight bandeau dress she'd bought on a dare and said, "This should definitely come with us."

"I can barely fit that over my thigh," she huffed, pulling the dress from him and throwing it on the bed. "Can you just hold on for a minute and tell me what the hell is going on? Because this is crazy, even for you."

He stepped forward and palmed her waist. "There was a time when you trusted me above anyone else. Do you remember that?"

"Yes," she murmured.

He grinned softly and kissed the tip of her nose. "Then trust me now. I can't tell you why we're going to Chicago, but you will like it. I promise."

"I was supposed to have another dress fitting on Sunday," she returned softly, hands sliding up the side of his arms.

"Well, you'll just have to reschedule."

She gazed up at him. "You're really not going to tell me why we're going to Chicago?"

He shook his head with a grin. "Nope. It's more fun this way."

She figured it out on the drive to the airport. What was the purpose of taking this impromptu trip to Chicago where she was given absolutely no heads up or information as to what was happening or why? There was only one logical explanation: they were throwing her a surprise wedding shower.

They hadn't had the shower yet, after all, and what better surprise than to whisk her away to Chicago where it had all begun? Yes, she'd figured it out, but she feigned complete ignorance the entire way, seeing how much Oliver was enjoying the surprise. She had the rest of their marriage to be right; she'd let him have this one.

Sure enough when they took a cab down to The Drake she found Lydia waiting for her in the lobby. She hugged her friend tightly and Lydia whispered, "Have you figured it out yet?"

Felicity nodded imperceptibly and Lydia grinned. "Just don't tell your guy that," she whispered. "You should have seen how proud he was to have set all of this up. Granted, it took some of my PR zazoo, but he was pretty fantastic."

"I chose a good one," Felicity murmured, smiling softly as she gazed at Oliver. He caught her glance and stepped closer as he slid an arm around her waist.

"Are you guys going upstairs to get ready?"

"I'm fine in what I'm wearing," Felicity said, smoothing down the skirt of her periwinkle blue skirt. Lydia looked at her oddly.

"Really? You're…you're okay in that?"
Felicity nodded with a bright smile. "Yeah, I mean, there's no reason to get too fancy, right?"

Lydia's eyes narrowed just a bit before she took a hold of Felicity's arm and said, "Alright, it's time for us to go upstairs. Oliver, see you in a few."

Lydia pulled Felicity toward the elevators as she hissed, "Why exactly do you think you're here?"

Felicity glanced back at where Oliver had been, to make sure he wasn't watching, and then said, "It's our wedding shower."

Lydia pushed the button for the elevator and a set of doors on their right opened immediately. Lydia stepped in first, pressing the button for the third floor.

"It is a pretty sweet idea to have it here," Felicity continued. "This is really where our relationship began. I mean, sure, there was a lot of groundwork laid beforehand – a lot of groundwork – but-"

"Felicity, you're not here for your wedding shower," Lydia interrupted, walking out of the elevator. Their room was just around the corner and she waved her card in front of the scanner before walking in and saying, "You're here for your wedding."

Before Felicity could answer she spotted it. The most perfect wedding dress she'd ever seen was resting on the bed. She stepped forward, breath catching as she ran her fingers over the fine lace.

"Do you like it?" Lydia asked anxiously. "Oliver asked me to pick out a dress he thought you'd like, and it seemed like you, but sometimes people can throw you a curveball, you know?"

"It's perfect," she breathed out. "It's…it's absolutely perfect."

"Okay good," Lydia said, voice uncharacteristically thick. "Then, um, let's see you in it, okay? I'll just…" she hiked her thumb toward the bathroom and disappeared. Felicity undressed quickly. She'd never wanted to have a dress on so badly in her life, and when the fabric brushed her skin she finally understood what all those bridal magazines meant when they talked about finding the one.

"Lyd?" she said. Her friend came out of the bathroom, all sentimentality replaced with curt business. Felicity gestured to row of buttons at the back and Lydia nodded quickly, buttoning up the back of the dress with measured proficiency. When she was finished she gently turned Felicity to face her. She examined her like a drill sergeant, making decisive movements as she adjusted the dress.

"Alright, the dress part is done. Now, it's time to do something with your hair."

"Is this really happening?" Felicity murmured, allowing Lydia to lead her to a chair in front of a full mirror. She hadn't noticed all the makeup and hair tools there before, but now she saw that Lydia had practically brought a makeshift salon.

"He called me after you told him all that fake bol shit about being happy with that wedding from hell," Lydia explained slowly, pulling Felicity's hair from its usual high ponytail. She grabbed the brush from the counter and set to work. "He knew you weren't happy and wanted to do something. So, he came up with having the wedding down here. It was pretty short notice, obviously, but he was certain that the people that really mattered would make it down here. He was right. Every single person we invited is here."

"Where are they?"

Lydia teased the hair at the crown of Felicity's head before gathering her hair at the nape of her neck and then shifting it to the side so that her hair spilled over her left shoulder.
"They're probably all out on the beach."

"The beach?"

"I told him we should try to get a banquet hall here. I even made some calls and there was an opening, but he insisted on the beach."

"It's perfect," Felicity said. "The beach is absolutely perfect."

Lydia shook her head. "He really does know you. I would have gone for the banquet hall. Hey, would you plug that curling iron in for me?"

Felicity unraveled the cord from the barrel and plugged it in.

"What about the other wedding? All the reservations and plans?"

"Oliver said Moira's taking care of all of that. Apparently she was absolutely scandalized by the realization she'd sort of hijacked your wedding. So, he said she insisted on wrapping all of that stuff up."

Lydia moved more in front of her and set on her makeup. She used about eighty more products than Felicity normally would, but she kept quiet. Lydia had always been good with makeup and when she pulled back to admire her finished product, Felicity couldn't deny the mastery of her skills. Lydia nodded to herself and picked up the curling iron, curling the ponytail in a few larger sections. She messed with it a bit – picking here and fluffing there – before finishing it all off with a healthy dose of hairspray.

"And now you look like a bride," Lydia said with a grin.

There was a knock on the door and Lydia walked over. She stopped with her hand on the knob and said, "This better not be you, Oliver."

"It's not," a familiar voice said. Lydia pulled open the door to reveal Sadie and Taylor, both of them craning their necks to see Felicity. They rushed forward when they saw her, giving her hearty hugs while being mindful not to muss her hair – a point of conduct driven home by Lydia's warning, "If you break what I just did, I break you."

"You look absolutely stunning," Sadie said.

"Total knockout," Taylor agreed. "And you should see Oliver." She laid her hand on her protruding belly and said, "Even Heather was kicking when we saw him."

"And just when I think you can't make a weirder comment about your pregnancy," Lydia retorted lightly. "Alright, Felicity, are you ready? I was given a strict deadline of 3:00 and…" she glanced down at her watch, "…we are right on time."

Felicity nodded, her entire body thrumming with nervous energy. When she woke up that morning she never dreamt she'd be getting married that afternoon. Everything was happening so quickly and she struggled to catch and remember every moment. She reached out and grasped Lydia's hand in one of her own and Sadie and Taylor's in the other.

"I love you guys and I cannot even tell you – there are literally no words – to express how happy I am that you guys are here with me right now."

"You have no words? That's a first," Lydia returned affectionately.
"We love you, too," Sadie said, squeezing her hand. "Now, let's go get you married."

When Felicity was a little girl she remembered seeing a couple getting married in Vegas. Her mom had snuck her into the casino that night when her babysitter didn't show up and had her stay in the hotel's chapel while she worked. Most of the couples were a blur to her – one inebriated pair after another – but she remembered one in particular. She'd been sitting in the back and had heard the groom ask his bride, "Are you sure you want to do this here?"

The woman had nodded slowly, hands grasping his tightly, and said, "I don't care where we do it, as long as you're the one standing in front of me."

Felicity had no idea how their relationship fared – and reason told her that a couple getting married in a cheap Las Vegas chapel probably wasn't on the side of longevity – but that small conversation had stayed with her, and when she grew up and fell in love she knew exactly what that woman meant. She would have married Oliver in a cheap Las Vegas chapel. She would have married him in Starling City wearing a poufy dress.

But, she married him in Chicago. It was an outdoors ceremony with the lake breeze cooling off the unseasonably warm September day. Everyone that meant something to her was there – including her mother – and she even had someone to walk her down the aisle. She'd hesitated for just a moment, thinking of her absentee father and wondering if he thought about this day and what he was missing, when John Diggle gently touched her arm and asked if he could have the honor of walking her down the aisle. She could only nod in response, too moved to speak.

The walk down the aisle seemed to be one of the longest she'd ever taken, Oliver watching her with unmasked adoration. He was usually so guarded, but today he held up no walls, no façade. He was entirely open for her, and she loved him all the more for it. When she finally reached him he took her hands quickly, rubbing his thumbs along her palm.

They'd decided on a nondenominational ceremony before, and they kept that with a secular officiant who led the ceremony. He asked if they had prepared vows, and when she looked at Oliver with wide eyes he said, "Don't worry, I'll go first."

She smiled slightly, squeezing his hands.

"When you met me, I was a different person. I was broken and damaged. More than you even know. But then you came into my life. You were this bright light, and I couldn't escape you, even when I wanted to." She smiled a bit at that and he squeezed her hands. "You pushed me to be better. Every day you put your faith in me, you believed in me, until one day I did, too. I was a broken man when you met me, Felicity, but you put me back together. You made me into the man standing before you, and I can't imagine spending the rest of this life with anyone else. You're my best friend. My partner. I want nothing else in this entire world more than I want you to be happy, and I hope to make that happen for the rest of our lives."

It clearly was the end of Oliver's vow and the officiant looked at Felicity and nodded for her to go. Her throat was dry and she swallowed uncomfortably. How could she follow that? Everything he said was perfect, and she felt about one I love you from a good old sob fest.

"Oliver," she began, testing her voice. It seemed strong enough, and she continued. "You know I don't usually have a problem talking, but right now I'm finding it sort of difficult. I…I don't know what to say besides the obvious. You are an amazing man. You surprised me with this entire wedding, and somehow you got every single detail right. I didn't even know what I wanted in a wedding, but you somehow did. See, that's the thing. You know me. You know me probably better
than anyone else, so you know what it means when I say that I have never loved, respected, or admired anyone as much as I love, respect, and admire you. You are my rock. My partner. My hero. I…I have always loved you and I always will."

She felt tears well in her eyes and she tried to blink them away as she nodded to the officiant that she was finished. Oliver's eyes were glassy, too, and when a tear trickled down his cheek she reached up impulsively and wiped it away with the edge of his thumb. He grabbed her hand and pressed a kiss to her palm.

"Oliver, do you take Felicity to be our wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part."

Oliver grinned down at her. "I do."

"Felicity, do you take Oliver to be your husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part."

Felicity nodded, already itching to step forward and kiss her almost husband. "I do."

The officiant paused for a moment and then said, "With the powers vested in me, I now pronounce you man and wife."

Felicity barely moved before Oliver had wrapped his arms around her, his mouth covering hers. She wound her arms around his neck and pressed herself close, opening her mouth to him as she thought to herself that she was kissing her husband.

Husband. She liked the sound of that.

They pulled away reluctantly, knowing that it wasn't exactly appropriate to have a full on make out session in front of their family and friends, but their hands stayed firmly clasped between them. She glanced up at him what felt like every five seconds, but he was always looking down at her with a soft gaze that made her stomach clench. As they walked out into the small crowd of guests he leaned his head toward her and said, "So, did you enjoy your wedding, Mrs. Queen?"

She held his gaze, feeling immensely fortunate to see the same love and devotion she felt mirrored in his eyes, "It was perfect."

Chapter End Notes

Good news guys - I've started work on a sequel called THE ACCIDENTAL HUSBAND!!! As with this story, chapters are posted over on FF.net. I will begin posting them tomorrow.

End Notes
Would you all like to see more? The rest of the story will take place at the wedding!

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