I Scream But No Sound Comes out
by laxit21

Summary

When Oliver returns from Lian Yu after five years, he comes back different. What happened there damaged more than just his body. How will his friends and family deal with this new Oliver?

Notes

This story came from one idea I had, which was ‘what if Oliver's PTSD wasn't so easy to hide or ignore’.
Chapter 1

Oliver stood looking out over the Starling City skyline as Dr. Lamb and his mother spoke out in the hallway. He knew what was going to happen in a few moments. Moira would come into the room to tell him how happy she was he was alive, only to learn how much he’d changed in the last five years. He needed to treasure these last few moments before reality set in for her.

“Has he said anything about what happened?”

“He hasn’t said anything. I want you to prepare yourself, the Oliver you lost might not be the one they found.”

Soon, far sooner than he would’ve liked, the door opened behind Oliver and his mother stepped into the room.

“Oliver?” He turned and gave his mother a sad smile before walking closer to her. “Oh, my beautiful boy. I missed you so much.” He didn’t respond but hugged his mother tighter. They broke apart a few seconds later. “When I got that call from the embassy, I couldn’t- it was like a dream come true.” It was at this moment that Moira Queen realized something. “Oliver, please say something.”

He took a few steps back and shook his head. He didn’t speak, he couldn’t make the words come out. He gestured to the doctor with two hands, miming writing something with a pen. Lamb handed him a pen and a notepad, and he began to write something down. He held the paper up so Moira could see.

_“I can’t.”_

“Doctor? Why didn’t you tell me-?”

“His mutism isn’t caused by a physical injury. His throat, esophagus and vocal chords are all perfectly intact. The old term for it was elective mutism, where a person is physically capable of speaking but doesn’t for an unknown reason. It’s widely believed to be a result of trauma.”

“Can he recover?”

“Yes, it’s possible but it won’t be an easy or short process.”

Oliver had to stay overnight for observation, so Moira went home to break the news to Thea, Tommy and Walter. All three reacted similar to how Moira had. She wasn’t sure any of them truly believed it.

The week after Oliver came home was frustrating for everyone. Sure, he could use his phone to text people, but it felt weird and rude to do when face-to-face with someone so he relied on writing things down. He could tell they were getting annoyed at having to stop and read his responses for every conversation. Thea kept trying to make him talk, to make him say anything and became annoyed when it didn’t work. His mother seemed dead set on filling all the silence. In addition, it felt like they were suffocating him, always wanting to be there in case he needed anything. On the eighth day he was home, Tommy made a suggestion. He could tell Oliver was getting frustrated with trying to talk to his family and often feeling ignored.

“Why don’t we all learn ASL? That way he doesn’t have to write everything down.”
“I’m not sure that’s-“

Before she could finish, Oliver knocked on the table once to get their attention. He held up his notepad.

*I know some ASL already. I think it’s a great idea.*

“I know it sounds like a good idea Oliver, but the doctor said you would recover and speak again. we just need to be patient.”

Oliver was too upset at his mother’s blasé attitude to point out that Lamb said he might recover, and he might speak again. Might and will were two different things.
Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Oliver starts his mission and hits a bit of a snag, and a few people make a first appearance.

Chapter Notes

PLEASE READ:
1) So, Oliver's still gonna be a vigilante. Due to his condition, he has to make a few adjustments. Oliver and Tommy weren't kidnapped, because Moira thought it would be a waste of time.
2) I'm adding some minor, background details/story for a few characters.

Laurel paused and put her cup down as Tommy finished his sentence. “Did you ask me to get coffee with you just to try and make me forgive Ollie?”

“What? No, I- its been the elephant in the room for a week and it just kinda occurred to me that you might still be angry. Understandably.”

“If he wants my forgiveness, why isn’t he here to ask for it himself?”

Tommy froze while thinking of an answer. Oliver’s condition was his private business and it wasn’t his place to tell Laurel about Oliver’s mutism. “About that, he’s..... he’s not in a good place. He can’t- I’m positive he wants to talk to you, but he can’t.” he sighed. “Let’s talk about something else.”

Oliver sneaked into his target’s office. Adam Hunt was still at the office, no doubt finding new innocent people to swindle out of their life’s savings. He was so focused on his work, he didn’t look up to see who was there or even comment. Last night, he’d sent an untraceable e-mail to Hunt, ordering him to return the money he’d stolen from people. Oliver nocked an arrow and fired so that it would miss Hunt’s head by a few inches. That got his attention.

“What-? What do you want?”

Oliver pressed a button inside the sleeve of his jacket.

A male voice that sounded a little robotic spoke. “You have failed this city.” Seconds later, Hunt’s security showed up and Oliver made his escape out of the window. He’d sent his message; the router arrow would do the rest.

Oliver let out a sigh as he made it back to his father’s old steel factory that he was using as a base. One name down, countless others to go. First, though, he needed to fix the recording he used. It
still sounded too robotic in his opinion. He wanted it to sound like a human voice being run through a modulator, not a talking computer. He worked on that for a few hours, unsuccessfully, before heading home.

Two days later, Oliver’s phone broke. Since that was his main way to communicate with people, he needed to get it fixed, fast. Walter mentioned a QC employee who could help.

Oliver found himself knocking on the door to Felicity Smoak’s office the following morning. She spun around and he saw that she had blonde hair, square glasses and was chewing on a red pen.

“Can I help you?”

He handed her the note he’d written on the ride over. Hi, my name is Oliver Queen. I was wondering if you could help me.

“No problem. What’s the issue?” she asked. He began writing something down when she spoke again. “Wait, not to be rude, but it just occurred to me that you might be deaf or hard of hearing and me talking wouldn’t help that much. Can you hear me?” He nodded. “Would signing be easier? If you know ASL that is, I don’t know if you do. Not that you have to learn it, I think more people should but- I’m gonna stop now.”

She thought it was a little odd that he didn’t just say what he wanted, but she supposed he had a good reason for not talking and didn’t want to push him. it wasn’t her business anyway.

He didn’t make any noise, but judging by the way his shoulders moved up and down, he was laughing at her babbling. He also had a smile on his face. He slowly signed “I know some ASL, but I am not very good” to her.

“That’s okay. I just didn’t want to make you write if signing was easier for you. How can I help you?”

My phone broke. I mostly communicate via text. Walter said you might be able to fix it. He handed her his phone.

She looked the device over before turning back to him. “I can fix this. I can also- if you want, I know an app or two that you might find useful.”

How?

“You type in what you want to say and it reads it aloud.” She told him. He looked unsure, so she started to backtrack. “Only if you want. And I’m sensing that you aren’t interested. Forget I said anything.”

I need to think about it. If I change my mind, can I come back and have you download it for me?

“Yeah, no problem.” She removed the back of the phone to start repairing it. “This might take a little bit, so why don’t you sit down?”

He took a seat next to her and watched her work. After about five minutes, he tapped her on the shoulder to get her attention. How do you know ASL?

“My cousin was born deaf. My whole family learned it so she could communicate with us. One of the apps I mentioned? I created it for her.”
That’s amazing.

“Thank you for being amazed.” She smiled. “And voila! Your phone is fixed!”

You’re a lifesaver. He left her office in a much better mood than he expected. Not only was his phone fixed, but he’d enjoyed his conversation with her and she hadn’t flooded him with questions like everybody else did.
Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

Oliver deals with a new obstacle, his family and friends still don't 'get it' when it comes to his condition and he asks someone for a favor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Oliver got back to the Queen Mansion, he found his mother standing in the foyer talking to an unknown black man in a suit.

“Good, you’re here.” she said when she heard the door open and him walk in. “Oliver, there’s someone I want you to meet. This is John Diggle. He’ll be accompanying you from now on.”

Why?

“We’ve received some….troubling things in the mail since your return. That combined with your….condition made me decide to hire Mr. Diggle.”

His mother was lying to him. It had surprised him at first, but after losing his voice, Oliver had gotten much better at reading people, and telling they were lying. It had saved him on the island shortly before his rescue. He knew how to tell if someone was lying, and Moira Queen was definitely lying. Or at least not telling the whole truth.

I don’t need a babysitter. He didn’t even respond to the implication that he needed help function because he couldn’t speak.

“This is something I need. We just got you back and-“

Oliver turned and went to his room. he was really starting to get tired of everyone ignoring what he wanted. Or acting like he couldn’t make a decision for himself. He guessed now he had to add ‘ditch my bodyguard’ on his to-do list before heading out every night.

The next morning, Oliver sat in one of the mansion’s sitting rooms, staring blankly in front of him.

“I want to help you Oliver. Please give me a chance to do that.” Dr. Brown, the therapist his mother had hired for him, said. “You’ve been through a very traumatic experience. I can understand your reluctance to discuss it.”

I’m not going to talk about it.

“If you don’t talk about it, you might never move past it. You might never regain your voice.”

What’s wrong with that? I’m fine like this. He scribbled quickly. It was unfortunate that he couldn’t convey his tone when writing things down. He meant for it to sound nonchalant, but based on the doctor’s expression it didn’t read that way.
“Are you being reluctant because you don’t want your family to know what happened? Because, as a medical professional, I’m barred from sharing anything you tell me.”

He didn’t want his family to know what happened, that much was true. He also thought the doctor’s words were crap. He was sure the man meant it, but his mother would somehow find a way to know.

The rest of the hour consisted of Brown trying to make Oliver answer questions about his emotional state and Oliver refusing to answer and staring into space. When the hour was over, Moira came into the room.

“How did it go?”

The doctor gave a meaningless reply about this being the first session, but how things looked promising. Oliver left the room without bothering to tell his mom anything or saying goodbye to the doctor. He didn’t want a therapist and definitely didn’t need one his mother hired. He was a grown man, he could find his own psychiatrist if he wanted.

After the doctor left, his mom tracked him down to ask what he thought, if he liked Dr. Brown. Oliver told her he didn’t need a therapist. Her lecture was interrupted by Tommy showing up to drag him out of the house.

“C’mon, its Ladies Night at Poison.”

No. I’m not going. He wasn’t interested in being around so many people. They’d ask him about the island or why he didn’t talk. Both situations made his anxiety worse, which in turn made him more on edge and hypervigilant.

“I finally have my wingman back.”

I said no.

“Chicks dig the whole silent, mysterious stranger type. That, and your new post-island look, will have them flocking to you.”

Not interested.

“Why not?”

I’m just not. Saying that should be reason enough.

He didn’t want to be mad at Tommy, he really didn’t, but this attitude was getting annoying. Tommy acted like the island was some kind of vacation or cool experience to brag about. It wasn’t. He lost his father, his innocence, his voice and a lot more there. He and Thea both acted like Oliver’s silence was a choice half the time. Before his friend could argue, Oliver left.

It took Oliver a week to work up the courage to go back to Queen Consolidated to see Felicity. Part of it was because he’d had a string of bad days recently between flashbacks from the island and fights with his family. Part of it was because he didn’t want to bother her, wallowing in his self-worth issues. Ollie had been confident, cocky even. Oliver, however, felt like he didn’t deserve to have survived more often than not and was unsure most of the time. He supposed in addition to undiagnosed PTSD, he likely had some form of anxiety as well. the day he worked up the courage to go back to QC, he found her office and knocked on the door.
She turned around, saw him and smiled. “Hello, Oliver.” He waved. “What brings you to my office?”

Sorry for stopping by unexpected. I had a question about something with my phone but I couldn’t just text you because I don’t have your number.

“Well, let’s fix that then.” She said as she wrote her cell number down on a pink sticky note and handed it to him. “Since you’re here, what’s the question?”

He made up some story about not understanding how to load music onto his phone and she patiently walked him through the steps. Even though he’d only met her a week ago, he felt more comfortable around her than anyone else these days. Excluding Felicity, the person he felt most comfortable around was Raisa, mostly because she didn’t try to fill the silence like everyone else.

“Was there anything else you needed help with?” Felicity asked, snapping him back to reality. He reached for his notepad. It was now or never.

No. but He began to write but then crossed it out. I know we just met, but I wanted to ask Will you teach me ASL? I know some but want to learn more. I want to be able to communicate with it and not just fingerspell everything.

“You want me to teach you ASL?” She repeated. He prepared himself for her to say no, that she didn’t have enough time or something. “I’d love to. It can’t be during the workday though, but my evenings and weekends are usually free. We could do Saturday mornings or something.”

Saturday would be good for me. I’ll get out of your hair now. he wanted to show off the little ASL he already knew, so he signed “Thank you, Felicity.”

“You’re welcome, Oliver.” she signed back.

He left Queen Consolidated for the second time in a row with a smile on his face. He made it back to the mansion and saw an unfamiliar car in the driveway. He walked inside to find several people in the foyer talking. Upon hearing the door close, everyone turned towards the door. Moira looked annoyed, Thea looked bored, Tommy looked concerned but it was the fourth person that made Oliver nervous.

“Enough’s enough, Ollie. We need to talk.” Laurel said.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts?
Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Confrontations happen and everyone seems intent on alienating Oliver further.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is mostly an insight on how Oliver feels about everyone’s attempts to ‘help’ him.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Enough’s enough, Ollie. We need to talk.” Laurel said.

Oliver gulped and subconsciously took a step backwards. His eyes darted back and forth as he looked for some way, any way, out of the room. Everyone just stood there, watching him. Trying to gauge what he was going to do.

“You cheated on me with my sister, you got her killed and you didn’t even think to try and apologize.” Oliver stayed frozen to his spot. “Five years and you have nothing to say to me?”

“I told you this wasn’t a good idea, Laurel.” Tommy piped up.

“No, you kept telling me how sorry he was. How he just needed time to work out what to say. I think five years was long enough to think about it. If he really is sorry, I wanna hear it from his own mouth.”

Oliver looked between his two oldest friends and something dawned on him. Tommy hadn’t told Laurel about his condition. She didn’t know he couldn’t speak.

You didn’t tell her?

“I was hoping you’d be better by the time she confronted you.” Oliver wanted to yell about how stupid that sounded. It would be months, if not years, before he’d get ‘better’. He supposed he shouldn’t be surprised. None of them seemed to understand that trauma, especially the trauma he’d been through, wasn’t that easy to ‘get over’ as they thought.

“Tell me what?”

I can’t talk Laurel. I haven’t been able to speak since I came back.

“You can’t talk? Are you kidding me? Of all the excuses to have, you decided on mutism? If you don’t want to talk to me, don’t wanna give me the apology I deserve, just say so.”

I CAN’T!

As a result, he’s lost the ability to speak.”

“Fine, you want to pretend to be traumatized because you don’t have the balls to admit you messed up, go ahead. When you decide to drop the act, I’ll be waiting for that apology.” Laurel said before leaving the building.

Oliver was left facing his family and Tommy and resisting the urge to throw something. He didn’t want to see Laurel, he’d made that clear. Yet somehow, no one stopped her from coming here and confronting him. He doubted anyone even considered how he might feel for his ex-girlfriend to show up and demand an apology. Not to mention the likelihood she wouldn’t believe them about his condition and mock him for it.

“Look, Ollie, I-“

No.

“What do you mean ‘no’?”

I don’t wanna hear it. How did you think that was going to go? Did you think I’d see Laurel and my mutism would be cured? Did you think she’d be ‘understanding’ about my condition? Did you think at all? Or are you just let her do this without thinking about how it might effect me?

“I understand that that wasn’t easy, but it doesn’t justify getting angry at Tommy.” Moira interjected.

I’m not just mad at him. You had no right to tell her what you told her. My condition is my business. It isn’t your secret to tell. Not to Laurel, not to anyone. Did it occur to you that I didn’t want her to know that?

“Oliver-“

He stormed right past his mother and went upstairs. He wasn’t going to listen to whatever she had to say, whatever excuse she was going to give. She was smart enough not to follow him. Thea wasn’t.

“Did you really need to do that?” she asked. “We get it, you have trauma you’re dealing with. You aren’t the only person with problems.”

No, you don’t get it. None of you do. You have no idea what I’ve been through. Losing Dad? That was the easy part. None of you get it and none of you care.

“Don’t say that we don’t care.”

You don’t though. Mom wants me to get ‘better’ so I can take over QC. Tommy wants his wingman back. You want the asshole older brother you had back. He’s not coming back, he’s gone.

“I don’t know why I even try to talk to you. You know, I felt closer to you when you were gone than I do right now.” Thea said before storming off.

Fifteen minutes later, there was a knock on Oliver’s door. He opened it to find his mother standing there. “Where were you?”

Out.

“Out where? Mr. Diggle didn’t seem to know where you were. You have to let him do his job.”
He didn’t know because I snuck out. I don’t want or need a bodyguard. I’m not going to pretend that I do. I don’t know how to make it any clearer to you.

“I need-“

Oliver slammed the door in her face. This is where conversations always ended up with his mother. it was never about what Oliver wanted or needed, it was about what she needed. Or what QC needed. Or what ‘the family’ needed. Never about Oliver.

“Leave it alone, mom.” He heard Thea say from across the hall. “He wants to be a miserable mute for the rest of his life, let him.”

The next morning, Oliver came downstairs for breakfast. Luckily, everyone else had already left for the day so he didn’t need to deal with his mother or sister. Diggle was sitting in the dining room, waiting for him.

“Good morning, Mr. Queen.”

Oliver nodded back and began eating. About halfway through, he realized he hadn’t even ‘spoken’ to Diggle once. He might not have wanted him there, but he didn’t want to be rude. So far, all John had done was his job.

It’s nothing personal. I want you to know that.

“I know.” It was frustrating for John to have a client that didn’t want his protection, as he tried to tell Moira with no success. “Your mother’s worried about losing you.”

No, she’s angry things aren’t going the way she wants. My return wasn’t as the prodigal son she wanted.

“Your condition is-“

My condition isn’t the problem. I’m doing just fine without my voice, and without her help or yours.

“Still, I have a job to do, and until your mother starts listening to you or fires me, I’m gonna do it.” He wasn’t stupid. He could tell Oliver was struggling with a lot of issues, PTSD and anxiety being the biggest ones. He also knew Mrs. Queen’s attempts to make him talk were doing more harm than good. At the same time, he wasn't Oliver's therapist and it wasn't his job to help Oliver recover. Still, he felt some sympathy for what he was going through.

“You know, I spent the first 27 years of my life in Starling City, and the next five in Afghanistan. You want to know what I learned?”

There’s no place like home?

“No, just the opposite. Home is a battlefield. Back home, they're all trying to get you. Get you to open up, be somebody you're not sure you are anymore.”

Since he was still worn out from all the excitement and action yesterday, Oliver decided to forego his usual habit of ditching Digg and instead wandered around the mansion and its grounds for the day. He didn’t have any pressing Hood business and wasn’t exactly in the mood to deal with going
into down and coming across other people, or worse, the press.

It was a little after 3pm when Oliver began staring at the pink sticky note Felicity had given him. He wanted to text her, just to say hi, to make sure she had his number, but didn’t quite know what to say. Just saying ‘hi’ seemed lame. Asking her questions about herself might resort in her wanting to get to know him better and asking about the island. He didn’t have any questions about his phone to use as a cover. He settled on something short but nice and sent the text before immediately regretting acting so soon.

>>To: Felicity- Hey, it’s Oliver. You gave me your number but I forgot to give you mine.

Each time he read it, he had a different reaction. Was it too short? Too formal? Would she be mad he texted her out of the blue? Before he could work himself into too much of a panic, his phone dinged, showing he had a reply.

>>From: Felicity- Hi! Now I have your number :)

>>To: Felicity- I hope I’m not bothering you or anything.

>>From: Felicity- It’s been a slow day and it’s almost over, so no worries. Are we still on for Saturday?

>>To: Felicity- Yes, wouldn’t miss it.

>>From: Felicity- Good! Let me know where/when.

>>To: Felicity- I should let you decide that.

>>From: Felicity- It doesn’t matter to me. Jitters is fine, or we can go somewhere a little quieter/less busy.

He began to panic. He didn’t want to choose somewhere so public for this. Public meant other people would be around. They’d recognize him and ask questions. The truth about his condition would get out. Everyone would know, everyone would judge him. The paparazzi and everyone and their mother would have something to say about him. Before he could work himself into a real panic attack, his phone buzzed again.

>>From: Felicity- The library’s usually quiet on Saturday mornings if that helps. They have private rooms we can use. You don’t need to decide now, just think about it.

>>To: Felicity- Ok, I’ll let you know.

“What are you smiling about?” Thea asked as she walked into the room. He quickly hid his phone and the smile dropped off his face a little bit. He shrugged. “Of course you aren’t going to tell me.”

I wasn’t smiling about anything specific. Its just been a good day.

“Good day meaning?”

It’s hard to explain, but it was a good day. A good day meant Oliver didn’t have flashbacks or a panic attack. He didn’t get into arguments with people who didn’t grasp what he was going through. It meant he did something besides think about the island and hate himself for what happened there. How about you?
“I had school, so not great. I’m glad you’ve decided to stop moping.”

“Who’s stopped moping?” Moira asked as she entered the room.

“Ollie. He said he had a good day today.”

“You did?”

Yeah, I didn’t really do anything, but it was still a pretty good day.

“I’m happy to hear that. The Bowens are coming over for dinner, so you might want to change.” She looked over at his sweatpants and T-shirt as she spoke.

He sighed and left the room. One step forward, two steps back. Two hours later, when Raisa came upstairs to fetch Oliver, he wasn’t there. An hour earlier he’d snuck out via a window in one of the guest rooms and headed to his father’s old steel factory. Maybe he would suit up and hit the streets tonight.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts?
Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Oliver and Felicity have their first lesson.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oliver’s frustration with his mother boiled over into the Hood’s activities that night. More than a few would be purse-snatchers and drug dealers were on the receiving end of his anger. If they hadn’t been poisoning the city, Oliver might’ve felt bad about his actions, but they were, so he didn’t. He finished his patrol shortly before dawn and headed back to the mansion.

After a few hours of restless sleep, he went downstairs for breakfast and found himself face-to-face with his mother.

“You weren’t at dinner.”

I never said I’d go.

“Your immaturity has lost its charm.” She said in a displeased tone. “Since you weren’t here, care to tell me where you were?”

Out.

“That’s isn’t an answer, Oliver.”

I’m 27 years old. I’m a grown man. I can take care of myself.

“Yes, you’re an adult. One who just came back from five years of isolation and can’t speak. Excuse me for worrying about you.”

You don’t know the difference between worrying and smothering. I spent five years on my own, why would I want you or anyone watching my every move and judging everything I do?

“I’m not judging your every-“ she began to say. He rolled his eyes, silently scoffed and walked away.

He spent the rest of the day locked in his room, avoiding everyone. The only person he spoke to was Felicity and that was to ask if they could meet at the library around 10 the next morning, which she agreed to.

Oliver left the mansion while everyone else was eating breakfast the next morning. He didn’t want to sit through yet another tense meal or have to explain where he was going when he excused himself. He was nervous, but trying to keep the feeling hidden.

As Digg drove, he looked at his charge in the backseat. Based on how restless Oliver was, he was
either nervous about where they were going or excited. Perhaps both. In any case, it was a refreshing change from the normal broody billionaire.

“Where exactly are we heading, sir?” He asked as they reached the edge of town. Oliver had asked for a ride into the city, but hadn’t told Diggle where in the city.

The library.

John didn’t think Oliver was a library kind of guy, but didn’t voice that opinion. His job was to keep Oliver safe, not comment on his social schedule. He focused back on the road as Oliver’s phone began to buzz. He had a text from Felicity.

>>From: Felicity- I’m on my way. If you get there before me, the rooms are on the second floor. Grab one and text me where you are.

>> To: Felicity- Ok, see you soon.

They reached the library at around 9:45. Oliver found an empty room on the second floor and waited inside. As he waited, he began to get more nervous. He was worried he’d have a flashback or panic attack in front of Felicity. Or that she’d realize how messed up he was and leave. Or ask about his speech or the island. The longer he sat, the more panicked he became. John noticed he was working himself into a frenzy.

“Mr. Queen, you need to breathe. Long and slow.”

He followed the advice and calmed down somewhat. Then, he saw the time. it was 10:10. She was ten minutes late, she wasn’t coming. She’d changed her mind. Of course she did. Why would she want to help or even know someone as fucked up as him? As his panic rose again, the door to the room opened.

“Sorry I’m late. There was construction down the street that took me longer to get here.” Felicity said. “Are you okay? You look a little pale.”

He took several deep breaths as he wrote his response. I'm fine.

“If you say so.” She remarked, before turning to John. “Sorry. Hi, I’m Felicity Smoak.”

“John Diggle.” He then turned to Oliver. “Mr. Queen, I think I’ll wait outside while you two work.” He could tell Oliver was nervous to be around Felicity. He didn’t want to make his anxiety worse by making him feel more crowded. Besides, Felicity didn’t seem like much of a threat.

“How are you Oliver?” Felicity asked. She signed as she spoke.

“Fine.” He signed back.

“That’s good.” She said. “I think we should do kinda half immersion and half traditional teaching. Because there are some important signs you should know but I don’t wanna spend too long on basics or things you might already know. How does that sound?”

What do you mean by immersion?

“I teach you sign by using it when I’m also speaking. Also, you respond to me in sign whenever possible. It makes learning easier and seem more natural. Does that sound good?”
“Yes.” I should warn you, I’m not the best student.

“Don’t sell yourself short.” She said. “Let’s see what signs you know.”

He knew the alphabet, some greetings, how to tell someone his name and ask theirs and some beginner ASL, like pronouns, please and thank you and how to ask how something is signed.

“That’s pretty good.”

“Thank you.”

They spent the next hour going over some more common signs and phrases. Ones that, in Felicity’s opinion, everyone should know. Like how to ask where the bathroom is or how to tell someone they’re signing too fast or to repeat themselves. They spent another hour conversing mostly in sign to give Oliver experience holding a conversation.

Diggle came into the room. “I hate to break this up, but your mother keeps calling.”

Oliver shot Felicity an apologetic look before standing up. “Thank you. See you next Saturday.”

“You’re welcome. Practice when you can and I’ll see you next week. Text me if you have any questions.” She told him as he left.

“So, sign language?” John said to Oliver as they got into the car.

*It seemed like a good idea. My mother doesn’t need to know.*

“Hey, I’m your bodyguard, not your babysitter. She asked where you were, I said the library and that was it.”

He didn’t respond to that and they drove back to the mansion. Regardless of what he walked into when he got home, today had been a good day and he enjoyed his time with Felicity.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Oliver continues to clash with his family and grows closer with Felicity.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Where exactly have you been?”

_I met up with a friend._

“That’s good. Who, if I may ask? Tommy? Carter? Steve?” His therapist had indicated to Moira that a good sign that he was recovering was any attempts he made to return to his old life. Connecting with old friends, mentioning plans he had before the accident, reminiscing of any kind, any of it was a good sign and should be encouraged.

_No, it was a friend I met after I came back._

“Oh, that’s nice. Why didn’t you reach out to one of your older friends?” Dr. Brown hadn’t told her what Oliver making new friends meant. Did it mean he was adjusting or was it the precursor to him pushing everyone further away?

_I didn’t want to. I’m allowed to have more than one friend._ He wrote more than that, but Moira only read the first two sentences before she started to argue.

“I never said you were only allowed one friend. You’re putting words in my mouth.”

This reminded him of another issue he was having since coming back. Since he didn’t make any sounds, everyone found it easier to just not listen to him and only read half of what he wrote. It was the nonverbal equivalent of interrupting him mid-sentence to go on an unrelated tangent. If she had kept reading what he wrote, his mother would’ve known he made a few new friends, a slight exaggeration since Felicity was the only one he made, who made him feel normal. He reached out to said friend because he thought it was better than staying cooped up in the mansion and avoiding everyone there.

He didn’t stay talking with his mother for much longer and headed upstairs. After making a plan to deal with his current target, he decided to take a shower. Ever since returning, he felt like he couldn’t get warm. Hot showers always helped allieviate that feeling. He was moving around his room in only a towel when the door opened and Thea rushed in. she didn’t even try to knock.

“Ollie, I- where did you get those? Mom said there were scars, but-” she said upon seeing his scars. She was met by her brother’s very angry look. “What?”

_DON’T YOU KNOCK?_

“Oh, like you would’ve let me in.”

_That still doesn’t make it okay. You can’t just barge into someone’s room without at least_
pretending to care about their privacy.

“Fine, I’ll do that next time. What happened to you?”

A lot. And that’s all I’m going to tell you. Once you know, you can never unknow it.

If she ever knew what he’d gone through, what he’d done to survive, she’d hate him. if anyone knew, they’d hate him. He could live with being estranged from certain people, but couldn’t stand the thought of losing them entirely.

“Is that why- is this why you stopped talking?”

These are part of it, yes. Stop asking me about it. It doesn’t make things any easier.

“Ollie, I’m so sorry.”

He hated this. He hated feeling like this. He hated that this had to happen, she had to see his scars, to understand that he wasn’t messing around and wasn’t acting like this on a whim. She didn’t know what else to say, and forgot why she came in, so she left the room. Oliver’s more depressed and self-loathing thoughts began to creep in as he sat on his bed.

His family really should stop trying to bring the old Ollie back and try to get as far away from him as possible. He was a monster. He ruined everything he touched. He should’ve died instead of his dad. Or Sara. Or Shado. He didn’t deserve to live. He started spiraling down into the darkest parts of his mind when his phone chimed, letting him know he had a text.

>>From: Felicity- I hope today was helpful.

>>To: Felicity- It was. Thank you.

He felt like he couldn’t just leave the conversation at that, so he messaged her about something he considered a safe topic. Her tech. He didn’t like answering questions about himself but learning more about Felicity, and keeping things focused on her made things slightly easier for him.

>>To: Felicity- About that app of yours.

>>From: Felicity- We can talk about it next week, or you can stop by QC when you get a chance.

>>From: Felicity- Whichever works for you. I just can’t really explain it that well over text and I can’t walk you through it over the phone.

Monday morning, Oliver snuck into Queen Consolidated around 10. He didn’t drive in with Walter, since it might give his mother the wrong idea. He wasn’t interested in starting at the company, he just wanted Felicity’s help. Being the son of the founder and the stepson of the current CEO meant no one tried to stop or question him on his way to her cubicle. He knocked on the door so he wouldn’t startle her.

“Hi, Oliver.” She said warmly.

‘Good morning Felicity.’ he signed. I wanted to know more about your app. Is now a bad time?

“No, I’m just updating some of the cybersecurity protocols. I can do that in my sleep.” She
answered. “Please don’t repeat that to your mom or Mr. Steele.”

*Your secret’s safe with me.*

“Thanks.” She said before launching into a spiel about the app she created, what features it had and what it can do. “-it will read aloud what you write, and only what you write, so keep that in mind.”

He tilted his head to the side in confusion. “It can’t read minds. If you spell something wrong or leave words out, it won’t know that that wasn’t what you meant, assume its right and say it. For example, if you mean to write ‘I can’t wait to see it’ but you leave out certain words, it’ll just say ‘I can’t see it’. If you’re writing your name, but you accidentally type an ‘s’, it’ll announce ‘my name is olives Queen’. That kind of thing.”

*Well, I don’t want people to think my name is Olives.* He wrote. He wore a grin when he showed the notepad to her. He learned a long time ago how important facial expressions were. Both on the island, and during his one year off of it in Moscow, being able to read someone’s intentions from their face kept him alive. If he wanted Felicity to know he was joking, he had to show it via his expression.

“Well, I don’t want people to think my name is Olives. He wrote. He wore a grin when he showed the notepad to her. He learned a long time ago how important facial expressions were. Both on the island, and during his one year off of it in Moscow, being able to read someone’s intentions from their face kept him alive. If he wanted Felicity to know he was joking, he had to show it via his expression.

“Yeah, you don’t look like an ‘olives’ to me.”

*Is it okay if I don’t use it right away? The app.* Oliver liked the idea of the app. He liked having the option but that didn’t mean he was determined to use it.

“Well, I don’t want people to think my name is Olives. He wrote. He wore a grin when he showed the notepad to her. He learned a long time ago how important facial expressions were. Both on the island, and during his one year off of it in Moscow, being able to read someone’s intentions from their face kept him alive. If he wanted Felicity to know he was joking, he had to show it via his expression.

“Yeah, you don’t look like an ‘olives’ to me.”

*Is it okay if I don’t use it right away? The app.* Oliver liked the idea of the app. He liked having the option but that didn’t mean he was determined to use it.

“Why wouldn’t it be okay?”

*You seem proud of it and I don’t but I’m not sure if I want to use it yet. I don’t know if I’m ready for I don’t want to hurt your feelings.*

“You won’t hurt my feelings. I didn’t tell you about it because I wanted you to use it, I told you because I wanted to offer you the option. Whether you use it or not is your choice.”

He thanked her and stood up to leave. ‘I’ll see you on Saturday.’

“Yes, you will. 10am, I promise not to be late this time. hopefully.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Oliver and Felicity grow closer, questions are asked and Thea makes a suggestion.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The following Saturday Oliver and Digg arrived at the library to find Felicity in the same private room as last time waiting for them. She looked up when the door opened and greeted the two men excitedly.

Oliver had spent the last week spending as little time around his mother as possible. He realized days ago that his therapist was telling Moira empty platitudes she wanted to hear and nothing that was helpful for Oliver. Everything he said revolved around getting the old Oliver back, not helping Oliver really heal. Thea had gone out of her way to be more sensitive towards Oliver over the last few days. It made things awkward, but Oliver could tell she was really trying as opposed to just doing the bare minimum. He’d spent some more time with Tommy, but it was mostly watching sports at the mansion and not leaving the grounds. He continued to hunt names on his father’s list, much to Digg’s annoyance every time he evaded him.

Digg said hello to Felicity before preparing to leave the room. “You can stay, if you want. I mean, if Oliver’s okay with that. I don’t want you to feel like you have to go.”

“I appreciate the gesture, but this is for Mr. Queen and I suspect he’d like the privacy.” John answered before closing the door. Moira had tried to get more details out of John last Saturday about where Oliver was and who he’d been with. He’d already realized that her reasons for asking weren’t entirely selfless and chose to be as brief as possible. Oliver had met with a friend at the library because it was quiet. John didn’t know how he met this friend or what they talked about because he was keeping an eye out for any threats against Oliver. She couldn’t reasonably argue against John doing his job instead of eavesdropping.

“I don’t think he likes me.” Felicity said to Oliver after Digg left. As always, she signed as she spoke, giving Oliver a more immersive experience.

_He doesn’t not like you._ He scribbled out. He put the pen down and began to sign. ‘Good morning.’

“How are you doing today?”

‘Ok. You?’

“I’m doing great. Let’s see, what did we cover last time?” She asked him. “I hope you practiced.”

‘I did. Maybe not enough.’

“It’s okay. Its hard to get into the habit. Especially if you don’t have someone to sign with.” She said. “Show me what you remember.”

They worked for an hour before Oliver wrote down a question he’d been thinking about for the last
week. Everyone wanted him to share what happened. Everyone, it seemed, except her.

Why haven’t you asked me about it?

“The island?” she asked, wanting clarification. He nodded. “Do you want me to ask about it?” he shook his head. “That’s why. I don’t ask because I don’t want you to feel like you have to answer. If you ever want to tell me, you can. You can tell me anything.”

‘You don’t want to know?’

“I don’t want to make you feel uncomfortable by asking. What I want doesn’t matter, its your story Oliver. You get to decide who you tell it to and when. I don’t get to demand answers from you, nobody does.”

‘I wish everyone felt that way.’

“I’m sorry they don’t. I hope they’ll realize it eventually.” She said. “This got really serious, didn’t it? Do you want to call it a day or-?” She left the question hanging, waiting to see what Oliver would say.

That’s probably a good idea. I’m sorry.

“You don’t need to apologize. In fact, you shouldn’t. You’re dealing with some heavy things. Not everyone understands what that’s like. It’s never an easy or linear process.”

‘But you do?’

“That’s a story for another day.” Felicity said sadly. It wasn’t an easy thing to talk about, even years later.

They said their goodbyes and Oliver and John left. On the way to the car, Oliver wrote something down and showed it to Digg.

“I don’t dislike Felicity. I assumed you wanted to be alone. And you’d feel crowded in a room that small with two other people.”

Oliver didn’t respond, but he was probably right. With his PTSD and anxiety, he didn’t like enclosed spaces. He also didn’t like feeling like he was being watched, which is why he escaped from Digg at least once a day. Having a bodyguard didn’t make his paranoia any easier.

For Oliver, the next few days were exactly the same as the last week. Moira wanted to know everything he was doing and lectured him for forgetting his latest therapy appointment. He didn’t forget, he just chose not to go. Tommy was still trying to talk him into returning to the party scene. Thea continued to try and repair her relationship with Oliver. She was trying, so he met her halfway. It helped that she stopped asking him about the island, which made him less defensive. Over those few days, Oliver took down two more names on his father’s list. Their crimes weren’t as widespread as Adam Hunt or deadly as Martin Somers, but they had failed the city and needed to face justice.

He was sitting in the dining room eating breakfast on Wednesday morning when Thea sat down next to him. “So, what do you do during the day?”

Shouldn’t you be at school?
“I’m going in late, doctor’s appointment. What do you do during the day?”

I read, try to catch up on things I missed. Go for jogs around the property. Watch movies in the family room. On occasion, I go into town to see a friend.

“You should call them. See if they can meet you for lunch.” She suggested. Oliver shot her a look. He didn’t know why she was suggesting it. Did she think something was going on? “What? Whoever this friend is, when you came back from seeing them last time, you were in a good mood. Besides, this place is practically a museum and you’re gonna get cabin fever. Its just a suggestion.”

“Thea, we need to go.” Moira said, coming into the room. “Good morning Oliver.” They left and Oliver finished his breakfast. Maybe Thea’s suggestion was worth a try.

>>To: Felicity- Do you wanna get coffee today?
He sat staring at the phone until she replied. What would she think of his text? Would she interpret it the wrong way? How did he want her to interpret it?

>>From: Felicity- I never say no to coffee. Is everything okay?
>>To: Felicity- Yeah, everything’s fine. Just wondering if you were free.
>>From: Felicity- Ok, just checking. I can meet you around noon. Jitters?
>>To: Felicity- Do you know of another place? They’re always busy and I don’t do well with crowds.

He regretted the message as soon as he sent it. He shouldn’t have told her about his dislike of crowds. It would remind her of how damaged he was and she’d think he couldn’t function.

>>From: Felicity- There’s a small, independent coffee place down the street from Jitters. And their coffee tastes better. Also, they have really good sandwiches. I’ll text you the address.

Oliver and John arrived at the coffeehouse at 11:45. Oliver wanted to get there before Felicity and have time to get a table and calm down. He settled for a table along one of the walls, close to the exit but not too close to the doors. He was just starting to relax when the door opened and Felicity walked in.

“Hey.” She said sitting down.

‘Hi, Felicity. How are you?’

“I’m doing well. Did you order yet?”

‘No, I just got here.’ Oliver avoided ordering in public as much as possible. It felt awkward having to write his order down. He was also worried the staff would recognize him, make a scene and then everyone would know about his issues.

“What do you want? I’ll go order for both of us.” Felicity offered. Since the only drink he’d ever tried was plain, black coffee, he ordered that. She nodded and went to get in line, wanting to look over the food options while she was waiting.

After a few minutes, Oliver saw movement out of the corner of his eye and looked over. he thought Felicity was coming back to the table. He found himself face-to-face with Laurel instead.
“Hello Oliver.” He waved. “I see you’re still pretending to be mute.”

“Excuse me?” Felicity’s voice came from behind her. She moved around Laurel, put both coffee orders and her sandwich down, and stepped in between her and Oliver. She crossed her arms and opened her mouth to speak further.

Chapter End Notes

Uh-oh.

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Felicity and Laurel have a confrontation.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I see you’re still pretending to be mute.”

The tentative smile on Oliver’s face fell off when Laurel said that. He wasn’t faking, he wasn’t pretending, and he wasn’t exaggerating. For five years, all he’d wanted to do was call his mother and tell her he was alive. He wanted to return home, hug Thea and tell her how much he missed her. He wanted to joke with Tommy that he was right about boats sucking. He wanted to do all of those things, but he couldn’t.

“Excuse me?” Felicity’s voice came from behind her. She moved around Laurel, put both coffee orders and her sandwich down, and stepped in between her and Oliver. She crossed her arms and opened her mouth to speak further. She didn’t yell or even raise her voice. She didn’t want to cause a scene, not when she could see Oliver was already on edge. “Why would you say something like that?”

“Who are you?”

“That doesn’t matter. Who are you? More importantly, who do you think you are?”

“Laurel Lance.” She stated.

“Is that supposed to mean something to me? Because it doesn’t.”

“Look, you don’t know our his-“

“I don’t care what your history is. Oliver’s a friend of mine. He was sitting here, minding his own business and you decided to come over here and harass him.”

“I’m not harassing him. I’m a lawyer and-“

“What does your job have to do with anything? Last time I checked, being a lawyer doesn’t mean you can’t break the law. And it doesn’t exempt you from behaving like a decent human being.”

“He’s faking a mental illness!”

“Is he? How do you know that? Are you a psychologist?”

“Because I know him. There’s no way his five years away made him so traumatized he went mute. This is just another excuse he has to get out of admitting he messed up.”

“No, you knew him. And you don’t really know what happened to him over the last few years, so how can you say he is or isn’t traumatized? And no one fakes being mute. Deaf or blind, yes, mute,
no.” Felicity said. “On top of that, your whole attitude needs go.”

“My attitude?”

“I don’t care what your history is. I can tell you don’t like him, though. Rather than get your coffee and be on your way, you decided to come over here and confront him when he wasn’t doing anything. Mocking him and his condition, accusing him like you did, I think that shows what kind of person you really are more than anything else.” She said, “You wanna yell at him for whatever he did, fine. But there’s a time and place for that, and I think you know this wasn’t it.”

Laurel didn’t respond and left in a huff. Next time she spoke to Oliver, she’d need to be sure his new friend wasn’t around. Clearly, she was protective of Oliver and insisted on defending him. She was still sure he was faking it, and until proven otherwise, would treat him as such.

After Laurel had left the building, Felicity sat down in the seat in front of Oliver. “Sorry that I went a little ‘grr’.”

‘Thank you.’

“You don’t have to thank me. She’s lucky I didn’t use my Loud Voice. I mean, why would you be faking?”

*Your Loud Voice?*

“The voice I use when I’m angry. A lot of people find it scary. I didn’t use it because I didn’t wanna cause a scene. Well, a bigger scene I suppose. Are you okay?”

‘Fine.’ *It’s frustrating that she doesn’t believe me. Or that she thinks I’d go to this extreme to avoid talking to her. I wasn’t the best person before the accident, but I wouldn’t sink that low, even then.*

“I know you wouldn’t. I don’t think the problem is really you.” she said, which earned her a confused look. “The thing she’s angry about, whatever it is, she had five years to let it stew. Five years to focus on it and become more and more angry and build up this false version of you in her head to justify it. The problem isn’t you, it’s her.”

*It’s kinda me. What I did to her was wrong and she deserves an apology.*

“Whatever you may have done, it doesn’t justify her accosting you in public or mocking the situation you’re in.”

He wasn’t sure that was true but dropped the matter. They talked a little more, but what had happened hung over their heads and neither wanted to break the silence and discuss it further. They said their goodbyes and Felicity went back to work. A few minutes after she left, Oliver sent her a text.

>>To: Felicity- Thank you, for standing up for me.

>>From: Felicity- That’s what friends are for.

He wasn’t completely sure that was true. His mom and Tommy both stood there when Laurel confronted him at the mansion, despite knowing he hadn’t gone to see Laurel for a reason. They also definitely suspected he wouldn’t react well to such a confrontation because he very clearly had anxiety. Thea had been the same way, but was working on it.

>>From: Felicity- Sorry that the way I handled it made you feel uncomfortable.
>>To: Felicity- What do you mean?

>>From: Felicity- I know you don’t really like drawing attention to yourself. Other people started looking over to see what was happening. I noticed that was making you nervous.

>> To: Felicity- You didn’t do it on purpose and you were trying to help. I’m not angry or anything.

With the excitement over with, Oliver and John drove back to the mansion. Oliver went up to his room and picked up the book he’d just started reading. In the last two months, he’d read more than he had in the two years before the island. The practice helped calm him down and allowed him to escape into another world for a little while. He was about halfway through the novel when he heard his mother calling his name. Closing the book, he left his room and went to find her. She was standing in the living room with her arms crossed. Oliver’s ‘therapist’ was sitting behind her, looking sheepish.

“Would you like to explain what’s going on with you?”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts?
I know everyone wanted to witness the Loud Voice, but Felicity knew it wasn't the time or place for that (unlike Laurel).
Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Moira confronts Oliver, Thea meets someone new and Oliver makes a long overdue decision.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oliver was about halfway through the novel when he heard his mother calling his name. Closing the book, he left his room and went to find her. She was standing in the living room with her arms crossed. Oliver’s ‘therapist’ was sitting behind her, looking sheepish.

“Would you like to explain what’s going on with you?”

He didn’t respond and simply blinked slowly at his mother. He knew she was going to say whatever she wanted to say and whatever response or excuse he gave wouldn’t matter.

“Dr. Brown told me you haven’t been to any of your appointments lately.”

He was aware of that and did it intentionally. He never said he would go. He never asked for a therapist. It was his mother’s idea to contact the doctor and his mother kept insisting on him talking to the man. The whole thing was a waste of time, in his opinion, and all the advice and recommendations the doctor gave during that first session were useless in his opinion.

“Well? Do you have anything to say for yourself?”

I never said I’d see him.

“Oliver, we agreed-“

“Hey, what’s going on?” Thea said coming into the room.

“Nothing, your brother and I are having a discussion about his therapy.”

Oliver tapped Thea on the shoulder and handed a piece of paper to her. “You want me to read this?” He nodded, so she read it out loud. “We, and that’s underlined for emphasis, didn’t agree. We didn’t discuss it. You demanded I do it. I never said I would.”

Oliver didn’t want or need a therapist and he definitely didn’t need that therapist. Given Brown’s habit of disclosing things to Moira, he wondered if the man was just weak willed or unethical. He was debating bringing that matter up to someone else, like the American Psychiatric Association.

“Oliver, it’s not that-“

“Why are you making him do this? He doesn’t want to.”

“Thea, this is a very delicate situation.”

“I know that, but if he doesn’t want to go to therapy, he shouldn’t have to. He’s an adult, he can
make his own choices. He clearly doesn’t want to, why are you trying to make him?” she asked. “Your insistence isn’t going to make him want to do it. If anything, it’s making him avoid it even more. Why are you so focused on this?”

“I want my son back!”

“We got him back. He’s standing right there.” Thea said, pointing to Oliver.

The archer, meanwhile, heard his mother say that, turned and left the room, slamming the door behind him. It was one thing for Moira to talk about how much she missed ‘the old Oliver’ but to claim the Oliver who’d returned from Lian Yu wasn’t her son anymore hurt deeply. It both hit on everything he felt insecure about and reminded him of how alienated he felt from his mother now. He needed to move, to do something to clear his head.

Thea found Oliver in the backyard, running laps around the property. She waited for him to notice her before saying anything.

“Are you okay?” he shook his head. “Yeah, I didn’t think so. Wanna talk about it?” Another shake. “Okay. Let’s go see what’s on TV.”

The siblings were halfway through watching The Goonies, which had been one of Oliver’s favorite movies as a kid, when Thea turned to him. “This friend of yours, the one you went to see today, can I meet them?” He looked nervous about answering, so Thea backtracked a little. “I don’t mean, like, right now, but can I meet them soon?” He nodded but didn’t say anything else. Both of them spent the rest of the day avoiding Moira.

Oliver took his anger towards his mother and funneled it into his activities as the Hood that night. His father’s list had plenty of names on it, and he had plenty of frustrations to work out. On a whim, he decided to try out Felicity’s app on tonight’s target. It didn’t work perfectly, but with the app, he could say more than ‘You have failed this city’. Him confronting his marks and telling them what he wanted from them and why worked better than his practice of sending threatening messages until now. Even if he didn’t use the app as Oliver Queen, it was useful for his night job.

After a few more days of Moira trying to get Oliver to see things her way, Tommy attempting to get ‘his old wingman back out there’, and Laurel trying to get Oliver alone to confront him, the archer had had enough. Thea was still supportive as ever, but there were too many unsupportive people around him for her to be very helpful. He asked Digg to drive them into the city. He needed to ask Felicity for another favor and wanted Thea to meet his new friend. The car pulled into QC’s garage.

“Why are we at Queen Consolidated? I thought you didn’t want to work here?”

My friend works here and I need to ask for a favor. I also want you to meet her. Oliver said as they got out of the car.

“Oh, your friend is a woman.” Thea said with a hint of suggestiveness. Oliver threw her a look that said ‘its not like that’. Her smile dropped a little bit. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to- let’s go meet her.”

Oliver led the way as the trio made their way to the IT floor and found Felicity’s office. He knocked on the open door and Felicity’s head shot up from her computer.

“Oh, hi Oliver. Hey, Digg. Hi, girl I haven’t met before.” Felicity said. Oliver began signing something to her, which surprised Thea. “Oh, so this is Thea. Nice to meet you, I’m Felicity Smoak.”
“Nice to meet you too. You know sign language Ollie?”

“He knew I signed, so I’ve been teaching him for the last few weeks.”

‘Please, don’t tell mom. She wouldn’t understand.’

Felicity relayed the message to Thea with a frown on her face. “I won’t. It’s- thank you, Felicity.”

“For what?”

“Well, since you’ve been helping Ollie out, since you two became friends, he’s seemed happier. So, I guess thank you for being his friend.”

“I’m happy to have a friend like him.” She responded. “What brings both of you by? Not that you have to have reason. I mean, maybe you just wanted me to meet Thea, but if that wasn’t the only reason you came by, I didn’t want to- sorry, that happens sometimes, the babbling.”

Thea, Oliver and Digg all had amused looks on their faces. “Ollie said he wanted me to meet you, I asked a few days ago if I could meet his new friend. He also said something about wanting to ask for a favor.”

‘I want to move out.’ He signed. ‘I was hoping you and Speedy could help me.’

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Oliver's decided to move out. How will his family react?

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘I want to move out.’ He signed. ‘I was hoping you and Speedy could help me.’

“You want to move out?” Felicity asked. Thea turned to look at her brother and asked the same thing.

He began to feel the room get smaller as they asked him that. He’d thought long and hard about this, but he didn’t take into account their reactions. His anxiety didn’t make him good with confrontations or having to explain his side of things. the walls started to close in and he felt a panic attack about to start. Was he being stupid? Oversensitive? Would Thea hate him? Think he was abandoning her?

Digg stepped around both ladies and started talking. “Hey, hey, Oliver. Look at me. Felicity, Thea, take a step back. It’s okay, Oliver. Just breathe.”

After several moments of silence and Oliver taking many deep breaths, it seemed his panic attack had been stopped in its tracks and he could focus again. Thea and Felicity both began to apologize.

“I didn’t mean to say it like that, I wasn’t expecting that to be the favor.”

“Sorry, Ollie, I- I didn’t mean to make you-“

Oliver shook his head and started waving his hands back and forth, in the universal gesture of ‘forget I said anything’. Wanting to move out was stupid.

“No, you want to move out. That’s perfectly fine. Let’s talk about it.” Felicity said. “Remember what I said about your feelings being important too?”

*I can’t stay there. With the way Mom keeps acting, and what she said, I can’t. it’s just making things worse.*

Thea nodded in understanding. Felicity raised an eyebrow at what he’d written. Clearly something was going on that he didn’t want to share. As curious as she was, he didn’t want to talk about it so she wouldn’t press.

“I’ll help you look for a place.”

“Me too.” Thea agreed.

“I know we haven’t been friends for long, but if you need to, I have a spare room you can stay in.” Felicity suggested. She didn’t know what was going on at Oliver’s house, but she sensed he was damaging his own mental health by staying.
‘I don’t want to trouble you.’

“You wouldn’t be. You don’t have to take me up on the offer, but its there if you need it or change your mind.” She assured him.

“Ok, lets talk details.” Thea said, wanting to move away from the heavy stuff for a while. “Apartment? Condo? What features do you want?”

They spoke for several hours while Felicity worked and Thea had a list of some things Oliver was looking for. The Queen siblings went home, and went their separate ways. Thea started looking online for places that matched Oliver’s criteria. Oliver went to his room, wanting to distract himself from his racing thoughts. Planning calmed his mind somewhat, so he planned who his next target would be. When that didn’t work, he began packing. He wanted to have a bag ready to go in case things at the mansion got even worse and he needed to leave immediately. Having a go-bag made it easier for him to deal with his hypervigilance.

The next day, Oliver only left his room for meals. Around 4pm, his mother came into his room and told him Laurel was there to see him. He told her he didn’t want to see Laurel, remembering the last time he saw her and what she’d said. He wasn’t sure that his mom wouldn’t ignore him, so he locked himself in the bathroom for an hour before texting Thea to make sure Laurel wasn’t there.

Nothing important happened over the next few days He worked out, avoided his mother and read. He and Thea visited a few of the places he was looking at in secret. Roughly a week after he’d gone to see Felicity, Oliver was walking towards the kitchen when his mother accosted him.

“Care to explain why Jean Loring sent leasing paperwork over for you to sign to rent a penthouse in the city?”

He froze and got a deer in the headlights look. It was now or never. *I’ve decided to move out.*

“No, you aren’t moving out.”

*Yes, I am.*

“No, you aren’t. I won’t allow it.”

*I’m an adult. You can’t stop me.*

“You’re an adult without a job, living off of our family’s money. If you leave, you’re cut off.”

Logically, Oliver knew she couldn’t do that. He was 27, he’d gained access to his trust fund at 25. Short of having him declared incompetent, which she couldn’t actually do, his mother had no say in this. It was the implication that made him panic though. Would she stop him from seeing or talking to Thea? Was this all a means of maintain control? What lengths would she go to to keep him at the mansion? He started to get agitated and then Thea came into the hallway. She could tell Oliver didn’t feel comfortable with the conversation that was happening.

“What are you two arguing about?”

“Your brother wants to move out.”

“Okay, and? He’s 27 years old.”

“I won’t allow it.”
“You won’t let him?” Thea asked incredulously.

“No, I won’t.” She said firmly.

The brunette nodded before taking her cellphone out and dialing a number. She’d need back-up for this. “Hey, can you come to the mansion?....he did and....no, it didn’t....he could really use some support.....ok, I’ll see you soon.” Thea hung up the phone.

“Who was that?” Moira demanded to know.

“A friend of Ollie’s.”

Across town, Felicity hung up her phone and got into her car. Thea hadn’t told her exactly what was going on, but from her tone, it wasn’t good. She still hadn’t gotten the whole story about why Oliver felt he needed to move out, but something told her it would make her furious.
Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

The Queen family meets Felicity, and she has some things to say.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Luckily, Felicity had the foresight to text John that she was coming over to the mansion. She’d never been there before and didn’t want to have to deal with any issues getting onto the property. It would just mean it took her longer to get to Oliver. Digg replied with just ‘ok’ so she’d know he’d seen the text. She texted back asking how bad the situation was, but didn’t get a response.

Soon enough, Felicity pulled into the driveway leading up to the Queen mansion. Digg was outside waiting and waved her inside, past the other members of the security team.

“Do you know what happened?”

“He told his mother he wanted to move out and she wasn’t happy. She’s threatening to cut him off and he started to shut down.”

“Oh.” She said as she followed him further into the house. They reached a formal sitting room, where Oliver was seated on the couch, Thea was next to him and a woman she recognized from the news, Moira Queen, was standing. “Oliver?”

“Who are you?” Moira asked, less than politely.

“I’m a friend of your son’s.” she answered before walking past her to get closer to Oliver. “Are you okay?”

‘No.’ he signed.

‘Do you want to leave?’ she signed.

‘Yes, but she won’t let me. She wants to cut me off. What if she doesn’t let me see Thea again?’

‘I don’t think you or Thea would let that happen.’

“What exactly are you doing?” Moira asked.

“Talking to Oliver.” Felicity said in a confused tone.

Tommy, who’d come into the room shortly after Felicity, spoke up. “Since when does Ollie know sign language?”

The blonde turned to Oliver and silently asked him if it was okay for her to tell them the truth. He nodded. “Since he asked me to teach it to him.”

“Oliver, we agreed-“
‘No, you agreed. I wanted to learn ASL, so I found someone to teach me.’ Felicity interpreted for him.

“Well, while I’m sure he appreciates your help, he won’t be needing it anymore.”

“Isn’t that for him to decide?” She responded. “Just like where he lives is for him to decide.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“I know that Oliver wants to move out. He told you about his plans and you told him he couldn’t leave. Despite the fact that he’s a 27-year old, fully functioning adult.”

“That’s what I said.” Thea remarked from the couch.

“Oliver can’t function on his own, he-“

“Doesn’t talk, I know. And while that’s difficult, its not as bad as you seem to think it is. He can still hear, he can see, he can feed himself, clothe himself, take care of his personal hygiene. The only thing he can’t do is talk, which he’s figured out ways to work around.” she said. “He’s an adult. I’m sure he has access to his trust fund, making him financially independent, and his condition doesn’t hinder his ability to take care of himself. What’s the problem with him moving out?”

“I won’t allow it.”

“Again, he’s an adult.”

Tommy stepped in, wanting to diffuse the situation. “Look, you and Oliver haven’t known each other for very long, but-“

“No, I haven’t. But he is my friend and I defend my friends. Whatever she said to him made him feel unsafe here, so we’re gonna get to the bottom of it.”

‘Forget it, Felicity. They won’t listen. They never do.’

“What do you mean?”

‘I keep telling them that I’m not the Oliver that left, but they don’t get it. Tommy wants me to use the island as a way to pick up women. My mom wants me to take over QC. I’ve told them, but they don’t listen.’ He said, not looking at anyone. ‘My mom hired a therapist I don’t want, and he told her everything that happened during our sessions. She wants to know where I am all the time and doesn’t understand why I might want privacy or to be alone after so long isolated. I tell her I don’t wanna see Laurel but she keeps letting her come over. She doesn’t even look at me when we try to have a conversation.’

“What?” She said with an edge to her voice.

‘She doesn’t look at me. She’ll read what I write down, most of the time not all of it, but doesn’t look at me when she talks anymore.’

“Do you have a bag or something packed?” She asked Oliver, who nodded. “Go get it.” He left, feeling Tommy and his mother’s eyes on his back. She’d heard enough. It was Loud Voice Time. “He’s leaving.”

“No, he’s-“
“No, he’s leaving. He wants to leave, and frankly, I’m starting to think it’s better for him mentally if he does.”

“What does that mean?”

“Ok. let’s go down the line.” She pointed to Tommy first. “You’re an asshole. He doesn’t want to see Laurel. He doesn’t wanna go bar crawling or use his trauma to get laid. He keeps telling you this, and you still don’t seem to get it. He’s different now, accept it or get out of his life.” She then turned to Thea. “You’re fine, because you’re trying. We can talk about some of the stuff that happened when he first got back later.” Lastly, she turned to Moira. “You, I don’t even have the right words to express how angry I am at you on his behalf.”

“What do you-?”

“One, you’re controlling. He shouldn’t need to tell you where he is every second of everyday. And he’s ditching his bodyguard half the time so that Mr. Diggle can’t report back to you. Two, you clearly don’t respect him. He said he didn’t want a therapist and you just ignored him. The therapist you got him should lose his license for sharing anything that happened during one of their sessions. You keep trying to get him to talk to Laurel despite the fact he’s said multiple times that he doesn’t want to see her. Having met her, I don’t blame him. You seem to think he’s just going to ‘snap out of it’ when it comes to his condition, but that’s not how trauma works. Then, there’s the talking thing.”

“Talking thing?”

“When you two have a conversation. You read what he writes but you rarely read all of it. You read the first sentence or two but don’t bother to be the rest. That’s the nonverbal equivalent to me shouting at the top of my lungs every time you open your mouth. On top of that, when you talk to him, you don’t even have the basic human decency to look at him. You talk to the wall, or to Thea when you’re addressing Oliver. How would you feel if someone did that to you? Why should he want to talk with you or even be around you when you act like that?”

“Who do you think you are?”

“I think I’m a friend of Oliver’s who’s tired of people treating him like crap for not being an irresponsible, reckless and easy to control idiot after going through five years of trauma. You might be his mother, and Tommy, you might’ve known him since you were three, but that doesn’t mean its okay for you to treat him like that.”

By now, Oliver had come back down with his bag. She stood to leave, with Moira, Tommy and Thea following behind them.

“Ollie, you can’t-“

“Oliver, be reasonable-“

“Text me when you feel up to it.”

Oliver turned around, gave Thea a short hug and continued walking. They got into Felicity’s car and she drove away from the house.

“Mr. Diggle, tell Mr. Thompson to close and lock the front gate until further notice.”

“I’m afraid I can’t do that, ma’am.” Digg told her. “They are trying to leave. Doing anything that keeps them from leaving can be considered false imprisonment, such as locking the gate.” The
former soldier doubted Felicity would take things that far, or that they’d have much of a case, but Moira was all about image, and the story wouldn’t make the Queen family look very good.

Felicity stopped at a red light and Oliver tapped her on the shoulder. ‘Maybe you shouldn’t have done that.’

“You didn’t want me to help you?” She asked, a little hurt.

‘No, I’m glad you helped, but this could be bad for you. You work for my family’s company. My mom could have you fired, and blacklisted.’

“She could, but it wouldn’t be very smart of her.” She admitted. “Even if she does, it was worth it. I meant what I said about people not treating you like crap. If I lose my job because I stood up for my friend, I’m okay with that.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts?
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To clarify: its very rude, where I live, not to look at someone when you speak to them. It's also incredibly rude to only acknowledge an interpreter and not the person you're having a conversation with. Yes, the interpreter (ASL or otherwise) is there for a reason/job, but that doesn't mean its okay to pretend that the person they're interpreting for should be ignored. Moira's doing a version of that, and Felicity knows that's not okay.
Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

Felicity and Oliver have a frank discussion, and Moira doesn't get her way (again).

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Oliver stared straight ahead of him until he felt the car come to a complete stop. He couldn't understand why Felicity had defended him so strongly against his family. Yes, they were friends, but she'd only known him for a few weeks. He wasn't sure he was worth the risk of her losing her job.

They'd stopped outside of a small condo in a middle class neighborhood of Starling. Felicity turned her car off and turned to Oliver, who'd been frozen since they'd left the mansion.

“Well, it's not much, but it's home.”

‘Thank you, Felicity’

“You don't need to thank me. I hate to say it, but staying where you were, it wasn't good for you. Having Thea around helped some, but you were dealing with too many others who either didn't believe your condition was real, or minimized it.”

‘They were trying their best.’

“No, they weren’t. I’ve met too many people like them before, I know the difference.” She sighed. “The way you were being treated was bad for your mental health. And trying to get ‘the old Ollie’ back probably set your recovery back significantly. Therapy’s about learning to live with trauma, not pretending it never happened.”

Felicity led Oliver inside her condo and showed him the guest room. It wasn't much, but it made Oliver feel safer than he did at the mansion. He thought it might be because he knew she wasn't a threat and wouldn't make his anxiety worse. He tried to ignore the warm feeling inside of him every time he saw Felicity.

Felicity knew she might go into work tomorrow only to get escorted out by security. It was possible, but given what her contract said, it wasn't likely. Even if she did get fired, she wouldn't regret it. She'd stood up for a friend who needed it. Besides, she had plenty of other projects, not related to QC, that were making money.

Queen Mansion

Moira and Tommy were still standing in the foyer in shock. They had no idea what had just
happened.

“Who was that woman?”

Both turned to Thea for answers. “Her name's Felicity. She's a friend of Ollie’s.”

“And you called her because?” Moira asked.

“He needed someone in his corner other than me.”

“Well, whoever this Felicity is, she's a fool if-”

“Felicity? As in Felicity Smoak?” Walter, who'd just arrived home from a business meeting, asked.

“You know her?” His wife asked.

“Yes, she works for the company.”

“I want that woman fired!”

“Why? Because she stood up for Ollie and didn't let you walk all over him?” Thea asked angrily. “And you wonder why he wanted to leave.”

“Clearly, I missed something.” Walter remarked.

“Ollie wanted to move out. Mom tried to stop him and made some threats. He started having a panic attack, so I called Felicity, who's a friend of his. She stood up for him and they left a little while ago.”

“That woman is incredibly rude and-”

“She told you and Tommy that your behavior towards Oliver wasn't helping him and that you need to accept that he's different now. She only did that after you made it clear you didn't care what Oliver wanted and kept arguing with her.” Thea said.

“Still, I want her fired.”

“That would be a big mistake.” Walter said. "She could sue for wrongful termination, since you don’t hold a position at the company and I’d be firing her for something that has nothing to do with her performance or behavior at work. It would also cost us millions of dollars since we use some of her proprietary software for internal uses and we’d need to either pay a higher price to use it or develop something else after she stopped working there. Not to mention the number of projects we’d need to scrap that she worked on, since she retains legal ownership of those projects, as stated in her iron clad contract.”

Queen Consolidated was jumping to hire Felicity the second she graduated. Her choice came down to QC or Wayne Enterprises. Then, QC offered her what Wayne wouldn't, she’d keep ownership of anything she developed. They were too focused on snapping up the purported next Steve Jobs to consider a less extreme option.

“So, we can't do anything.” Moira said.

“You could try taking what she said seriously and changing your behavior.” Thea said before sauntering away.

Moira and Tommy were left standing in the foyer. Moira was too busy feeling insulted that
someone had stood up to her to think about anything that was said. Tommy was struggling to understand what had just happened. Did Felicity have a point? Had he been ignoring the clear signs Oliver had been giving out?

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts?
The day after Oliver had moved into Felicity’s guest room, the blonde woke up and went into work like normal. Yes, there was a very slim chance she could get fired for what she did, but she wasn’t going to hide from anyone. If they were going to fire her, they’d have to tell her in person.

She got to her office and started checking her emails. She also began processing help desk tickets, since it was her day to do that in the rotation. She was so busy doing that, she didn’t notice as an hour and a half flew by. Then, there was a knock on her door. She looked up to see Walter Steele there.

“Good morning, Ms. Smoak.”

“Mr. Steele, hi.” She said politely. She was trying not to show how nervous she really was. While her contract was ironclad, QC had managed to work around those before when they really wanted to.

“I was hoping to speak with you about a personal matter.”

“It’s about Oliver, isn’t it?” she asked. “Or better yet, my coming to his defense last night. This is probably the part where you fire me.”

“You aren’t fired. I don’t know what happened when you arrived at the mansion last night or what was said. But I can’t, and I won’t, fire one of our best employees for personal reasons. Your contract says so. Your friendship with Oliver has nothing to do with your performance at work or your behavior while in the office. And I’ve always believed one’s personal life should be separate from their professional one.”

“Okay. Uh, thanks for not firing me.” She wasn’t quite sure how she was supposed to respond.

“At the risk of sounding like a hypocrite and ignoring that line of separation I just mentioned, could I ask you to pass one message along to Oliver?”

“Yeah.” She said, hesitantly.

“Could you ask him to message me, when he feels up to it? I understand he may need some time to think about it, but please tell him I’d like to speak with him.”

“Can I be honest?” Felicity asked. Walter nodded. “It might take him a while.”

“Understandable. I won’t keep you from work any longer.” He said before leaving her office.
Laurel walked into the mansion like she owned the place. Up until now, she’d come over to try and see Oliver. Today, however, she’d been invited by Moira Queen. The woman had only told her she needed to see her about an urgent legal matter. This was the first time Moira wanted Dinah Laurel Lance, attorney at law, and not Laurel Lance, Oliver’s ex-girlfriend.

“He’s not here you know.” Thea remarked, unhappy to see Laurel. She didn’t know what had happened between her, Ollie and Felicity, but she could guess it wasn’t good if Oliver would lock himself in a bathroom to avoid her.

“He’s not?”

“Nope. Moved out.” She was hoping Oliver would also pull his head out of his ass and act on his feelings for Felicity soon.

“Ah, there you are Laurel.” Moira said, entering the room. She led her through the house into one of the smaller sitting rooms. “I suppose you would like to know what this is about.”

“Yes. Does it have something to do with Oliver?”

“Yes. He’s moved out, which I disagree with.” She said as she handed her a stack of papers. “This is every document I have relating to Oliver’s trust. I want to know what I have to do to cut him off.” If he was going to make this difficult, then she would make things difficult.

Laurel read through the paperwork. It didn’t look good for Moira. There wasn’t any kind of clause barring Oliver from accessing his trust fund. He wasn’t required to marry before a certain age or hold a job or anything. The only thing he needed to do was turn 25 and outlive the person who set up the trust by 90 days. Since the trust was set up by his grandparents, he’d done that. Additionally, Moira was not the trustee of the fund, and thus couldn’t prevent Oliver from receiving what he was entitled to.

“Based just on these documents, you can’t.”

“What do you mean I can’t?”

“Oliver needed to do two things to access this money. He needed to turn 25, which he did. And he needed to outlive his grandfather by 90 days, which he did. Since it was Mr. Queen’s parents who left him this money, you don’t have a case to challenge the will in court.” She said. “The only way to control this fund is if you were to obtain guardianship over Oliver.”

“Oliver’s 27.”

“Yes, but if an adult is proven to not be mentally competent, the court will assign them a guardian to make decisions, including those involving his finances, on his behalf.”

“There’s just one problem: we can’t prove that.”

“Why not?”

“Oliver had to be evaluated by a psychologist before they would release him from the hospital. He was later evaluated by a different, court-appointed psychologist when we were in the process of bringing him back from the dead legally. Both evaluations were submitted to the court.”

“So, there’s nothing I can do.” Moira said.

“Nothing for now. Give me a few days.” She insisted. She wasn’t sure she wanted to do this, but
having Moira as a client would help her career. CNRI needed donors and this might give her a chance to snap Oliver out of it. "Estate law isn't my specialty, there might be some obscure law I'm unaware of."

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

In which Thea is the world's best sister, Felicity is mystified by how delusional Moira is and Tommy finally picks a side.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Thea stuck her head out of her bedroom door and checked the hallway. When she saw is was empty, she closed the door, locked it and pulled out her phone.

>> To: Ollie: I need you to Facetime me RIGHT NOW!

>> From: Ollie: What’s wrong?

Rolling her eyes, she went down further in her contacts and dialed the number. “Are you with Ollie right now?”

“I just got home, so I can go grab him. Why?” Felicity answered.

“Can you put me on speaker?” She said hurriedly. She could hear Felicity pressing buttons on the other end.

“Okay, you’re on speaker.”

“Mom and Laurel are up to something.”

At Felicity’s place, she gave Oliver a look as he processed what Thea was saying. “When you say up to something, what do you mean?”

“Laurel came to the house. Mom seemed to be expecting her and took her into one of the rooms we never use.” She told them. “I waited a little bit before following after them. Mom seemed- it just felt off to me. I might’ve stood outside the room and listened in. They were talking about Ollie’s trust fund and how to cut him off.”

“They can’t.” Felicity pointed out.

“Yeah, that’s what she told Mom, but then Laurel said something about incompetence.”

“They can’t prove it. I was evaluated and deemed mentally sound.” Oliver signed to Felicity.

She repeated what he said to her. “Thea, did either of them say anything about what they were going to do?”

“Mom told Laurel Ollie had been evaluated and everything. She told her she’d need a few more days, saying estate law wasn’t her specialty and she needed to look further into it.” She said. “Can they- could they get him declared incompetent.”

“They could try, yes, but its gonna be an uphill battle. Mental illness isn’t the same thing as being
mentally incompetent. His situation, what he’s been through, what he’s dealing with, it doesn’t prevent him from making sound decisions or taking care of himself.” Felicity admitted. “Was Walter there or do you think he was involved?” She hadn’t had a chance to tell Oliver about him visiting her earlier that day.

“No, he was at work. And when he found out about Ollie moving out, he seemed supportive. Well, he said that it might be what he needs. Why?”

“He stopped by to see me today. He asked me to ask Oliver to contact him when he feels ready.” She answered. “I only said I’d pass the message along. Then, you called and I didn’t want to say anything before knowing if he was a part of this.”

“I don’t think he is.” Thea told her. “What do we do?”

“For right now, nothing. We need to see what they’re going to try first. A very naïve part of me hopes Laurel won’t be able to find a loophole and your mother will just drop it.”

“That’s not gonna happen.” Thea said angrily.

Oliver began saying something. ‘Can you ask if mom talked to Jean Loring?’ Felicity repeated the question.

“No. I think Mom’s gonna fire her for not telling her about Oliver buying his apartment or wanting to move out.”

“Um, not to be rude, but does your mom not understand how the law and legal ethics work?” Felicity wondered. “Because this is like the fifth thing she either doesn’t know or wants to ignore about the law. Oliver came to Jean, as a client, to go through the process of buying the apartment. He paid her with his money, not your mother’s, making him her client and she had no obligation to tell Moira anything. How did she find out anyway?”

‘She opened the envelope of paperwork Jean sent over.’

“Oh, so she committed a felony by opening mail that wasn’t addressed to her.” Felicity said. It honestly surprised her how much crap Moira got away with. “Ok, we’ll call Jean as soon as we get off the phone and talk with her. See what Oliver’s options are.”

‘Thanks for the heads up Speedy.’ Felicity repeated the message and they ended the phone call.

Their next call was to Jean to discuss options. She asked Oliver to come to her office the next day. That call ended and Oliver asked Felicity if he could talk with her and Digg about something the following night.

Tommy tried to call Oliver after he stormed out of the mansion with Felicity, but all of the calls went unanswered. It took him about 12 hours to realize that calling someone who was mute wasn’t the best idea. That just made him feel even more guilty because of how willfully ignorant he was being. He stopped trying to contact Oliver for a little while, needing to figure out what to say. He knew ‘sorry I was a sick who ignored your trauma’ wasn’t very helpful.

It was while Tommy was working on what he wanted to tell Oliver and how he wanted to approach him that Laurel called. Other than random booty calls, she hadn’t reached out to him in a few days.

“Hey.” He said, answering the phone.
“Hi. I need to ask you something.”

“Sure, anything.”

“How much time have you spent around Ollie since he came back and would you be willing to testify about the changes in his behavior?”

“What?” Laurel repeated the question. “What’s this about?”

She didn’t fully explain what Moira’s plan was, just said that Oliver was refusing to listen to his mother’s wishes and things might have to go to court. Laurel didn’t want having Oliver declared incompetent to be their first plan of attack, but she needed character witnesses in case things came to that. Tommy, Oliver’s best friend, was the ideal person to testify about his odd behavior recently.

“I haven’t spent much time with him and I don’t feel comfortable doing that.” He said honestly.

“It’s for his own good. He needs a wake-up call.”

Tommy didn’t want to argue, knowing it wouldn’t do any good and made an excuse to end the conversation. He immediately texted Oliver, no longer worried about how angry his friend might be.

>>To: Ollie: Laurel just called me. She asked about me testifying about your recent behavior. I think she’s trying to have you declared insane or something.

Moments later, he got a response.

>>From: Ollie: Meet me at Loring & Wasserman tomorrow at 10am. Thanks for the head’s up.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Oliver and Felicity talk to Jean, Tommy tries to right his wrongs and Felicity's done playing defense.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Felicity stood next to Oliver as he looked up at the office building in front of them. Jean Loring’s practice, Loring and Wasserman, took up the top floor. When she saw Oliver gulp slightly, she grabbed his hand and squeezed it gently, showing her support.

“We’ve come this far, let’s keep going.”

‘Thank you.’

They walked into the building and Felicity was pressing a button for the elevator when Tommy called out to Oliver. They turned around to see him jogging over to them.

“Hey, how- how’ve you been?” he asked awkwardly.

‘Not great.’ He answered honestly. As always, Felicity translated his words. ‘I wish I didn’t have to be here. I wish it didn’t come to this.’

“Come to what?”

“You’ll see when he tells Jean what’s been going on.” She told him. “Other than Laurel’s phone call, can you think of anything else they’ve approached you about in regards to Oliver?”

“Not that I can think of. What’s- do you know what they’re up to?”

“We’ve got suspicions.” She answered cryptically as the elevator reached the correct floor. Felicity approached the receptionist and explained they had an appointment with Jean. They were led into a small conference room and offered refreshments. After about five minutes, Jean came into the room.

“Mr. Queen, nice to see you.” She said as she shook his hand. “This is more of a crowd than I was expecting.”

“I’m here as his interpreter.” Felicity explained. “And I’m also a witness to some of the things Oliver wanted to discuss with you. As is Tommy.”

“Ok, what’s this about?”

“We think Moira Queen and Laurel Lance are planning to try to have Oliver declared mentally incompetent.”

“And what makes you think that?”
‘I wanted to move out, as you know. When I told my mother, she threatened to cut me off, which she’s unable to do because I have fully access to my trust fund.’ Oliver signed. ‘Thea overheard them discussing loopholes and Laurel brought up that if I were declared unable to make sound decisions-’

“You’d be placed under the guardianship of another person, with your mother being the most likely choice.” Jean filled in. “Why would she do this? I believe you, but I need to know more about her angle.”

“She’s a control freak.” Felicity said. “Oliver’s behavior since he came back isn’t what she wanted. She wanted a prodigal son, but he’s different now and she refuses to accept or acknowledge it. Her behavior was making Oliver’s mental health worse, so he wanted to move out. She refused to let him.”

“Do you have anything to add, Mr. Merlyn?” Jean asked.

“Last night, Laurel called me out of the blue. She asked how much time I’d spent around Ollie since he came back and whether I’d testify about his changes in behavior. She wouldn’t tell me much beyond that. I told her I didn’t feel comfortable with what she was asking, and she claimed Oliver needed a wake-up call.”

Felicity snorted. “Of course she did.”

“Could you elaborate?”

“She thinks he needs a wake-up call because she thinks this, Oliver not speaking, his changes in behavior, the symptoms of PTSD, are all an act, so that he doesn’t have to apologize to her or face what he’s done. Her words, not mine.”

“She thinks he’s faking?” Tommy asked.

“Yes. She made that clear when she accosted him in a coffee shop when he was just sitting there, not bothering anyone.” Felicity explained. She didn’t mention that Laurel had been calling and texting Oliver repeatedly for the last two days.

“So, you’ve come here so we can be prepared in case Laurel and Moira move forward with their plan.” Jean summarized. “I’d be happy to represent Oliver in that case. Or any other attempt they make.” She wrote something down before turning to Oliver. “I don’t suppose you brought the forms I sent over regarding your new apartment?”

‘No. My mom saw that the envelope was from me and opened it. She read the forms and confronted me, which led to me telling her I was planning to move out.’

“She opened your mail?”

“Yes.’

“I had those forms delivered by courier because I knew the situation was unique. The courier wasn’t supposed to let go of that envelope until it was in your hands.” The attorney said, distressed. “I gave very specific instructions.”

“Having known Mrs. Queen, you probably persuaded the courier to leave it with her. She lives in the house and would be able to give it to Oliver.” Tommy pointed out.

“But she was aware those documents weren’t meant for her. By opening them, his mother
committed a federal offense.”

‘It’s not surprising after what she did to my therapist. She forced me to see him, and even though I
didn’t tell him anything substantial, he disclosed everything that happened in our sessions to her.’
Felicity repeated what he said.

Jean sat up straighter at the news. “Can you prove this? We could use it to show that Moira isn’t
acting in Oliver’s best interest. And, if you want, we can sue the doctor for breach of
confidentiality.”

“I don’t know. I might be able to find some proof.” Felicity said.

‘It would be my word against hers.’

“It wouldn’t just be yours. We can subpoena the doctor. Someone else may have overheard a
discussion they had, such as Thea or Walter.” Tommy said. “Hell, if they had this talk at your
house, Raisa or one of the security team could’ve heard it.”

“Speaking of Thea, will you be okay if I step out into the hallway really quick?” Felicity asked.
Mentioning Thea and the mansion reminded her of something. She went into the hallway and
called Thea. The teen was supposed to be at school but skipped for the day. “I need to ask you a
question about Laurel.”

“She hasn’t been back since last night.”

“Good, but that wasn’t the question. Is there any kind of record of people coming and going from
the mansion? Security cams? Anything like that?”

“I think Walter had some put up about two years ago. I’m not sure.”

“That’s okay. I was just wondering.” She hung up and went back into the room.

They wrapped up their meeting with Jean and left. Tommy asked Oliver to text him when he was
ready to talk and Felicity and Oliver went back to her condo. They pulled up outside and found
Laurel standing there.

“What are you doing here? Leave.”

“I came to talk to him.”

“How did you know where he was?” Felicity asked. “Oliver, stay in the car.”

“Moira told me he was staying with you.” She said, looking at the building with disgust.

“Ok, but how do you know where I live?” Felicity asked. “I’m not in the phone book.” She could
think of two scenarios. Either Laurel looked her up using DMV records, which she didn’t have a
valid reason to do, or she ran her name through a police database, which would only require asking
her father for a favor. Felicity pulled out her phone and started dialing. “Yes, hello. I’d like to
report a trespasser on my property.”

“What are you doing?”

“You’re on my property, I’ve asked you to leave. You’re refusing to leave, meaning you’re
trespassing.”
Laurel scoffed and stormed off, getting into her car. Felicity told the dispatcher the trespasser was gone.

Over the next few days, Laurel continued to show up at Felicity’s condo at random times, demanding to speak with Oliver. She also called and texted him multiple times a day. Twice, she came to QC and confronted Felicity.

Unfortunately for her, Felicity kept detailed accounts of this happening and, after her second appearance at QC, Felicity and Oliver went to the SCPD with everything they had. Luckily, Quentin Lance didn’t work at the precinct they went to. Luckier still, the officers they spoke to weren’t his biggest fans and didn’t warn him about the charges Oliver and Felicity were pressing.

Laurel was at a fundraising lunch for CNRI, trying to drum up investors from Starling City’s elite when two men in suits she didn’t recognize approached her.

“Dinah Laurel Lance?” One of them asked.

“Yes.”

“You’ve been served.” He said, handing her an envelope and walking out.

The other attendees were staring at her and whispering among themselves. Laurel opened the envelope and read what was inside. It was a temporary restraining order. She wasn’t to be within 500 feet of Oliver Queen or Felicity Smoak. Moments later, two uniformed officers entered the restaurant.

“Stand up please.”


“Because you’re under arrest for harassment.” One of the officers said. “Stand up or I’ll have to add ‘resisting arrest’ to your charges.”

Feeling eyes on her, Laurel stood up and let herself be escorted out of the building.

Chapter End Notes

Thoughts? Comments?
Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Laurel's arraignment hearing takes place, Oliver comes clean about something and pressing charges throws a wrench in Moira's plans.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Laurel was escorted out of the restaurant and into a police car. The cruiser drove to a SCPD precinct downtown where Laurel was taken inside and booked. The entire time she tried to convince the officers that this was a mistake and demanded that they call her father.

As luck would have it, they were taking Laurel into a holding cell when Detective Lance showed up. “What do you think you’re doing?”

“I’ve got a warrant for her arrest. We arrested her. She’s here.”

“On what charges?”

“Why are you asking Lance? You don’t work at this precinct, it’s not a major crimes case and you aren’t exactly neutral in all of this.”

“I’m asking as a professional courtesy.” He reasoned. “This is a misunderstanding. Drop the charges.”

“I can’t do that. Two people came in wanting to press charges and they had enough evidence to warrant arresting your daughter. There’s nothing I can do.” The officer didn’t say it, but even if he could drop the charges, he didn’t want to. Lance was a good cop, unless his daughters were involved. He had a tendency to sweep things under the rug whenever they were involved.

“Who pressed the charges?”

“I’m not gonna tell you that and you know I’m not gonna tell you that. You can’t be involved with this at all. If you keep trying to get information on this case, IA’s gonna have to get involved.”

Lance grumbled, promised his daughter they’d work this out and stormed away. The arresting officer asked Laurel if she wanted to call an attorney, but she smugly responded that she’d be defending herself.

“Well, your arraignment won’t be until tomorrow morning.” He informed her before walking away.

Moira was impatiently looking at the clock. Laurel should’ve been here by now. She called her cell phone and left a message. Thea came into the room right as she was ending the message.

“Who are you waiting for?”
“Laurel. She was supposed to meet with me to discuss— it doesn’t matter. I wonder where she is.”

“I don’t think she’s gonna be able to meet with you today.” Thea said knowingly.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, Laurel got arrested a few hours ago, so she’s a little busy right now.”

“Arrested? On what charges?”

“Why would I know?” Thea shrugged before leaving the room.

Laurel was under arrest. That just wouldn’t do. Moira needed to act quickly to make Oliver see sense. She couldn’t do that if her lawyer was in a prison cell. She asked one of the servants to bring the car around. She needed to get to the SCPD and clear this mess up.

Moira arrived at the closest police station and asked to see the officer that arrested Laurel Lance. No one there knew what she was talking about. She started making a fuss and then the captain came out to address her. He refused to answer any of her questions and told his men to ignore her. Eventually, she got frustrated and left, threatening to call the mayor.

Knowing, or at least suspecting, that Laurel’s arrest would garner attention on them, Felicity, Oliver and Digg were holed up at Felicity’s condo. Over the few weeks that he’d been Oliver’s bodyguard, they’d become friends or at the very least friendly. And after he didn’t stop Oliver from leaving the Queen mansion, Felicity trusted him.

Around dusk, Oliver told them he wanted to show them something. He drove them to an abandoned steel factory in the Glades that used to belong to Queen Consolidated. He led them into the building and down into the basement. This was where his lair as the Hood was set up. He pulled out his phone and opened Felicity’s app.

“I needed to tell both of you the truth. I’m the vigilante.” It read out.

“You’re the Hood?” Felicity asked.

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“People are poisoning this city. Starling City is dying because too many people, people like my father, failed it. I want to bring justice, real justice, to this city.” The program read.

“That’s why you kept ditching me.”

“Does this, does it have anything to do with your….vocal issues?”

‘Yes and no. The experiences that turned me into the vigilante also took my voice, but it didn’t cause it.’

“I’m not- I can’t do this, Oliver.” John said turning away. “This is not- I’m out. I’ll keep the secret but-“ he left.
“Does it help?” Felicity asked quietly. “Doing this, being the vigilante, does it help you?”

‘A little. It makes me feel like I survived for a reason.’

“Okay then.” She said. “Are you planning to head out tonight or-?”

‘No. but I didn’t want to lie to you anymore.’

Early the next morning, Laurel was taken out of her cell and escorted to the courthouse. Her father, Moira Queen, and her friend Joanna were the only people who seemed to be there supporting her. Part of her was hurt that Tommy hadn’t come. Just before the hearing began, Moira spotted Jean Loring entering the room but didn’t have time to address her.

The bailiff began to speak. “Dinah Laurel Lance. You’re charged with three counts of harassment, two counts trespassing, one count of stalking, and one count of illegal information gathering. How do you plead?”

“Not guilty.” She answered. “And this is ridiculous.”

The judge banged his gavel. “I will not have outbursts in my court room.” He turned to the DA. “What is the People’s recommendation?”

“Ms. Lance is an attorney herself. She has a number of active cases and we don’t deem her a flight risk.” The DA answered.

“Fine. Bail is set at 10,000.” The judge announced. He was about to bang his gavel when Jean stood up.

“Your Honor, if I may interject.”

“Who are you?”

“Jean Loring. I represent one of the parties pressing charges against Ms. Lance. I move to add an additional stipulation to her bail. She’s aware of who is pressing charges against her. I move that she, nor anyone acting on her behalf, attempt to directly contact her accusers.”

“Objection. This condition prevents me from being able to build a defense against these charges.” Laurel argued.

“The People will provide you with copies of the evidence and a list of witnesses. I don’t see why you should need to contact the alleged victims yourself.” The judge said. “Overruled.”

Laurel’s bail was paid and she put in a motion to move the trial date up. Jean went to her office and told Oliver and Felicity how the hearing went.

After her bail was posted, Laurel left the station to find Moira waiting. “How exactly did this happen?”

“Oliver’s new friend decided to fight dirty. Which….complicates things.”

“How?”
“They both have restraining orders against me, which means I can’t be within a certain distance of them which means I can’t approach Oliver to ask him to talk things out with you.”

“So we’ll take the matter to court.”

“That’s also a problem, because any sane judge will throw out the case if I’m in the process of being tried for harassing and possibly stalking Oliver.”

“Well, let’s hope Oliver drops the charges.” Moira said, leading Laurel over to her car.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts?
Chapter 17

Chapter Summary

With Laurel's arrest now public knowledge, some people try to make the whole situation go away while others gain some clarity.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Felicity sat with Oliver when Jean told them the news about Laurel’s arraignment. She told them she was trying to have the trial date moved up because she thought the charges were ridiculous.

“Who’s representing her?” Felicity wondered aloud.

“She’s decided to represent herself.”

“Isn’t there a saying about lawyers who represent themselves?”

“Yes, they have a fool for a client. This is good though.”

‘How?’ Oliver signed to Felicity. He’d been arrested before, but his parents always bailed him out, so he didn’t know how the actual trial process worked. She repeated the question to Jean.

“Laurel isn’t acting rationally. If she hired a lawyer, that person would be more objective and try to find a way to argue against the facts. From what I’ve seen, she’s focusing on her own feelings and opinions and will probably continue doing that.”

‘So she’s probably going to make a mistake.’

“I want both of you to keep an eye out. Laurel, her coworkers at CNRI, her father. If any of them approach you, I want you to contact me immediately. Actually, if anyone other than the two detectives you gave your statements to approach you and asks about this case or the charges, call me.”

“Will do.” Felicity promised before hanging up. “How are you doing?”

‘I wish it didn’t come to this. I wish she could’ve just left me alone and my mother would just listen to me.’

“I’m sorry this is happening too.” She told him. “You haven’t changed your mind though, have you?”

‘No. I don’t like this, but its what I need to do.’ He told her. ‘Thank you.’

“For what?”

‘Helping me, believing me. Giving me a place to stay. Not screaming or running away when I told you the truth.’

“John’s gonna be back, he just needs some time. I can see why it’s a lot to process. And you never
Tommy was sitting in his room at Merlyn Mansion. He had his laptop open with several articles about PTSD, trauma and helping a friend going through a difficult time loaded in different tabs. He knew this was a little nerdy, and he would’ve laughed at himself a month ago, but he wasn’t sure how to help Ollie. He didn’t know how to help his friend, but maybe one of these articles or websites might.

He was halfway through with an article on the Mayo Clinic’s website when his phone rang. He answered it without looking at the caller ID. “Hello?”

“Where have you been?” Laurel asked.

“Well, right now I’m at home looking through-“

“Why weren’t you at my hearing?”

“Hearing? What hearing?”

“My arraignment. I got arrested yesterday.” She said angrily.

“For what?”

“Ollie and his new friend went to the police with this made up story about how I’m harassing them and how she thinks I’m stalking Ollie. It’s ridiculous. And you- you, didn’t even show up when I needed you to.”

Over the last few days, he’d thought a lot about his relationship with Laurel recently and some of the things she was saying was making him a little uneasy. “What do you mean?”

“I needed you there to support me. And you weren’t there.”

“How was I supposed to be? I didn’t know this was happening. You didn’t tell me, you didn’t ask anyone to let me know, and I’ve been holed up in my house for two days. I didn’t know any of this was going on.” He said. “So, now that you’ve yelled at me, what happens now?”

“Now, I’m gonna get even with Oliver and his friend. They had me arrested, they embarrassed me. I’m gonna make them pay.”

“I’m not sure that’s a good idea.” Tommy told her. “It might make things worse.”

“I know what I’m doing.” She said, practically growling, as she hung up the phone.

Felicity woke up the next day, got dressed and went to work. She sat through two meetings for potential collaborations before grabbing lunch and returning to her office. Her good mood vanished the second she entered her office and found Moira standing there.

“Hi.” She said warily.

“I want to talk to Oliver about something. Where is he?”

“Why do you wanna talk to him?”
“That isn’t your concern.”

“Well, when you consider he’s currently pressing charges against Laurel, you keep trying to make him talk to Laurel and her bail will get revoked if she tries to talk to him, yes it is.” Felicity explained. “And also, I’m not his babysitter.”

“My son is sick.”

“No, he isn’t. He’s just thinking for himself and you don’t like that.” She countered. “I think you should go, unless you want to discuss the upgrades I’m making to the company firewall.”

“Or what?”

“Well, I’d have to contact the judge presiding over Laurel’s trial and inform him that Laurel, through you, is trying to contact Oliver despite knowing she isn’t supposed to. I don’t want to do that, but I will.”

“Are you threatening her? Or me?”

“How is asking someone to respect a valid restraining order threatening? Oliver wants to be left alone. As do I. I’ll tell him you came to visit, and if he wants to talk to you, I’m sure he will.”

The Queen matriarch must not have had anything to say, because she let out a huff and left. The rest of Felicity’s workday went by smoothly, in spite of the strange looks her coworkers were giving her.

She drove home and got out of her car. She was locking the vehicle when she heard someone call her name. She turned around to see a man old enough to be her father approaching her.

“How is asking someone to respect a valid restraining order threatening? Oliver wants to be left alone. As do I. I’ll tell him you came to visit, and if he wants to talk to you, I’m sure he will.”

The Queen matriarch must not have had anything to say, because she let out a huff and left. The rest of Felicity’s workday went by smoothly, in spite of the strange looks her coworkers were giving her.

“Can I help you?”

“Yes, my name is Detective Lance.”

“You really shouldn’t be here, detective.” She said.

“Oh really, and why’s that?”

“You know why. Let me guess, you’re here to try and convince me to let you talk to Oliver about the case against Laurel.”

“He killed one of my daughters and now he’s trying to get the other one locked up.”

“No, he isn’t. He wants to be left alone. Your daughter refuses to leave him alone. Things were escalating and he, we, needed to do something. If Laurel had just left him alone, there wouldn’t need to be a case.”

“Yeah, because he’s totally innocent in all of this.”

“In this? Yes. Because he’s gone out of his way to steer clear of your family, but she won’t let him. And before you say it, whatever happened five years ago doesn’t justify the harassment he’s been dealing with.” She argued. “And now, you’re here trying to fix things for her, which isn’t gonna look good.”

“Meaning?”
“Well, you’re a cop. I’m a victim and potential witness to the crime your daughter is being tried for. This isn’t your jurisdiction, either.” She pointed out. “At best, you’re a man with a blindspot, at worst, you might be a crooked cop.” She stepped around him and walked to her front door. “That’s all I have to say to you, detective.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 18

Chapter Summary

Felicity talks to Oliver about her surprise guests, Thea tries to encourage her brother and Oliver has some self-worth issues.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Felicity walked into her condo and let out the deep breath she was holding in. She wasn’t a very combative person by nature, nor was she big on confrontation. The last few days, however, had brought out that side of her. She walked into her kitchen, where she was surprised to see Oliver cooking something. She didn’t want to startle him, so she dropped her bag on the table with a quiet thud, causing him to turn around.

“Hey.”

‘Hi. How was work?’

“It was fine, until your mom showed up. She wanted to talk to you.”

‘Did she do something? Cause a scene?’

“No, she was just a little unpleasant, and didn’t understand why I wouldn’t budge. I’m mostly annoyed that she’s interrupting my workday, and the workday of other employees, for a personal matter.”

‘Did you tell Jean?’

“I’m not sure if I should. She didn’t bring up Laurel or the case, so I can’t say she was definitely trying to pull something. At the same time, telling her feels like the right move.” She said. “But first, I need to check to make sure the external cameras are on.”

‘Why?’

“Because Laurel’s father was waiting for me when I got home.”

‘Are you okay? Did he threaten you?’ Oliver felt guilty. Ever since he met Felicity, he’d been making her like more complicated. Maybe he should just leave, so that she wouldn’t have to deal with his problems.

“I’m fine, but I need to call Jean.” She promised him. “And get that ‘this is all my fault’ look off of your face. You can’t control the actions, or overreactions, of other people.” She looked past him to what he was cooking. “What is that?”

‘I made dinner. I wanted to thank you for helping me so much. It’s just some pasta and grilled chicken but I thought-‘ This was hard for him. Talking about his feelings was hard. Expressing himself was hard. Even if he didn’t need to speak, it was difficult for him to tell Felicity what he wanted to say.
“I can’t wait to try it, thank you.” She said before heading to her room to change.

They ate dinner before Felicity called Jean. She told her about Moira’s visit at her work and her conversation with Lance. She mentioned that Moira didn’t outright say what she wanted but Lance made his motivations clear. Oliver sat beside Felicity as she and Jean discussed what to do.

“There’s a question I’ve been….reluctant to ask, but since Laurel seems determined to fight this out, I need to know.” Jean said. “Is there anything in your past that I should know about, Felicity?”

“In what sense?”

“Laurel may try to attack your character while attempting to prove her innocence. I need to know, and the DA’s gonna need to know, if there are any skeletons in your closet that she might find. I don’t want you to be blindsided.”

“I had a stalker my first year of college. My ex-boyfriend hacked into the Department of Education right after we broke up my senior year and he went to prison. And then there’s Emily, my cousin who she might bring up.”

“Why would she bring up your cousin?”

“I’d rather explain to you in person, but she’s the reason I learned sign language and why I’m being so protective of Oliver.” Felicity said. “The rest is kinda- like I said, I’d rather not tell you about it over the phone.”

“That’s fair. Could you stop by my office tomorrow and we’ll discuss it?”

“Yes.” Felicity agreed before wrapping up the conversation and ending the call.

Oliver was looking at her with a concerned look. ‘Did something happen to her? Do you wanna talk about it?’

“Thanks for offering, but I’d prefer not to.” She told him, getting up from the couch. “I think I’m gonna go read alone for a while. You didn’t do anything, I just- I need some alone time.” She assured him as she went into her bedroom. This situation with Laurel was bringing up a lot of painful memories for Felicity.

After she disappeared into her room, Oliver’s phone buzzed. He saw that he had two texts, one from Tommy and one from Thea.

>>From: Tommy: Laurel called me. She sounded kinda unhinged, talking about how she was going to make you and Felicity pay. I told Jean about it, but I wanted to tell you too.

He didn’t respond and his breathing started to become shallow as he worried about what she might do. It took him several moments to calm himself enough to read Thea’s text.

>>From: Speedy: Have you made your move yet?

>>To: Speedy: What move?

>>From Speedy: Felicity. I know you like her, are you gonna ask her out???

>>To: Speedy: No, I think I’ve caused her enough problems already.

>>From: Speedy: That’s complete crap. You like her, I’m pretty sure she likes you. Ask her out. You deserve to be happy.
To: Speedy: I’m a mute with PTSD and a ton of other problems. She deserves better than someone like me.

From Speedy: Yes, you’re mute. And yes, you have some issues, but that doesn’t mean you don’t deserve to be happy or that you aren’t good enough for her.

From: Speedy: I’ll drop the subject after this, but think about it for a second. Felicity’s the first person who you said made you feel normal. And she doesn’t treat you any differently because of your situation.

From: Speedy: I gotta go. Homework to do.

To: Speedy: Goodnight Speedy.

Oliver wandered into the bathroom and locked the door. While he thought about what Thea said, he stared at himself in the mirror. He did have feelings for Felicity, that much was true, but he didn’t know if she had feelings for him. On top of that, he was so damaged, physically and emotionally, that he didn’t think anyone would want him. He wasn’t sure if he deserved to be happy after everything he’d done. Felicity was happy and amazing, like sunshine personified, while he was all darkness and pain. He thought the only thing a relationship with him could bring her was pain.

There was a light knock at the door. “Oliver? Is everything okay? You’ve been in there for about ten minutes. Just, if you’re okay, knock twice for ‘yes’.” Felicity said. He knocked twice on the door. “Do you just need some time alone?” He knocked twice more. “Okay, I’ll give you some space.”

He heard her footsteps move away from the door. Oliver stared at himself in the mirror and opened his mouth. Maybe, if he started talking again, if he could convince people he was normal, this whole thing would go away. All he had to do was move his mouth and make sound come out. He started moving his lips, but no sound would come out. He stood there for several moments, trying to will some noise, any noise, to come out, but was met with silence. Depressed, he turned away and unlocked the door, leaving the room. Felicity was on the couch, watching something on a low volume and looked up when the door opened. She stood up when she saw his expression.

“You’re crying. What’s wrong?”

‘I tried.’ He signed. ‘Nothing would come out.’

“What?”

‘I tried to speak, to say something, but the sound wouldn’t come out. I thought maybe, if I really tried, I could talk again and this would all go away, but it didn’t work.’

“Oh, Oliver.” She said, moving closer to him. “Is it okay if I hug you?” He nodded, so she wrapped her arms around him. “I’m so sorry. I don’t think it’s about effort, it’s about healing and time. You’re on the way, but you aren’t there yet.” She told him. “And that’s okay. It’s okay not to be okay.”

‘Thank you, Felicity.’

When he went to bed that night, he thought back on his conversation with Felicity. She had made him feel so much better, which only convinced him that he wasn’t good enough for her.
Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
The next morning, Felicity was getting ready for work when Oliver walked over to her. He seemed determined but had a nervous look on his face. She smiled at him and waited for him to say or do whatever he was worried about.

‘Good morning.’

“Morning.” She responded. “How are you feeling?”

‘Better than yesterday.’ He signed at her. ‘Is it okay if Tommy comes here this afternoon? I wanted to talk to him, but I don’t wanna meet him in public because of the press.’

“He’s your best friend, of course he can come over.” She told him.

‘But its your house.’

“You live here too, and anyone on Team Oliver is welcome here.”

‘Team Oliver?’

“All of the people who want to support you and make sure you aren’t forced to do things you don’t wanna do. You, me, Tommy, Thea, Digg, Jean. Team Oliver.” She explained.

‘I don’t know if Digg still counts.’ He said. They hadn’t heard from the retired soldier since Oliver revealed his secret identity.

“He called me a little while ago. He wants to talk to you, about what you told us. He admits that he was too surprised by the revelation to fully listen to your arguments.” She said. She looked over to the clock. “Sorry, I gotta go. Work and all that. Tell Tommy I say hi.” She grabbed her bag and headed out.

On her way to work, Felicity stopped by the SCOD and told the detectives about Moira’s visit to her office and Lance coming to her home. She wasn’t sure what, if anything, would come of it, but wanted to do things the right way just in case.

Knowing that Digg was open to talking, Oliver sent John a message just asking how he was doing. He wanted to ease into the conversation about Oliver being the Hood and John’s feelings about it. Digg said he’d spent the last few days thinking about what Oliver had told them, and why he was doing what he was doing. He admitted that while he didn’t fully understand Oliver’s reasons, he could see where his motivations were coming from. Oliver ended the conversation by asking John
to meet him at the foundry the following night.

Around noon, Oliver texted Tommy and asked if he’d come to Felicity’s house. He was finally ready to talk like Tommy had suggested in Jean’s office. His friend almost immediately agreed and drove over. When Oliver let him into the house, he launched into a long speech.

“First, I wanna say I’m sorry. I’m sorry I didn’t take what you were saying about your state seriously and I’m sorry that I didn’t pick up on how you were reacting when I did that. I guess I was so excited to have my wingman back, I ignored anything that didn’t fit the image of you I wanted. But, after Felicity pointed a few things out, and some research on my own, I realize how selfish and hurtful my actions were.”

Oliver pulled out his trusty pad of paper and started writing. **You did research?**

“My best friend has PTSD and he’s trying to recover from five years of trauma. Of course, I did. I read a bunch of articles about PTSD and trauma so that I wouldn’t be such an asshole inadvertently.” Tommy chuckled. “I mean, I don’t know anything about what you went through, and I wasn’t sure what else to do, so…”

**You didn’t need to do that much.**

“Yes, I did.” He insisted. “So, what did you wanna talk about? Crap, that wasn’t a good word to use.”

_Hearing the word ‘talk’ doesn’t upset me. You don’t have to avoid using it. I use it all the time. I get kinda annoyed when people avoid words like ‘talk’ and ‘speak’ or feel bad for saying it._

He handed the sheet over to Tommy before starting to write on another one. **I don’t wanna talk about what happened. I think it’ll be a long time before I’d even consider it. No one seemed to get that except Felicity and Digg and later Thea, which is why I’ve spent so much time with them.**

“That makes sense.”

_I’m not Ollie anymore. Even if I could talk, I don’t think I could ever be him again. Too much has happened. And as painful as its been for you all here, for me its been way worse. I spent five years trying to come home, dreaming about it. But when I finally got home, everyone was trying to get the ‘old me’ back and no one seemed happy since I wasn’t Ollie and my mother claims she still hasn’t gotten her son back. Imagine how that feels._

“That’s awful. And again, I’m sorry for making things worse.”

**You didn’t make things worse, just the same. But it didn’t make it any easier I have issues, and they aren’t just PTSD and mutism. Some of the ‘I want Ollie back’ behavior brought those issues to light.**

“Anything I can do to help?”

_Helping stop Laurel and my mom is doing a lot. Other than that, what you’re doing now is good. I think there might be a Rocket’s game on._

The conversation had gotten a little too heavy and veered too far into Oliver’s mental state. He wanted to backtrack. Tommy read the note, said they should watch it and handed Oliver the remote.

Tommy left around four and Felicity came home a little after five. She looked upset, but wouldn’t say why. Oliver wanted to respect her privacy, so he didn’t push. They were eating dinner, some
Big Belly Burger she’d picked up, when she finally spoke.

“I have a meeting with Jean in the morning. It’s about Emily. I’m not looking forward to it.” She admitted. “There’s- I don’t think of myself as an angry or vindictive person, but if Laurel brings her up, all bets are off. She should’ve left you alone to begin with, but if she crosses that line, I won’t be able to just let it go.”

‘I can come with you, if you want.’ He offered.

“I’d like that. Just- there’s something I need you to know before you agree.” She told him. “Emily- she’s- she isn’t- she passed away, and I blame myself.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 20

Chapter Summary

Emily and Felicity’s story is told.

Chapter Notes

Warning: this is not a fun chapter. It’s not a happy chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Emily- she’s- she isn’t- she passed away, and I blame myself.” Felicity admitted.

‘Why do you blame yourself?’ Oliver signed.

“I didn’t- when I tell you the story, you and Jean both, then you’ll understand. How did it go with Tommy?”

‘Good, we talked about his behavior and came to an understanding. He was acting like an asshole, but a well-meaning asshole. If that makes sense.’

“It does, kinda.” She told him.

The night was quiet and then Oliver mentioned needing to take care of something Hood-related. ‘I’ve been putting the fight off for longer than I meant to.’ he had given Anthony Venza, a major drug dealer in Starling several days to turn himself in or get out of town. The man hadn’t taken him up on that offer, so Oliver needed to pay him another visit.

“If you need to go, you should go. Just- be safe, and be careful.” She told him.

It wasn’t difficult for Oliver to find Venza. After their confrontation days ago, the dealer hadn’t even bothered to find a new hideout. He wasn’t sure if the man didn’t take the threats seriously or if he was just stupid.

“Oh, you’re back. Here to threaten me again?” The man yelled at Oliver after he’d stormed into the building and taken out his security. “News flash, it doesn’t work if you aren’t gonna back it up.” Oliver didn’t react other than to raise his bow and aim it at Venza. “Look, I’m not leaving. I’ve got a good business built here. I’ve got the drugs and this city’s got plenty of junkies willing to pay whatever I ask to get their fix. I leave, and someone else’s just gonna take my place.” Oliver released the arrow and watched as it hit Venza in the shoulder. He didn’t want to kill him, just to wound. “You don’t talk much, do you?”

Oliver lowered his bow and attacked the man. He had gotten the confession he needed. The building he was standing in held more than enough proof that Venza was making and selling drugs. He just needed the dealer to still be here when the police arrived. Knocking the man out
wasn’t difficult and he was already hearing sirens when he was tying the man to his chair so he couldn’t escape.

Oliver left his recording arrow, with Venza’s full confession on the desk for the police to find before making his escape. His father’s list now had one less name on it for him to deal with. He went to the foundry, changed out of his hood and returned to Felicity’s condo a little before dawn.

The next morning, Felicity knocked lightly on Oliver’s door a little after eight. “Hey, my appointment with Jean is at nine, so if you still wanna be there, you should probably get up soon.” She said from the hallway before walking away.

Oliver was up, dressed and ready to go within five minutes. Felicity had been very supportive of him. He wanted to be just as supportive of her. He didn’t know why Emily was a sore subject or why Felicity seemed to be dreading this meeting, but he was determined to be there for Felicity, however she needed him to be, so that she wouldn’t have to talk about it alone. If the blonde was surprised that he was ready so quickly, she didn’t say anything other than to ask Oliver if he wanted to eat something before they left.

The drive to Jean Loring’s office was quiet and they were shown into a conference room as soon as they arrived. Jean came in a few moments later.

“Oh, I didn’t know you were joining us as well, Oliver. Is that ok with you, Felicity?”

“Yeah, I kinda- I asked him to be here. Nothing against you, but I wanted a friend here with me.” Oliver gave her an encouraging smile and turned back to Jean.

“That’s understandable. We can start whenever you’re ready.”

“I don’t know where to start, actually.” She said, looking down at her hands. “I guess I should tell you why Laurel’s likely to bring Emily up. Emily and Oliver’s situations are very different, but they have some similarities and she’s- I’m afraid she’s going to argue that I’m projecting my guilt about Emily onto Oliver’s situation.”

“In what way?”

“I feel like I didn’t do enough to help her.” She said. “My cousin, she was born deaf. We all learned sign language as soon as we knew. We wanted to be able to communicate with her. Emily- you know how sometimes people who are deaf have issues being understood when they speak? Emily learned to talk, but since she could never hear herself, she didn’t know how words were supposed to sound. The enunciation, volume, pitch, she couldn’t hear any of that, so she was missing the important feedback that hearing children learn from when they start talking. It didn’t really become a problem until she started school. Her first day of school, she tried to talk to the other kids, to make friends, but it didn’t work out very well. Kids can be mean and they started making fun of her. She ended up switching classes when the teacher noticed. So, from kindergarten until the start of 11th grade, she didn’t talk around anyone who wasn’t family. The county got her an interpreter for school and she communicated using ASL.”

“May I ask what happened?”

“Her 11th grade English teacher was an asshole. He knew she was deaf. He knew she had a right to use an interpreter, but he didn’t care. He singled her out because he saw an interpreter as being a distraction for the other students. I think he just didn’t wanna accommodate her and was hoping to
force her into changing schools. He added a graded speech to the curriculum and pulled Emily and her interpreter aside and told them that if she used the interpreter, he’d give her a failing grade. Now, no one in my mom’s family takes that kinda crap lying down, so my uncle raised a fuss, justifiably. They sided with Emily, but the damage was done. Everyone in the school knew about it and because teenagers are mean, they started picking on her. Trying to get her talk, mocking the way she signed. Those kinds of things.” Felicity said. ‘I- I was at MIT when this happened, so all I could really do is text or Skype her and try to make her feel better. That app I built, I built it so that she wouldn’t have to deal with that kind of crap every single day. I was trying to make things a little better for her.” Oliver reached over and squeezed Felicity’s hand. He could sense that the hard part of the story was coming. “But I wasn’t able to finish it before-.”

“Before what?” Jean asked in a kind voice. She didn’t want to press for details, but she needed to know the full story.

“She was being bullied, badly. And nothing I did, nothing my mom did or my family did, was able to help her. We tried but it became too much for her. So, she came home from school one day and she-.” By now, Felicity was sobbing. “And it’s my-.”

Oliver could fill in the blanks. Emily’s peers bullied her to the point where she didn’t see a way out and she killed herself. Felicity blamed herself for that happening. ‘It’s not your fault.’

“Yes, it is. She tried to Skype me, but I was studying for a test and-“

‘It’s not your fault. You tried the best that you could to help her. You weren’t the one to make her feel like that was her only option and you couldn’t have known she was going to do that.’

“I’m going to give both of you a moment.” Jean said, standing up.

“No, I- I wanna get this over with.” Felicity said. “After that happened, I finished the app. I couldn’t help Emily, but I could help other people. I also swore that I wouldn’t let that happen to anyone else if I could prevent it. Then, I met Oliver and he asked me to teach him ASL and we became friends. Then, I found out his mother was trying to force him to speak and browbeat him into doing things her way and not caring how he felt and-“

“It reminded you of Emily and your promise.”

“Exactly. But I- I’m not helping Oliver because of Emily. I’m doing it because it’s the right thing to do. No one deserves to be treated like that.” Emily’s death was a pivotal moment in Felicity’s life. It was the reason she created half a dozen apps to help deaf people, blind people and others with disabilities. It was also when she decided she wasn’t going to ignore it or look the other way when people, like Laurel Lance and Moira Queen, went out of their way to make people struggling with mental illness feel worse about themselves. She wasn’t going to sit by and just let people behave like that.

‘I know.’ Oliver signed.

Jean didn’t need to hear anymore from Felicity and they came up with a plan in case Laurel used Emily to discredit Felicity. “I’ll admit, it will surprise me if she’s foolish enough to bring her up. On the surface, it might look like some form of trump card, but digging any deeper and it only makes your character look better. I think I should look into Ms. Lance some more, see what information I can dig up.”

“Can you also find out how she knows where I live? Because I’m purposefully not in the phone book and she had to get it from somewhere.” Felicity stated.
“Yes, that’s on the top of my list.”

Felicity and Oliver thanked Jean and left. Felicity was no longer sobbing, but she was still crying. “Kinda glad I took a personal day from work for this.” She said, trying to lighten the mood.

‘You don’t have to pretend to be okay.’ Oliver told her. ‘Why don’t I drive?’ She handed him the keys and he drove them back to her condo.

They went inside and Felicity made a beeline for the freezer and pulled out some ice cream. “Sorry, I just- I really need this.”

‘You don’t need to explain. I know that wasn’t easy to talk about.’

“I don’t think its ever going to be.” She admitted as she dug her spoon in for more. “Want some?”

‘Thank you, but no.’ He told her. He considered something for several moments before finally saying it. ‘Tell me about Emily. Something happy.’

“She was an amazing artist. I have this painting she did in my room. It’s the view from the roof of the apartment building my mom and I used to live in. It’s beautiful.” She said with a smile. “She also- she had the weirdest sense of humor. She’d find the most random things funny and then I’d laugh because she was laughing.”

‘She sounds wonderful.’

“She was.” Felicity wiped away some of her tears. “I’m sorry. You’re dealing with enough issues as is, I don’t wanna add mine on top of that.”

‘You aren’t. You have supported me for weeks. I want to return the favor.’ He said. ‘But it isn’t your fault. You, your family, you all did everything you could. Even now, you’re doing more than you need to. Emily’s death isn’t your fault, and you shouldn’t blame yourself for what happened.’

“And you shouldn’t blame yourself for what’s happening now. Your mom, Laurel, Laurel’s father, its not your fault.”

‘It is though. If I tried harder to be normal, then maybe.’

“I don’t wanna interrupt you, but no. You didn’t do anything wrong.”

‘Neither did you.’

The room fell silent. “You know what I kinda wanna watch? Harry Potter. Emily loved those movies. I’ve got all of them, but I haven’t watched them since- well, in a long time.” Felicity remarked.

‘Let’s watch them. If its okay that I watch them with you?’

“Of course, I’ll go grab them.” She said as she put the ice cream back into the fridge and went into her bedroom. She came back holding a stack of DVDs.

Oliver and Felicity spent the rest of the day watching the first three Harry Potter films. Oliver had only read the first two books, but made a mental note to ask Felicity about the others.
Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 21

Chapter Summary

Oliver and John talk, Felicity and Thea talk and they get some less-than-good news.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Felicity and Oliver were just finishing up the third Harry Potter movie when Oliver realized what time it was. He was supposed to meet Digg at the foundry soon to talk. He didn’t want to blow the other man off, but he also didn’t want to leave Felicity alone. He decided to text him instead, asking him to come here.

‘Digg is on his way.’ He told Felicity.

“He is? Why? What’s wrong?”

‘Nothing. I wanted to talk to him about me being a vigilante. We were going to meet at my father’s old steel factory but I didn’t want to leave you alone.’

“Oliver, I’m a big girl. You don’t need to worry about me.”

‘I don’t need to, but I do.’ He responded.

“Aren’t you sweet.” She remarked as she leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. “Thank you, but I’ll be okay.”

Oliver’s cheeks reddened when she kissed him and he was trying to figure out how to respond when there was a knock at the door. He went over to answer it after seeing it was John.

“Hey man.”

Hi, thanks for coming.

“No problem. Is everything okay with Felicity? You said in your text that you didn’t want to leave her here alone.”

We met with Jean today. Felicity had to tell us what happened to her cousin. It’s not a happy story. It hasn’t been a very good day.

“So, you wanted to support her since she’s supported you.” He remarked knowingly. “Okay. Makes sense. Let’s talk about why I’m here. You’re the Hood.”

I’m not a fan of that name.

“Is there another codename you wanna go by?” Digg asked. Oliver didn’t have an answer to that. “If you don’t pick a name, the police or press are gonna name you themselves.”
While John and Oliver were talking, Felicity hid in her room to give them some privacy. She didn’t want to intrude on their conversation and she was also worried Oliver might be more focused on making sure she was okay than coming to an understanding with John or explaining things.

She was working on a piece of code when her phone rang. She saw Thea was calling her and answered. “Are you anywhere near your mother or Laurel right now?” She asked immediately.

“No, of course not.” The teenager answered. “I was just calling to say hi.”

“Hi. Sorry if it sounded like- I wasn’t accusing you of anything, its just- I want this whole mess to be over.”

“Me too. Mom keeps making comments about how she ‘just wants to fix things’ whenever I’m in the room. I think she’s hoping I’ll call Ollie to try and get him to come back here. Like I’d make him step foot in this place with what’s going on.” She said. “How- how is he?”

“He’s struggling. Your mom’s behavior, the situation with Laurel, its stressing him out. And he’s starting to feel guilty because their actions aren’t just impacting him. I keep telling him it isn’t his fault but he doesn’t seem to believe me.”

“He’s blaming himself? That’s ridiculous.”

“To you and me, maybe. But to him, its not. He thinks that if he tried harder to be normal or something, none of this would be happening. Its not true and I think deep down he knows that, but the guilt still remains.”

“He doesn’t have anything to feel guilty about.”

“Again, we both know that, but he doesn’t want to admit it.”

“Another thing he doesn’t want to admit.” Thea remarked. He didn’t want to admit that what was happening wasn’t his fault. He didn’t want to admit that he had feelings for Felicity.

“What are you talking about?”

“Nothing, its nothing. I- I was trying to encourage him to do something, but he kinda shut down and I haven’t tried to mention it since.” She hurried to say. “Don’t worry about it.”

“Are you sure? Because I can try to broach the subject with him if its important.”

“It’s not.” Thea insisted. “Can I talk to Ollie for a second? I don’t need to talk with him, there’s just- there’s something I want him to hear from me.”

“Yeah, let me go get him.” Felicity left her bedroom and walked into the living room where Oliver and John were. “Sorry, Thea wants to talk to you.” She talked into the receiver. “I’m gonna hand him the phone okay?”

She could make out the sounds of Thea’s voice but couldn’t decipher what she was saying to Oliver. He listened to his sister with rapt attention for just over a minute before handing the phone back to Felicity.

‘Tell her I love her.’ He signed. ‘And I’m sorry I haven’t said it before now.’

Felicity repeated the message and Thea said her goodbyes before hanging up.
John didn’t feel comfortable staying after Thea’s phone call. Clearly, whatever she’d said to Oliver had made him very emotional, and the man wasn’t used to other people seeing him like that. John told Oliver that they’d talk more later and let himself out. Oliver and Felicity were alone in the living room once again. It was quiet for a solid five minutes.

“Oliver, are you okay? Thea’s phone call seemed to really- if you need someone to talk to, I’m here.”

‘I didn’t tell her I loved her when I got back. I spent five years wanting to just hug my family and tell them I loved them, but when I came back I couldn’t. I lost a lot over five years, but I think that’s the worst. They took my voice from me.’

“They?”

Oliver had slipped up. Until now, he’d never mentioned there were other people on the island with him. It was now or never. ‘I wasn’t entirely alone on the island. There were others there, and they tortured me.’

She didn’t say anything right away and Oliver stood up from the couch and started to walk away. “Wait, please. Stop.” She said, following after him. “I’m sorry, I just- I don’t know what I’m supposed to say or do here. ‘I’m sorry that happened’ doesn’t feel like enough. It’s not enough. And I don’t wanna downplay what you told me by trying to relate. Nor do I wanna ask if you’d like to talk about it, because I’m pretty sure you don’t. Just, tell me what you need from me, please.”

‘You still want to help me?’ He was afraid that if anyone found out what happened to him, they’d think he was weak or think he was damaged. They wouldn’t look at him or treat him the same.

“Of course, I do. What you said, it doesn’t change anything about us.”

‘You don’t think I’m weak or pathetic because I was tortured?’

“No. Oliver, you survived on your own for five years. You dealt with some very traumatic things happening to you. You aren’t weak. In fact, you’re probably the strongest person I know.” She told him.

‘I need some time alone for a little bit.’

“Okay.”

She didn’t see Oliver for the rest of the night. The next morning, he was already in the kitchen when she came in for some coffee. It didn’t look like he’d slept very well. She was about to ask if he was okay when her phone rang. She saw that it was the detective they’d spoken to about pressing charges against Laurel.

“Hello?”

“Ms. Smoak, this is Detective Parks. I have Mr. Donner, the ADA here with me. Is now a good time?”

“As good a time as any.”

“Ms. Lance filed a motion to move up the trial date.” The attorney said. “I just received word that its scheduled to start on Monday.”

It was Thursday, meaning Felicity and Oliver only had four days before they were due to appear in
court. “The trial starts Monday?”

“Yes. Both you and Mr. Queen will be called to testify and it was important that you know. I was wondering if we could meet either today or tomorrow to go over a few things to prepare. I also wanted Mr. Queen to have a chance to meet with the ASL interpreter we’d be using.”

“I’ll- let me talk to Oliver and I’ll call you back.” She said before hanging up. “I take it you heard most of that.”

‘Yes.’ He said with a frown. ‘I wanna get this over with.’

“Me too.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 22

Chapter Summary

Laurel's trial begins

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Oliver spent the four days before Laurel’s trial working off his nerves by crossing names off of his father’s list. He knew it might not be the healthiest way to cope, but he had too many conflicting emotions about the trial and couldn’t think of another way to get all of that energy out.

Felicity spent the time helping Oliver with a few things related to his self-assigned mission. Outside of his mission, she doubled down on some of her personal projects. Her nerves about how the trial would go manifested as her feeling the need to finish all of her unfinished projects and start the new ones she’d been putting off. Unfortunately, Monday came a lot faster than either Oliver and Felicity were ready for.

Thanks to John, Oliver and Felicity both arrived at the courthouse and were able to make it through the crowd of paparazzi unharmed. Laurel’s arrest hadn’t gotten much attention when it first happened; people in Starling got arrested every day. Then, word got out that Laurel’s ex-boyfriend was the one pressing charges and the press jumped on that instantly. Oliver Queen’s name sold papers, so of course every tabloid in town had shown up to dig up some dirt. Oliver was just happy that, by county law, only respectable news outlets, such as the Starling Times, were allowed to sit in on court proceedings.

They were taken to a small office on the second floor of the courthouse where they’d wait until they were called as witnesses. Oliver had spent plenty of time in courtrooms in his younger years but he’d never been there as a witness or victim. To make matters worse, the person he felt the most comfortable around, Felicity, couldn’t be in the courtroom when he testified because hearing his testimony could impact hers.

‘I don’t think I can do this.’

“What makes you say that?”

‘They- I might get asked about the island, she might ask about it. And I….its a room full of people I either don’t know or don’t feel comfortable around.’ He told her. ‘What if I freeze up?’

“Do something for me, okay? Just in case you get nervous. Don’t look at Laurel, look at John, or look at Thea, or even the translator. They aren’t getting called as witnesses, and they’re both here. Forget about everyone else, just focus on them. You can do this.”

Felicity said that just in time, because a few moments later, a bailiff opened the door. “Mr. Queen, they’re ready for you.”

“Remember what I said.”
Oliver walked with the man down the stairs and into the court room. Everyone turned to gawk at him as he walked from the door to the witness stand, but he just focused on taking one more step. He heard his mother try to get his attention, but tuned her out. if he looked at anyone, he’d probably bolt and that wouldn’t look good. He eventually made it to the stand and swore to tell the truth.

“Please give your name for the record.” The DA started.

‘My name is Oliver Queen.’ He signed and Madison Green, the ASL interpreter provided by the court, repeated what he’d said.

“Can you give us your account of events concerning Ms. Lance’s actions towards you?”

‘It really started a few weeks after I came home. I was in a coffee shop, waiting for Felicity to order, when she walked up to me.’ He signed. ‘She asked me if I was still ‘faking’ being unable to speak.’

“What happened next?”

‘Felicity overheard Laurel say that and came to my defense.’

“Mr. Queen is, of course, referring to the events shown on the surveillance tape we submitted as Exhibit B.” The DA told the jury. “What happened next?”

‘She started showing up at my house, demanding to see me. I usually left or hid when she came by.’

“No one noticed you were avoiding her?”

‘My sister did. I never talked to my mother about it, but I think she might’ve been the one who kept inviting her over.’

“And how did you feel about that happening?”

“Objection. This isn’t relevant.” Laurel said, standing.

“How the victim feels about being harassed isn’t relevant?” The DA asked rhetorically.

“His feelings matter, but since I was invited to be there, my presence during this time shouldn’t be used as evidence against me.”

“I’ll allow it. Answer the question, Mr. Queen.”

‘Angry and annoyed. I’d stated I didn’t want to see or talk to Laurel, but no one seemed to care what I thought.’ He answered. ‘My hope was if I kept avoiding her, she’d stop coming around and leave me alone. It didn’t work, especially after I moved out.’

“What happened after you moved?”

‘She began to call and text me multiple times a day, I never answered any of them. More than once, she showed up at the place I was staying, trying to see me, despite being told I didn’t want to see her.’ he told them. ‘I just wanna be left alone.’

“I have no more questions.” The DA said, sitting down.

Laurel stood up, and the look on her face reminded Oliver of the shark that bit him on Lian Yu.
“Hello, Oliver.”

‘Hi.’

“Could you tell us about the events that caused you to stop talking?”

“Objection!” The DA said. “This isn’t relevant. We’re here to determine if Ms. Lance harassed and stalked Mr. Queen.”

“I realize that but-“

“And asking him to revisit unrelated trauma is cruel and unfair to him.”

“Sustained. The cause of Mr. Queen’s muteness is banned as a line of questioning.”

“Of course.” She said. “How long have we known each other?”

‘About 15 years.’

“So, you could say we’re friends. Good friends. Is it not possible that I was simply a concerned friend, worried about you and that’s why I tried so hard to see you.”

‘When you found out I was mute, you accused me of faking it to avoid apologizing to you. At the coffee shop, you asked me point blank if I was still faking. Every message you left for me involved either claiming I was faking or demanding I talk to you.’

“Tell me about Felicity Smoak.”

‘She’s my friend. She’s the one who taught me ASL and I’ve been staying at her house since I moved out of my family’s home.’

“And how long have you known her?”

‘A few months.’

“You moved in with her after only knowing her a few months?”

‘I couldn’t stay at my family’s house anymore and she offered me her guest room while I figured things out.’

“Why couldn’t you stay there?”

“Again, relevance?” The DA asked.

‘I didn’t feel comfortable there. Partially because my mother knew I was avoiding you, and didn’t seem to care.’

“She was trying to help, trying to get you to reconnect with your old friends.”

‘Every time I see you, you have something nasty or cruel to say to me. And if she wanted to help me, she would’ve listened to me and not tried to force me to see you, or force me to see a therapist.’

“Your mental health-“

“The witness’s mental health isn’t the matter at hand.” The DA said. “Nor are Moira Queen’s motives. She isn’t on trial, neither is Mr. Queen.”
“No more questions.” Laurel said.

“Very well. Mr. Queen, you can step down.” The judge said. Oliver stood up from the witness stand and moved towards the door.

“The prosecution calls its next witness, Felicity Smoak.” The DA announced.

Felicity passed Oliver in the hallway and gave him a reassuring smile. She wasn’t sure how convincing she was, but hoped it eased his worry a little bit. She went to the witness stand and swore to tell the truth.

“How did you meet Oliver Queen?”

“About a week after he was found, he came into my office. His phone had broken and someone said I could fix it. I think it might’ve been Walter Steele, but I don’t know for sure. After our first meeting, he came back to ask another tech related question. That was when he asked if I could teach him ASL.”

“And how did Oliver know you knew ASL?”

“It came up when we first met. I didn’t know if he was writing things down because he had some kind of hearing loss or if he was simply mute. I asked him if ASL would be easier for him. I started teaching it to him and we became friends as a result.”

“Please describe how you met Ms. Lance.”

“Oliver had texted me, wondering if I wanted to get coffee. I think he just wanted to get out of the house. I’d gone up to order, leaving Oliver alone at the table. When I came back with our drinks, Laurel was standing next to the table. I heard her ask, in a rude tone, if Oliver was still faking being mute.”

“And what was your response?”

“I got angry. He was just sitting there, he hadn’t tried to get her attention. He didn’t approach her. And she just walked up and decided to insult him. I asked her who exactly she thought she was and why she thought saying something like that was appropriate.”

“And what was her response?”

“She claimed that, since I didn’t know her history with Oliver, I wouldn’t understand. I said I didn’t care what their history was and her behavior wasn’t appropriate, regardless of said history. I asked why she thought it was okay to harass him and her response was that, since she’s an attorney, she can’t harass anyone.”

“Objection! That’s not what I said.”

“Overruled.” The judge said. “You’ll have a chance to cross-examine the witness. Sit down or I will hold you in contempt.”

“When was the next time you saw or heard from Ms. Lance?”

“Two days after Oliver started staying with me. We came home from a meeting, and she was outside of my house. She demanded to talk to Oliver. When she refused to leave, I called the police, but she left before they arrived.”
“And after that?”

“She showed up a few more times. She also visited me at work more than once to confront me. After her second time coming to my place of work and causing a scene, Oliver and I decided to involve the police.”

“Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I’d like to enter Exhibit C, video surveillance from outside Ms. Smoak’s home and Exhibit D, visitor logs from Queen Consolidated into evidence, along with this sworn statement from a Mr. George, a member of the company’s security team.”

The DA said. He played the tape, which showed Laurel appearing outside of Felicity’s house multiple times. He stopped the tape after seeing a few visits and turned back to Felicity. “How did Ms. Lance get your address? She claims she was just a concerned friend, trying to help Oliver. If that’s the case, her coming to your house shouldn’t be out of the ordinary.”

“Because I never gave her my address and neither did Oliver.”

“She looked you up in the phonebook then.”

“She couldn’t have. I’m not listed, intentionally.”

“If you aren’t listed, then she had to get your address some other way, like the police database or your employee file, correct?”

“Yes. Except, QC digitalized their system a year ago. The system keeps track of any time personnel files are viewed and who views them. The last time anyone looked at my file was in June, ahead of a performance review.” Felicity explained.

“So, Ms. Lance got it from either the SCPD database or DMV records, both requiring a warrant. Unless, of course, Ms. Lance just asked her father to look up your name.”

“Objection, that’s hearsay.”

“Sustained. Reword the question or it’ll be stricken from the record.”

“Fine. Could you think of another way someone, any random person, could find your address?”

“No.”

“No more questions.” The DA said, sitting down.

“We will be taking a recess for lunch. We’ll reconvene in one hour for cross-examination.” The judge said before banging his gavel.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 23

Chapter Summary

Laurel gets her chance to cross-examine Felicity.

When the judge announced they were taking a recess for lunch, John went out and grabbed some Big Belly Burger. He knew today was going to be a tough day for both Oliver and Felicity and wanted to do something to make the day suck slightly less for them.

Moira allowed Thea to skip school for the day so she could be there for the trial. She likely was hoping seeing both of them there would appeal to Oliver, make him miss his family and want to come home. When recess was called, Thea snuck away from her mother to find Oliver. She gave him a hug and praised him for doing so well on the stand. She knew it couldn't have been easy for Oliver to face Laurel or talk about some of the issues he was dealing with.

Sooner than anyone wanted, everyone was called back into the courtroom and Felicity returned to the witness stand. Unlike with Oliver, Laurel didn't pretend to be friends or at least friendly with Felicity.

“You said earlier that there was no way I could've gotten your address. Isn't it possible that Oliver told his mother where he was staying so she wouldn't be concerned and that she provided me with your address?”

“No.”

“No, that's it? You don't want to elaborate on that?”

“I could, I guess. It's possible that he could've told her my address but he didn't because from the moment he left the mansion with me until right now, he hasn't had any contact with his mother.”

“How do you know that?”

“Because he told me, several times, that he didn't want to see or speak with her if she kept treating him the way she was. She didn't care about what he wanted, or what he thought would help him the most because it conflicted with the plans she'd made for him and hoped if she just kept pushing him, he'd be the son she wanted.”

“Uh, objection. What does this question have to do with the charges we’re discussing?” The DA asked.

“It doesn't.” The judge concluded. “Get back on track.”

“If I could just make a comment, your honor. It's related to Ms. Lance’s argument or at least, the one I think she’s trying to make.” Felicity said. The judge nodded for her to continue. “Oliver didn't want his mother to know where he was. He wouldn't have told her where he was staying, so she couldn’t have just given you my address. The DA already pointed out the two ways you could've found it out. And what happened the day after your arrest lends credibility to his theory.”

“What are you talking about?”
"When your father showed up at my house, trying to intimidate Oliver and myself into dropping the charges. Despite that fact that he doesn't even work in the department that arrested you."

"You're lying!"

The judge banged his gavel. "I told you no outbursts in my courtroom. This is your second and last warning. Next time, I'll hold you in contempt."

"You have no evidence to support that claim."

"Yes, I do. I gave the detectives the video tape, which they gave you a copy of, because they're required to." Felicity said. "Along with my statement explaining that I chose not to make a big deal out of it because I think his anger was misplaced."

Laurel took a deep breath and tried to collect herself. She'd ignored most of the evidence the DA had shared with her because she knew she was innocent and didn't see the point in wasting her time looking at it. "Let's take a step back. You're a graduate of MIT."

"Yes, I graduated at 19 with two Masters degrees."

"And you moved to Starling, with those degrees, to become an IT technician."

"No, I didn't. I'm not Geek Squad. I mostly work in applied sciences but I have a few projects in the technical division, mostly related to the company's cyber security or next generation processors."

Laurel didn't understand most of what that meant. "Still, I find it awfully suspicious that the heir of Queen Consolidated became friends with one of his family's employees. How can we be sure that you aren't using Oliver to advance your career?"

"I'm not a manipulative person. And I don't need Oliver's friendship to be successful. I was already respected in the industry before he was found. And I work at QC because it gives me the chance to help more people than I could if I developed my projects independently. Google my name and you can see for yourself. In fact, some of the things I've been praised for the most are pieces of technology I created and developed without any input or assistance from the company."

"So, you didn't befriend Oliver to benefit yourself. Perhaps to make yourself feel better."

"Meaning?"

"Isn't it true that your cousin Emily was born deaf?"

"Yes."

"And she wound up committing suicide. I think your guilt about what happened to her is being projected onto Oliver and everything you've done to ‘help’ Oliver is to assuage your own guilt." Laurel concluded. Felicity could see a few of the jurors looking at Laurel incredulously for the question. They couldn't believe that she'd brought that up in this context.

"Yes, Emily committed suicide, and I regret that I wasn't able to help her. Thank you for bringing that up, since I love being reminded of a family tragedy in a room full of strangers." Felicity said that last part sarcastically. "She passed away, and I spent the next few years trying to make sure no one else has to go through what she went through. I've developed apps and other tech to help not only deaf people like my cousin, but also blind people and those living with physical disabilities. Emily's death made me want to make this world a better place and make life easier for people.
Someone else's insistence that Emily talk, despite knowing she didn't want to, is what led to her death. Oliver left home because his mother was doing that. She believed she could just force Oliver to talk and not put in any of the effort to help him get his voice back. He tried to get away from you because you continually insist that he's faking. I'm not his friend because of Emily and I didn't help him because I felt guilty. I did it because I'm a decent human being.” Felicity said.

“Oliver's mental health—”

“His health isn't the point. We aren't debating Oliver's health. This trial is because you keep harassing him, and me, and we wanted it to stop. I was tired of your showing up at my house. And my work. Oliver was tired of you going out of your way to attack him for something that happened five years ago.”

“He killed my sister.”

“Except you, and your father, keep forgetting something. Sara got on that boat willingly.” Was it fair for Felicity to throw Sara’s death in her sister’s face? Since Laurel decided to use Emily, Felicity thought it was more than fair.

“Look you—”

“That's it. I'm holding you in contempt of court. When we finish today, a bailiff will escort you to a holding cell.” The judge ordered. “Ms. Smoak, I'm giving you a warning. Your behavior is out of line.”

“Sorry, your honor.” Felicity apologized.

Laurel’s defense was falling apart. Her argument was that Felicity was using Oliver, either to advance her career or to alleviate her guilt. She’d been so sure one of those theories had been true that she didn’t build a more solid way of arguing against the charges against her.

“No further questions.”

“Very well. Court is adjourned for the day. We will reconvene tomorrow morning at 9AM.” The judge said, ending the first day of the trial.

Oliver and Felicity fought their way back through the throng of reporters and went home. Laurel was escorted to a holding cell as the judge informed her she would be for her behavior in court that day. She knew she could simply apologize and would be let out, but she refused to. Felicity’s testimony had provoked her. While she was thinking over what happened in court, and trying to figure out what she was going to do for her defense now that her ‘Felicity is an untrustworthy, manipulative shrew’ argument had been ruined, someone came to visit her.

“What exactly was that?” Moira asked. “I hope your defense is more concrete than what I just saw during your cross-examination.”

“It doesn’t need to be. Stalking charges never result in convictions. The victims have to prove they feared for their safety, which is difficult because you can’t prove fear.” She said. “Which leaves the harassment charges, which are misdemeanors.”

“And the illegal information gathering?”

Laurel shrugged, not bothering to answer. Since when was asking her father for a favor a crime?
She skipped past the paperwork, yes, but that was because she couldn’t fail Moira and needed to give Oliver a wake-up call.

“You should go. I didn’t do anything wrong. Soon, this will be over and we can get back to the real problem on our hands.”

Moira said goodbye and left. She passed Laurel’s coworker Joanna on the way out. Joanna had seen the very end of the trial today and realized Laurel was in over her head. The trial wasn’t going in her favor. The jury didn’t seem to like her and, on top of that, she doubted Laurel’s defense would go very well. She wanted to convince Laurel to let her represent her. She was more objective, given her distance from the crime being discussed. Laurel turned her down, saying she didn’t need someone else to represent her, just like she didn’t need the DA’s deal. The other attorney left and made a phone call to Quentin, hoping he could talk some sense into his daughter.

The second day of the trial began. After the pleasantries were observed and everyone was seated, the prosecution called their next witness.

“We call Thomas Merlyn to the stand.”

If looks could kill, Tommy would’ve been struck dead the second Laurel saw him enter the court room.
Chapter 24

Chapter Summary

Tommy testifies and the jury reaches a verdict.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The second day of the trial began. After the pleasantries were observed and everyone was seated, the prosecution called their next witness.

“We call Thomas Merlyn to the stand.”

If looks could kill, Tommy would’ve been struck dead the second Laurel saw him enter the court room.

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Last Thursday

“What do you mean ‘no’?” Laurel asked Tommy with her arms crossed. She wasn’t asking a lot, just for Tommy to testify on her behalf at her upcoming trial. She needed someone to say that she wasn’t stalking Oliver and that everything she was doing was to help him.

“I mean ‘I can’t’. If I could help, I would but I can’t.” He said. He was surprised she was even asking him for this, since the DA’s office gave her a list of their witnesses early in the week and his name was pretty high on that list.

“And what’s so important that you can’t reschedule it to help me? You do realize that Ollie’s new friend is trying to ruin my life and my career, right?”

If Tommy was more confrontational, he’d point out that Laurel had done enough to ruin her own career without help from Felicity. He didn’t though, because he wasn’t confrontational by nature. Instead, he went a different route. “Do you know what today is, Laurel?”

“November 13th.” She answered.

“Yes, which means tomorrow is the 20th anniversary of my mother’s death. Time sure flies, doesn’t it? I’ve been a little preoccupied.”

“I’m sorry Tommy, I-“

“I can’t help you. I’m sorry.”

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Present
Laurel was still processing Tommy’s arrival as he was sworn in. She came back to reality when the DA stood to question Tommy.

“Objection!”

“The prosecution hasn’t even asked a question yet.” The judge said.

“I object to Mr. Merlyn being called as a witness.”

“On what grounds?”

“I was not informed he was being called.”

“Your Honor, how long must we deal with this level of unprofessionalism?” The DA asked. “Mr. Merlyn’s name was on the list of witnesses we submitted to the court last week. The same list Ms. Lance acknowledged receiving. This is the third thing Ms. Lance was informed of, and objected to.”

“Do you have a legitimate reason why Mr. Merlyn’s testimony shouldn’t be allowed?” The judge asked.

“We were…involved. Romantically.”

“Mr. Merlyn, do you feel that you can give an accurate testimony on this matter without allowing your past with Ms. Lance to sway your responses?” The judge asked. Tommy nodded. “I also ask that the members of the jury take Mr. Merlyn’s past relationship with the defendant into account when reviewing his testimony. Please begin, Mr. Donner.”

“Tommy, could you tell me how you became involved in this case?”

“Yeah, I- I realized, with some help from Felicity, that I wasn’t being as supportive of Ollie as I could’ve been. So, I started doing some research on PTSD and things like that.” Tommy took a deep breath. “While I was doing that research, Laurel called me.”

“And what happened during that call?”

“She asked how much time I’d spent around Oliver since he returned and whether I’d testify about changes in his behavior. I told her I didn’t feel comfortable with that.”

“Did she tell you why she was asking?”

“She didn’t, but I learned why after. From someone else.”

The DA had been clued in on what Felicity and Oliver believed Laurel was planning, and decided not to pursue that line of questioning right now. He shifted gears.

“After your initial phone call, when was the next time you spoke with Ms. Lance?”

“The day after her arrest. She called me demanding to know why I wasn’t at her arraignment. No one made any attempt to tell me she’d been arrested, including her, so I was confused about why she was so angry.”

“And did she say anything else during that call?”

“Yes, she said that Oliver and Felicity embarrassed her. That she needed to get even and they had to pay.”
“So, not only did Ms. Lance repeatedly ignore Oliver and Felicity’s numerous requests to leave them alone, she decided they needed to be punished for doing something about the harassment. No more questions, Tommy.”

Laurel stood up and approached the witness stand. “I find it interesting that you’re here, since last week, you told me you were too busy mourning your mother to testify.”

“I told you I wasn’t able to testify on your behalf. I told you I was mourning my mom. I never said that my mother’s death was the reason I wasn’t able to testify.” He clarified. “When you asked me, Donner had already provided his list of witnesses. My name was very clearly on it.”

“The ‘someone else’ you learned my reason from, was it Oliver or Felicity Smoak?”

“No, it wasn’t.”

“Who was it then?”

“Objection, relevance? What Mr. Merlyn learned is not related to this case.” The DA said.

“Speaks to the credibility of his statement.” Laurel responded. “Who did you learn it from?”

“Jean Loring.”

“Mrs. Loring, as in Oliver’s attorney. Why would she reveal that information to you?”

“Because Oliver and I met with her the day after you called me to discuss something.”

“What did you discuss?”

“Again, relevance?” The DA asked. “Can Mr. Merlyn first say if what was discussed is relevant to the stalking, harassment or illegal information gathering charges before we go down this road?”

“Does your topic of conversation relate to the charges facing Ms. Lance?” The judge asked.

“No.”

“The objection is sustained.”

Laurel didn’t have any more questions, and admitted so. The prosecution rested and Laurel called her first witness, Joanna.

Since Laurel hadn’t looked at most of the evidence, her defense consisted of the idea that she was trying to help Oliver but was perhaps a little too forceful in doing so. She wasn’t able to explain to the jury what she was trying to help Oliver do, which weakened her argument. All of her witnesses were character witnesses, who were asked to testify on the kind of person Laurel was, not any facts of the case.

Joanna’s testimony painted Laurel as a determined lawyer, always trying to fight for what’s right and defend those who needed it most. The images she painted were marred when the DA cross-examined her and asked how often Laurel mentioned Oliver or Felicity in the last month. She was forced to admit that Laurel often brought them up, and usually not in a kind way.

Her father testified next. He insisted that Laurel was innocent and placed the blame, unsurprisingly, on Oliver. The DA wasn’t sure if the jury even listened to what he said. What father wouldn’t claim his daughter was innocent or that the situation was just a big misunderstanding?
The DA stood to question Lance, and the trial finally got interesting. “Mr. Lance-“

“It’s Detective Lance.”

“Sorry, detective. How did you get Felicity Smoak’s address? We’ve already shown the court that you appeared at her house following your daughter’s arrest.”

“From the police database.”

“And what reason did you have to look up that information? Certainly you’d agree that, given the situation, searching her name would be a conflict of interest.”

“I looked her up in the system before Laurel’s arrest.” Quentin said.

“Still, I’d like to know why. I think we all would, since Ms. Smoak’s record is clean.” Quentin looked over to Laurel for a split second. “May I remind you that you are under oath, detective?”

“I plead the fifth.”

“You plead the fifth. Probably because you looked Ms. Smoak up for Laurel, without a warrant or any kind of authorization. She probably just asked for a favor. It must be nice for her, not having to follow procedure like the rest of us.” The DA said. “No more questions, Your Honor.”

Lance left the courtroom and the judge called for a recess. Laurel sat at her table, fuming at the turn of events. The DA was gathering his papers and looked over to her.

“I already know how you’re going to answer, but do you wanna make a deal?”

“I’ll take my chances.”

The recess ended. Everyone was called back into the courtroom. Laurel and the DA both gave closing arguments. The jury was sent to deliberate.

“What do you think will happen?” Oliver asked Felicity.

“I think, or at least I hope, they come back with a guilty verdict on most of it. The illegal information gathering charge is a little hard to prove, Lance didn't admit to it and we couldn't find any evidence, but she didn’t really have much of a defense at all.”

The jury returned before the end of the day. They'd reached a verdict. “In the case of Dinah Laurel Lance against Starling City, how do you find the defendant?”

“On the charge of illegal information gathering, we find her not guilty. On the charges of trespassing, harassment and stalking, we find the defendant guilty.” The foreman of the jury said.

“What?” Laurel shouted. She lost. How did she lose?

“Bailiff, take Ms. Lance into custody for contempt. Again. Sentencing will take place tomorrow.”

Chapter End Notes
Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
When the verdict was read aloud, there were a number of different reactions in the room. Laurel looked like she’d been hit by a truck, as did Moira albeit for different reasons. Lance looked livid. Tommy was resigned. Thea was almost giddy. The brunette had liked Laurel five years ago, but she wasn’t a fan of how she was acting now. She brought this on herself, and Thea was happy to see it wasn’t going to be swept under the rug. Felicity was relieved, while Oliver was torn between relief and guilt.

He was happy this mess was over, and that Laurel wouldn’t be able to treat him the way she had been anymore. He also felt bad that things had gotten to this point where taking Laurel to court and getting her convicted of a crime was the only option he had. Was there something he could’ve done differently? If he’d tried harder, would things have gotten this bad? The questions started to chip away at him as the furor died down and people started to leave the courtroom.

“We should probably get out of here.” Felicity said, pulling Oliver from his thoughts. “The press are gonna find out the verdict any second and I don’t wanna have to deal with that.”

‘You’re probably right.’ He responded. ‘Wanna get food?’

“My three favorite words.” She said with a smile.

Diggle helped them avoid the press long enough to exit out of the backdoor of the courthouse, with Tommy following after them. Felicity invited Tommy to get food with them, wanting to extend an olive branch to him.

Moira watched Oliver, Felicity and Tommy leave and, for the first time, started to wonder if she’d made a mistake. No matter what she did to try and get his attention, Oliver hadn’t looked at her at any point during the trial or his testimony. “Where is he going?”

“Probably out with his friends to celebrate.” Thea said. “I mean, they did win.”

“Celebrate? Laurel could go to prison.”

“First of all, she probably won’t. She was convicted of misdemeanors and at most she’ll spend a few weeks in jail. Second, she had plenty of chances to back off or take a deal and she didn’t. Third, she was harassing Ollie who’s just trying to get his life together. Who’s side are you on?” Thea asked. “I’m going to Ashley’s. I’ll see you at home.”

When the verdict was announced and Laurel was taken into custody, Lance got out of his seat and tried to follow after her. He was stopped by the bailiffs who wouldn’t let him into the holding area
where she was. At the moment, to them, he wasn’t an officer of the law, he was just a father. Being Laurel’s father didn’t get him very far.

When it became clear that if he didn’t back off, he’d be taken into custody as well, Lance yelled to Laurel that everything would be okay before storming out of the courthouse. There had to be something he could do, some favor he could call in to get Laurel the smallest sentence possible.

He went back to the precinct, unsure of what else to do. Quentin was just starting the paperwork he’d let pile up over the last week when two other detectives walked in and approached him. They introduced themselves as Detectives Jones and Montoya, from Internal Affairs.

“We need to talk about your testimony today.” Montoya said.

“I don’t see why you do.” He countered.

“Yes, you do. You just don’t wanna admit it, because of what it means for you and for your daughter. We’ve already talked to Captain Stein. You’re on admin leave until the investigation’s over.” She responded.

“You can’t be serious.”

Before either of the IA detectives could respond, the Captain came out of his office. “Lance, they’re serious. You’re on desk duty. Give your case files to another detective.”

Quentin handed his files over and spent the rest of the day at his desk. As the day went on, he got angrier and angrier about the situation.

The bailiff escorted Laurel to a holding cell where she’d stay for the night. He closed the door, but didn’t walk away immediately. “Since you’re staying the night, is there someone you wanna call to bring you a change of clothes or something?”

“No, but I need a Petition to Appeal form.” She answered.

“You got convicted of a misdemeanor. You haven’t even been sentenced yet, and you already wanna appeal it?” In the 15 years the bailiff had been working in Starling, he’d never had something like this happen. He thought she was a little crazy before this, but now he was convinced. There were people falsely convicted of murder waiting years for an appeal, but she wanted to appeal a few misdemeanors.

“Yes. Get me the form.”

“Sorry, county clerk’s office is closed.” He told her before walking away.

Laurel changed her mind about calling someone when she realized she’d have to wear the same outfit again for sentencing if she didn’t ask someone to drop fresh clothes off.

The next morning, Oliver sat down in the courtroom, waiting for Laurel’s sentencing hearing to start. She hadn’t been brought in by the bailiff yet, but he was already nervous. Felicity sat on his right side. Tommy took a seat on his left. Thea sat next to Tommy, while John sat directly behind Oliver. They wanted to be sure that Oliver knew he had support, that he wasn’t alone.
When the door opened and Laurel was brought into the room, Felicity reached over and took Oliver’s hand.

‘It’s gonna be okay. The hard part is done.’ She signed to him with her other hand.

The judge came in and the hearing started. “Will the defendant please rise?” he said and Laurel stood. “Until now, you’ve had no criminal record, which is something I’ve taken into account when deciding your sentence. As has your work at CNRI. I sentence you to three years’ probation, which will require you to meet with a probation officer on a regular basis. You’ll also be fined $1,000 per offense and you are responsible for the court costs this case has accrued. I’m upholding the order of protection both victims obtained. Additionally, you are barred from seeing, contacting or using a third party to contact Mr. Queen or Ms. Smoak for the duration of your sentence. Failure to abide by the orders will result in violation of your probation.” He read out. “Are there any remarks you wish to make before we end this hearing?” Laurel shook her head. “Very well. Court adjourned.”

Oliver, Felicity and Tommy left as soon as the sentence was announced.

As Laurel was led out of the room, she tried to think of what her next step should be. She’d already started building her case arguing that Oliver wasn’t mentally sound. She wasn’t going to throw all of that work away for nothing. She also knew, if the sentence stayed the same, it would three years before she could take Oliver to court. Getting the conviction overturned was vital to her and Moira’s plans, but getting her sentence reduced could work just as well.

Moira watched Laurel being escorted away and started coming up with Plan B. Perhaps she’d acted too quickly when she approached Laurel to help her get Oliver back on track.

“Too bad she wasn’t fast enough to file that motion.” Thea remarked.

“What are you talking about?”

“Do you really think no one knew what you and Laurel were planning?” She said as she stood up. “Now that Laurel’s been convicted of stalking Oliver, no judge would even consider hearing the case.”

“So, that was a pretty good outcome, right?” Tommy asked as they left the building. “I mean, she has to leave you alone now or she goes to jail.”

“It’s more or less what we wanted.” Felicity admitted. “I mean, we didn’t want her to go to prison, but the judge could’ve just fined her and stopped there, so- overall, the best we could hope for.”

‘I wish it didn’t have to come to this.’ Oliver said.

“I know.” She responded. “Well, the last few days have been emotionally draining, so I think we’re gonna go.”

“See you later.” He said before heading to his car.

Oliver and Felicity got into Felicity’s car and drove towards her condo. He’d been thinking about something for a while, and after the last few days, he decided it was time to do something about it. Out of the corner of her eye while she was driving, she saw Oliver’s hands move.
She pulled over so she could face him. “Everything okay?”

He took a deep breath. It was now or never. ‘I have to tell you something, but I don’t want it to ruin our friendship.’

‘Nothing you say, other than admitting you’re a Nazi or white supremacist, could ruin our friendship.” She told him. “What is it?”

‘I….I have feelings for you, Felicity.’ He told her. He turned to see her reaction.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Wanna yell at me for that ending?
Chapter 26

Chapter Summary

Felicity responds to Oliver’s confession, Laurel learns her sentence won’t be the only consequences she faces and Moira starts to wonder if maybe, she made a mistake.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘I…I have feelings for you, Felicity.’ Oliver told her. He turned to look at her, waiting for her to say something.

“You- when you say feelings, what exactly do you mean? Like friendship feelings or the other kind of feelings?” She asked.

‘The romantic kind.’ He answered. She was silent for several moments and he started to panic. ‘I messed this up, didn’t I? Forget I said anything.’

“No, I- you didn’t mess anything up. It’s- I have feelings for you too. The romantic kind.” She blurted out. “Your confession caught me kinda off-guard because I didn’t know you felt the same way and I- this doesn’t happen to me.”

‘What doesn’t happen to you?’

“I was never the prom queen. I was never the girl who every guy had a crush on. No one’s- every other person I’ve had feelings for hasn’t returned them.” She said quietly. “In fact, most of them thought I was annoying.”

‘They’re idiots then. You’re wonderful.’

“No, I’m not. I talk way too much, half the time I don’t even say anything important. I get wrapped up in my work. I make references no one outside of Comic Con would get. And if my nervous, babbling, ‘everything’s gonna be okay’ mentality doesn’t put them off, my intelligence does. Or my attitude or my stubbornness. Or just how mean I can be when someone hurts me or someone I care about.”

All of that was true, but Felicity was also worried about something else. Oliver had been through a lot, and Felicity had been nice to him when a lot of other people weren’t. She was worried that he was putting her on a pedestal or building her up to be this perfect, infallible woman who never did anything wrong and was going to somehow save him. She wasn’t perfect and she didn’t want him to think that she was.

‘I like the fact that you babble. It makes it easier for me to talk to you because I don’t feel like you’re sitting there, waiting for me to respond. You aren’t just trying to fill silence, but you also aren’t talking to me just because you think you should be. I like your references, because I’ve gotten to learn more about you and some things I missed while I was away. And you get so excited about those things. I might be a pessimist, but I don’t think there’s anything wrong with you feeling optimistic about things. You’re passionate about your work. You’re compassionate, even with
someone you’ve only known for a week. You didn’t know me well at all but you were willing to help me, you came to my defense. As for you being mean, you aren’t.’

“You can’t really say that. If Laurel hadn’t been convicted, I was gonna do something to punish her. If the judge hadn’t interrupted me when I brought up Sara, I was gonna get very nasty just so that she’d regret bringing up Emily. The only reason I haven’t hatched a similar plot for your mother is because Thea’s a minor.” She said. “Like I used to tell my mom, I’m a good person until you piss me off.”

‘That’s not true. You’re a good person, but everyone has their limits. Your very firm stance on certain things is part of why I feel the way I feel about you.’ Oliver realized how he felt about Felicity weeks ago. It had taken him a long time to work up the courage to tell her. He was shocked and astounded that she returned his feelings. He was convinced that his mutism, his PTSD and all of his other problems made him impossible to love. He didn’t think anyone could love him, let alone someone as amazing as Felicity.

Felicity was quiet for several moments. “So, you have feelings for me. I have feelings for you. What happens now?”

‘If I remember correctly, this is the part where I ask you out on a date.’ He said. ‘Will you go out with me?’

“Yeah. 100%.”

Laurel left her meeting with her probation officer and headed to CNRI. She hadn’t been to the office since her arrest and knew there’d be a large pile of work waiting for her. Most of it was probably mundane paperwork, but the repetition would give her some time to think about what to do next.

She felt like everyone in the building was staring at her as she walked into the office, but ignored them. Her trial had been a big deal because of who Oliver was, but soon the buzz around it would fade and Laurel’s image would recover. She just needed one big win and then no one would care about her issues with Oliver. Laurel got to her desk and saw that most of her case files were gone.

“Where are all my files?” She asked Joanna who gave her a pitying look but didn’t answer. “Jo?”

“Allison reassigned your cases after your arrest.”

“What?! She can’t-“

“Ms. Lance, could I speak with you in my office please?” Allison, the woman who ran CNRI said as she walked up to the pair. Laurel gave a tense nod and followed her into the woman’s office.

“We need to-“

“Why did you reassign my cases?”

“You were on trial. We couldn’t just ask our clients to wait until your case was resolved to handle theirs.” She explained.

“My trial’s over, so I can get back to work.”

“Your trial is over, but you weren’t acquitted. The charges weren’t dropped. You were convicted on almost all counts.”
“Yes, of misdemeanors.”

“Misdemeanor or not, you’re a convicted criminal. And your trial got a lot of attention. Most of it wasn’t good. And the Washington State Bar Association is considering an investigation into ethics violations. Your name is connected to this office’s. How would it look, for us, if you kept representing our clients in court?”

“So, you don’t wanna look bad.”

“We rely on public funds and charitable donations to keep this office open. In order for us to continue to help the people we serve, we can’t have you front and center making headlines. CNRI needs to distance itself from your actions and your behavior.”

“That’s it then? I’m fired?”

“No, you can assist on cases. Help others with research and discovery on their cases. We can’t have you taking on your own cases or representing anyone right now.”

“So, you want me to be a glorified paralegal.” Laurel scoffed.

“The only other alternative would be firing you, and we didn’t want to resort to that.”

Moira came back to the mansion after the sentencing and ran into Walter, who was carrying a suitcase. “Where are you going?”

“I’m leaving for Sydney tonight. This trip’s been in the works for several weeks.”

“Oh, right.” She said with a sigh. “I completely forgot about that happening.”

“Yes, you’ve been preoccupied with other things.” He remarked in an even tone. Saying Moira had been focused on only one thing over the last few weeks would’ve been an understatement. Walter was also convinced that everything she was doing was only making things worse in the long run.

“Is there something you’d like to say?”

“I need to go or I’ll miss my flight. We’ll talk when I get back.” He said as he made his way out of the house.

“Well, that went well.”

“Thea! I know you’re upset with me but-”

“No, no buts. You don’t get to make excuses. You’re in this situation because of choices you made. You could’ve avoided this.” She said, moving upstairs.

Moira stood alone in the foyer and thought about Thea’s words. Should she have done something differently?

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

Oliver relives a moment from his past and Thea gives Moira some hard truths.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oliver struggled against his restraints. He needed to get out of there. He needed to stop the mercenaries that had captured him.

“You can struggle all you want, Mr. Queen. You won’t escape.” Their leader said as he circled the chair Oliver was captive in. “I believe its time that you and I had a chat.”

“Fuck you.” Oliver spat out.

“There’s no need to be rude.” The man stated as he broke one of Oliver’s fingers. “Let’s try this again.”

He wasn’t sure how long it went on for. It could’ve been hours or it could’ve just been minutes. He’d be asked a question, he wouldn’t answer and they’d torture him. He tried to keep quiet, but past a point, the pain became too much and he started to scream. He felt ashamed when that happened, and his torturer seemed to notice.

“Go right ahead and scream Oliver. No one can hear you. No one will save you. It doesn’t matter.” The man told him. “I think that’s enough for today.”

Instead of leaving the room as Oliver expected, as he always did, the door opened and a gurney was wheeled in. Someone was strapped to it. The person looked around and Oliver saw that it was Felicity.

“if you won’t tell me, perhaps she will.” The torturer said with an evil glint in his eye.

“Stay away from her!” Oliver shouted as he tried once again to break free. He was exhausted and on the verge of passing out, but he needed to break free. He had to save Felicity.

He could sort of hear a voice calling out to him. “Oliver? Oliver! OLIVER!”

With a gasp, Oliver shot up out of the bed. He looked around, panicked, and realized he was panting. Felicity was standing in the doorway looking worried. “Are you okay? No, of course you weren’t. You were thrashing around and whimpering. I didn’t wanna startle you, but I also didn’t want to just walk away and not try to help you.”

It had been a dream. Just a dream. Felicity was safe. The man couldn’t get to her. He was dead, his corpse was rotting on Lian Yu where he belonged. Oliver took several deep breaths and calmed himself down. It was dream. It wasn’t real.
‘Sorry I woke you up.’ He signed shakily.

“You didn’t, I was already awake.” She told him coming into the room. “Do you wanna talk about it? It seemed like a pretty bad nightmare.”

‘Memory. It wasn’t a dream; it was a memory. Or, at least, it started that way.’ He said. ‘I don’t wanna talk about it, if that’s okay.’

“Okay, then you don’t have to.” She said. “Whatever it was, it’s over now. You’re past it. You survived.”

‘Barely.’

“You might’ve barely survived, but you did survive. That’s important.” She said. “And while I’m not happy those things happened to you, I’m happy you survived them so that I got to meet you.” He gave her a tight smile but didn’t say anything. “It’s a little after seven. You should try and get some more sleep.”

‘I don’t think I can. I’m surprised I was able to sleep as much as I did.’

“Ok, well, I just started the coffee if you want some. I gotta go get ready for work.” She said, leaving his room.

Thea was eating breakfast when her mother came into the kitchen. She spent the whole previous night avoiding her because she didn’t think she could be in the same room as Moira without wanting to scream at her. She pretended to not even notice her mother walking into the room.

“Do you- have you spoken to Oliver recently?” Moira realized, after Laurel’s trial ended, that she’d gone about trying to help her son in the completely wrong way. She shouldn’t have gone to Laurel for help, nor should she have tried to control him in the first place.

Thea finished chewing her food and swallowed before answering. “Yes.”

“How is he doing?”

“Not great lately. The situation with Laurel, which you didn’t make any easier, wasn’t easy for him.” She answered. “Overall, he does seem to be doing better, according to Felicity.”

“Does he- if I tried to reach out to him, do you think he’d be willing to talk with me?”

“I don’t know.” The brunette answered honestly. “Maybe one day he’ll want to talk to you, but right now- you messed up badly. It’s gonna take a long time for you to undo the damage you caused.”

“When this is over, I’m gonna make both of them regret crossing me.” Laurel muttered to herself as she slammed another law book closed. She didn’t graduate at the top of her class in law school to end up like this. Her career was going exactly the way she planned until Oliver came back to life and he and Felicity ruined her career and trashed her image.

“Huh?” Joanna asked. She thought Laurel was talking to her.

“Oliver and that blonde bitch. I’m gonna get even with them.”
“I don’t know about Felicity Smoak, but the way you talk about Oliver…it kinda sounds like you still have feelings for him or something.”

“The only thing I feel is hatred.”

“Doesn’t sound like it.” Jo responded, before seeing the time. “I gotta head to a deposition.”

Oliver’s dream was still fresh in his mind when he suited up to hit the streets as the vigilante later that night. It wasn’t rare for him to have flashbacks or nightmares about the island, but this was the first time his nightmares involved someone else. He started to worry. Was getting close to Felicity going to put her in danger? Could he protect her if someone tried to hurt her?

He put his concerns about Felicity on the back burner, as he needed to focus when he broke into Nelson Ravich’s office building. He was advancing towards the man when suddenly, Ravich began to smirk. A second later, he felt a bullet hit him in the shoulder.

“You should’ve brought a friend.” Ravich taunted.

Oliver’s hood wasn’t completely bulletproof, but it was made out a material that was supposed to be bullet resistant. The fabric kept the round of going into his body, but it still hurt like hell. He quickly took care of the guard before turning his attention back to Ravich. He pressed a button in his sleeve that played a recorded message.

“Nelson Ravich, you have failed this city.” The message went on to demand he return the $70 million he’d embezzled from ordinary citizens and that he had 24 hours to comply. He made it back to the foundry to ice his shoulder for a little bit before heading back to Felicity’s house. While he was recuperating in the lair, he came to a conclusion. No one knew who the vigilante was; no one had even gotten close. He could keep Felicity safe. He would keep her safe. On the way home, he sent her a text.

>>To: Felicity- About our date, how’s tomorrow sound?

>>From: Felicity- Sounds good to me!

He smiled at her response. Everything would be fine.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

Due to boring, real life stuff, there won't be a chapter next week.
Chapter 28

Chapter Summary

Felicity and Oliver (finally) go on a date.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Two days after Laurel’s sentencing, Moira woke up to find she had a message from Malcolm Merlyn. He wanted to see her immediately. She’d been so caught up with Oliver’s situation and the trial that she’d taken a step back from Tempest. Clearly, Malcolm wasn’t too pleased by this move. She went to his office first thing to see what he wanted to speak with her about.

“You wanted to see me.”

“Yes, Tempest is…behind schedule, thanks in part to your…recent distractions.”

“My son returned from the dead. He survived the accident you swore wouldn’t have any survivors. I had every reason to prioritize Oliver.” She pointed out.

“Perhaps, but we still don’t know what, if anything, he knows about his father or our undertaking.” He said pointedly.

“I didn’t see the point in wasting the time or resources to hire men to abduct a man who isn’t able to speak.” She said bluntly. “Even if he did know something, he couldn’t tell anyone.”

“Talking is not the only way to communicate or relay information, Moira.”

“He’s been back over a month. He hasn’t even mentioned Sara or Robert once. He doesn’t talk about his life before the island at all. Whatever happened there, it traumatized him. So much so that he nearly has a panic attack whenever the word ‘Gambit’, ‘yacht’ or ‘island’ are mentioned.” She said. “Whatever he might know, and I doubt he knows anything, he’s repressed it.”

“I suppose that’s good enough for now.” Merlyn said. “Now we should discuss Starling City’s newest self-appointed savoir, the Hood.”

“What about him? He’s just a random vigilante.”

“Nelson Ravich, Martin Somers, Adam Hunt. All targeted by him, all members of the List. In fact, every person he’s gone after has been on the List. That isn’t suspicious to you?”

“It’s one hell of a coincidence.”

“That’s one word for it. Watch your back, Moira. Someone’s onto us.” He said before dismissing her.

Oliver stood in front of the mirror in his room. His date with Felicity was tonight, he knew he
He was standing there in a towel and he couldn’t take his eyes off of his scarred body. He was so damaged, not just mentally but also physically. How could someone like Felicity be attracted to someone like him? He shook his head, trying to will the bad thoughts away. He put on a shirt so he couldn’t see his scars. He had a date, he needed to get dressed.

He needed to psych himself up first though. This was his first date in five years. He was terrified about something bad happening. The problem with anxiety was that Oliver could think of countless ways this date could go wrong. What if the paparazzi showed up? What if the waitstaff caused a scene when he tried to write his order down? What if he had a panic attack in the middle of dinner? What if he said the wrong thing and it offended Felicity?

Before he could work himself into a panic, he managed to get his phone out and text Thea.

>>To: Speedy- I need you to do me a favor.

>>From: Speedy- Sure. Anything.

>>To: Speedy- Tell me this isn’t gonna blow up in my face.

>>From: Speedy- What’s not gonna blow up in your face?

>>To: Speedy- My date. With Felicity.

Seconds later, his phone started to ring. Thea wanted to FaceTime him. It occurred to him in that moment that he hadn’t told Thea he was going to ask Felicity out or that she’d said yes. He accepted the call and saw his excited sister on the other line.

“She said yes? Well, I knew she would but- yay! And it’s gonna go great. Everything’s gonna be fine. Just breathe.” She said. “What are you gonna wear?” He shrugged. “Are you going somewhere fancy?” Oliver gave the universal signal for ‘kinda’ and waited for Thea’s reaction. “Do you have a polo or button-down shirt and some slacks?” He nodded. “Wear that, no jacket.”

‘Thank you, Thea.’ He signed.

“Wait, did you say thanks? Did I interpret it correctly?” She asked. Thea had been learning ASL in her spare time and was excited that she picked some of it up. Oliver smiled and nodded. “Yay! I gotta go, but good luck!”

Oliver changed and went into the living room to wait. He and Felicity had agreed to leave around 6, since they had a reservation at 6:30. He wanted to be ready whenever she was. He was pleasantly surprised to see her walking out of her bedroom right as he walked out of his. He took in the sight of her and froze on the spot.

‘You look beautiful.’

“So do you. Wait, I didn’t- handsome. You look handsome. That’s what I meant to say.” She told him. “Ready to go?”

He nodded. They walked to her car and she drove towards the restaurant. He wanted where they were going to be a surprise, but he couldn’t really make it work considering someone had to call to make the reservation and he didn’t think to ask Tommy for help until it was too late.

They were shown to their table and thankfully, since the restaurant was small and intimate, they
arrival didn’t attract too much attention. Too many people around made Oliver nervous.

“You know, I’ve driven past this place a few dozen times but I’ve never tried it. Always wanted to though.” She said after they were seated.

‘I did too. I’m glad we get to experience this place for the first time together.’ He told her. ‘I’m really glad you said yes to dinner.’

“I’m really glad you asked me to dinner.” She said with a smile. “How loudly did Thea scream when you told her? She hasn’t exactly been subtle.”

‘I’m surprised you didn’t hear it.’ His sister was many things, soft-spoken wasn’t one of them.

A waiter came and took their drink orders. Felicity ordered a glass of merlot while Oliver asked for a club soda. He nodded and left. Felicity tilted her head in confusion.

‘I’m not a big drinker these days.’ He told her. Part of his avoidance was due to alcohol leaving him with less control, which scared him. He was always on edge and when he drank, he actually became more on-edge because he was worried about it dulling his senses. Most of the reason Oliver didn’t drink very much, however, was related to an incident when he was missing. He tried to figure out how to word his reasoning but she stopped him.

“You don’t have to explain if you don’t want to. You don’t drink and that’s all you need to say. Will it bother you if I have wine?”

‘No, not at all.’ He said. The waiter returned and took their food orders. Felicity interpreted for Oliver and they were alone once again. ‘I know you keep saying I don’t have to tell you anything I don’t want to, but there’s something I think you should know.’

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

What do you think Oliver's gonna tell Felicity?
Chapter 29

Chapter Summary

Oliver tells Felicity a few things about his past and her reactions surprised him.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘I know you keep saying I don’t have to tell you anything I don’t want to, but there’s something I think you should know.’ Oliver signed. It was better for everyone if she found this out now, rather than later.

Felicity slowly put her drink down and turned her attention fully to Oliver. “Okay, what is it?”

‘I had to do….certain things to survive. Unthinkable things.’ She needed to know exactly how messed up he was. She needed to see that he was a monster and that he deserved to be alone and unhappy.

“We’ve all done things we aren’t proud of.”

‘It’s different. I hurt people. I- I’ve killed people, Felicity. I did a lot of that when I was missing.’

It was silent for several seconds. Oliver was waiting for her to get up and leave. He wouldn’t have blamed her if she did. Felicity, meanwhile, was trying to find the right words to express what she was thinking to Oliver.

“Did you want to?” She asked quietly. “Those things you did, did you do them because you wanted to or because you had to?”

‘I had to. I was- if I didn’t kill them, they would’ve killed me. I was just trying to stay alive.’

“Exactly. I won’t say that it doesn’t matter, because it does. What you went through matters. But, you did those things because you were trying to survive and make it home. Surviving doesn’t make you a bad person, Oliver. And the fact that you feel so torn up about it means you’re still a good person. You feel guilt, you have regrets. It hurts but its good.”

‘I’m a monster.’

“No, you aren’t.”

‘Yes, I am. I should’ve- I should’ve tried harder.’

“You were on an island in the middle of the ocean, I think you did the best you could.” She said sympathetically.

‘I wasn’t there the whole time.’ he admitted. ‘There was a year where I was- I wasn’t on the island. I actually came back here for a bit. I had to break into my dad’s office and I saw- I saw you. You were babbling to yourself and- it made me smile, for the first time in years.’
“You saw me?” She said. “If you were here, why didn’t you-?” She stopped herself before she could ask why he didn’t just come home then. She figured, like everything else, it wouldn’t be easy to talk about.

‘There was someone who wouldn’t let me.’ He answered. ‘I don’t wanna talk about it.’ What Waller had done to him when ARGUS no longer needed his “skills” still made him furious and devastated to this day. Her actions ranked higher than the Gambit sinking on his list of worst things that ever happened to him. He didn’t want to think about it, he refused to think about it. Thinking about it only resulted in him feeling more pain.

“You don’t have to talk about it. I’m glad I was able to make you smile, even if it didn’t last very long.” She said, reaching over to take his hand. “You did the best you could. You kept yourself alive. You found your way home. That’s what’s important.”

After that very heavy conversation, Felicity started telling Oliver about one of her new projects. She knew their previous conversation had brought his mood way down and hoped talking about something completely unrelated would cheer him up. It took a little while, but eventually his mood lifted and they were able to enjoy their meal.

They left the restaurant and drove home. While stopped at a light, Oliver started signing. ‘There’s something else I need to tell you. My dad made it to the life raft, but he didn’t- he asked me to right his wrongs just before he died. It’s why-‘

“Why you became the vigilante.” She finished. “I’m sorry.”

‘He wanted to save me. He died trying to save me.’

“It doesn’t make watching him die, which I’m guessing you did, any easier.” She said.

He sighed. ‘I should be the one apologizing. Our date was supposed to be fun and I keep bringing up depressing things.’

“Not including the two very heavy discussions we had, I enjoyed myself. I think you did too.” She assured him. “And the things you told me, I feel like they’ve been weighing on you for a while. They’re important to you, they’re important to what happened to you. You aren’t selfish for wanting to ease some of that burden.”

‘You are amazing.’

They reached Felicity’s condo and she parked the car. “So, this date went well.”

‘Yes, it did.’ He agreed. ‘Wanna go on another?’

“Definitely.”

His face turned into a huge, happy smile. He started fidgeting with his hands. ‘Can I kiss you?’

She nodded and he leaned in to kiss her. It was the perfect end to a not-so-perfect night.

Thea woke Oliver up at 7am the next day to FaceTime him and ask him how the date went. While she was able to get some stuff out of him, Oliver wasn’t big on sharing, so she wound up calling Felicity soon after to get a more detailed account of the night. Felicity didn’t tell Thea any of the private things Oliver had shared, but she told her most of the other stuff and that they were going to
go out again, which thrilled the teenager.

Laurel walked into work. When she walked past a few of her coworkers, they all suddenly got quiet. Annoyingly, she was used to it. Ever since her trial, rooms tended to fall silent when she walked in. She held her head high and continued on her way. Once she cleared her name and made Oliver and Felicity pay, they’d all regret the way they treated her. She’d made sure of it.

She logged onto her computer and opened up a web browser. She was about to type in a website when a headline caught her eye.

OLIVER QUEEN FINDS NEW LOVE? Below the headline there was a picture of Oliver and Felicity, clearly on a date. It was probably taken discreetly by another customer, but it was clear that the photo was of the pair and they certainly looked cozy.

As soon as she saw the picture, she let out a scream. “WHAT?!”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 30

Chapter Summary

Laurel hears some hard truths and Oliver and Felicity have a lazy day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

OLIVER QUEEN FINDS NEW LOVE? Below the headline there was a picture of Oliver and Felicity, clearly on a date. It was probably taken discreetly by another customer, but it was clear that the photo was of the pair and they certainly looked cozy.

As soon as she saw the picture, Laurel let out a scream. “WHAT?!”

A few other attorneys snorted or rolled their eyes at her reaction. They knew she’d see the story eventually and had been waiting to see her reaction. It wasn’t startling that she was angry. They went back to work. Joanna and Allison, their boss, walked towards her.

“Laurel, is there a problem?” Allison asked.

“No, no problem. I was just….startled by something.”

“Ok, please remember this is an office environment in the future.” She said before walking away.

“You okay?” Joanna asked.

“He moved on. With her.”

“I know you’re still really pissed, but him dating someone doesn’t seem like a big deal.”

“It is. This wasn’t supposed to happen. He was supposed to pick me, to come begging for me to forgive him, for Sara. and they we’d-.”

“Wait, back up. You wanted him back? I thought you hated him?”

“I’m angry but Ollie and I just work together. We’re supposed to be the city’s power couple. But now he’s mute and I can’t very well date a mute.”

Joanna thought Laurel’s last sentence was messed up in about six different ways but didn’t say anything. Instead, she focused on something else she’d said. “I’m your friend, you know I’m on your side, but that doesn’t make sense. You wanted to hate him and you also wanted him to come crawling back. You can’t have it both ways.” Joanna said. “I gotta get back to work.”

Oliver walked out of his room that morning and was surprised to see Felicity sitting in the living room, typing away on her computer. It was Friday and he’d been expecting her to be at work by now. She either heard his door close or sensed him standing there, because she turned to look at him with a soft smile.
“Good morning.”

‘Morning. I thought you’d be at work.’

“Normally, I would be, but luckily, Queen Consolidated is pretty flexible when it comes to
telework. I don’t have to go in everyday, but a lot of my projects work better if I’m in the office.”
She told him. “Sorry if I’m gonna mess up your plans to do…whatever you do when I’m not
here.”

‘Oh, I wasn’t complaining.’ He told her. ‘Have you had breakfast yet?’

“Well, I made myself some toast and coffee.”

‘That doesn’t count as breakfast, no protein.’ He told her as he walked into the kitchen. ‘I will
make you something.’

He came back about ten minutes later with an omelet and handed the plate to her. “Wow, you
really didn’t need to go to this much trouble.”

‘It wasn’t any trouble.’ He told her.

After breakfast, Felicity went back to work and Oliver decided today was a good day to read one of
the books that had been on his list for a while. He took a seat on the other side of the couch and
opened the book. They stayed like that for a few hours, Oliver reading and Felicity hard at work
doing some coding. It was quiet, but it was a comfortable silence.

“Good book?” She asked at one point.

‘So far, yes. I didn’t think I’d like it, to be honest.’

“Why not?”

‘When Thea mentioned it to me, I thought it was gonna be….a girly book.’


‘Like a romance novel or Twilight or something. You know.’

“Really? Well, I guess that makes sense. She is a teenage girl, but I think she knew you’d be more
interested in Percy Jackson than Twilight.” She said. “Are you at a good stopping point?”

‘I guess. Why?’

“Because I think it might be time for lunch, and since we’re both here, we should eat lunch
together.” She suggested. “I’ve got some stuff for tomato soup and grilled cheese or we can go out
somewhere.”

‘Tomato soup and grilled cheese.’ He said. ‘I missed that a lot.’

They both got up from the couch and walked into the kitchen together. Oliver heated the soup
while Felicity made grilled cheese sandwiches. “So, other than reading, what are your plans for
today?”

‘Usually I work out a little, but I don’t wanna be a distraction. Or I can go to the foundry and do
that.’
“If you wanna work out here, I’m not gonna stop you.” She said. “I can go into my room or come in here if it makes you feel better. How do you explain being at an old steel factory late at night anyway?”

‘I own the building and the official story is that I’m in the process of renovating. Don’t know what the cover story will be.’

“Well, construction and renovations take a while, so you’ve got time.” She told him. The topic moved onto something else and before they knew it, Felicity realized she should get back to work. She opened her laptop back up and got to work. After a few assurances, she convinced Oliver that his exercise wouldn’t be a distraction.

She looked over the top of her computer as he did some push-ups and sit-ups on the floor of the living room. He moved over to one of the walls to do a headstand for a while and a few other exercises he needed to do against the wall, but she didn’t turn to watch him work out once he moved away from the couch. He came back into her line of sight and did another set of push-ups and sit-ups. When both sets were done, he realized how sweaty he was and took his shirt off.

He heard a quiet gasp from the couch. Felicity was sitting there, looking at him with a hand over her mouth. His eyes widened as he realized he was shirtless. He was shirtless and Felicity could see his scars. She could see his scars and now she knew how damaged he was. He picked his shirt up from where he dropped it and went to flee the room.

Her voice stopped him. “Please don’t go lock yourself in your room. I don’t want you to sit in there, all by yourself and think negative thoughts. I’m sorry I gasped. I was taken a little off guard.”

He put his shirt back on before responding. ‘Because you finally see how damaged I am.’

“You are not damaged, Oliver. You have scars, yes, but it’s because you went through something traumatic. I knew you had scars, but knowing you have them, and seeing them are two different things.” She said. “Do you-? Do they hurt?”

‘Not physically.’ He answered. ‘But every time I see them, I remember how I got them. They’re a part of me and I hate them, because they’re a reminder of what they did to me.’

“You’re right about one thing, they’re a part of you. And I can understand why you might see them that way, but they don’t just represent things that happened to you, they also represent that you survived those things.”

‘You aren’t disgusted by them?’

“No, of course not. They make me sad, but that’s because I get upset when I think about the things you’ve gone through. You survived things many people couldn’t. You have scars, but that doesn’t change the way I see you, the way I feel about you.” She told him.

‘You’re….unlike anyone else I’ve ever met.’ He said after a long moment of silence.

“I try.” She said with a soft smile. “Why don’t you finish your book?”

Oliver realized she was probably right, and sitting in his room wallowing wouldn’t help, so he sat back down on the couch and continued the book he was reading.


Comments? Thoughts?
Chapter 31

Chapter Summary

Oliver tells Felicity about the List, which leads to a surprise revelation, Thea meets someone new and Laurel just can't help herself.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The day after Oliver had accidentally let Felicity see his scars, he woke up to a message from his mother. The text was rather long, and he was surprised to find his mother even knew how to text, but he read it anyway. The message was longer than it needed to be, but it could easily be summarized as Moira apologizing for her behavior and then asking Oliver to come to the mansion so they could talk. His emotions were hard to pin down after reading it. He was pleased his mother was finally starting to realize she was in the wrong. He was upset, and a little angry, that it had taken her so long and such drastic steps to realize it. The most pessimistic part of his mind thought this might just be another attempt to manipulate him. Oliver closed the messaging app for now. He didn’t need to respond right now.

He walked into the living room and found Felicity in front of the television. Her body was twisted in a strange shape and he immediately thought back to watching Shado do yoga on the island. Before he could become too immersed in his memory, she noticed him standing there and moved out of her pose.

“Hey! Did my video wake you up? I’m sorry.” She said quickly.

‘Nope. I woke up a little while ago.’ He assured her. ‘You do yoga?’

“When I have time. It helps me de-stress.” She shrugged. “What are you up to today?”

‘I’m not sure yet. Probably working on the List.’

“The List?”

‘I- I don’t wanna get into how I got the list, but it’s how I decide who the Arrow should go after.’ He told her. ‘They all failed this city in one way or another, and I need to stop them. That’s where this comes in.’ He held up the small, beige notebook he carried with him most of the time. It was too valuable to his mission, and too important to him on an emotional level, to risk it being misplaced.

“That journal has the list in it?” She asked. He noticed something off about her voice. She wasn’t asking out of pure curiosity. Or to keep the conversation going. She recognized the item and he wanted to know why.

‘Yes. Why do you ask? Have you seen it before?’

“Yeah, I- right before he went to Sydney, Walter asked me to look into a notebook that looks exactly like that one.” She admitted. “He seemed really freaked out by it, which is weird since the pages are just blank.”
‘They aren’t though. The ink can only be seen if the pages are exposed to either heat or UV light.’ Oliver admitted. ‘Where’s his version now?’

‘In my bag. It isn’t his though. I don’t think he’d be as scared as he was if it belonged to him. But if he’d just found it and wondered why it was hidden or something…” She trailed off. She didn’t want to accuse Moira of anything, but it seemed like the notebook belonged to her and Walter wanted to know about it in order to protect her.

‘Can I see it?’ He asked. He didn’t want to jump to any conclusions until he confirmed the books were the same. He also knew, if they were the same, the other notebook would have the complete list. Oliver had torn out a few pages of his father’s copy in order to keep a fire on the island going, not realizing how valuable those few tiny sheets were. Felicity gave him the book and he locked himself in his room, studying it. She was a little worried, but she also knew the notebook was more than just a collection of paper to him.

Thea had woken up bright and early Saturday morning and snuck out of the mansion. She left partially because she wanted to avoid her mother, and partially because she wanted to visit Oliver. Her main reason for sneaking out though was that she needed to get to a rec center right outside the Glades by a certain time. Thea had started teaching herself ASL by watching videos online. She soon realized that she didn’t just want to understand Oliver, she wanted to be able to communicate fully with him in sign language. She started looking into classes and learned there was one held every Saturday at the rec center. When she got there, the room was empty except for the instructor and one other person, a teenager wearing a red hoodie.

“What are you doing here?” He asked her, clearly recognizing her. He was convinced she was either lost or came here as some kind of publicity stunt.

“Isn’t this where the sign language classes are held?” She responded. “I’m Thea.”


“Why are you here?” She countered.

“Stephanie needed at least one person to show up so the center wouldn’t cancel the class.” He said, nodding towards the instructor. “I’ve known her since forever, so when she asked I couldn’t really turn her down.”

“My brother is mute. He either uses ASL or he writes things down. I wanna learn so that I can still have conversations with him. This is the only class in the city.” Thea admitted.

“I see we have a full house today.” Stephanie said, getting their attention. “Let’s get started.”

Oliver studied the notebook from Felicity for about an hour before he was convinced he’d gotten every name on the list written down. Now, he knew the names of everyone his father wanted him to save the city from, not just most of them. He left his room and gave the notebook back to Felicity, thanking her.

‘Sorry I ran off with it.’

“Well, I didn’t even know what it was until you told me. I thought your stepfather was just being paranoid.” She said. “And I don’t need to know the whole story to know that that notebook’s not
‘My father gave it to me right before he died. While we were on the life raft.’ He said. ‘It was his
dying wish.’

“Like I said, its not just a notebook to you.” She said. “Ugh, I need to head to the store. We’re
almost out of milk and toilet paper, among other things.”

‘I can go.’

“Nah, it’s okay. You do most of the cooking, I can do the buying.” She waved him off. “There’s a
shop just down the street.”

‘Can I come with you then?’ He asked. ‘I think I need to get used to being around more than just
you, Tommy, Thea and John.’ He might not like people for the most part, but he recognized that he
needed to start getting more comfortable around others. He couldn’t spend the rest of his life only
leaving the house to fight crime.

“Okay.” She agreed and they left soon after.

They were walking through the store when Oliver told Felicity he’d forgotten to grab something in
one of the other aisles. He told her he’d be right back and left to go get it. Felicity stayed in the
cereal aisle, trying to remember which type of Cheerios she hated.

“It’s a phase you know.” A voice, an annoyingly familiar voice, said from her left. “You and him, I
mean. He might like you, but in the end, he’ll always pick me.” Laurel said with a smirk.

Felicity put the cereal box down and turned to face her directly.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 32

Chapter Summary

Laurel makes a big mistake and Lance refuses to give up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“It’s a phase you know.” A voice, an annoyingly familiar voice, said from her left. “You and him, I mean. He might like you, but in the end, he’ll always pick me.” Laurel said with a smirk.

Felicity put the cereal box down and turned to face her directly. “I can’t tell if you’re delusional or just stupid.”

“You’re calling me stupid?”

“Yeah. Do you not know what the words ‘restraining order’ mean? You aren’t supposed to be near me or Oliver.”

“This is a public place. You can’t demand that I leave.”

“No, you’re right, I can’t. But the parameters of our orders against you clearly state that, if you happen to be in the same public place with us, you are barred from approaching us. Which you have now done. So, you’re either delusional, stupid or no one taught you that in law school.”

She didn’t want to admit it, but Felicity was right. She was supposed to avoid them in public, as stated in the restraining order they had. Still, Laurel saw them standing there, looking so happy and she just couldn’t resist. She had to say something. “I’ll have you know that- oh, hi Ollie.” She said with a disgusted tone. “Decide to come back after she yelled at me for you? Are you that scared of me?”

‘I’m not scared of you.’ He signed and Felicity translated. ‘I forgot something. And I don’t need Felicity to yell at you for me.’

“Oh really?”

“Look, I don’t know if you followed us or if this was a genuine coincidence, and I kinda don’t care. We’re trying to buy groceries, so can you just go away? You’re mad things didn’t turn out your way, you’re pissed Oliver moved on.” Felicity said. “We get it. Let’s move on because this is getting a little pathetic.”

“Pathetic? You-!” Laurel started to yell.

“Is there a problem here, folks?” A man dressed in the store uniform, probably the manager, asked walking up to them.

Laurel seemed to realize other people could overhear their argument and stormed off.

“Not anymore, but I was wondering if we could talk in your office.” Felicity said. She was fairly
sure this store had security cameras and that footage would be useful. “It’s a bit of a complicated situation.”

“Right this way.” He gestured towards the back of the store. They talked to the manager for about fifteen minutes. The man was more than happy to give Felicity a copy of the security footage. It even had audio that proved Laurel approached Felicity, not vice versa.

‘What are you gonna do?’ Oliver asked Felicity on their way out of the shop. ‘With the tape I mean.’

“I don’t know. I should give it to the SCPD, have them bring her in for violating her probation. I don’t know if that’ll make things better though.”

‘How could they get worse?’

“It’s gonna sound dumb, but I kinda hoped that, since she’s supposed to leave us alone, she’d take the time to deal with some of the underlying issues she has. It’s like- she’s not just angry, she’s obsessed. And if she goes to prison, she might never work on those issues.” Felicity didn’t like Laurel. She didn’t think she ever would, but some of her actions made her feel sorry for her. The attorney clearly had a lot of problems and Felicity was a compassionate person by nature.

‘It’s not dumb to hope someone will stop being self-destructive. At the same time, she needs to be the one to decide she needs to change. And it’s not our responsibility to help her.’ He told her.

Felicity decided to wait until Monday morning to decide if she should go to the SCPD and deliver the store surveillance video to the detectives. Two days gave her enough time to think things over fully and consider what would happen.

“Lance, what the hell are you doing?” One of the other detectives asked Quentin when they walked past his desk. He was hunched over a bunch of case files, reading them like they had the answers to life. “Thought you were in administrative leave.”

“I am.” He answered.

“What are you doing with a bunch of open case files then?”

“It’s a…a side project. Helps with the boredom.” He said. He’d tried to look more into Felicity Smoak, but got nowhere. Oliver was a different matter. He knew the man was lying about something, covering something up. He was going to find out what it was. Even if it meant pouring over every open case file since Queen’s return.

The other detective looked at him warily before going to talk to their captain. He didn’t know why Lance was obsessing over the vigilante case files, but he thought their commanding officer should know.

Monday morning, Laurel went into CNRI. Joanna asked her how her weekend was, which led to Laurel venting about what happened at the store. Over the last week, Joanna had realized how much Laurel needed help. The time for just suggesting she leave Oliver alone was over.
“Why did you talk to them at all?”

“I just saw them and I needed to make it clear to her that-.”

“No, you didn’t. You could’ve and should’ve kept on shopping and not even let them know you were there. You’re my friend, but you need to start seeing a therapist or something.”

“I’m not crazy!”

“I didn’t say you were, but all I ever hear is you complaining about Oliver and Felicity. You keep insisting you need to ‘get even’ with them. Now, you violated your probation to try and get under her skin. That’s not good.”

“I didn’t talk to her for long.”

“That doesn’t matter. You still violated the restraining order. That’s all the court’s gonna care about.”

“It’s not gonna get to that. It’ll be my word against theirs and the manager only came over at the end of our conversation.” She waved her friend off.

“You really think a store in 2012 isn’t gonna have security cameras?” Joanna countered.

Around 11:30 am, two SCPD officers came to CNRI and arrested Laurel for violating the conditions of her restraining order, and thus her probation. As she was being escorted out the building, she was yelling about how they ‘couldn’t do this to her’ and how she’d fight to clear her name. Joanna watched it play out and regretted not encouraging Laurel to seek help sooner.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 33

Chapter Summary

Felicity tries to make something clear to her coworkers and gets a surprise visitor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The day Laurel got arrested, again, Felicity was at work. She’d been in the middle of a meeting with the board about one of her projects when the story broke. She didn’t plan it that way, but it was excellent timing since she doubted any of the board members would so much as glance at their phones during her presentation. She didn’t count on their assistants though.

All at once, phones began to vibrate with the news update. The board ignored it, but Felicity saw several of the younger people in the room grab their phones and subtly look at them under the table.

“Is something wrong Miranda?” The COO asked his EA.

“Laurel Lance was just arrested for violating her probation.” She said. All eyes turned to Felicity. The blonde fought the urge to roll her eyes. Of course everyone cared more about her reaction to this news than the groundbreaking things she was working on. Technological breakthroughs weren’t as important as tabloid drama, after all.

“We’re hoping to begin production in the next three weeks.” Felicity said, wrapping up her presentation. “Why is everyone staring at me? If she got arrested, that’s because of something she did.”

“We know that, but I feel like this may be a good time to discuss this situation and it’s impact on the company.”

“It’s impact on the company? There hasn’t been one. Stock prices have risen, not lowered. The court case didn’t impact productivity. I don’t see how it’s impact Queen Consolidated.” The CFO spoke up. Felicity gave him a small smile. She’d always liked the CFO.

“It’s not just about stock price, its also about perception.” Someone from PR said.

“Perception.” Felicity said, kind of in disbelief. “Do you know how many times the company was mentioned by name in court? Twice. Once in referring to piece of evidence and a second time when the defendant decided to grasp at straws. I’m trying to put the whole situation behind me, we both are. And, I know Oliver’s name being on the side of this building doesn’t help, but we’ve both done all that we could.”

“We still need to make a statement.” The PR person said. “Get ahead of any more press on this.”

“You’re better at that than I am. Why don’t you handle that and I’ll get back to working on my implantable biostimulant for people with serious spinal injuries?” She suggested. “Glad we cleared that up.”
She spent the rest of the day in her office, trying to ignore the curious employees who wanted to know what happened and attempting to work out what was missing in her prototype implant. When she was about to leave, she saw a text from Oliver.

>>From: Oliver- There’s a very excited blonde woman on the front step. Are you expecting someone? Should I let her in?

>>To: Oliver- This is gonna sound weird, but send me a picture.

Felicity was pretty sure she knew who it was, but she needed confirmation. A few seconds later, Oliver sent her a picture. As she both expected and feared, it was her mother.

>>To: Oliver- It’s my mother. Let her in. Tell her I’ll be home soon. She knows ASL, so she won’t be weird about you signing.

She really should’ve seen this coming. Between how long she’d been avoiding talking to her mother, the court case and the recent publicity, it wasn’t surprising that Donna would come for a visit. She just wished her mom would’ve told her she was visiting before appearing at her front door.

She unlocked the door to her house and saw Donna sitting on one end of the couch, facing Oliver who was telling her something. It was such a small moment, but it made Felicity happy to see Oliver seem so relaxed around someone who wasn’t her or Thea. She knew he heard the door open because his shoulders tensed slightly.

“It’s funny, isn’t it? How you meet people who end up being important in the most mundane situations?” Donna asked. “Hey sweetie. Oliver was just telling me about how he met you when his phone broke.”

‘I’m glad it did.’ He signed after waving hello to her.

“Me too.” She told him as she walked over to hug her mother. “How have you been?”

“Good, I wish you would’ve told me what was going on with that girl before it was all over the news.” She said pointedly.

“I know, but it wasn’t your fight.”

“After what she said about Emily-.”

“Mom, it wasn’t your fight. It was Oliver’s and to a lesser extent, mine.”

‘I’m sorry she said those things.’ Oliver told both of them.

“You don’t need to apologize.” Both Smoaks said at the same time. Felicity then continued. “Can we please start talking about something else?”

“Ok, let’s talk about the very handsome man you’re living with.” Her mother said. “And the fact that you didn’t tell me you were dating someone.”

“We had a lot going on, and we just- our relationship is new. We’re still getting to know each other.”

“You’re getting to know each other, but you live together.”

“Mom, its complicated.” She said in a warning tone. Felicity and Oliver had done things out of
order, and she was perfectly okay with that. She just didn’t want Oliver to freak out about it and think he needed to leave. “We didn’t do things the normal way, but normal’s boring and it works for us.”

“Oh, I’m the last person that’s ever gonna tell you to be more normal.” She remarked.

“I’m gonna go change into sweatpants. Will you two be okay?” Felicity asked.

“We’ll be fine.” Donna assured her. “So, Oliver, tell me a little more about yourself. What do you like to do?”

“I read a lot. I just finished the first book in the Percy Jackson series after my sister recommended them.’ He answered. ‘I also like cooking and I’ve started experimenting with food.’

“Oh, a man who cooks.” She remarked. “What’s your favorite meal you’ve made so far?”

“The chicken parmigiana I made for Felicity a few days ago. It sounds lame, but I like sharing my cooking with other people, especially Felicity.’ Oliver remembered the night he’d made the dish for her. It wasn’t an important night or anything, but it stood out because of how much she said she liked it. Seeing her so excited made him really excited. A smile formed on his face when he thought about it.

Donna saw the look on his face and a soft smile formed on her own face. It was easy for anyone to see that Oliver really cared about Felicity. “Yeah, Felicity’s pretty special, isn’t she?”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 34

Chapter Summary

Quentin just can't quit, Donna, Felicity and Oliver discuss the board's actions earlier that day and Thea stops by for a visit.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You’re joking.” Captain Stein said, looking at Lance with a bored expression. “Please tell me this is a joke.”

“it’s not.”

“So, you’ve lost your mind then.”

“It makes sense!” Lance argued.

“In what universe does Oliver Queen being the vigilante make sense?” Stein countered.

“The Hood appeared after Queen came back from the dead.”

“Yeah, its quite the coincidence.”

“It’s not-.”

“Look, Quentin, we both know what this is. Your daughter’s trial didn’t go the way you wanted it to and you wanna make Queen pay for it somehow. So, you’ve come up with some crazy theory to fit your bias.” The captain said. “I’m not gonna sit here and enable that. Queen isn’t the vigilante and you aren’t even supposed to be looking at those files. You’re still in hot water with IA. Don’t make it worse.”

Felicity came back out into the living room after changing her clothes and Oliver changed the subject before Donna could say anything else about his feelings towards Felicity. He cared a lot about her, he was pretty sure that he loved her, but he was also worried that it was really soon in their relationship to tell her that. He didn’t want to tell her and freak her out, since saying ‘I love you’ was a huge step in any relationship.

“So, how’s Vegas?” Felicity asked her mother.

“Good. The girls at the Grand are good as well. They say ‘hi’. Amber, a new waitress, told me she saw you at some kind of press conference on TV a few days ago.” Donna answered. “She asked if we knew each other.”

“And of course, you spent the next hour gushing about how proud you are of me.” Felicity knew the other woman had probably caught the press conference where Queen Consolidated announced a number of upcoming biomedical projects they were starting.
“Yes, and why shouldn’t I? I raised a successful, compassionate, genius child, on my own, who’s done a lot of impressive things to help others.” She said. “Not only am I allowed to brag about you, I deserve to.”

‘Your mother is right.’ Oliver signed. ‘You’ve helped a lot of people. Most of whom you’ll probably never even meet. You should be proud of yourself.’

“I am, its just- your ex-girlfriend’s making things hard.” She said with a sigh.

‘What did she do? I thought she got arrested today.’

“She did, but her arrest made the news, while I was doing a presentation in front of the board. And they wanted to talk about it, and how its effecting the company.” She explained. “I don’t know why they don’t understand the phrases ‘I’m trying to move on’ and ‘I didn’t escalate things’. But, you know, blame the victim and all that.”

“They’re giving you a hard time because you did something about being harassed?” Donna asked angrily. “You should’ve quit right then and there and taken your big, beautiful brain somewhere else.”

‘That doesn’t make sense.’ Oliver said after a few moments. ‘The thing with Laurel doesn’t have anything to do with QC. And since the trial started, stock prices and profits have both risen.’ Felicity and Donna looked at him in confusion. They were surprised he knew that. ‘I inherited my grandfather’s stake in the company. I get earnings reports and I pay attention to how the company’s doing. It’s doing well, and the board shouldn’t make you explain yourself to them.’

“Well, your name is also involved in the Laurel fiasco, and its on the side of the building, so they can claim there’s a presumed association between the case and the company. It’s still a load of crap.”

“Can we stop talking about boring business stuff?” Donna asked. “I’m visiting you for the first time in two years. I don’t wanna hear about boring work stuff.”

“You won’t hear me compl-.” Felicity began to say but there was a knock at the door. She stood up. “I swear to Google, if Lance is here to hurl accusations.” She muttered as she made her way over to see who it was.

“Who’s Lance?” Donna whispered.

‘Laurel’s father who’s a detective.’

Felicity checked the peephole before opening the door. “Hi, Thea.”

“Hey. I’m sorry to drop by like this, especially without calling, but I was wondering. Is Ollie here?” She asked.

“Yeah. Is everything okay?” Felicity said, moving out of the way so she could come inside.

“What? No, everything’s fine. Just haven’t seen him in a while.” She answered, walking inside. She saw Donna. “Oh, I didn’t know you had a guest. I can come back. I should’ve called.”

“You’re already here. Thea, this is my mother Donna. Mom, this is Oliver’s sister.”

The two women exchanged greetings and Oliver waved hello to Thea. The teenager took a deep breath before responding. “Sorry, I don’t wanna mess this up.” She said before she began to sign.
‘Hi Oliver. It’s nice to see you. How are you doing?’ She then looked to Felicity. “Did I- did I do it right? I’ve been practicing but-.”

“It was perfect.” Both Smoak women said.

‘You- you’re learning ASL?’ Oliver signed, slower than usual. ‘For me?’

‘Of course. You’re my brother and-.’ She stopped signing. “I don’t know how to sign the next part yet. I wanted to learn so you wouldn’t have to write everything down or text me all the time. I wanna be able to have a conversation with you.” She looked at him hopefully.

Oliver felt something wet on his face. It took him a few seconds to realize he was crying. Thea looked like she was going to apologize but then he said something. ‘Don’t say sorry. This is…I’m crying because I’m happy.’ When he’d come back from the island, Oliver thought he’d be miserable. He expected to be miserable. He couldn’t have predicted meeting Felicity. He thought his family would reject him for being different now. He expected to lose the few real friends he had from before the island. He couldn’t believe that Thea was so accepting of him and willing to spend her free time learning to communicate with him a little better. ‘Thank you, Speedy.’

Thea stayed for about an hour before she went home. Both Queen siblings thought it was nice to spend time together without the trial or Moira’s actions hanging over their heads. After Thea left, Oliver, Donna and Felicity spoke for a few more hours before Donna decided to go to bed. That was when Felicity realized they had a problem. Her condo only had one guest room, and Oliver was staying in it. She couldn’t ask him, or Donna to sleep on the couch. Felicity tried to convince Donna to take her bed, but her mother wouldn’t hear of it. Oliver then volunteered to sleep on the couch, but Felicity was worried it wouldn’t be comfortable to sleep on and didn’t want him to be sore the next morning. Oliver and Donna both insisted that Felicity not sleep on the couch either.

“The solution’s simple, sweetie.” Donna said. “I’ll take the guest room and you two share Felicity’s bed. You’re both adults. I think you can handle it.”

Her logic made sense, and it was the best possible option. Felicity and Donna stripped Oliver’s bed and changed the sheets. Donna went to bed and Oliver and Felicity stood awkwardly in the living room. Neither was sure what to do now.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 35

Chapter Summary

Oliver and Felicity have to share a bed, and they’re roommates. (Oh my god, they’re roommates). Also, Oliver finds out some information about the List.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“The solution’s simple, sweetie.” Donna said. “I’ll take the guest room and you two share Felicity’s bed. You’re both adults. I think you can handle it.”

Her logic made sense, and it was the best possible option. Felicity and Donna stripped Oliver’s bed and changed the sheets. Donna went to bed and Oliver and Felicity stood awkwardly in the living room. Neither was sure what to do now.

“You know what? She’s right. We’re grown-ups. We’re probably making this a bigger deal than it really is.” Felicity said.

‘You’re probably right. Like always.’ Oliver sighed. He wasn’t as confident as Felicity seemed to be, but decided to go with the flow.

A few seconds later, Felicity yawned. Oliver did as well. “Well, I guess that means it’s time for bed.” She declared. “Come on.” She gestured for him to follow her into her room.

Even though he’d been living there for weeks, Felicity’s bedroom was the only room in the house he hadn’t been in to. It was her personal space and he didn’t want to invade her privacy. He was also fairly certain she wasn’t hiding anything groundbreaking or life-altering in there. He entered the room and saw that the walls were painted a pale purple shade. He looked around and noticed that the room fit Felicity’s personality really well. He could quite explain it, but it suited her. He noticed a frame painting hanging on one wall and moved closer to it.

‘Was this the painting Emily made for you?’ He asked.

“Yeah, it- you remember me telling you about that?”

‘I remember most of the things you tell me.’ He answered. ‘It’s a fantastic painting. She was really talented.’

“Yeah, she was.” The blonde said with a soft smile. Then, she realized they needed to talk about logistics of sharing a bed. “Which side? I mean, do you have a preference?”

‘I was gonna sleep on the floor. It wouldn’t be the first time.’

“No. if I’m not letting you sleep on the couch, I’m definitely not letting you sleep on the floor.” She said sternly. “Do you care which side?”

Oliver looked around the room. The bed was situated in the middle of the room. There was a window on the opposite side of the room as the door. If he slept closer to the window, he knew he
had a way out and wouldn’t feel boxed in. If he slept closer to the door, though, he could protect Felicity from an intruder. He doubted he’d do much sleeping to begin with, between his nightmares and his nerves. He looked between the window and the door for several moments before making a decision.

‘I’ll take the left side.’ The side that was closer to the door. If someone broke in and wanted to hurt Felicity, they would need to get past him first. ‘If you don’t mind. I think I’ll be able to sleep better on that side.’

“Fine by me.” She said. “So, do you wanna- should we make a wall of pillows or something?”

‘For what?’

“So you won’t worry as much. I can tell you’re worried about having a nightmare and hurting me. It’s the look on your face. You need to get some sleep, so if putting up some pillows makes you worry less, helps you get some sleep, we can do that.” She said.

‘Not pillows.’ He signed. If he woke up and couldn’t see her, he would go into a panic. ‘Is there a blanket we could wedge between us. It won’t sit as high as a stack of pillows.’

Felicity found a fluffy comforter she rarely used and folded it a few times before putting it down the middle of her king-sized bed. It was enough of a barrier to satisfy Oliver, but he could still see her from where he was laying. With that matter settled, they wished each other goodnight and went to sleep.

Oliver stayed awake, staring at the ceiling for a while. He found it difficult to shut his mind off most nights. After an unknown amount of time, he heard a strange, but cute, noise coming from next to him. Peering over the blanket wall, he saw that Felicity was fast asleep. He should’ve known that even her snores would be adorable. He let the noise lull him to sleep.

Felicity woke up the next morning and felt a weight around her abdomen. She was confused and couldn’t figure out what could be laying on her. She opened her eyes and looked down. There was an arm wrapped around her waist. A hairy, male arm. Oliver’s arm. The blanket wall had been pushed over, and at some point during the night, Oliver had snuggled up against her. Slowly, Felicity tried to extract herself from under his arm, but when she moved, his grip tightened. Realizing the only way to get free was to wake Oliver up, she quietly said his name. He stirred but didn’t awaken. She repeated it, a little louder, but still close to a whisper. Nothing. She tried one more time, and this time, his eyes opened.

He seemed to realize the position they were in and quickly moved his arm. ‘I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to-.’

“It’s okay. You didn’t hurt me and I wasn’t uncomfortable.” She assured him. “I just need to use the bathroom.” She jumped out of bed, relieved herself and came back into the bedroom. “Don’t look so guilty. I’m not mad or anything. It was kinda nice. How did you sleep?”

‘Pretty good.’ Better than pretty good. Last night was one of the best night’s sleeps he’d had since coming back from the island. ‘No nightmares.’

“That’s good. Actually, no, that’s great.” She said, before looking at the clock. “I’m change and gonna make some coffee. I’m working remote today, but I like keeping my routine consistent, you know?”
He nodded. Felicity changed out of her pajamas and was about to head out of the room when he waved to get her attention. ‘Last night was nice. I like sleeping next to you.’

“Aw. You’re so sweet.” She said, leaning over to kiss him. “I like sleeping next to you too.”

Donna looked only slightly smug when they walked into the kitchen smiling while she was drinking her coffee. Her plan to bring those two closer together had worked.

Donna’s visit lasted a few more days. Felicity and Oliver continued to share a bed during her stay. They only had one ‘bad’ night when Oliver had a nightmare, but nothing serious happened. He didn’t lash out or hurt Felicity. She told him later, after it had passed, that his limbs twitched a lot and let out a sound that was close to whimpering. Oliver went out as the Hood twice while Donna was visiting and took down two lesser known people on his father’s list.

The day after Donna left, Oliver began investigating Frank Chen, a former associate of his father’s. When he realized Chen had connections to the Triad, he knew he needed to act sooner rather than later. When he first approached Chen, trying to scare him, an unexpected thing happened.

“It’s true, isn’t it?” Chen asked after Oliver had taken out his security. “You’re targeting the List. The members of Tempest.” He didn’t receive a response. “How do you even know about the Undertaking?”

Oliver fired an arrow just past his head and whole Chen was recovering from the panic he felt, the archer escaped. Tempest. The Undertaking. It sounded very ominous. Ominous, and like something his father would want him to stop. Was it possible he had missed the real meaning behind his father’s last words?

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

I know everyone wanted some sexy-times, but it just didn't feel right at this stage.
Chapter 36

Chapter Summary

Felicity and Oliver begin to investigate Tempest, the blonde finds something surprising, and Laurel receives an unexpected visitor.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After his confrontation with Frank Chen, Oliver barely remembered making it back to the foundry or changing out of his green hood. His mind was replaying what happened with Chen over and over. The words kept repeating in his mind. He was somehow able to make it back to Felicity’s in one piece, despite not paying much attention to the road as he drove.

It was Friday night, so the blonde was wide awake when he got back. She turned the TV volume down when he came in and turned to face him. She was about to ask how it went when she saw the look on his face.

“What’s wrong?”

‘Chen said something when I confronted him. He seemed to know about the List.’

“That’s….unsettling. Did he say anything else?”

‘He implied that the people on the List were part of some group called Tempest. And he mentioned something called the Undertaking.’ Oliver told her. ‘The name sounds…’

“Familiar?” She filled in, but he shook his head. “Ominous?” He nodded. “Like something your dad would want you to stop?” He nodded again.

‘What if I’ve been doing this wrong all along? What if this Undertaking is what my dad meant by telling me to right his wrongs?’

“That’s possible, and if that’s the case, its good that you learned about it.” She said. “But the fact you’re learning about it now doesn’t mean you failed.”

‘It feels like I did.’ Of course, Robert wanted him to stop the Undertaking. He felt foolish for thinking his father wanted him to take down each person on the List one at a time. That would’ve taken years. He’d wasted so much time fulfilling his father’s last wish in the wrong way.

“Oliver, from what you told me, your father gave you the notebook, told you to fix what he broke and died. I hate being that blunt, but it’s the only way for me to say it.” She said. “He didn’t tell you what that list was, how you were supposed to use it, any of it. You had no way of knowing about Tempest’s existence or that this Undertaking was being planned. Not unless you learned it from someone else. Which you did. You were doing what you thought he wanted because you didn’t have any reason to think the List was part of some major plot.”

‘Why couldn’t he have just told me?’ He asked.
“I don’t know. I think that’s one question we’ll never get an answer to.” She said. “But Tempest and the Undertaking, those sound like mysteries we can solve. You now know they exist, there’s a connection between the group, the List and whatever the Undertaking is. What do you wanna do now?”

‘Find out what Tempest and the Undertaking are. What they’re planning. I don’t even know where to start.’ He said.

“Why don’t I do some research into Tempest. You can look into more connections between the names on the List. And I think another visit to Frank Chen might be in order. It seems like he’s kinda chatty, which is good for us.”

‘Us?’

She gave him a funny look. “Did you think I wasn’t gonna help you or something?” She asked. “Not a chance. You couldn’t get rid of me if you tried.” She then yawned. “I’m gonna get some searches started, but then I’m going to bed.”

‘Sleep well.’

While Felicity and Oliver were talking, Chen had recovered from the terror of facing down the Hood. As soon as he was sure the archer was gone, he called the other Tempest members. They needed to know what had happened. He found himself in Malcolm Merlyn’s office, along with Moira Queen and half a dozen others, within the hour.

“-took out my security to have ‘a word’ with me.” He said, as he finished telling the story.

“And what exactly did he say?” Malcolm asked.

“He didn’t say anything beyond ‘you have failed this city’.” He left out the part where the Hood didn’t say anything because he let slip about the List, Tempest and the Undertaking. “I think it’s clear now that he’s targeting the List.”

“We knew that.” Moira said. “But the List doesn’t just relate to our undertaking. This is the first time a member of our group has been targeted.”

“You think he knows, somehow, what we’re doing?”

“Specifics, I doubt, but he clearly has a very good idea.” Malcolm said. “Well, we can’t do much for now. Moira, if I could speak to you?” The others left and Moira waited for Malcolm to speak. “There’s only so many people who could have the List that weren’t in this room.”

“Not this again. Robert drowned. He wouldn’t have had time to tell Oliver about the List, let alone give him his copy of it.”

“It’s unlikely, but its possible. The only person who can say for sure is Oliver. Maybe he doesn’t have the List, maybe this is all just a coincidence. I’d rather be certain, wouldn’t you?”

“And how are you gonna do that?”

“Easy. This Hood wanted someone’s attention. He finally caught mine.” He said before walking away.
Laurel let the prison guards lead her down the hallway to the visitors room. They’d told her she had a visitor, but she couldn’t imagine who it was. Her father maybe. Joanna. Other than those two, she couldn’t think of anyone who would visit her here, unless it was Oliver and Felicity, coming to gloat. She took a seat at one of the tables and her jaw dropped.

“Mom?”

“Sorry I didn’t visit earlier.” Dinah said. “I didn’t think things would get this far.” When she didn’t stop Sara from leaving with Oliver five years ago, she had no way of knowing things would end up like this. Sara dead, Oliver traumatized, and Quentin and Laurel doing everything they could to get revenge on him for an accident.

“Well, they did, because of Ollie and that stupid, blonde-.”

“They didn’t put you in here, you did.” She said, cutting Laurel off. “Your actions got you arrested and imprisoned.”

“Easier for you to say, you left.”

“Yes, I did. Maybe that was a mistake, but I can’t change the past.” She said. “You need to stop this. Let go of all of this anger.”

“He killed Sara! He hasn’t even said sorry! He’s faking being sick so he doesn’t have to. And he got me locked up here because I was the only person who didn’t fall for his lies.”

“I don’t think Oliver’s smart enough to fool multiple mental health professionals.” Her mother said. “I’m gonna tell you the same thing I told your father earlier today: What happened to Sara was an accident. You need to stop trying to punish him for it. Look at where your anger has gotten you.”

The next morning, after a very unrestful night, Oliver walked out into the living room to find Felicity hunched over her computer. She was talking to herself and typing furiously. She saw him move and looked up.

“Good morning. You look…did you sleep okay?” She asked. She didn’t want to say it, but he looked exhausted.

‘No, I didn’t.’ He answered truthfully. Ever since Donna had gone back to Vegas, and he went back to sleeping in the guest room, he hadn’t been able to sleep very well. ‘Nightmares.’

“I’m sorry.”

“You didn’t cause them.’

“I’m also sorry for what I’m about to tell you.” She said. “It’s about Tempest. It’s a fake company, no surprise there, but they own a warehouse in town. I can give you the address.”

‘Why is that something you feel sorry for?’

“Because your mother invested $2.2 million in the fake company. A few months after your father’s yacht went missing.” She said. “And it looks like that wasn’t the only time she’s given them
money.”

‘You think she’s a part of this…group?’

“I think its possible.” Felicity answered.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

No chapter next week, because I'll be on vacation.
Chapter 37

Chapter Summary

Walter returns from Australia, and Oliver makes a discovery.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘You think she’s a part of this…group?’

“I think its possible.” Felicity answered. “Walter got the List from her. Chen said the names on the List were part of, or at least connected to, Tempest. Your mother invested in this fake company. I don’t know what it means, but its one hell of a coincidence if its not related.”

‘Why would- she paid them after the Gambit went missing?’ Oliver asked.

“Yes. Eight weeks after the yacht was reported missing.” She answered. She stopped herself from telling him that the money was paid right before the search for any survivors was called off. She didn’t want to dump too much on him at once.

Oliver stared into space for a few moments. He didn’t want to believe that his mother was involved with these people, the people his father wanted him to stop. He also couldn’t manage to convince himself that she definitely wasn’t affiliated with them. Five years ago, it would’ve seemed impossible, but now, after her recent behavior, he couldn’t say that he knew she couldn’t be involved. He decided to push those thoughts aside for now. ‘You said there was a warehouse Tempest owns?’

“Yes. And I’ll give you the address, after we discuss it with John tonight.” She’d called him earlier and asked him to come to the abandoned steel factory that night.

‘Why wait?’

“In case it’s a trap. Even if it isn’t, if you both check it out, you can search the building faster.” She said. “Besides, its broad daylight and you’d be spotted by the police, which you don’t want. I’ll keep digging into Tempest while we wait.”

Walter’s return from Sydney was awkward to say the least. He arrived home in the early morning, so the family had breakfast together. Things were still noticeably strained between him and Moira, and judging by Thea’s behavior, she was still angry with her mother. The teen did seem excited that he was home, however. She told him what she’d been up to while he was in Australia and he listened with rapt attention. The meal ended when Moira left the table, saying she needed to attend a meeting about an upcoming charity event.

“Have you seen Oliver since the trial ended?” He asked casually.

“He hasn’t come back here, but I’ve seen him.” She said. “He’s doing a lot better. I think he realized he had more people on his side than he thought during the trial and that helped him feel
“I’m glad.” He said.

“You should text him and ask if he’s willing to speak with you. It doesn’t hurt to ask and if he’s not ready now, he may be soon.”

“I spoke to Ms. Smoak and asked her to pass my message along.”

“That was before the trial even started, before Laurel’s arrest.” Thea reminded him. “And he’s come a long way since then.” She stood up and left the table. Walter sat there for a little while longer, thinking about Thea’s words.

Around dusk, Oliver and Felicity left her condo and drove to Oliver’s lair. He hated calling it that, but Felicity joked that that’s exactly what it was, and since he didn’t have a name for it, ‘the lair’ would have to do. ‘Lair’ sounded better than ‘the abandoned steel factory Oliver inherited and had no other use for’ anyway. Felicity started up the computers in the hideout and triple-checked her findings while they waited for John.

Fifteen minutes later, he came down the stairs. “Sorry I’m late. What’s this about?”

“Oliver confronted someone on his dad’s list. The man was rather….chatty. He said he knew the Hood was targeting the List, and implied that some, if not all, of the names on the List are part of some secret group called Tempest. And they’re planning something.” She told him. “It’s called the Undertaking, which is appropriately ominous.”

“Do you know what they’re planning?”

“Nope, not yet.” She said. “But I did find out that they have a warehouse in town. Oliver wants to go check it out and you going with him is a better idea than if I go. I’m useless in a fight.”

‘I don’t think that’s completely true.’ Oliver told her. ‘You’re a badass.’

“Maybe, but I don’t have any of your ninja moves and I wasn’t taught how to kick ass and take names in the army like Digg was.” She said doing karate hand gestures.

Digg and Oliver left as soon as Felicity gave them a location. The building wasn’t in a bad part of town like Oliver had expected. Sure, it was out of the way and the area around it wasn’t busy, but the location didn’t seem as suspicious as he would’ve guessed. He supposed that’s why they’d been able to keep things under wraps for so long. The warehouse didn’t attract any unwanted attention, and thus Tempest didn’t attract attention.

They approached the main entrance and saw that there was a keypad on it. “Looks like we need a passcode. Or the Hood can just shoot the lock.” John said. Oliver took an arrow out of his quiver, nocked it and prepared to fire.

“No, do not shoot the lock.” Felicity told them.

Oliver lowered his bow and John spoke. “Ok, we won’t. Just out of curiosity, why shouldn’t we?”

“Because it could be wired to an alarm. Or worse, shooting either the keypad or the lock could trigger some failsafe that destroys whatever’s inside. That keypad’s advanced, it’s gotta be connected to something I can hack. Give me a minute.” She began typing furiously. “Okay, found
the password. It’s Robert.”

“Just to clarify. Passcode’s Robert, as in Robert Queen?”

“Yup.” She said awkwardly. Any doubt she had about Moira being a part of Tempest vanished when she discovered the passcode.

Oliver entered the code and the door unlocked. Silently, he and John made their way inside. There weren’t guards inside the building, and other than the keypad, there didn’t seem to be any security measures in place. The warehouse was mostly one giant, open room. Most of the empty space was filled up by debris. Oliver froze as soon as he saw it, but Digg kept moving until he saw realized what they were looking at.

“There aren’t any cameras in there I can hack, so someone wanna tell me what’s going on?” Felicity said.

“It’s the Gambit.” Digg whispered. “Someone salvaged the remains of the Gambit.” He raised the flashlight in his hand to get a closer look at the sunken boat. Something caught his eye. “We have a problem.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 38

Chapter Summary

John and Oliver discover something that will change everything, and everyone else struggles to figure out what to do with this information.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“There aren’t any cameras in there I can hack, so someone wanna tell me what’s going on?” Felicity said.

“It’s the Gambit.” Digg whispered. “Someone salvaged the remains of the Gambit.” He raised the flashlight in his hand to get a closer look at the sunken boat. Something caught his eye. “We have a problem.”


“No, none of that.” He answered. “There’s a…..there’s a giant gaping hole in the side of the Gambit. I don’t think what happened was an accident.”

Felicity closed her eyes. Never in a million years would she have guessed that the Gambit had been salvaged and stored right under everyone’s noses. She couldn’t imagine how this felt for Oliver.

“And Oliver?”

“He hasn’t moved since he saw the debris.” He whispered.

“Take as many pictures as you can and get out of there.” She told them.

“Why?”

“I think this has been a secret for way too long, don’t you?” She asked. “I’m gonna call the police.”

Digg took pictures of the debris from as many angles as possible. Some were close up, others were wide shots showing that most, if not all, pieces had been found and assembled. He told Felicity when he was done. She disabled the lock on the building and called 9-1-1. Oliver had stopped staring at the debris and was now focused on the ground in front of him.

“Oliver?”

He didn’t look at John or try to communicate anything. He just turned and walked out of the building. They were a few blocks away when they heard sirens coming towards them. The police cars drove right past them to the warehouse.

“Queen’s Gambit found salvaged in Starling” was the top story on the 11 o’clock news and the headline on the next day’s paper. Digg took Oliver back to Felicity’s condo, still dressed in his green hood. He’d been near-catatonic since he saw the yacht. He just sat on the couch, staring ahead of him.
“Oliver?” She asked quietly. She knew he’d have a reaction to seeing the Gambit. She expected one, and she knew it wouldn’t be good. She wasn’t quite expecting this though. He was clearly in shock, and she couldn’t get a read on him. “Do you wanna change out of your hood?” Finally, a reaction. He shook his head. “Is it okay if I sit down next to you?” He nodded. She took a seat on the couch next to him. After a few minutes, he reached over and grabbed her hand, squeezing it. “I know.” They stayed like that for over an hour, in silence, before Oliver began signing.

‘It wasn’t an accident.’

“Based on the photos John sent me, no it doesn’t look like it was.” She said.

‘The island, Sara’s death, my condition. It all happened because the Gambit sank. Someone did this to me.’

“And we’re gonna find out who. We’re gonna make sure they pay for this.” She promised him.

‘How?’

“I found the warehouse, didn’t I? You found out about Tempest, didn’t you? We’re gonna find the answers to this.” She said.

‘Someone did this to me.’ He repeated.

Felicity reached a hand up and started rubbing Oliver’s shoulder. She didn’t know what to say. There was nothing to say, no words would fix this. She could, however, remind Oliver that he wasn’t alone. After a few moments, he leaned over so that his head was resting on her shoulder. She started running her fingers through his hair. She felt him start to shake and a few tears fell onto her shirt. He was crying and she sat there, holding him, until his tears dried up.

Malcolm, furious, stormed into Frank Chen’s office. He demanded that every Tempest member be available for a meeting immediately. Not wanting to attract the wrong attention, the meeting wasn’t being held at Merlyn Global Group this time.

“How the hell did this happen?” He shouted.

“Perhaps we shouldn’t have kept the debris in a warehouse in the city.” One of the members said.

“Or it shouldn’t have been salvaged at all.” Another said, looking pointedly at Moira.

“I thought it would bring me closure. It didn’t, but I couldn’t bring myself to dispose of it either.” She defended.

“Well, now the whole city knows the Gambit was salvaged. The building’s under lockdown by the SCPD, the Coast Guard and several federal agencies. The giant hole in the side of it isn’t gonna stay hidden for long.”

“Robert had plenty of enemies. And this type of things is like catnip for conspiracy theorists. I’m not worried about the Gambit being found.” Malcolm said. “I wanna know how the warehouse was found. It’s owned by a shell corporation. The security is too advanced for someone to just stumble into the building. Someone knew about its existence and decided to search it.”

“You don’t think the man in the hood-?”
“Someone had to tip off the SCPD.” He reasoned. “And the Hood has been sniffing around our business a lot lately.”

“How would he even know about Tempest in the first place?” Chen asked.

The day after Oliver and John found the Gambit, the archer was still somewhat in shock. Still, it was better than the previous night. He was reacting to things Felicity said to him at least and not just staring into space. The problem was that he couldn’t quite process what had happened. His mother was part of some group called Tempest. Tempest at the wreckage of the Gambit in a warehouse. The Gambit was most likely sabotaged. Did his mother know the Gambit was sabotaged? Did she help sabotage it? His brain couldn’t handle thinking about those questions, so he wandered around in a haze.

Around noon, there was a knock at the door. Felicity, who was home, went to answer it. She turned the knob and Thea stormed in, followed by Tommy.

“Is Ollie here? Did you see the news? Does he-?” Thea and Tommy had both woken up to the news. The authorities were being tight-lipped, but one station reported that it was possible there was foul play involved in the sinking of the Queen’s Gambit. For them, it was like déjà vu, five years earlier, they woke up to the news of the yacht being lost.

“Yes to the first two, and I don’t know about that last one.” The blonde answered. “He’s in the living room. He’s not quite- I don’t think he knows how to process the news.”

“Is it okay if we see him?” Tommy asked.

“I’m not gonna stop you, just….if he doesn’t respond or react, don’t be surprised.” She said. “And ask him before you touch him.”

Oliver’s sister and oldest friend rounded the corner into the living room and saw him sitting on the couch. He saw them and stood up. He didn’t greet either of them, but walked over to Thea and wrapped her up in a hug. He was devastated by what he’d found and he knew the news would also devastate his sister. Thea broke down in his arms, and Oliver felt a tear roll down his cheek.

“I, um, I’ve got no clue what to say here.” Tommy admitted.

“I don’t think anyone does. I don’t think anyone could ever think of the right thing to say.” Felicity said.

Oliver spent the day with Felicity, Thea and Tommy. They didn’t do anything, but he liked being reminded that he wasn’t alone. While Thea and Tommy were there, Felicity excused herself to get some programs running. She wanted to know everything Moira and Tempest were involved in, immediately.

A few days after the story broke, after the press realized Oliver wasn’t going to make an appearance any time soon, Felicity told Oliver about her day when there was another knock at the door. She opened it to see Walter standing there.

“I apologize for showing up unexpectedly, but I’d like to speak with Oliver.”

“I’ll see if he’s up for company. The last few days have been difficult.” She said evenly. She went and asked Oliver if he wanted to see Walter. To her surprise, he agreed. She went back to the door. “He wants to talk to you. Please don’t mention the Gambit.”
She showed him inside and excused herself, wanting to give them some privacy.

“Hello Oliver.”

*Hey Walter. It’s good to see you.* Oliver scribbled on a notepad. *What brings you by?*

“There’s something I need to discuss with you, and I don’t know if it can wait.” He said.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

What does Walter want to tell Oliver?
Chapter 39

Chapter Summary

Walter and Oliver talk, Laurel hears something surprising and someone learns a surprisingly piece of information.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Walter walked into Felicity’s living room and sat down in the chair across from the couch. “Hello Oliver.”

Hey Walter. It’s good to see you. Oliver scribbled on a notepad. What brings you by?

“There’s something I need to discuss with you, and I don’t know if it can wait.” He said.

Oliver immediately started to panic. Is Thea okay?

“She is fine, Oliver. She is struggling to comprehend… recent events, but nothing has happened.” He assured him. “Before I say what I need to, I must apologize.”

For what?

“When you first returned home, I wanted to give you space. You knew me only peripherally before you left, and wanting to get to know you better could wait. You were adjusting and trying to find some form of normalcy. I wanted to allow you time to do that.” He explained. “And, unfortunately, in giving you space, I was complicit in allowing others to treat you in a way that wasn’t conducive to your well-being or mental health.” He sighed. “Specifically, your mother. I want, and need, to apologize for that. I wasn’t seeing how her actions were impacting you.”

It’s not your fault. No one could’ve known she’d react the way she did.

“Still, I should have at least tried to talk to her about her behavior. I didn’t, and that is on me.” He said. “I’m not here to talk about your mother, I came to talk about you.”

What about me?

“I want to ask how you are doing, and if there’s anything I can do to help you?”

The last few days have been difficult. A nightmare. I was doing really well, and then the SCPD found what they found.

“I can imagine.” Walter said. “Things between your mother and I are strained, and I know you don’t know me very well, but I wanted to tell you that, if you ever need my help, I’m here. I would like to get to know my stepson.”

I’d like that too. He wrote.

Walter placed the envelope in his hand on the coffee table. “Your father once told me that if
anything happened to him, I should give you the contents of this package. I’d nearly forgotten about his comment until the news of the Gambit being found broke.”

**What’s in the envelope?**

“I don’t know. Your father handed it to me sealed, and as you can see, the seal is intact.” He said. “Open it when you’re ready.”

*Thank you.*

Walter stayed for about fifteen more minutes before taking his leave. He knew Oliver had a lot on his mind and a lot to think about. Felicity considered reminding him that she had the notebook he’d given her, with Moira’s copy of the List, but stopped herself. If he wasn’t going to ask for the List back, she didn’t see a reason to remind him.

Laurel sat in her cell and stewed. Oliver got her thrown in prison. He’d somehow turned her own mother against her. She might get disbarred because of him. If anyone should be in prison, it should be Oliver, not her. A guard came and unlocked the door to her cell. It was time for breakfast. Laurel made her way through the food line and sat down at an empty table.

Most of the inmates glared at her. When she first arrived at the prison, she kept yelling and whining about how her being in prison wasn’t fair, and how they couldn’t do this to her. Nothing ever came of it, and most of the other women viewed her as an entitled bitch who thought she was better than them. A few guards were sure the only reason she hadn’t been attacked before now was because her father was a cop.

Laurel was choking down her oatmeal when someone called out to her.

“Hey, Lance, you hear the news?” One of the women at the table next to her yelled.

“Did I hear what?” She said, barely containing an eyeroll.

“They found the boat your baby sister died on.” She said. “Someone rigged it to blow. Seems you were a bitch to your ex for no reason.”

“You’re lying.”

“I don’t give enough of a shit about you, or your fucking dead sister, to lie.” She said with a scoff.

Laurel sat glaring at her food for the rest of breakfast. When a guard was escorting her back to her cell, she asked him if the news were true. He told her the remnants of the Gambit had been found, and that the authorities hadn’t dismissed the possibility of foul play.

As she sat in her cell, for the first time since Oliver returned, Laurel started to wonder if she’d made a mistake. Maybe Oliver wasn’t to blame for Sara’s death.

After Walter left, Oliver and Felicity watched a movie. The blonde had searches running for anything suspicious happening in or around Starling for the last nine years. She had another laptop open that was looking into every business deal, charity organization or opportunity Moira Queen was involved in or connected to. She didn’t know who Tempest was or what their plan might be, but she was determined to find an answer eventually.
Oliver must’ve been exhausted, because he fell asleep a third of the way into the movie, leaning over so that his head was resting on Felicity’s shoulder. He woke up when the credits started to roll.

‘Sorry.’

“You don’t need to apologize. Did you have a nice nap?”

‘Yes. I sleep better around you.’ He answered before his cheeks turned red from embarrassment.

“Aw, don’t be embarrassed. It’s nice. And I like sleeping with you too. I mean, around you, because we haven’t- you know what I mean.”

‘Yes, I do.’

“Do you wanna- maybe tonight, we should sleep in the same bed. I mean, I miss you being next to me, and maybe if you know you aren’t by yourself, even subconsciously, you might sleep better.” She suggested.

He looked at her for several moments. ‘I think it’s worth a shot.’

John had just gotten off the phone with Carly. He called her once a week to check in and see how AJ was doing. His feelings for his brother’s widow were complicated, but he wanted to make sure, no matter what, that they were looked after and that his nephew had exactly what he needed. He’d just hung up the phone when there was a knock at his door.

He opened it to find a surprising person on the other side. ‘Lyla? What are you-?’

His ex-wife cut him off. “I don’t have time for pleasantries right now, Johnny. I know you’ve been working with the Hood, or the Arrow, or whatever name he’s going by. There’s something Oliver needs to know.”


She sighed. “He wasn’t on that island the whole time he was “dead”. We met about three years ago. In Moscow.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 40

Chapter Summary

Lance, Thea and Walter all deal with the fallout of the Gambit being found, Oliver and Felicity get a little bit closer and Oliver reunites with someone he never expected to see again.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Digg had just started to ask Lyla why she was here when she cut him off.

“I don’t have time for pleasantries right now, Johnny. I know you’ve been working with the Hood, or the Arrow, or whatever name he’s going by. There’s something Oliver needs to know.”


She sighed. “He wasn’t on that island the whole time he was “dead”. We met about three years ago. In Moscow.”

“He left the- you knew he was alive?” He asked.

“It’s complicated.” She said. “We were in Moscow, he was my partner. I need to talk to him.” She needed to talk to him now.

“We’ll go in the morning then.”

After he left Felicity’s condo, Walter drove back to Queen Mansion. His discussion with Oliver had gone better than he anticipated and he hoped Oliver knew that he was sincere in his desire to help. He arrived home to find the mansion quiet and made his way upstairs. He ran into Thea on his way to his bedroom.

“I take it I missed dinner.”

“I don’t know. I wasn’t in the mood for a family dinner anyway.” The teen responded. “Where were you?”

“I went to see Oliver. I wanted to see how he was doing after the news broke. How are you faring?”

“I don’t know, I mean- I thought they died in a storm. A storm, which meant it was beyond anyone’s control, no one could’ve stopped it. I could hate the ocean as much as I wanted for taking Ollie and my dad away.” She said, “But that’s- it’s not- the police don’t think it was an accident, and if that’s the case, then it means-.”

“It means someone killed your father and tried to kill Oliver.”

“it’s not just that, its have you actually seen Oliver’s scars? Because I have. I walked in on him
once, before I realized- he has a lot of scars, too many to be self-inflicted or accidental. I’m starting to think he wasn’t alone, and if the Gambit sinking wasn’t an accident, it means whoever sabotaged the yacht is responsible for what happened, what someone might’ve done to him.”

“That thought hadn’t occurred to me.”

“What hadn’t occurred to you?” Moira asked from behind them.

“What the far-reaching implications of the Queen’s Gambit being tampered with means.” He said. “How are you handling the news?”

“It’s been….tough. And an unexpected shock.” She said.

“Lance, my office, now.” Captain Pike said as he walked past Quentin’s desk. He was unhappy about the situation with Lance and IA and now he had even more of a reason to regret ever meeting the detective.

Quentin stood and walked into the room. “You hear back from IA? Am I reinstated yet?”

“You were never discharged, just moved to a less public area.” Pike said. “And no, I haven’t heard from them. We need to talk about yesterday though.”

“Frank, you have kids. If all of a sudden, you learned the accident that killed one of them might not have been an accident, you’d want to know what happened too.” Lance argued. Yes, he’d gone to the warehouse where the Gambit was found. He tried to ask the SCPD officers, as well as the feds, what they knew about the yacht. They all told him that they couldn’t tell him anything. “Five years and I still don’t know how Sara died.”

“I know, which is why I convinced the officers not to tell IA. You weren’t there as a detective, you were there as a grieving father. You can’t do that again, though. I don’t have the same sway with the feds as I do the 12th precinct.”

After the movie ended, Oliver and Felicity went to bed. He changed in the bathroom and waited for her to already be under the covers before he came into the room. She gave him an encouraging smile before wishing him goodnight.

That night, Oliver dreamed about the night that Gambit sank. Ever since they’d found the boat, he’d relived the same memory of the storm causing the boat to capsize. He saw Sara reach for his hand before being sucked into the dark water below her. He remembered his father pulling him out of the water and onto the lifeboat. He recalled his father’s last words to him and the sound of the gunshot that ended his life.

He could hear the crashing of waves against the boat, and knew what came next. This was the part of the dream/memory where he washed up on Lian Yu. However, before he could see the shore, he was woken up by a noise.

“Oliver? Oliver.” Felicity whispered. “Are you okay?”

He didn’t sit up from where he was laying, still startled by the nightmare, but he signed out something to her. ‘I was having a nightmare, about the Gambit. I’m not okay, but I’m not not okay either.’
“Okay.” She said. “Is there something I can do to help?”

‘Can you- no, its dumb.’

“It’s not dumb, tell me.” She said quietly.

‘Can you- can I hold you? Just until I fall asleep?’ If he could feel Felicity, he knew he wasn’t alone. Her head on his chest, or her fingers running through his hair grounded him. It kept the nightmares at bay.

“Sure.” She said as she moved the pillow separating them out of the way.

It was a little awkward at first, but they eventually found a position that worked for them. Felicity had her head resting on Oliver’s shoulder and he had one arm around her. She fell asleep somewhat quickly, and as he listened to her even breathing, he found his eyelids getting heavy.

Oliver didn’t wake up again until a ray of sunshine came through the window and hit his eyes. If he had to guess, it was between seven or eight AM, much later than his usual wake-up time of 4:30. Felicity was still sound asleep on his chest, and for the first time in weeks, Oliver felt rested. He was trying to figure out how to get out of bed without disturbing his girlfriend when she stirred.

“Why is my pillow moving?” She asked sleepily. She looked up. “Oh, that’s why. Good morning.”

‘Good morning. Did you sleep well?’

“I did, thanks to my comfy pillow.” She said with a smile. “What about you?”

‘Good, I- I only had the one nightmare.’

“Do you wanna talk about it?” She asked. She didn’t want to push him to talk, but she also wanted to give him the chance to talk if he chose to.

‘I don’t wanna be too detailed but- it was a memory. Of the night that Gambit went down. It’s been five years, but I can still feel the water on my face and when I close my eyes, I-.’

He closed his eyes and his hands started shaking.

“Hey, hey. It’s okay. You don’t have to say anymore.” She said as she rubbed his arm. “It’s January of 2013. You’re in Starling. You’re home. You survived. I’m right here.”

Oliver calmed down after several moments and they both got out of bed. She followed him into the kitchen and talked with him while he made omelets for both of them. They talked about random things: projects she was working on, books he had just read. It was took early for them to discuss, or even think about, Tempest or the Gambit or his crusade. They were finishing up breakfast when there was a knock at the door.

Felicity opened it to find John standing there with a brunette she’d never seen before. He told her there was something important the woman needed to tell Oliver.
Amanda Waller had just finished explaining to Oliver Queen, the newest asset she’d “recruited” for ARGUS why she’d taken him to Moscow. There was, allegedly, going to be a sale of weapons-grade Uranium, helpful for make nuclear bombs, on the horizon. Waller believed that between his friendship with Anatoli, a known Bratva member, and his combat skills, which foiled Fyers’ operation, he was the best choice for the job.

“And why exactly should I help you?” He asked, crossing his arms. She’d just admitted to knowing he was alive and leaving him on Lian Yu. This meant her inaction also made her somewhat responsible for what happened to Shado and Sara.

“You are going to work for me whether you like it or not.”

“Might as well kill me now then.” He said.

“I have a better idea.” She countered. She then told him her offer.

“What?”

“You heard me.” She said. “Do we have a deal, Mr. Queen?” Oliver nodded. “Good, follow me and you’ll meet your partner.”

He followed Waller out of the bedroom he’d woken up in. They walked downstairs and she introduced him to Lyla Michaels, who would be his partner for the mission.

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**Starling Present**

Felicity led John and Lyla into the kitchen. Oliver looked up when he heard footsteps. As soon as he saw Lyla, he tensed. She was about to open her mouth and speak when a knife whizzed past her head and hit the wall.

“What the hell Oliver?” John started to ask.

Oliver, meanwhile, was glaring at Lyla, to everyone’s confusion. They hadn’t seen him that angry at anyone or anything ever. Oliver slowly signed something, without taking his eyes off of Lyla. Felicity interpreted.

“What the fuck are you doing here, Lyla?” She interpreted. “Why did you bring her here, John?” She crossed her arms. “I’d like to know that too, as well as why you don’t seem surprised to be getting this type of reaction.”

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Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 41

Chapter Summary

Felicity and Digg learn why Oliver hates Waller, and by extension Lyla, so much.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oliver was glaring at Lyla, to everyone’s confusion. John and Felicity hadn’t seen him that angry at anyone or anything ever. Oliver slowly signed something, without taking his eyes off of Lyla. Felicity interpreted.

“What the fuck are you doing here, Lyla?” She interpreted. “Why did you bring her here, John?” She crossed her arms. “I’d like to know that too, as well as why you don’t seem surprised to be getting this type of reaction.”

“I-.” She started to say. She had a plan in her head on the drive over, but suddenly, her mind went blank. “Johnny, I know what he can do. If he wanted me dead, I would be.”

Oliver, meanwhile, continued signing. ‘I met her the one time I was off the island.’

‘Is she the person who wouldn’t let you come home?’

‘No, she works for her though. The woman’s name is Amanda Waller. The group is called ARGUS.’ He admitted.

‘Do you want me to make her leave?’

‘Not yet. I wanna know why she came.’

Felicity looked over to Lyla who was trying to find the right words. “I suggest you start talking soon, or the only secret AGRUS is gonna be keeping anymore is the last place Amanda Waller took a dump.”

“Felicity, that’s really not-.” John said. He didn’t know what was going on, why Oliver had reacted like this, but he was worried they were jumping to extremes.

“Look at him and tell me this isn’t necessary.” She said, pointing to Oliver. “When the trial was happening, when you found the Gambit, he didn’t have as bad of a reaction as he did when your friend walked into the room. That tells me that whatever she did to him, whatever Waller did, was worse than what happened to the Gambit.” She turned to Lyla. “Well?”

“I didn’t know.” She said quietly.

“You didn’t know what?”

“Oliver, the deal you made with Waller, I didn’t know that that’s what she meant.” Lyla said after clearing her throat.
“What do you mean? What deal?” Felicity asked.

2010

Oliver went to the ARGUS hideout. He and Lyla had stopped the sale, the nuclear material had been recovered. The world was safe, or so it seemed. His left pec was still sore from getting his Bratva tattoo. Anatoly had made him a captain just before ARGUS swarmed the building to stop the sale. He wondered how the man would react if he knew Oliver only came to Russia, only joined the Bratva, because of ARGUS.

Oliver couldn’t bring himself to worry too much at the moment though. He kept his word, now it was time for Waller to keep hers. Waller, and a handful of other agents were already in the building. Lyla wasn’t, but Waller told him she was finishing up some paperwork.

“I must admit, as troublesome as you were, you came through.” She said.

“Yeah, so now its time for you to fulfill your end of the deal.” Oliver said, crossing his arms.

“First, a toast. I think you’ve earned that.” She said as she poured a brown liquid into two glasses. She handed one to Oliver and they clinked glasses before he took a sip.

“Stall all you want, I haven’t changed my mind.” He said, putting the glass, which was still mostly full, down. Waller nodded to someone behind him and a second later, everything went black.

Oliver came back to consciousness slowly. He could hear voices, but his eyelids felt heavy and he couldn’t quite open them yet. The voices speaking were very close to him.

“How pissed do you think he’s gonna be when he wakes up?” A man said.

“How pissed would you be?” Another man said. Oliver recognized his voice. The man was an ARGUS agent. What was going on? “We need to go. This place freaks me out and I don’t wanna be here when he wakes up, do you?”

“I feel kinda bad.”

“Don’t.” Both men stopped talking and Oliver heard them walk away.

He heard the whirl of machinery. It sounded like either an airplane or a helicopter. He finally got his eyes opened and saw a small military aircraft flying over him. Next to him was a duffel bag, containing his bow and some clothes. He sat up and wanted to vomit. He was back on Lian Yu.

Waller had lied to him. Lyla had lied to him. They both gave their word Oliver could go back to his normal life after he stopped the Uranium from being sold. He was wary of Waller, but he thought he could trust Lyla. She was his partner; he’d told her how much he just wanted to see his family again. She sat there and nodded along while knowing he wasn’t going to go home after this.

Before he could get too angry, a missile hit the ARGUS plane. It looked like the kind Fyers’ missile launcher had had. Looking at the smoke trail, it had to have been fired from on the island. He was back in Lian Yu, back in purgatory, and just like the first time, he wasn’t alone.
He grabbed the bag, knowing whoever fired that missile would want to know why a plane had landed here. Oliver needed to not be in the clearing when they arrived. He made his way back to Slade’s downed plane and hid his stuff before going to investigate who else was here.

He went back to the clearing he’d woken up in and started looking around. Then, the hair on the back of his neck started to stand up. He was being watched.

“Well, well, well. What have we here?” A voice said from behind him.

Lyla entered the safehouse after she’d finished cataloging evidence from the mission. She didn’t know why Waller insisted she oversee it and not a different agent. The brunette was tired enough as is. Waller was looking over case files, preparing to pack up and leave Russia.

“Where’s Oliver?” Lyla asked.

“He was eager to go, so I sent him on his way.”

“What story did you give him to tell?” She wondered. She was a little upset she hadn’t gotten to say goodbye to her partner, but knew he was happier than anyone than this was over.

“Story?”

“For how he was found? His disappearance was kinda a big deal. When they find Oliver Queen miraculously alive, that’s gonna be a big deal too.” Lyla said. Waller just gave her a look. “You aren’t sending him back to Starling, are you?”

“No. Oliver Queen was a useful asset. He’s no longer useful to us. And if he were found alive, people would definitely have questions.”

“You told him if he helped us stop the sale, you’d give him his life back.” Lyla pointed out.

“And I have. I’m sending him back to his life on Lian Yu. He should’ve been more specific when he took my deal.” Waller said as she put the last file in the box. “I imagine he’ll be waking up on the island right about now. Grab your stuff, we’re leaving.” She saw the look on Lyla’s face. “Don’t tell me you feel bad for him. The world already thinks he’s dead, its not like anyone’s waiting for him to show up.”

Lyla knew there wasn’t anything she could do right now. Quitting ARGUS wouldn’t solve anything and she didn’t have the clearance to commandeer a plane and get Oliver off of Lian Yu. At least, not yet. One way or another, she was going to help Oliver. She owed him that much. In the meantime, she needed to wait for the right moment and hope Oliver could survive the island.

For two years, Lyla struggled with the part she’d played in Waller’s deception. She knew Oliver probably hated her; he probably thought she’d been in on the secret. The day Oliver Queen was found alive was the first day Lyla felt like she could breathe properly. Her ex-partner was alive. Now, she just needed to make things right with him.

Present

“She did that to him?” Felicity asked. “And you still think I shouldn’t burn the agency to the
“I don’t think you should dump all their files onto the dark web. It’ll mean chaos and innocent people will be caught in the middle.” John said. “I’m still on the fence about destroying them though.”

Oliver stood up from his seat and walked over to Lyla. He stared into her eyes before signing something to Felicity. ‘You said you didn’t know Waller was tricking me. Why should I believe you?’

“Do you remember the last conversation we had, Oliver? ARGUS had recovered the…. Material we were looking for, you went back to the safehouse and Waller pulled me aside. Do you remember what I said?”

‘You volunteered to pretend to be the person who found me floating in the middle of the ocean with no memory.’ He answered. ‘That doesn’t prove you didn’t know.’

“You were my partner. You saved my ass when I got made and Kovar tried to kill me. Do you really think I’m so heartless that I wouldn’t have told you the truth? Tipped you off? Or tried to help you? Waller betrayed you, and made me complicit in it. I didn’t know until after you left, and I spent two years trying to find a way to get you off of that damn island.”

“Ok, let’s say we believe you. Oliver found his own way home. Why are you here now?” Felicity cut in.

“Like I said, I was complicit in what Waller did. I need to make up for that.” She said. “And after the Gambit was found, I looked into a few files in ARGUS’s backroom that you might find interesting.”

“Tomorrow.” Felicity insisted. “Come back tomorrow and tell him, He- I think today’s been tough enough. Unless it’s about an immediate threat.”

“It’s not. I know this was a lot to drop on you. Let’s go Johnny.” She said before walking out of the kitchen and leaving the house altogether. Digg apologized for bringing her here without knowing the full story and left.

Felicity waited to hear the door close before she spoke. Her eyes hadn’t left Oliver’s since Lyla had finished telling her side of the story. “Do you want to be alone for a little bit?”

‘No. Please don’t leave me alone. I don’t wanna be alone.’

Felicity held a hand out, waiting for Oliver to take it. He looked at it for a few seconds before sliding his hand into hers. She led him into the living room and gestured for him to sit down on the couch. “I’m sorry for what happened.”

‘You shouldn’t be. I was stupid.’

“You weren’t stupid, Oliver. You were manipulated. That’s a very big difference.”

‘I don’t wanna talk about it anymore.’

“Ok. Did I ever tell you about the first computer I ever built?” She asked him. He shook his head. “Well, buckle up, because its my favorite story. It all started when I was five…”
Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
After John and Lyla left Felicity’s house, they drove back to Digg’s apartment. John had plenty of questions about what had just been revealed, but couldn’t figure out which one to ask first. He also knew asking a question he might not like the answer to, while driving, might not be the best idea. They walked into his apartment and he walked over to a cabinet, pulling out a bottle.

“You look like you could use a drink.”

“Well, if you’re offering.” She said. He poured her a glass, and then one for himself. “I know you’ve got a bunch of questions.”

“Why did Waller need Oliver in the first place?”

“Oliver wasn’t alone on the island. I think you know that by now. One of the people he crossed paths with was a member of the Bratva. He actually helped Anatoli get off of the island, even if it meant he couldn’t leave. Anyway, a few weeks after Anatoli returned, Waller found intel that there was going to be a sale of weaponized uranium. Anything’s for sale in Russia, and anything for sale, the Bratva knows about.”

“So, she used him to get close to Anatoli.”

“Pretty much. Oliver joined the Bratva. It allowed him to get more information that way. That’s also when he saved my ass.”

“What happened?”

“I got made. We knew where the buy was going to be. I’d already given Waller the info. All we needed to do was show up at the sale, reclaim the material and arrest everyone there. I was leaving the restaurant where I’d overheard the conversation, and passed it to Waller, when an enemy of the Bratva, his name was Konstantin Kovar, cornered me. He’d been watching everyone involved for days and realized I was an American agent.”

“They captured you.”

“Yes. And because Waller is Waller, she didn’t care. She had her intel, she got what she needed and was going to leave me to die. Losing one agent doesn’t matter to her as long as the job gets done. The Russian government is willing to torture spies to death, what do you think a bunch of Russian mobsters would do?” She said, taking another sip of her drink. “Oliver saw me get nabbed and followed them to where they took me. I was in some dingy room for most of what happened, but he went in, without back-up, and took them all out. He saved my life. Only reason I’m sitting here talking to you. And Waller dumped him back on that hellhole of an island as soon as she
didn’t need him anymore.”

“You couldn’t have known.”

“I should’ve at least suspected. If Waller was willing to let me die, if she makes everything so
difficult for people who want to work for ARGUS, why would she treat someone she coerced any
better? I just hope he’ll eventually forgive me.”

“He will. I think he just needs time.” John assured her.

Dinah Lance had come to Starling when the news about the Queens Gambit being found broke.
She took a sabbatical from work when Laurel was arrested, and was about to go back when the
yacht’s debris was found. She needed to be in Starling when the authorities released their findings,
whatever those findings happened to be. That was how she found herself sitting in her ex-husband’s
apartment as he paced back and forth.

“We gotta- the feds, they aren’t gonna tell me anything. It’s an open case, interagency cooperation,
all of that. But I did overhear that Sara’s body wasn’t on board. It’s not- We gotta talk to someone
else.”

“Who would you suggest?”

“The one person who was there.”

“No.” She said bluntly. “The last thing he needs is for our family to bother him again.”

“But Queen’s-.”

“He was the last person to see Sara alive, I know. He’s been through enough. He doesn’t need
either of us banging down his door, demanding that he relive that night.” Dinah reasoned.

“You don’t wanna know what really happened?”

“I do. I just don’t want to cause Oliver Queen, who’s only crime was inviting Sara along, more
pain by forcing him to discuss what’s probably the worst day of his life.”

“Well, I don’t care. I need to know.”

“And if you ask, if you even try to talk to him, you’ll pay for it.” She said. “Leave him alone. Wait
for the investigation to be over. Sara wouldn’t want this.”

“Don’t use her as a smoke-screen.”

“Right. Only you and Laurel are allowed to use her as an excuse. I forgot.” She said before she
grabbed her purse and stood up. “She was my daughter too, you know. Has it ever occurred to you
that your actions tarnish her memory? Or are you just that obsessed with having someone to
blame?”

Roy waited for the weekly ASL class to be over before he decided to talk with Thea. As always, he
and Thea were the only people who showed up, aside from Stephanie. Still, he wanted to wait until
after class ended so that if he made things awkward, he wasn’t stuck in a room with her for over an
hour. Over the last few weeks, the pair had gotten closer. He’d gotten to really know her and
realized that there might be feelings there.

“Hey, Thea- I, uhm-.” He began to say.

“Do you wanna get coffee sometime?” She asked him before he could finish. “Maybe right now, since the lesson’s over.”

“I- what- yeah. I’d like that. I was actually about to ask you myself.” He finished lamely.

“I guess I got tired of waiting.” She teased. “Jitters okay?”

He nodded and they headed to the coffee shop. They both ordered and took a seat at a table in the corner. They talked for a little while before he broached a topic he’d avoided so far, since meeting Thea.

“How’s your brother doing?”

“’He’s- he says he’s fine, but he always claims he is. I know finding…what the SCPD found wasn’t easy. But he’s got me, and Tommy and Felicity. I think he’ll be okay.” She answered.

“Actually, I think you should meet him.”

“No, I- he probably has other things on his plate.” He reasoned.

It wasn’t that he didn’t want to meet Oliver, it was just a lot of pressure. Thea cared a lot about Oliver and he didn’t want to make a bad impression.

“I want you to meet him. Maybe not today, but soon.”

The day after Oliver learned the truth about what Waller had done, and how Lyla had also been deceived by her, John and Lyla returned to Felicity’s house. He wasn’t quite willing to trust his former partner just yet, but he was willing to listen. Especially since she claimed to have intel on something related to the Gambit.

Lyla took a seat in the living room and the group just stared at one another until Felicity spoke. “Okay, this is super awkward. Let’s not pretend like its not. Staring at each other isn’t gonna make it better. You said you had some information?”

“Yeah.” Lyla said. “ARGUS has…it’s not quite a watchlist, but it nearly is. When certain things are purchased, we like to know about it.” She placed a piece of paper on the coffee table. “Those items were purchased on September 23, 2007. Which is-.”

“Four days before the Gambit went missing.” Felicity finished. “And these look like the things you’d need to build a bomb and hide it on, say, a boat.”

“Exactly. An analyst at ARGUS owed me a favor. He backtraced that money to the same fake company that was housing the Queen’s Gambit’s debris.”

“The people who destroyed the Queen’s Gambit also kept the evidence from being found. That’s not surprising.” She remarked.

“No, but this is.” She put another piece of paper on the table.

It showed the delivery receipt of the materials. Anything that could be used as an explosive needed to be signed for when it was delivered. Felicity didn’t recognize the signature, but Oliver stiffened
when she handed him the paper.

“What is it?” She asked him.

“That’s Malcolm Merlyn’s signature. He—he’s involved?”

“I take it he recognizes the signature.” Lyla remarked. “ARGUS has been...keeping an eye on this group, the account that bought the explosives, since 2007. Waller doesn’t believe their activities are concerning, which is completely in character. As soon as I read “Queen’s Gambit” and “possible foul play” however, I pulled what I could, what ARGUS kept track of, to give to you.”

“And She-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is okay with you doing this?” Felicity asked.

“She didn’t stop me from taking the files. I don’t think she cares one iota about this, since the Gambit being discovered means she can’t use the information as leverage.”

“If I ever meet this woman, I’m gonna punch her in the face.” The blonde remarked.

Lyla gave them the rest of the files and the trio spent the next few hours working their way through everything. Felicity insisted on making several pots of coffee since caffeine was the answer to Life, the Universe and Everything according to her. Digg and Oliver didn’t understand the reference.

“What should our next move be, sir?” Michael Adams, one of Malcolm Merlyn’s cronies asked.

Over the last week, the Hood became aware of Tempest’s existence, the debris of the Queen’s Gambit had been found, an investigation into the yacht’s sinking was opened and Merlyn was pretty sure someone had hacked into their system. It felt like they were taking fire on all sides, and no one was quite sure what to do.

“If you ask me that question one more time, I will kill you.” Malcolm was stressed and hated being asked these things. “How much do the feds know?”

“We don’t know. None of our applicable contacts are part of the investigation.”

“None of them?”

“Correct.” He answered.

“Plan B then. The Hood found the warehouse. We need to get his attention off of what was found inside.”

“Meaning?”

“He wants a fight, I’ll give him one.”

After a few hours, Oliver, Digg and Felicity reached a good stopping point. They’d gone through most of what Lyla had presented them with, and needed to take a break anyway. John left and Felicity found herself alone with Oliver once again.

“I’d ask if you’re doing okay, but I already know the answer is going to be “no”.” She said quietly.

‘My mom was involved with what happened, what’s happening. Malcolm is too. I don’t—do you
think Tommy knows?’

“He definitely doesn’t know.”

“What makes you sure?’

“His behavior. I don’t think if he knew, he’d have been so happy you were alive, or so upset about your condition. I’ve never met his father, so I can’t talk about him, but Tommy doesn’t know how to lie.”

“Still, my mom is part of Tempest, so is Malcolm. And my dad’s best friend bought the explosives that-.’

“I know.”

“That means she might’ve known what he was going to-. What if she knew?’ Every time he learned something about his mother recently, Oliver convinced himself he couldn’t learn anything worse. Every time, he’d been wrong. He really wished he’d stop being wrong. ‘What if she let this happen to me?’

“Let’s not sit here and think about “what ifs”. We don’t know what she knew or when she knew it, but we’re gonna figure it out. I promise.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 43

Chapter Summary

The Dark Archer strikes, the city reacts and Moira finally makes a good decision, but is it too late?

Chapter Notes

A huge thank you to RoyArtHan for giving me some serious inspiration/suggesting some of the plot points this chapter introduces.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Adam Hunt was in his office building. Ever since his encounter with the Hood, things hadn’t gone well for the businessman. Not only did the people he conned somehow get their money back, and then some, but the whole ordeal led to him being investigated by the FBI, and the SEC. The added heat caused his few legitimate dealings to suffer and he’d been forced to sell off some of his things in order to cover for the costs.

Now, he needed to get out of town. The FBI had come nosing around again, and he had a feeling they’d finally found the proof they were looking for that he’d committed embezzlement, among other crimes. He was packing up his office, grabbing the few things he absolutely needed before flying to China, where he’d be harder to extradite. He was just finishing up when an arrow flew past his face. He looked up in fright.

“You again? What do you want? You’ve already taken enough from me!” He shouted. What else could the Hood possibly want?

“It’s nothing personal.” The archer in front of him said, stepping into the light. Hunt had been wrong. The Hood wasn’t here. The archer in front of him was dressed all in black, not the Hood’s green, and only his eyes were visible. “I can’t afford loose ends.” He nocked another arrow and released it. This one struck Hunt in the heart, killing him.

Malcolm left Hunt’s office. For his plan to work, he needed to draw the Hood out. In order to do that, he needed to make sure he caught his attention. Going after his known past targets was the best way he could think of.

Within a few hours, the CSIs were going through Hunt’s office, trying to figure out what had happened. Given the weapon used, the anti-vigilante task force had been assigned the case. The task force consisted of five officers, all of whom had grown bored with the assignment in the last few months. The Hood was too smart to get caught, and due to the fact that all he did was intimidate 1%ers and smash a few things, the majority of the detectives thought the funds allocated to them should be used elsewhere.
“This doesn’t make any sense.” McKenna Hall, one of the detectives, said to her partner.

“The Hood killing Hunt? Maybe his previous actions were building to this.”

“I don’t think so. According to Hunt’s statement, the Hood wanted him to return the money he stole. He did that, why come back?” She reasoned. “And if he did escalate to murdering his targets, which I doubt given how reports say he actively tries not to kill, I think he’d choose someone he hadn’t already gone after.”

“The guy’s a lunatic. You can’t try to reason with-.”

“This might not have been him. Could be a copycat.”

News of Adam Hunt’s death made the morning news. Oliver, Felicity and Digg were both unsettled by the idea of someone else targeting the List or there being a copycat. They decided to keep a close watch on the investigation, trying to work out what was going on and how to stop whoever this other archer was. Oliver was about to turn the report off, when one of detectives investigating walked up to a podium. It was his old friend McKenna.

“Oliver, everything okay?”

‘I know her. Well, I knew her. Before the island. I never pictured her being a cop.’ He said. ‘Her name’s McKenna.’

“Maybe you should stop by the station and say hi.” Felicity suggested.

‘What?’

“Well, one, you can connect with an old friend, which isn’t a bad thing. Two, if you stop by to say “hi”, you can put a bug on her phone and we can keep an eye on the investigation.” The blonde explained.

‘You want me to bug a police detective’s phone?’

“I’m saying its an option.” She clarified. “If you don’t want to do that, if it makes you uncomfortable, I can think of something else. I do think you should think about reaching out to her though.”

Malcolm was in his office. The murder of Hunt had caught attention, but he didn’t believe it was enough. He didn’t want anyone to think this was a fluke occurrence. His next move needed to be bigger, and more specific.

“Your work with Hunt was impressive.” Michael Adams remarked.

“I don’t need your empty compliments.” He said. “That wasn’t impressive in the slightest. And I’m not trying to be impressive, I’m trying to issue a challenge.”

“What would you like me to do, sir?”

“The Hood, he has to have some technical prowess, or a partner. Finding out about Tempest through research would take a very particular set of skills. Very few people could’ve found the breadcrumbs we left behind.” He reasoned. “If I ask you to get me a list of people in the city with
that level of skills with a computer, can you manage not to fuck it up too badly?”

“I will certainly try my best.” Adams said before walking out of the office.

As Adams left, Moira stormed in. “I’m done.” She declared.

“Pardon me?”

“I’m done. With Tempest, with the Undertaking, with you. I am done.” She repeated.

“You’re done when I say you’re done.”

“You have no idea what I’ve lost because of you, because of this crusade of yours. You have your money, you’ll have your machine soon enough. What else do you need me for? Nothing. So, I’m done now.”

“We’re in the spotlight, Tempest is being investigated, because of you. Because you couldn’t leave that useless boat at the bottom of the ocean where it belonged. You don’t get to be done.”

“You could’ve had the debris destroyed and I couldn’t have stopped you. I salvaged the Gambit, you left it in that warehouse.” She countered. “I’ve given you enough. I need to focus on my family now.”

“Speaking of which-.”

“No, there’s no “speaking of which”. You’re going to leave me and my family alone, Malcolm.”

“Or what?”

“You aren’t the only one that’s resourceful or has useful friends.” She warned as she left.

That night, a second one of Oliver’s old targets was killed by an archer. The police were equally confused, especially since during the second murder, the Hood had been spotted on the other side of town, fighting the Triad. They weren’t willing to announce his innocence, but they’d started to operate under the assumption that the killer was a copycat and not Oliver himself.

Oliver heard the news about the second death and broke down when he got home. He wanted to make things right, to right his father’s wrongs. He wanted to get to the truth about the Gambit sinking and stop whatever the Undertaking was. He never wanted anyone to die.

‘This is my fault.’ He told Felicity.

“No, its not.”

‘The archer is targeting my old marks. He’s trying to draw me out. If I didn’t start doing this, those men would-.’

“They’d still be taking advantage of innocent people. I’m not saying they deserved to die, but you didn’t do some horrible thing by exposing them.” She said. “This could also just be a distraction. Tempest’s warehouse was found, they’re under a microscope. Maybe they’re trying to shift attention off of themselves by framing you.”

‘Two men are dead because of me.’
“No, they aren’t. They’re dead because of the other archer. You’ve been trying to do what you think it right, regardless of the consequences. Don’t let this other archer take that away from you.” She said, running one hand through his hair. “You haven’t done anything wrong.”

I’m a vigilante who threatens people with arrows.’ He pointed out.

“Threaten people? Yes. Smash up their stuff? Yes. But you don’t kill people, even if it would make things easier for you.”

‘Dead bodies get too much attention.’ He told her. ‘I learned that from Lyla.’

“Really?”

‘In Russia, I was- I wasn’t in a good place. I thought killing anyone in my way was the best way to get home. She convinced me otherwise, that direct confrontations weren’t always the best solution.’ He said. ‘And as much as I believe in what I’m doing, I didn’t want anyone to know about it at first.’

“Well, I’m glad Lyla was able to get through to you back then.” She said with a smile. “My point is, we should find this archer and not spend any more time blaming you.”

Oliver was about to respond, when there was a knock at the door. Since he was closer, he went to see who it was. Felicity followed behind him in case someone needed to speak to the visitor. He looked through the peephole and relaxed.

‘It’s Thea.’ He signed before opening the door and letting his sister inside. ‘Hi.’

“Hi Ollie!” Thea said, and signed, at the same time. “Hi Felicity!”

‘Hey Speedy. How are you?’

“I’m good. Sorry to just drop in like this, I know I should’ve called-.”

“You’re Oliver’s sister and this is his home. You don’t need to call or ask to come over.” Felicity assured her.

Oliver looked at Felicity for a second. She was right. This was his home, it felt like home to him. He should probably start contributing towards the rent or groceries or something, since he wasn’t just a guest. Before he began overthinking, Thea spoke again.

“Earth to Ollie?”

‘Sorry. I got distracted by a random thought.’ He told her.

They walked into the living room and sat down. They spoke for a little while. Thea told them how her ASL lessons were coming along. Felicity told them a little but about work and Oliver mentioned a few of the books he was reading. He asked about how Walter and Moira were doing. Thea’s answer about Moira surprised him.

“She’s- you’d think the Gambit being found would make her feel….something strong. It took me days to work up the courage to see you because I was so devastated by it. But she’s- she seemed upset, but not as much as I thought she would be. Like, you know how you see sad stories on the news, and they bum you out, but you get over it soon enough? That’s kinda what her reaction was.”

“She might’ve just been too shocked to say anything.” Felicity suggested. She doubted it was
likely, given Moira had a connection to Tempest, but didn’t want to tell Thea that. “She spent years thinking a storm caused everything and now, that might not be true.”

Oliver asked if they could change the subject, which they did. After about half an hour, Thea cleared her throat. “I came over for a reason, actually. There’s- I need to tell you something.”

‘You aren’t in trouble, are you?’

“No. I just- I met someone. A guy, I want both of you to meet him. Maybe in the next few weeks?” She said. Felicity looked to Oliver, who was staring at the floor. “Ollie, please say something.”

‘This boy, he’s your boyfriend?’

“I guess. We’ve gone out on one date. I really want you to meet him, both of you, but please don’t go all “overprotective brother” on me.”

‘I don’t plan to. Just answer one thing for me. Is he- he’s not like me, is he? The way I was before….before the island.’ He asked her. Oliver didn’t want to be the stereotypical overbearing brother, but he did want his sister to be happy. He wanted Thea to be as happy as he was with Felicity. He didn’t want her to waste her time with guys who didn’t deserve someone as amazing as she was

“No. I met him at my ASL class. We became friends and he asked me for coffee. Well, I asked him right before he could get the words out, but it’s the same- he’s a good guy. Please promise me you’ll give him a chance.”

‘I promise. I just want you to be happy, Speedy.’ He told her.

They made a plan for Thea and Roy to come over for dinner sometime the next week. Oliver offered to cook and being home meant he would feel less on edge, meeting a new person. Thea left in a good mood, excited to introduce Roy to Oliver.

The next day, Malcolm Merlyn was in his office, going over some reports in preparation for a board meeting when his lackey, Michael Adams, walked in. “I have that list for you, sir.”

He took the piece of paper from him without looking up and began skimming it. “This is page 1, I assume?”

“No, that’s the entire list.” He said.

“In a city where three major corporations are headquartered, you’re telling me only nine people have the skills to this?”

“Our cybersecurity is quite advanced. Only an expert could have followed the breadcrumbs, as you said, or accessed our files undetected.”

“This should be easy then.” Malcolm said standing up.

“It should?”

“You really are an idiot. Did you not notice all nine of these people work in the same department, at the same company?” He asked as he hit the intercom button in his office. “Mary, please reschedule the board meeting for tomorrow. Something unexpected has come up.”
Today was going to be a very rough day for Queen Consolidated’s Applied Sciences department.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 44

Chapter Summary

The Dark Archer makes his move.

Chapter Notes

To RoyArtHan- I know you've been looking forward to this. I hope I did it justice.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day after Thea stopped by Oliver and Felicity’s house, the blonde went into work like normal. One of the projects she was working on had just been approved to begin testing, so she needed to be on site to instruct the others in Applied Sciences which tests she wanted run first and how she wanted to conduct the testing. She kissed Oliver goodbye and told him she’d see him around 5:30.

Oliver worked out for a few hours that morning before he starting digging into one of the names on the List. The man, Nick Major, wasn’t a heavy hitter, but he was still taking advantage of too many people just because he had money and power on his side. Oliver knew firsthand what it felt like to be powerless, truly powerless, and knew the man needed to be stopped.

Lian Yu- Post-Moscow

After Oliver had been found in the middle of the field, the two men who found him, probably mercenaries, dragged him to their leader. They had set-up a base in the same spot Fyers’ own base had been located. The similarities made Oliver want to puke.

He was dragged into a tent and restrained to a chair. He was testing the furniture, looking for a weak spot in the wood, when someone else entered the tent. The man wasn’t large, he wasn’t scarred and didn’t look crazy, but something about him made Oliver uneasy. The man was dangerous, and he probably wouldn’t be able to talk his way out of this situation.

“There are two ways this can go. You can tell me what I want to know. Or you can decide not to, in which case it will force us to hurt you. And you will be hurt in ways you didn’t think were possible.”

Oliver just stared at him.

“So be it.”

He called another man into the tent. The man had a tool kit, full of torture devices. Some he may have even invented himself. The man started off slow, he used painful methods, but nothing Oliver hadn’t seen or survived before. While he worked, his boss asked Oliver who else was on the island
and if there were other planes that would be stopping to land.

“I don’t see why you’re being so stubborn.” He said at one point. “You have nothing to do with what’s going on. We have no issue with you. None of my questions are, at least I don’t believe they are, unreasonable. Answer my two or three questions, and I will send you home.”

Oliver had heard that one before, three times actually. Fyers told him that, and it was a lie. Ivo said the same, and it was also a lie. Lastly, there was Waller. Again, a lie. As Oliver studied him in silence, he watched the man’s face closely.

“I don’t know why or how you wound up here, but I don’t think you want to be here. I can help you get home.”

Another lie. His facial expression was meant to seem trusting, but his eyes weren’t convincing. He tried to make his body language seem relaxed, but when he spoke, there were movements he couldn’t control. He was projecting deception, the same way some Bratva members did. It was subconscious behaviors that he hadn’t noticed until Lyla pointed it out to him.

“Mr. Smith, it seems our guest still doesn’t want to share.” The man said to his colleague. “I will leave you to what you do best. Call me when he’s ready to talk.” He left the tent and his lackey picked up another torture device.

After several hours, they stopped. Oliver screamed, but he never answered any of their questions. They told Oliver they’d give him some time to “think things over” and check back in the morning. He didn’t get much sleep, as they kept waking him up. He had honestly expected them to wait a little bit longer before they started using sleep deprivation as a method of torture.

The cycle continued for weeks. He got little sleep. They fed him just enough food so that he wouldn’t starve. Past a point, they stopped asking him questions altogether. Someone would walk in, torture him for a little while. Then, someone else would take over. He didn’t know what they wanted for most of the time he was captive. He convinced himself that they didn’t want anything, only to hurt someone.

The day Oliver escaped their grasp was the day a military helicopter flew over Lian Yu.

**Starling- Present**

The test on Felicity’s newest piece of tech was going well. The device, an implant meant to stimulate damaged nerves in people with spinal cord injuries, had passed the first two tests with flying colors. They were about to call it a day, and schedule the next test for tomorrow when the lights cut out.

“What was that?” Felicity’s coworker Curtis asked. “Did we- the lights just cut out. They aren’t supposed to do that. This building is-.”

“Curtis? Be quiet.” She said. “Something’s wrong.”

A moment later, the door to the lab they were in was kicked open. A person dressed all in black walked in, pointing an arrow at them. Then, he spoke. “Do exactly as I say, and I won’t kill you.”

Terrified, they both raised their arms in surrender. He ordered them out of the lab and into a large, open area in the center of the building. The other people who worked at the Robert Queen
Memorial Applied Sciences Building were huddled together in the area.

“Which one of you works for the Hood?” The archer asked. “Answer me, and the rest of you can go.” The room was silent, except for the nervous breathing of the scientists. “Which one of you works for him?!”

“We- why would you think any of us know anything about that?” One man asked.

“Call it a hunch.” The Dark Archer responded. “If you won’t answer my question, I guess I’ll need to lure him out.” He responded menacingly. He started pacing in front of the employees. He looked one over, before moving on to the next employee. He finally stopped in front of Felicity.

“Ah, Felicity Smoak. Just the person I need.”

“Need for what?” She asked, looking up. She couldn’t see the man’s face, but guessed that he was smirking at her.

He pulled her up from her seat and had her record a message for the police. The Dark Archer was holding everyone in Applied Sciences hostage, and would start killing hostages if the Hood didn’t show up to face him in the next hour.

Oliver was starting to make dinner with the television on in the background. He was going to have a quick dinner with Felicity before leaving to confront Nick Major. The news report he was watching was interrupted by breaking news. Several people were being held hostage. The station then began playing a video they’d been sent by the hostage-taker.

“Good evening, Starling City.” Felicity read out. Oliver dropped the plate he was holding when he heard her voice. “For the past four months, this city has been plagued by a vigilante-.”

Oliver didn’t stay around to hear the rest. Felicity was in danger. She was being held hostage by the Dark Archer. He didn’t need to hear the threats. He needed to save her. He turned off the TV and rushed out of the house.

“Isn’t that your brother’s girlfriend?” Roy asked Thea, pointing to a TV in Big Belly Burger. Thea spun around and saw the hostage video. She pulled out her phone and was about to text Oliver when Tommy called her.

“Do we- should I- you saw the news, right?” He asked.

“Yes. Have you talked to Ollie?”

“I wanna text him or something, but this doesn’t seem like a great time. I don’t think he’s in the mood for-.”

“He shouldn’t have to be alone.” She pointed out.

“No, he shouldn’t. When this is- wait, he just texted me. He said he’ll text when Felicity’s safe. He doesn’t want to talk until he knows she’s okay.” Tommy read.

“What if-?”

“Don’t even finish that sentence. The SWAT team’s probably on its way. The Hood too.
Everything’s gonna be fine.”

Somehow, Oliver managed to drive his bike to Digg’s apartment, and began banging on the door.

“Oliver, what are you-?” Digg started to ask. Lyla was standing behind him. Oliver pushed past both of them and turned the TV on. The video was over, but the news was still discussing the situation. “Is it the Dark Archer?”

Lyla’s phone buzzed. She glanced down to check it. “Yes, at QC’s Applied Sciences.”

Oliver held up his trusty notepad. Felicity’s there. He has her. WE NEED TO GO!

Digg understood his feelings, but he didn’t think them going was wise. “The SWAT team’s been called, Oliver, they can-.”

I don’t care. It’s Felicity! They’re in danger because of me. She could die, because of me. I CAN’T LOSE HER! He turned to Lyla. You want me to trust you again? Help me.

“What do you need?” Lyla asked him. Yes, she wanted to regain Oliver’s trust, but even if that wasn’t the case, she’d offer to help. It was her job to protect people.

Someone needs to get the hostages out of there while I fight the archer.

“We’ll handle it.” She said.

“You want him to fight the guy alone?”

“He can handle himself, Johnny, take my word for it.” She said as she walked away to grab her guns and ammo. The group made a quick pit stop at the foundry before heading to the Applied Sciences building. The SCPD and SWAT had finished setting up a control center. Oliver could see a few officers from the vigilante task force talking to the SWAT officers.

The trio stuck to the shadows and snuck around the assembled law enforcement. He’d visited Felicity at work a few times, so he knew where all the exits were. He led Lyla and Digg to one of the hidden exits, and they went inside.

They cleared the smaller offices before heading further into the building. John was about to round a corner, when Oliver held him back. He signaled that he was going to move to the other side of the hallway to get a better view. He moved into position and peered around the corner. He couldn’t see the Archer from where he was standing, but he could see a few of the hostages.

“It’s been an hour and he’s not here.” The Dark Archer said. “That’s unfortunate for one of you.”

Oliver took a deep breath and nocked one of his arrows. He then heard the Dark Archer pull back his bowstring. Oliver rushed around the corner and released his arrow. Miraculously, his arrow knocked the black arrow off course, causing it to miss its intended target.

“Finally. I knew this little show would catch your attention. When the two bodies didn’t, I knew I needed to up my game.” He said in a smug tone. “Let’s see who the better archer is.” He fired an arrow at Oliver, which he dodged.

Oliver’s strategy was to push his opponent backwards. He wanted to take the fight as far away from Felicity and the other scientists as possible. He didn’t want them anywhere near the line of
fire. The two archers fired arrows back and forth, moving out of the way to avoid being hit. While they fought, Lyla and John slowly began evacuating the hostages out of the area. Soon, everyone except the two archers were gone. John and Lyla had to physically drag Felicity out of the building.

“Let go of me.” She yelled at them.

“Can’t do that.”

“Give me your earpiece then.” She demanded.

When he noticed the hostages were leaving, the Dark Archer grew angry and changed tactics. He started aiming at more vital areas. When he ran out of arrows, he started fighting Oliver hand-to-hand. He hit him harder than Oliver was expecting, knocking the wind out of him. Oliver fell backwards onto some boxes.

“That’s the best you can do?” The Dark Archer taunted. “The whole city’s gonna see this. You might as well make your last moments entertaining.” Oliver looked up and saw there were a few spy cameras set up around where they were fighting. He wouldn’t be surprised if they were broadcasting the fight live.

The Archer moved to hit Oliver again, but he ducked out of the way. “Ah, still some fight in you. Not enough though.” He went to hit him again, but Oliver beat him to the punch and landed a strong hit to his ribs. He thought he heard a few crack.

Getting angrier, he swept a leg out, knocking Oliver to the floor. “I know about the List. About Tempest. They want you dead. Why do you think I hunted down your partner?”

Hearing that Tempest was connected to the Dark Archer, and that he’d attacked Applied Sciences in order to find Felicity and draw him out, Oliver’s anger intensified. He already hated the Archer, but now, based on what he just said, he wasn’t sure if he hated Waller, Fyers or the man in front of him the most. He went to hit the man, but his fist was blocked.

“It’s a shame it has to happen this way. You’re a good fighter, but you aren’t a killer.” He taunted.

“Oliver, can you hear me?” Felicity’s voice said. “I’m gonna assume you can. I’m safe. Everyone’s safe. Do… do what you need to do and get out of there, okay?”

Hearing Felicity’s voice, hearing that she was okay, it revitalized Oliver. He broke free of the Archer’s hold. He hit him twice in the face, knocking him backwards. The Dark Archer went to grab his bow, which he’d dropped to fight Oliver, but he shot him in the hand with an arrow. Grunting, he pulled the arrow out and rushed towards Oliver. Before he could make contact, Oliver used one of his earlier tactics against him and swept his leg out, knocking him onto the ground. When he tried to stand up, Oliver fired an arrow into his knee. The Dark Archer grunted in pain. Despite the injury, he stood back up, only for Oliver to aim a powerful kick at his injured leg. If he was lucky, he’d only have a hairline fracture or dislocated knee.

Oliver moved towards him, intent to remove his mask and find out who the man was. Before he could, the Archer released a smoke bomb at the same time SWAT rushed into the building. Not wanting to deal with the police, Oliver fled. With everyone focused on the SWAT team’s movements, no one noticed a side door open slightly as he walked out.

Diggle and Lyla met him around the corner as planned. As soon as he was out of the police department’s sight, he found himself holding a crying Felicity. He held her for several moments
before pulling away.

‘Are you okay?’

“Am I okay? I wasn’t fighting that nutjob! Are you okay?” She asked. “Did he hurt you? Is anything broken?”

‘I think I’m gonna be sore tomorrow.’ He said.

“Let’s go home and put some ice on…well, everything.” She suggested.

Across town, Malcolm Merlyn was holed up in his bedroom. Thankfully, he managed to find a doctor who made house calls and didn’t ask too many questions years ago. The doctor was looking him over, cataloging his extensive injuries.

“How bad is it?”

“You have a collapsed lung and three cracked ribs. Your hand is- I don’t know what the damage there is yet. We’d need to take an X-ray. As for your leg, you have a dislocated knee and the damage from the- the projectile injury.”

“How long will it take to heal?”

“Weeks if you’re lucky. Months if you aren’t.” He answered.

The doctor showed himself out and Malcolm sat in bed thinking. He’d clearly underestimated the Hood’s abilities. As soon as he was fully healed, he intended to have a rematch. Michael Adams, per Malcolm’s orders, went out and crashed the CEO’s car. He needed a reason to explain his injuries and a car crash was the least likely to draw too much attention.

“‘How the hell did this happen?’ The police commissioner yelled as he stormed into the bullpen where the anti-vigilante task force was working. The officers had finally cleared the scene and returned to their office. “How did the Hood manage to sneak in without being spotted?’

“We don’t know.”

“You don’t know? We’ve been looking for this guy for months. He killed two people-.”

“The archer in black killed them. He admitted to it.” McKenna spoke up. “We all heard it, along with the rest of the city.”

“There’s a vigilante at large, detective. I don’t care if he is innocent of those two murders, he’s still a vigilante and last I checked, you’re still a police officer. He-.”

“He saved 12 people tonight. He saved them when we couldn’t. SWAT wasn’t in position; the Archer’s deadline was nearing. He’s breaking the law, yes, but he also saved 12 people.”

The news was already replaying footage from the Hood’s daring rescue. McKenna didn’t want to say that the Hood was a hero outright, but his actions tonight spoke for themselves.

“How do you think it looks when the SCPD won’t act quickly, so a vigilante has to? He made us look like amateurs. Stop him, that’s an order, before he makes this department look any worse.”
The commissioner ordered before storming off.

“Why do I get the feeling that he’s not worried about the department looking bad?” McKenna asked her partner.

“Because he thinks if we catch the Hood, he’ll get reelected.” He answered. “I don’t know what he expects. Only way we’re gonna catch the Hood is if he decides to walk in here and give a full confession.”

“Well, Lance is convinced he solved the mystery months ago.”

“Yeah, Oliver Queen doesn’t seem like the archery type to me.” Her partner joked. “We should keep looking for clues, the task force hasn’t been shutdown yet. Tomorrow, maybe we should go back through his targets and the arrests that followed. That might indicate something.”

Oliver, Digg, Felicity and Lyla to the foundry so Oliver could change. He thanked John and Lyla for their help and left with Felicity. The trip back to the house was quiet. He realized when they entered the building that, while he hadn’t left the stove on, he did leave a bunch of food out, which he now needed to get rid of. He threw it out while Felicity sat on the couch. She said she was okay, but he could tell she was a little shaken up.

‘I’m really glad you’re okay.’ He said, taking a seat beside her. ‘When I saw you on the news- I don’t think I’ve ever been that scared. Not even- I don’t know what I’d do if something happened to you.’

“Well, I probably wasn’t as scared as I should’ve been. I knew you’d swoop in and save everyone.” She said.

‘Of course. I’m not gonna let anyone hurt you, ever. I’ve already lost too many people I love.’

“Wha- you just said you loved me.” She pointed out. He started to fidget. “Relax, I love you too.” She said with a smile.

‘I didn’t- I wasn’t going to tell you…like this.’ He said.

“There’s a saying about the best-laid plans going wrong.” She said lightly. “Hey Oliver, guess what? I love you.”

‘I love you too.’ He said. ‘Let’s go to bed.’

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 45

Chapter Summary

The aftermath of the scene at Applied Sciences is experienced by many people. Oliver is reminded, yet again, that he even though he might feel alone, he isn't.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After Oliver and Felicity confessed their feelings for one another, they both went into the bedroom. While they both would’ve preferred to stay awake and talk about this big moment in their relationship, they were both way too exhausted to stay awake much longer. Oliver kissed Felicity and then they both went to bed. Felicity fell asleep easily, curled up against Oliver while he stayed awake, thinking about everything that had happened that day. The Dark Archer had gotten close, incredibly close, to taking away something he wasn’t ready to lose. Oliver couldn’t let that happen, or anything like the Archer’s attack happen again.

Diggle and Lyla made it back to John’s apartment. They both knew they had a lot to talk about, but after the night they’d had, those conversations could wait. John was about to offer to let Lyla crash at his place when her phone rang.

“Michaels.” She said, answering it.

“What exactly did you think you were doing?” Waller asked on the other end.

“I’ll talk to you tomorrow.” She answered before hanging up. She didn’t have the energy or desire to talk to Amanda Waller right now. Or in the foreseeable future.

The next morning, Oliver woke up when he heard quiet, but insistent, knocking on Felicity’s front door. He debated letting whoever it was tire themselves out and leave, when the yelling started.

“Felicity! Fel-ic-ity!” The person on the other side of the door yelled.

Oliver maneuvered Felicity off of his chest to answer the door. The movement woke the blonde up and she looked up at him sleepily. “What’s going on?”

‘Someone’s at the door. Go back to sleep.’ He told her.

“M’kay.” She said, rolling back over.

He slipped out of bed and down the hallway to the front door. He opened it to find Donna Smoak standing there. She looked torn between excitement and terror. “I saw what happened on the news. Is Felicity okay? Are you okay? I tried calling, but she didn’t answer and after it had been a few hours, I decided “screw it” and flew out here.”
‘Sorry. Felicity’s okay, completely unhurt. We- by the time we got back last night, it was really late, so we just went to bed. She’s asleep right now.’ He answered.

Donna calmed down considerably and took a seat on the couch. “You probably think I overreacted.”

‘Not at all. You were scared, it’s… it’s Felicity.’ He answered. He wanted to tell Donna he would’ve done the same thing, or admitted he dropped everything to go make sure she was okay, but he didn’t feel right telling her that.

Oliver went into the kitchen to make some coffee when he heard the bedroom door creak open. Felicity stepped out, rubbing her eyes. “Oliver, I- Mom, you’re here.”

“Of course I’m here! My babygirl got kidnapped by some crazy archer-guy and wasn’t answering my calls.” She said as she ran over to hug her daughter.

“Sorry, Mom, I- it was a long night.” She responded. “But I’m okay, thanks to the Hood.”

“The Hood?”

“Starling’s masked hero. He saved me and my coworkers.” She told her mother. She was about to continue when her stomach rumbled. “Wow, why am I so hungry?”

‘We didn’t eat dinner last night.’ Oliver reminded her as he handed Donna some coffee. ‘We were supposed to, but then- we just came home and went to bed. I’ll make breakfast for all of us.’

Donna and Felicity both tried to tell Oliver that he didn’t need to do that, but he waved them off. Even though Felicity hadn’t gone into detail about what happened the night before with her mother, he still felt on edge about the whole thing. If something had happened to Felicity, he wasn’t sure he’d be able to survive it. What if he hadn’t gotten there in time? What if the Dark Archer had shot her? He could feel himself getting panicky, so he turned his attention to the eggs he was scrambling in front of him. He watched the food cook and zoned out, until he heard the faint buzzing of Felicity’s phone.

“Hello?….Oh, hi, Mr. Steele- Sorry, Walter, you did ask me to call you Walter. I know it’s a workday but…oh, I guess I should’ve checked my messages… thank you….I’m okay I guess. I think I’m still kinda….I don’t know. Yeah, I’ll see you next week. Goodbye.” She hung up.

“Who was that?” Donna asked.

“Walter, Oliver’s stepfather, and my boss. He gave everyone that was at Applied Sciences the rest of the week off. He also wanted to see how I was doing.”

“That’s very nice of him.”

“He’s a nice man.” She answered with a smile.

Oliver came into the living room balancing three plates with scrambled eggs and toast on them and handed two to the Smoaks. Breakfast was mostly quiet, with Donna asking Oliver every now and then about books he was reading or movies he mentioned wanting to see.

McKenna sat back in her chair and sighed. After what happened last night, everyone’s attention was on the Anti-Vigilante Task Force, but right now, all they had were a bunch of witness
statements that didn’t reveal very much. They didn’t know how the Dark Archer got inside the building. They didn’t know how the Hood did either. The Hood appeared and fought the Dark Archer. Two people they couldn’t see, due to the power being cut, helped get them out of the building while the fight was taking place. The Dark Archer had taken down all of the security cameras when he broke in, and the two good Samaritans weren’t spotted on the spy cameras he’d set up.

“I feel like this is a waste of time.” McKenna’s partner said when he heard her sigh.

“Because we have no leads?” She asked.

“That, and he saved a bunch of people last night. I don’t think many people are angry he wasn’t caught. And the witness statements didn’t give us a whole lot.” He said. “Find anything interesting when going through his old targets?”

“I don’t think we even know how many people he’s gone after.”

“What makes you say that?” He asked.

“Adam Hunt, plenty of white collar criminals, when they were confronted by the Hood, they reported the attack. And we got either a confession or ample evidence the next day, after he confronts them again. A few others, guys like Anthony Venza for one, the ones who don’t wanna even pretend to be respectable, the Hood went after them. Anonymous tips were called in about the Hood confronting them, but they denied it. We still get confessions from them, though.” She explained. “I’m thinking he’s gone after plenty of people we don’t know about, and some of his targets turned themselves in before he could come back.”

“I never understood why he pays them a visit twice.”

“Maybe his goal is for the people he thinks “failed this city” to go to prison.” She guessed. “Or maybe they think he’s bluffing and the second visit is to prove he’s not.”

He stood up and grabbed his jacket. “I’m too exhausted to have this talk right now. We’ve been on shift for 18 hours. I’m going to bed. You should do the same.”

Moira walked into Frank Chen’s office under the guise of having a brunch meeting with him. They’d both seen what happened the night before, and neither had heard from Malcolm since a few days earlier. Moira might’ve claimed she was “out” but that didn’t mean she was ignoring what the previous night’s events would mean.

“Still no word?”

“None.” He answered. “I suppose he’s still licking his wounds. He claimed no one could defeat the Dark Archer.” They both shivered at the man’s mention. Everyone in Tempest was scared of the Archer except Malcolm. Then again, Malcolm was the only person who’d met the Archer from their organization.

“Well, the Hood did.” She pointed out. “Still, I was expecting something from him this morning.”

“I wasn’t. He’s never been one to admit when he’s been defeated.” Frank said.

They made small talk for a little while longer before she left his office. They were both worried about what the Dark Archer’s defeat meant. If the Hood could defeat him, what would he do to the
Malcolm was laying in bed, stewing in his anger. Drawing the Hood out, fighting him, it was supposed to lead to him prevailing and ridding the city of his filth and himself of an unforeseen headache. Instead of defeating the Hood, and moving on with the Undertaking, he needed to convalesce and rethink his next move. Making matter, and his mood, worse was the fact that his loss at the hands of the Hood was all the new stations and newspapers seemed capable of talking about. Every time he changed the channel, another station was playing the footage of their fight.

Malcolm sat in bed and stewed and planned his revenge for the next time he confronted the Hood. He may have lost this round, but next time he’d be ready. Next time, he wouldn’t just defeat the Hood, he’d unmask him and kill him for all the world to see.

Since Oliver made breakfast, Felicity and Donna agreed that it was only fair that they clean up the mess. They were in the kitchen, washing dishes, when there was another knock at the door. Unlike when Donna arrived, these knocks were a lot louder and more insistent. Oliver saw who it was and opened the door.

Thea stormed past him, into the house, followed by Tommy. They both looked worried, and Thea looked a little angry as well.

‘Speedy, what are you-?’

“You were supposed to text both us yesterday once Felicity was safe. You didn’t.” She said, crossing her arms. “So, we decided as soon as it wasn’t too early to show up, we’d come and see both of you.”

‘I’m sorry. I- last night was hectic.’ He said, not looking her in the eyes.

“Um, not to be “that guy” but can someone tell me what he just said. My ASL is very limited right now.” Tommy remarked.

Thea summarized Oliver’s response before speaking again. “I understand that, and I can only guess how scared you must’ve been, but- I was scared too. Felicity’s my friend, I didn’t know if she was okay. I also didn’t know if you were okay, you know emotionally, because of what was going on. We both were, and then you never told us what was happening.”

‘I’m sorry. I had to make sure she was okay and then we came back and were so exhausted and- I’m the worst.’

“You’re not “the worst” Oliver. Don’t say that. You made us worry, that’s it.” She remarked. She was about to ask where Felicity was when she and Donna came into the room.

“Are you seeing double?” Tommy asked her.

“Did you hear that? He said we look like twins.” Donna told Felicity.

“I don’t think that’s what he meant, Mom.” She responded. “Donna, this is Oliver’s best friend Tommy. Tommy, meet my mom.”

They exchanged greetings before taking a seat on the couch. Thea quietly asked Felicity how she
was doing, trying not to upset the blonde. Felicity answered that she was okay, all things considered, and she was happy the Hood was there to save everyone.

While Felicity was talking to Thea, Donna turned to Tommy. “So, tell me about yourself.”

“I don’t know what there is to know about me that hasn’t been in a thousand tabloids.” Tommy was so used to just being “billionaire Tommy Merlyn” that he didn’t know how to respond.

“Oh, most of the stuff they write is completely made-up.” She said. “Tell me something real. It could be anything. A hobby, a favorite movie, something.”

Tommy’s mind was still blank, so he spit out the first thing he could think of, without really thinking. “I used to play the piano.”

“When was the last time you played?”

“A long time. I was a kid when I gave it up.” Not since he lost his mother. “I stopped because- I lost someone and it was too painful to continue.”

“Have you ever thought about trying again? Maybe it’ll hurt a little less now.” Donna guessed the person Tommy lost was his mother, she remembered reading about Rebecca Merlyn’s death. She might not know him very well, but she could tell he missed her a lot. She suggested he start playing again as a way to feel closer to her. “I always wanted to learn an instrument, but I just don’t have the natural talent for it. I tried, but I read music about as well as I could understand Felicity’s math homework, which is to say not at all.”

They sat talking for about an hour before Felicity pulled Oliver aside. She said she needed his help moving something, leaving Thea and Tommy with Donna. He followed her into the guest room.

“You doing okay?”

‘Why wouldn’t I be?’

“I was thinking you might feel a little overwhelmed and just wanted to check.” She said. “If you need to take some time, recharge, they’ll understand.”

‘I’m good, but thank you.’ He said before his smirk turned mischievous. ‘Now that I have you all to myself, though.’

He bent down to kiss her. Their mouths opened at the same time and he slid his tongue into her mouth. They weren’t sure how long they stayed like that before Felicity pulled back. Oliver looked at her with a worried expression.

“Sorry, I just- I needed air. You didn’t do anything wrong. You did- no complaints from me. 10 out of 10.” She told him. “Seriously, never stop kissing me like that.”

‘If you insist.’ He said as he bent down again.

“Did they really just ditch us to make-out?” Tommy asked out loud after Oliver closed the door behind him and Felicity.

“It looks like they did.” Thea said with a smile. “I’m not upset about it. I haven’t seen him like this in a long time.”
“Like what?”

“Happy.”

“I don’t think I’ve seen Felicity this happy in years either.” Donna remarked. Felicity and Oliver’s relationship might be unorthodox, but she didn’t care, having seen how happy Oliver made her. “Good for them.”

After about ten minutes, Felicity and Oliver must’ve realized everyone would be wondering where they were and came out of the spare room. Tommy and Thea were both smiling, but didn’t say anything, while Donna looked like she was about to yell in excitement and jump up and down. After about twenty minutes, Oliver’s sister and best friend both had to leave. Thea was supposed to meet Roy for lunch while Tommy decided he was finally ready to see Laurel in prison. They hadn’t spoken since before her trial and he needed closure on his feelings for her. Before she left, Thea made plans for Oliver and Felicity to meet Roy in the next few days. Donna realized her adrenaline had worn off and noticed how tired she was, having jumped on a red eye flight to Starling and not getting any sleep. She decided to take a nap in the guest room, leaving Oliver and Felicity alone.

“You were wrong.’ Oliver signed as soon as she left.

“About what?”

‘I’m not a hero.’

‘’Yes, you are. You saved a bunch of people last night. That’s pretty heroic.” She argued.

‘John and Lyla did that. I just fought the Dark Archer. I didn’t even manage to stop him. I could’ve. I should’ve.’

Felicity sighed. “You know, I really don’t like it when you do that. I don’t like it when you try to downplay good things you do because you don’t think you deserve to feel good about yourself. You do. John and Lyla helped you save a dozen people, which means you saved a dozen people.” She said. “You might not see yourself as a hero, but after last night, a lot of people do. As for the Archer, if he comes back, we’ll make him regret it. You can do all of the karate and I’ll hack ever piece of tech he owns to freak out on him and emit the sounds of farting animals. Oh, and I’ll steal all his money and donate it to people he hates.”

He bent down to kiss her. ‘Thank you.’

“For what? Not that I don’t like being kissed by you but- what’s it for this time?”

‘Always knowing how to make me smile.’

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 46

Chapter Summary

Oliver and Felicity talk about confronting the Dark Archer the night before in more detail, Tommy visits Laurel, and the task force gets a surprise.

Chapter Notes

Happy Friday!

RoyArtHan, if you're reading this, I used/adapted a few of the ideas you mentioned. Hope you like what I did with them.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After Oliver and Felicity kissed for a little while, the blonde remembered she had some personal projects she’d been meaning to work on that she hadn't had a chance to get to in a while. Apologetically, she asked Oliver if it would be okay if she worked on them now. She was happy to have the next three days with no work commitment, but she knew she needed to occupy herself.

“It’s not that I wanna stop kissing you, I think I made my position on that clear, its just-.”

“You’ve got projects you wanna finish. It’s okay.’ He answered. ‘I don’t mind.’

“You sure?”

‘I’m sure. We don’t need to spend every single second together. Work on your projects, make the world a better place.’ He told her as he picked up the book he’d just started reading. ‘I can entertain myself.’

Felicity gave him a grateful smile and grabbed her tablet out of the bedroom. She wasn’t sure how long she spent going over the code for a new app that she just couldn’t get to work right, but when she stood up to get some more coffee, she noticed Oliver wasn’t reading his book any longer. Instead he was staring at the TV, which was muted. Footage of his fight with the Dark Archer was playing.

“Why are you watching that?” She asked him.

‘I need to study it.’ He answered, not looking at her.

“Can you look at me for a sec, please?” She waited until he turned his face towards her before she spoke again. “I wanna make sure what you’re doing isn’t unhealthy. We both know how you react to bad things happening and I don’t want- please don’t tell me you blame yourself for what happened, for him showing up at Applied Sciences. It’s not your fault.”

‘I know. At first- when I saw you on TV, the message he made you give the SCPD, I couldn’t help but thinking it was all my fault. I panicked. You were in danger, and it was because of me, at least
that’s what I thought. I needed to fix it, I needed to save you, so I raced over to Digg’s, because I needed to help you, but I couldn’t do it alone. I blamed myself, but now that you’re safe, now that I can see you’re okay and nothing bad happened, I know its not my fault. The Archer attacked Applied Sciences and Tempest set him loose on you and your coworkers. It’s their fault, not mine.’

“If you aren’t watching this because you feel guilty, why are you studying the footage? I’m not saying you can’t but- I don’t get it, and I wanna understand.”

‘I wanna see where I can improve. I’ve never been able to see what I look like when I fight before. Now, I can see where I need to adjust.’ He told her. ‘I also wanna study his fighting style. I wanna know what his strengths and weaknesses are, in case he comes back. He has training, but I don’t recognize his fighting style. I’ve never seen anyone fight like that. I don’t like unknowns.’

“Okay.” She said. She didn’t see a problem in Oliver continuing to study the tape, so she didn’t try to stop him from doing so. “Speaking of Tempest, what should we do about them? I mean, they’ve been backed into a corner by the investigation but-”

‘But that won’t last forever.’

“Exactly. I know she’s your mother but- if we don’t do something, I have a feeling a lot of people are going to get hurt.”

‘I don’t know what to do. She’s my mom, but at the same time, she’s….not a nice person. Not a good person.’ He said. ‘My father would want me to stop the Undertaking. Or maybe he changed his mind and that’s what’s in the envelope Walter gave me.’

“You haven’t opened it yet?”

‘I’m kinda….I’m scared to. What if whatever’s in there is worse? Worse than what we’re dealing with now?’

“Whatever it is, when you’re ready, we’ll open it together and deal with it.” She promised him.

“I’m awake and I’m about to walk into the hallway!” Donna shouted as she opened the door.

“Why are you announcing your arrival?”

“You two are…an item, and I left you here alone. I wanted to make sure I didn’t…..see anything you’d prefer I didn’t see.” She answered. “Didn’t wanna embarrass anyone.”

“Mom, its not- we haven’t- we just started sleeping together.” Felicity blurted out. “And by together I mean, in the same bed. We’re not quite at that stage of- why have neither of you interrupted me?” She looked between her boyfriend and her mother, both of whom looked amused. “You’re both mean.”

Donna suggested that, since Felicity had the day off, they could spend some time together. The last time she visited, she hadn’t gotten much of a chance to see Starling and wanted to see more of it now. The two Smoaks and Oliver left shortly thereafter to explore the city.

“Are we gonna talk about that?” Diggle asked Lyla out of the blue.

“Talk about what? I crashed here last night after we got done at Applied Sciences.”
“You didn’t just crash here, though. You slept here, in the same bed as me.” He pointed out. “And as your ex-husband, I don’t know how I’m supposed to see that.”

“Don’t ruin a good thing by overthinking it, Johnny.” She said right as her phone rang. This was the sixth time Waller had called so far. “I think I should get this. Before she sends a black ops team to bring me in.” She sighed and answered the phone. “Michaels?”

“Would you care to explain what that was last night and why exactly you hung up on me?”

“You saw the footage, you know exactly what I was doing, and why. People were in danger, so I did what I could to help them. As for hanging up on you, I’d had a long night already. I did tell you I’d call you back.”

“You save people for a living, although less overtly. It’s not what you did, its who you were working with. Why exactly are you helping Oliver Queen?”

“I guess I didn’t see a reason why I shouldn’t. And I guess I kinda owe him.”

“If this is about what happened in Moscow, you need to get over that. It was years ago, I don’t know why you insist on holding onto that.”

“Of course you don’t, which is why you don’t understand why I’d help him.” She rebutted. “Now, since I am on leave, I’m gonna get back to my vacation now.”

“This conversation isn’t over.” Waller warned before hanging up.

“It never is with you.”

“You’re on leave?” Digg asked.

“Yeah, my last op got messy, like it always does when the Triad is involved. Someone above Waller’s head ordered me, and the other two agents involved, to take a few weeks of leave. I didn’t feel like going anywhere, so- here I am.”

Tommy let out a deep breath as he waited for Laurel to arrive in the visitor room at the prison. He hadn’t seen her since her trial and hadn’t made any attempt to contact her afterward. He had started to realize the inequality in his relationship with her and was still considering that when she was arrested for violating her restraining order. By now, Tommy knew he and Laurel weren’t good for each other. He knew their relationship didn’t really have a future and was essentially toxic, yet here he was. He had been in love with Laurel, or so he thought for so long, and been friends with her for so much longer, that it didn’t feel right for him to just completely cut her out of his life without trying to get closure.

The door on the other side of the glass opened and Laurel walked in. When she saw him, she glared but took a seat and picked up the phone.

“What are you doing here?”

“I thought it was time I paid you a visit.” He answered.

“Why? So you can feel less bad about betraying me?”

“I didn’t betray you.”
“You testified against me!”

“You were in the wrong. Oliver and Felicity hadn’t done anything to you, except ask you to leave them alone.” He said. He could tell she was about to go on a tirade, so he spoke up before she could get started. “I’m not here to relive what happened. How- how are you?”

“How am I? I’m in prison, Tommy. How do you think I’m doing?” She said. “I don’t belong in here. I should be at CNRI, fighting for justice. And helping my dad figure out what happened to Sara.”

“So, you heard the news then, about the Gambit being sabotaged?”

“Oh, I head. One of the inmates was more than happy to rub that in my face.” She spat out. “It doesn’t change anything. it’s still Oliver’s fault.”

“How? Someone tampered with the boat, he couldn’t have known. How is it still his fault?” Tommy asked incredulously.

“Sara was on that boat because of him. It doesn’t matter why it sank, her death is still his fault.” Tommy sighed. He didn’t know what he was expecting. Maybe a naïve part of him hoped, after some time to reflect, and upon hearing the news, that she’d stop hating Oliver so much. That hadn’t happened. It seemed she was incapable of letting go of her hatred for Oliver. “I guess this is goodbye then.”

“What?”

“You can’t stop blaming Oliver for everything, and I don’t wanna be around you when you act like that.” He said. “I hope everything turns out okay for you, but- I can’t do this anymore.”

“You’re dumping me? While I’m in prison?”

“You’re the one who didn’t want to become official. So, I’m not dumping you. I’m just….moving on.” He said, standing up. “Goodbye Laurel.”

Tommy left the prison and went home. He was rummaging around in the fridge when he heard footsteps coming towards him. He looked up to see his father ambling towards him. unsteadily, looking way worse for wear.

“What happened to you?”

“Car accident. Nice to see how much you seem to care, since you didn’t even know.” Malcolm remarked snidely.

Tommy walked away before he pointed out that Malcolm completely abandoned him after his mother died for two years. Not knowing his father was in a car accident was nothing compared to that.

After Thea left Oliver and Felicity’s place, she went back to the mansion. Walter was at work. Her mother was off doing whatever it was Moira Queen did during the day, meaning Thea had the house to herself. She’d skipped school to make sure Oliver and Felicity were okay, so she supposed she should do her homework or try to get the work she missed. She realized, halfway through doing her history homework, that none of her teachers had asked to speak with her alone recently. Her
math teacher even made a comment on her improved work. She wasn’t sure how, but she was doing better at school recently.

After she was finished with the reading she needed to do, she took out her phone and saw she had a text from Roy.

>>From: Roy: Hey, how’s your brother & his gf after last night?

>>To: Roy: Freaked out but they’re both ok.

>>To: Roy: I want you to meet them on Friday.

>>From: Roy: What?

>>To: Roy: I want you to meet them. They invited us over for dinner. Ollie’s gonna cook.

>>From: Roy: You sure that’s a good idea? I mean, we come from very different places.

>>To: Roy: They don’t care. Please? I really want you to finally meet them.

She added a sad-looking emoji for effect, and he texted back saying Friday worked for him.

The antivigilante task force was hard at work trying to find any clues as to the Hood’s identity or the Dark Archer’s. Even though their entire battle happened on video, at no point did the Dark Archer’s mask come off, and somehow, the Hood’s green hood stayed firmly on his head for the entire fight. McKenna had given up on that particular train of thought and was exploring the idea that the Hood actually had gone after more people than they knew about. She was trying to find some connection between the lesser-known victims when three people in suits walked into the bullpen. They were all dressed in basic black suits, and a comment about them being the Men In Black ran through her head. One of the men then cleared his throat.

“My name is Agent Anderson. My partner and I are with the FBI. This is Special Agent Dinan, with the US Coast Guard.” He pointed to the man on his left and then a woman on his right. “We need to speak to your superior officer.”

“In there.” McKenna said, pointing to the lieutenant’s office.

The three federal agents walked into the office. They spoke with the lieutenant for a few moments and then all four officers came into the bullpen.

“For the time being, we’ll be investigating the hostage situation at Queen Consolidated separately from the other activities of the Hood.” The lieutenant said. “And the FBI and the Coast Guard will be leading that investigation.”

“Why?” One of the cops asked.

“Because when your green archer fought the archer in black, the one in black said, and I quote, “I know about the List. About Tempest. They want you dead”. Now, while we don’t know what “the list” is, the rest of that comment caught our attention.” The FBI agent said. “Because Tempest owns the warehouse where the remains of the Queen’s Gambit were found. That’s a detail we’ve kept very closely guarded, so we’re quite curious how the black archer knew that name.”

“You think the hostage situation has something to do with the Gambit sinking?” McKenna asked.
“We’re exploring all options at this point.” Dinan answered “We’re gonna need to see all of your evidence and all of the witness statements.”

“Should we-?” McKenna’s partner started to ask. He saw the look on her face and backtracked. “Nevermind.”

“No, clearly you’ve got something important, if that look means anything. What is it?”

“It’s just- the woman who filmed the message, Felicity Smoak, is Oliver Queen’s girlfriend. And McKenna here, is an old friend of Oliver’s. Should we ask them to come in?”

“At this juncture, no.” The federal agents hadn’t approached Oliver to question him about the Gambit since they wanted to do it in a way that didn’t overwhelm or distress him. “If we need to, we will.”

Oliver, Felicity and Donna wound up going to a small shopping mall in a less busy part of town. Felicity realized she needed some more clothes for work, while Donna could never resist the offer to go shopping. Sure, they butted heads over their style choices, but it was a fun experience for mother and daughter. At one point Oliver went over to the men’s section of a store, just to browse. He didn’t see anything that caught his eye and returned to where Felicity and Donna were. He caught the end of their conversation.

“No, I know you didn’t see his face, honey.” Donna said. “I’m talking about his butt.”

“You wanna know if I saw the Hood’s butt?”

“I’ve seen the footage. He fights crime in skintight leather. I’m just asking if you got a good look at it. Is it as firm as it looks in photos?”

“I….wasn’t really paying attention to that part of him.” She answered. She wanted to agree, Oliver had a very nice backside. She was also mortified that her mother was talking about his ass. To make matters worse, Oliver was standing behind Donna, giving Felicity a flirtatious look. “You didn’t find anything you liked?”

He shook his head. ‘I don’t get fashion anymore.’

“You and me both. Why are ripped jeans a thing, and why do they cost so much?” She remarked. She and Donna went to the fitting rooms to try on a few things before checking out. on the ride home, Felicity noticed Oliver seemed distracted.

“Everything ok?”

‘Yeah, just thinking.’

“About what, hon?” Donna asked.

‘What to make when Thea comes over for dinner with Roy. I said I’d cook but I don’t know what to make.’ He wanted dinner to go well. He wanted to meet Roy, who Thea seemed to care a lot about, and make a good impression. ‘I don’t wanna mess anything up.’

“You won’t. and whatever you make is gonna be amazing. Seriously, its criminal how easily cooking comes to you.” Felicity told him.
Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 47

Chapter Summary

Malcolm runs into someone he'd prefer not to, Thea and Roy talk about Oliver, Moira gets a harsh dose of reality and Oliver confronts Frank Chen a second time.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After his run-in with Tommy, Malcolm ambled back to his room. He hadn’t heard from any Tempest members yet, but he also wasn’t in the mood to deal with any of them. Still, he found it suspicious that none had even bothered to call after the Dark Archer’s fight with the Hood. Were some of them beginning to doubt the effectiveness of the plan for the Undertaking? He decided he would give them two more days before doing something about the radio silence. Tempest was already weeks behind schedule, further delay was unacceptable.

Malcolm reached his room and was about to get back into bed when hairs on the back of his neck began to stand up. “What are you doing here?”

“I suspect you already know.” The person standing in the darkness answered.

“How did you manage to sneak in?”

“You know better than most that there is nowhere we cannot find you.”

“You’re here to kill me then?”

“No. Merely to relay the Demon Head’s displeasure at your actions.”

“My actions?”

“Thanks to your stunt against the vigilante archer, I believe your city calls him The Hood, people across the world have seen the League’s armor. We are meant to be a rumor, being caught on video ruins that attempt.”

“The League isn’t-.”

“My father released you from your oath, but do not be foolish and believe he isn’t watching. It is rare for him to even give such a warning.” Nyssa said before leaving the room via the window.

Despite Felicity’s assurances that dinner with Thea and Roy would go well regardless of what Oliver chose to make, he couldn’t calm himself down enough to make a decision about what to make. There was too much he didn’t know about Roy, and meeting new people was always difficult for him. It was making him even more nervous that he was going to meet someone Thea really cared about.

He decided the best way to calm himself down was to talk to Thea. She knew Roy well, she could
give him a general feel for him and warn him of anything that should be avoided.

“Why does your phone keep buzzing?” Roy asked as he started to take a bite of his burger. For the last two minutes, Thea’s phone had been buzzing every few seconds.

“I’m getting a text. It’s probably that group chat I have with my friends.” She said, going to unlock her phone. She pressed the icon for her text message app and saw she had nearly a dozen texts all from Oliver. “No, they’re from Ollie.”

Roy swallowed slowly. “Everything okay?”

She skimmed the messages, looking for anything concerning, and breathed out a sigh of relief when she’d read the entire text chain. She wasn’t happy that Oliver was stressed, but she was glad something bad wasn’t happening. Knowing Oliver was just as nervous about meeting Roy as Roy was about meeting him made her feel better as well. “It’s fine. He’s fine. He just needed to ask me some stuff. Are there any foods you’re allergic to? Is there anything you don’t like to eat?”

“I’m not allergic to anything. And I’ll eat whatever get put in front of me. Except zucchini.” He answered.

“Oh, I’ll let him know.” She said with a smile. The other questions from Oliver, asking what topics he should avoid, she could answer later, after her dinner with Roy was over.

“I don’t think he’s gonna like me.”

“Why do you think that?” She asked, tilting her head.

“We come from very different worlds, Thea. I mean, you’re Thea Queen and I’m some nobody from the Glades. And your brother-.”

“Ollie spent five years on an island without money or running water. He doesn’t care about that kinda things you’re worried about anymore. What matters to him is that I’m happy, which I am.” She assured him.

After receiving Thea’s reply about Roy’s culinary tastes, Oliver felt a lot calmer. His sister promised to answer his other questions later, but he could reasonably plan dinner now that he knew he didn’t need to be cautious about anything besides Felicity’s nut allergy. He was walking out of the bedroom when he heard Felicity and Donna talking.

“So, you two have gone from living together to sleeping together.”

“Yup.” She said. “And we also…. After we got back from….after what happened at Applied Science, we kinda said “I love you’ for the first time.”

“You did?! Why wasn’t that the first thing you told me when I showed up?!” Donna exclaimed. She hugged her daughter. “Oh, baby. I’m so happy for you!”

“I’m happy too.” She said with a smile. “Oliver, you can come out now.”

The archer should’ve known she could sense him standing there, but he sheepishly came into the
room. He walked over to Felicity and took her hand. ‘I didn’t mean to eavesdrop, but I also didn’t want to interrupt.’

“It’s okay.” She told him. “I still would’ve told you if you were in here. You know that, right?”

‘I know.’ He said. A piece of Felicity’s hair fell into her eyes and he pushed it aside.

“Honey, what happened to your arm?” Donna asked. When he reached up to tuck the piece of hair away, Donna noticed he had a scar on his wrist. It looked like whatever had caused it was wrapped around his wrist.

Oliver tensed, as did Felicity. “Mom, it’s nothing.”

“Felicity-.”

“Mom. Please.”

Donna seemed to realize how uncomfortable Oliver was, and opened her mouth to apologize. Before she could say anything, he told Felicity he was going to go read for a little bit. Felicity was left standing in the kitchen with her mom.

“I’m so sorry, I wouldn’t have-.” She hadn’t meant to make him uncomfortable. Her question was more of a kneejerk reaction than anything else. Still, she could tell she’d ruined the mood.

“I know. It’s okay. When I first saw his scars, I gasped and he wanted to lock himself in his room for the rest of the day.” Felicity said. “He’s very self-conscious about them. I know that was a natural reaction, but-.”

“Don’t mention his scars again. Got it.”

“Not unless he brings them up.” She said, “I’m gonna go check on him.” She walked into the bedroom and found Oliver sitting on the edge of the bed with his head in his hands. “Hey…”

His head shot up. ‘I’m sorry, I-.’

“You don’t have anything to be sorry for.” She said, walking over to sit next to him. “My mom said something by accident that brought up some unpleasant memories. You reacted to being reminded. It’s no one’s fault.”

‘Maybe if I wasn’t so-.’ If he wasn’t weak, if he wasn’t a coward, then he wouldn’t react like this.

“I love you, but stop talking. Traumatic things are traumatizing for a reason. How you react says nothing about how strong or brave you are.” She said. “And you’re the strongest person I know. Let me see your hand for a second.”

“What?”

She held her hand out. “Can I please see your hand for a second?”

Cautiously, he placed his hand in hers, nervous to see what she was going to do. Gently, she traced one finger along the scar on his wrist. She was pretty sure it was from him being handcuffed or otherwise restrained for a long time, or perhaps it was from him trying to break free. In either case, the experience had left scars, both physically and emotionally. “I’m not hurting you, am I?”

‘No.’
“Good, because you’ve been hurt enough and I don’t want- you deserve snuggles, not struggles.” She told him. “I know it feels otherwise, but this doesn’t make you weak. Having this scar, it means you survived.”

‘Sometimes it doesn’t feel like I did.’

“I know.” She said before lifting his hand up to her mouth and pressing a kiss to the scar on his wrist. “But you did. Don’t forget that.”

The vigilante task force’s work began to slow once the FBI and Coast Guard showed up. They were focused on figuring out what happened to the Queen’s Gambit, and didn’t care all that much about the Hood’s activities. Much to the police commissioner’s annoyance, the SCPD were told to prioritize investigating the hostage situation over whoever the Hood elected to terrorize today. When the commissioner tried to make a stink about it, he was told by Agent Anderson to take his complaint to the Attorney General of the United States and see what he had to say. The FBI wasn’t willing to lose a possible lead on the Gambit’s sabotage because a local police chief was worried about re-election.

“So, let me see if I have this right,” McKenna’s partner said to Agent Dinan, “you’re here because the black archer mentioned something called Tempest.”

“Yes.”

“And Tempest is somehow connected to where you found the Queen’s Gambit?”

“Yes.”

“So, you think the archer has something to do with the Queen’s Gambit sinking?”

“We believed it possible. The debris was found in a warehouse owned by Tempest. Tempest isn’t the name of a licensed organization, being more of a shell company. Therefore, how would a random person know about it?”

“And you have no idea who anyone in Tempest is?”

“No, but we have some of the best cybersecurity and forensics specialists in the world. It won’t be long before they find a name we can look into. After all, someone had to pay for that warehouse.”

“Was it sabotaged?” McKenna asked after a long moment. “The Queen’s Gambit. Everyone’s been saying it was but-.”

“We’re still investigating.” The agent responded.

McKenna was about to point out that that wasn’t a “no” but decided not to. Part of her, quite a big part in fact, hoped it wasn’t sabotaged, only because of what that would mean for Oliver and his family.

After Thea’s date with Roy was over, the brunette went back to the mansion. The place was starting to feel more like a museum than a home these days. Walter seemed to avoid Moira sometimes. Thea was avoiding Moira. And the building had felt empty for years, ever since the news came about the Gambit being lost at sea. Still, Thea was only 17, for a few more months at
least, and couldn’t move out on her own.

Thea entered the house, waved goodnight to Raisa who was leaving for the night and nearly ran into her mother.

“There you are, Thea. Where have you been? You missed dinner.”

“Nowhere. I went to dinner with a friend.” She knew how her mother felt about people from the Glades. She wasn’t ready to tell her about Roy or that they were dating. Based on Moira’s reaction to Oliver moving out, the conversation wouldn’t go well.

“You skipped school to hang out with your friends? The principal called about your absence.”

“I needed to see Ollie, to make sure he and Felicity were okay.” She admitted. “After that, I went to visit a friend.”

“Speaking of Oliver, how much longer is he going to punish me like this?” She asked. “I asked to speak with him weeks ago, and he hasn’t even bothered to respond.”

“Do you blame him? He wanted to leave, you tried to stop him.”

“I’m his mother. We’re his family, this is his home.”

“I don’t think he’s been at home here for a long time, maybe since before the Gambit sank.” She said plainly. “And you might be his mother, but you tried to have him declared mentally incompetent. Did you think he was just gonna forgive and forget about that?”

“I’m his mother.”

“That doesn’t give you carte blanche to do whatever you want with no consequences. You don’t get to use it as an excuse to justify doing something that cruel to him, especially when all he wants is to figure out what to do now. If anything, you being his mom makes what you did, or tried to do, worse.” Thea rebutted. “Oliver’s been doing a lot better since he left. I think that says enough. I hope you destroyed Laurel’s notes.”

“Why?”

“You care about our family image, right? That’s why you kept ignoring what Ollie wanted and tried to force him to be someone he isn’t anymore. Imagine how it would look if that information got out. Laurel didn’t exactly react to her conviction well. She’s not gonna be in prison forever, and I don’t think her law career’s gonna fair very well. She could play the grief-stricken sister and paint you as the real villain.” She pointed out. “For a woman who’s whole philosophy is that the ends always justify the means to preserve the family’s image, I’m surprised you didn’t burn everything the second the verdict was read.”

Having said her piece, Thea went upstairs and away from her mother.

After some time, and a bit of coaxing from Felicity, Oliver left their bedroom and went back into the living room. Donna had been watching TV and immediately turned it off when they entered the room. As soon as she saw Oliver, she began apologizing.

“Oliver, honey, I’m so sorry I made you feel uncomfortable.” She said. “I- it won’t happen again.”
‘It’s okay. I overreacted.’ He said.

“No, you didn’t.” She said. “I knew you don’t like talking about what happened and I shouldn’t have brought it up. You didn’t do anything wrong. Do you forgive me?”

‘Of course.’

Felicity announced she was in the mood for a burger, so she ordered Big Belly Burger to be delivered to her house. She, Donna and Oliver ate mostly in silence before Donna decided to turn in early.

‘I need to see Frank Chen.’ Oliver told Felicity after she was gone.

“See him or see him?”

‘The second one. I confronted him, and then we started looking into Tempest and I haven’t gone back. I need to know more about them and-’

“And your choices are him, your mother or Tommy’s father, so he’s the obvious choice.” She concluded. “Promise me you’ll be safe.”

‘I promise. It’s just a conversation.’

Oliver found Frank Chen leaving his office, same as last time. He fired an arrow at the lightbulb directly above the man’s head, getting his attention.

“What are- I didn’t have anything to do with what the Dark Archer did!” He shouted. “I don’t want to be a part of this.”

Oliver didn’t respond, and continued to stand there. He hoped standing there in silence would cause Chen to panic and reveal more information.

“You wanna go interrogate someone, interrogate Malcolm Merlyn. He’s the one behind all of this.” He continued. “I’m not the one who called the Dark Archer, I’ve never even met the man, he was. This Undertaking, Tempest, it was all his idea. I’m only going along with it so my family will be safe.”

Oliver nocked an arrow and fired it at Chen. The man ducked out of the way, and he used the distraction to escape. He went back to the foundry and changed out of his hood before heading home. Felicity was still awake, waiting for him.

‘I need to know everything you found out about the Gambit and Tempest.’ He told her. ‘I know there’s some stuff you don’t wanna tell me, but I need to know.’

“In the morning.” She said. “You’re gonna need to get a good night’s sleep first. Trust me.” When Felicity found the few things she hadn’t shared with him, she didn’t get any sleep that night. She knew for him it would be way worse.

Chapter End Notes
Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

Due to personal reasons, I will not be updating next week.
Chapter 48

Chapter Summary

Felicity gives Oliver some bad news and they meet Roy.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Oliver went back to the foundry and changed out of his hood before heading home. Felicity was still awake, waiting for him.

‘I need to know everything you found out about the Gambit and Tempest.’ He told her. ‘I know there’s some stuff you don’t wanna tell me, but I need to know.’

“In the morning.” She said. “You’re gonna need to get a good night’s sleep first. Trust me.” When Felicity found the few things she hadn’t shared with him, she didn’t get any sleep that night. She knew for him it would be way worse.

‘In the morning.’ He repeated.

They walked into the bedroom together and he kissed her on the forehead before snuggling up under the covers. Felicity fell asleep fairly quickly, but rest evaded Oliver. He was too nervous about what Felicity needed to tell him. Whatever it was, it had to be bad. It had to be even worse than what he already knew, which was saying a lot. The archer started going over scenarios in his head, imaging what it could be. Eventually, Felicity’s even breathing lured Oliver to sleep.

“Beloved, I am in the middle of a mission.” Nyssa said upon answering her disposable phone. There were only two people who knew the number, but only her lover would call her at this time.

“I know, I just- Sarab let slip where you were and-.” The woman on the other end responded. “I need to ask a favor. I know you can’t go see my family but-.”

“If I have time, I will check on them for you.” She said before saying goodbye. Nyssa had already checked on Sara’s father, and learned where her sister currently was. She wasn’t sure how she was going to explain what had happened to Sara.

Oliver was awake at dawn. He didn’t want to be rude and insist Felicity wake up to tell him everything she knew, so he went into the kitchen and made some coffee. When that was done, and she wasn’t awake, he began tidying up the kitchen. He needed to keep his hands busy to avoid getting more anxious, but it seemed like nothing he did fully eased his anxiety. After about an hour, Felicity stepped out of the bedroom and found Oliver rearranging the spice rack.

“How much sleep did you end up getting?” She asked, leaning against the doorframe.

‘A few hours at most.’
“Well, that’s better than nothing. I knew- I didn’t wanna tell you everything and then have you spend all night, sitting up thinking about it. I wanted you to have time to deal with it, and have me around to help you.” She took a deep breath. “And we can talk whenever you’re ready.”

‘I think I am.’

“The money your mother invested in Tempest, she paid it eight weeks after the Gambit went missing.”

‘I already knew that.’

“As soon as that payment cleared, the search for survivors was called off.” She said quietly. “The Coast Guard wanted to keep looking, but your mother claimed, loudly, that they were using your family’s fame to boost their own reputation and, to preserve their image, they agreed to call off the search.”

‘Ok.’

“That’s not all. She paid on November 22nd. The search was called off November 24th. And I don’t know when it was found, but the warehouse where the wreckage of the Gambit was stored was purchased on November 17th.” Felicity couldn’t say Moira found the wreckage and then bought the warehouse, but that was the most likely explanation. Oliver and Robert’s corpses weren’t on board, meaning there was a chance they’d survived as far as she was concerned. The average person, after finding the yacht but no bodies, would’ve continued the search instead of ending it.

‘She knew it had been tampered with, and she still paid.’ He said. ‘Dad and I- we weren’t on board. She didn’t know we were dead. She didn’t- she stopped looking.’

“Yeah.” She whispered. “Shortly after the search was ended, the phone calls between her and Malcolm began. They talk frequently, but not often enough that it would be suspicious.”

‘Chen claims he’s the mastermind.’ He told her. He couldn’t remember if he’d told Felicity about Frank’s confession the night before. ‘Did she- is there any sign she knew about the sabotage before-?’

“I can’t say one way or the other. I’d like to believe that, if she’d known the Queen’s Gambit was going to sink, she wouldn’t have let you board but-.”

‘You can’t say for sure. How fucked up is that? My own mother, and I can’t say with any certainty that she didn’t play a hand in the worst five years of my life.’

“Now you know why I didn’t wanna tell you last night.” She responded. “The rest of what I found is more of the same. Shady business dealings, meetings with people on the List, donations to charities that don’t exist and investments in companies that aren’t real.”

Oliver stood up. ‘I need to go.’ He suddenly felt the need to go, the need to not be in Felicity’s house for a little while. He didn’t know where he was going, but he needed to clear his head.

“Of course. Come back when you’re ready.”

‘You don’t wanna come with me?’

“I do, but if you’d rather be alone, I understand.”

‘I don’t. Being alone, it makes me- I don’t like being alone.’ Oliver didn’t know which was worse:
the time he spent on the island being tortured, or the time there he spent completely alone. Both messed with his head. They were terrible in different ways and, despite thinking he deserved to be alone, he actually hated it.

They went to the foundry where Oliver spent a few hours making arrows and firing them at various targets in the lair. Felicity watched him practice while debating whether telling him everything she knew was the right thing. He deserved to know, but she was worried she hadn’t told him in the right way.

After several hours, Oliver had calmed down significantly and told her he was ready to go home. The big dinner where he’d meet Roy was supposed to be that night and he wanted to get back to the house and get some of the prepwork done so he’d have time to talk to Thea’s boyfriend a little before dinner.

“We don’t have to do this tonight, you know.” Felicity pointed out. “We can call Thea, ask her to come tomorrow if you want. She’ll understand.”

“That’s not necessary. Besides, cooking will help clear my head.’

“If you’re sure.”

They drove back to the house and Oliver got to work. He decided to make his famous chicken parmigiana. Felicity added the “famous” moniker after her first time eating it. Oliver secretly thought the dish was lucky, as it was the first full meal he’d ever made from scratch for Felicity and thus he had a good track record with it. Felicity, being somewhat of a disaster in the kitchen, was trusted to set timers and read packaging, but that was it. She also served as the designated taste tester, but that part would come later.

“What should I talk about?’ He asked Felicity while he was waiting for the pan to heat up. ‘I wanna have something to say, a safe topic.’

“I don’t know, this is my first time meeting Roy too. Sports? The weather? Thea?” She suggested. “Those seem like good places to start, and you can figure out the rest as you go.”

“Okay, what topics should I avoid again?” Roy asked Thea over the phone as he walked into his house to change for dinner. He wanted to make a good impression on Oliver, and showing up to dinner dressed in his uniform from Sink, Shower & Stuff probably wouldn’t do that. Working in retail wasn’t great, but it paid the bills and kept him out of trouble.

“Pretty much anything about the Gambit, the island, or his mutism.” She answered. “Safe topics are what books he’s reading, TV shows, sports, me and of course, his favorite topic.”

“His favorite topic?”

“Felicity, duh.” She said with a laugh. “You wanna score some points and get him to talk more, ask him about how he met Felicity. That’s his favorite story to tell.”

“I’ll remember that.” He said. “Where am I meeting you?” They hadn’t talked about how they were getting to Felicity’s, just that they were driving together. He didn’t have a car, so she’d be the one driving, but he didn’t want her to pick him up. He was kind of avoiding letting Thea see where he lived, since it wasn’t the best area. She suggested the Jitters where they’d had their first date.
and he agreed.

Roy changed and took the bus to Jitters, arriving a few minutes behind Thea. They got into her car and drove to Felicity’s neighborhood. Halfway there, something occurred to Roy.

“I didn’t ask about Felicity.” He said with dread.

“What?”

“I’ve been so worried about Oliver, I didn’t even think about meeting Felicity. What if I do good with Oliver, but she doesn’t like me?” He said.

“Felicity is pretty much sunshine in human form. I don’t think it’s possible for her to not like someone, except Laurel, but she doesn’t count. She’ll like you, relax.”

“Easy for you to say.”

Before too long, they reached the house and Thea rang the doorbell. A few moments later, the door was thrown open by Felicity. “Hi!”

“Hey, Felicity.” Thea said. “Felicity, this is Roy. Roy, meet Felicity Smoak.”

“Nice to meet you. Come in. You came just in time, I’m pretty sure my mom is about to bust out baby pictures of me to show Oliver.” She said in a fond, but exasperated tone.

“Donna’s here?” Thea asked. Roy’s eyes widened.

“Yup. And don’t look so scared, Roy. My mom’s not gonna bite.” She said, moving out of the way. “Mom! Oliver! Thea and Roy are here.”

Donna ran over from the living room and hugged Thea tightly. She then hugged Roy, introducing herself as she squeezed him. Oliver walked out of the kitchen, wiping his hands off. He hugged his sister before letting go and waiting for her to do the introductions.

“Roy, this is Ollie. Ollie, Roy.”

“It’s nice to meet you. Thea talks about you a lot.” Roy said, while also signing along.

‘You too.’ He said. ‘I hope you’re both hungry.’

“I am.” His sister cut in. “What did you make anyway?”

“His famous chicken parmigiana.” Felicity told them.

‘It’s not- she’s the one who decided it’s famous.’ He said shyly. ‘I hope that’s okay with everyone.’

“I love Italian food.” Roy blurted out. Thea nodded in agreement.

“Felicity, can I borrow you and your mom for a second?” She asked before turning to Roy and Oliver. “Sorry, this is a no-boys-allowed conversation.”

Both Smoaks nodded and followed Thea to the living room, leaving Oliver alone with Roy.

“What’s so important that-?”

“Roy’s really nervous about being alone with Ollie, and I thought if they got that out of the way,
they’d both be less stressed.” She answered. “I know they’re gonna get along, but until they actually talk-.”

“Say no more. Oliver’s nervous too.”

“So, Thea said you read a lot. What are you reading now?” Roy asked.

‘I just finished the last book in the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series.’

“Those are the books with the kids descended from Greek Gods, right?”

‘Yes. Speedy recommended them when I got back.’

“Speedy?”

‘Thea. I call her Speedy because when she was a kid, she was always running after my friend Tommy and I.’ He said with a smile. ‘She didn’t tell you about her nickname?’ Roy shook his head. ‘I think I’m the only one allowed to call her that anymore.’

“So, you finished the Percy Jackson series, what’s next?”

‘I haven’t decided yet. There’s another series by that author, and Felicity suggested I read The Hobbit.’ He shrugged. ‘I should probably make a list or something.’

“I’d offer a suggestion, but I don’t read that much.” He admitted. “How’d you meet Felicity, anyway?” Roy remembered Thea’s advice about how asking about Felicity was a good way to earn brownie points with Oliver.

‘After I- a week after I got back, my phone broke. I needed to get it fixed, so I asked Walter, who said there was someone at QC who could fix anything. I knocked on her door, she turned around and the rest is history.’ He said fondly. ‘Well, she fixed my phone, I came back a few days later and asked if she’d teach me ASL, and after that, the rest is history.’ Suddenly, there was a ding from the kitchen. ‘Looks like dinner’s ready. Can you tell the others?’

“Yeah, no problem.” He said. He went to where Felicity, Donna and Thea were standing and told them dinner was ready. Felicity went to lend Oliver a hand, and he turned to Thea. “That wasn’t very smooth.”

“What are you-?”

“You wanted to let Oliver and I talk alone, I get it, but you three weren’t even talking to each other. Instead you were watching us talk.” He pointed out.

“No, we- okay, yeah. We were, but you both were nervous and we wanted to get the awkwardness over with.” She responded. “Come on, let’s eat.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 49

Chapter Summary

The dinner party continues, Moira is forced to do something she'd prefer not to and the federal agents learn something surprising.

Chapter Notes

Thank you to RoyArtHan, for inspiring some parts for this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Roy followed Thea and Donna into the dining room. Oliver was setting dishes down on a potholder while Felicity had grabbed a bottle of wine and walked into the kitchen. Thea noticed that the hacker seemed to get as far away from Oliver as possible, and wait for him to not be holding anything, before she pulled the cork out. The slight jump Oliver made when it popped told Thea that he probably mistook the sound for something else at some point. The thought made her sad. Felicity came back into the room holding two wine glasses.

“Okay, wine for Felicity, wine for Donna.” She said, putting both glasses down and filling them. “Thea, do you want some? Roy?”

Thea looked to her brother, wanting to know what he thought. She was underage after all. ‘One glass won’t hurt, as long as you aren’t driving.’

“I’m driving, so I shouldn’t. Maybe next time.” She said. “Do you have soda?”

“Smart decision. And yes, to the soda question. Roy, wine?” The blonde asked. Roy wanted to say no, but he didn’t want to offend or upset Felicity for saying no. “If wine’s not your thing, we have water, soda, juice, coffee. Chocolate milk.”

“Water’s fine.”

The hacker nodded and walked back into the kitchen. She handed a bottle of water to Roy, a soda can to Thea and placed a glass down in front of Oliver. “And club soda for Oliver.”

Thea raised her eyebrow slightly at Oliver turning down wine. On reflection, she realized she hadn’t seen him drink anything alcoholic since coming home. Felicity took a seat and Oliver pulled the lid off of the dish dinner was in. She clapped her hands together excitedly.

“I love Oliver’s chicken parmigiana so much.” She said. “And I don’t wanna make too big of a deal about it, but your lives won’t be the same after you eat it.”

Her boyfriend lowered his head slightly to hide his blushing before he served everyone a helping of the food, and then himself. Everyone started eating at the same time, but Oliver paused, wanting to see how Thea, Roy and Donna liked his recipe.
“Ollie, this is--.”

“I think this is the best thing I’ve ever eaten.” Donna cut in. Thea and Roy both nodded in agreement.

“Now you understand why I call it his famous chicken parmigiana, because its so good. it deserves to be famous.” Felicity said. “It’s literally the best thing I’ve ever put in my mouth. And by thing, I mean food, of course, not- not something else. Not that I put other things in my mouth. Well, I have, but not…what you’re thinking. Unless that wasn’t what you were thinking, in which case- how am I still talking? Someone stop me. Please! Because I keep talking about things being in my mouth and-”

Oliver rested a hand against her cheek and brought his lips closer to hers. After a few moments, they separated and Felicity let out a sigh. “Thank you.” Oliver went in for another tender kiss. When they broke apart, Felicity had a contented smile on her face. Oliver was about to pull away when she kissed him, just as softly as he did with her. When pulling away, she rubbed her nose against his for a few seconds.

“Aw.” Thea said, reminding them they weren’t the only ones in the room. She thought the scene was adorable. Roy was sitting there with a sappy smile on his face while Donna looked like she was trying not to scream about how cute and perfect for one another they were.

Everyone went back to eating. As Roy was getting a second helping, he asked Felicity a question he’d been wondering for days. ‘How are you doing, by the way? What happened at Applied Sciences must’ve been--”

“I’m fine. I- it was terrifying. The Dark Archer, I didn’t know what he’d do, but then…then, the Hood showed up.” She said. “I hate that name, “the Hood”. Whoever came up with it has no imagination. Anyway, he showed up, and thanks to him, everyone made it home okay.”

“I wish there was a way I could thank him.” Donna said, almost too quiet to be heard.

“Mom?”

“The Hood, whoever he is, he saved you from that awful- I don’t wanna get sappy, but if something had happened to you, I don’t know what I’d do.”

“It’s not just the hostage situation that makes him a hero.” Roy said. “I’ve lived in the Glades all of my life. It’s not the best area, but before he came along, it was a lot worse. He’s had a bigger effect on crime in the Glades than the police have. It’s safer than its ever been.”

“You’re both right.” Thea said. “He’s a hero. The police keep trying to paint him as a menace but- I mean, look at what he’s done, how he’s helped people.”

Felicity gave Oliver a small smile when she heard what Thea, Roy and Donna thought of the vigilante. She’d been trying to convince him for a while that he was a hero, and that people saw him as one. He seemed to think she was just saying that to make him feel better, but clearly, he had proof she was telling the truth. While Oliver felt warmth in his chest when they called him a hero, he just wasn’t sure he believed it. Felicity then said that while she was okay, she wasn’t ready to talk about what happened in more detail.

‘How is school going?’ Oliver asked his sister.

“Good. I- except for math, all of my grades have gotten a lot higher.” She answered.
“I might be able to help with that.” Felicity cut in. “Did you know I was Nevada’s three-time state Mathletics champion?”

‘Only three times?’ Oliver asked with a smile.

“Oh, boy.” Donna sighed, taking a sip of wine. She’d heard this rant plenty of times and knew what was coming.

“I would’ve been a four-time champ, but they didn’t let freshmen compete, which is something I’m still a little angry about.” She answered. “But, back to Thea, if you need help, let me know.”

“Will do.”

Dinner finished and, since Oliver cooked, Felicity and Donna insisted on cleaning up afterwards. Neither Smoak thought it was fair for Oliver to both cook and do all of the clean-up. They went into the kitchen while Thea, Roy and Oliver moved into the living room.

Since Oliver shared the story of him meeting Felicity, he asked them to share the story of how they met. He already knew, from Thea, that they met at ASL classes, but he wanted a little more detail. After Thea wrapped up her story, she excused herself to the bathroom.

‘Thank you.’ Oliver told Roy when she walked away.

“For what?”

‘It’s been a long time since I’ve seen Thea this happy. Thank you for that.’

“I have a record.” Roy said quietly. Dinner had gone well. He liked Oliver and Felicity and got the impression that they liked him. At the same time, he knew it was a matter of time before the truth about his past came out. He really liked Thea, her brother was important to her and he didn’t want his past to cause any problems. “I know it’s a matter of time before-. I wanted you to find out from me.”

‘I don’t care about that.’

“Really? You don’t even wanna know what I did?” He responded. “It was an armed robbery charge. The gun wasn’t loaded but-."

‘I’ve done worse than that. I can’t and won’t judge.’ Oliver said. ‘When I told Felicity some of what I’d done, do you know what she told me?’ Roy shook his head. ‘She told me that we’re more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. Some days I don’t know if I believe that, but- record or not, you make my sister happy. And that’s what I care about.’

Thea came back from the bathroom as Felicity and Donna came out of the kitchen, having finished cleaning up. The group sat in the living room talking for a few hours before Thea and Roy decided it was time to go. The pair left, with promises to come back for more of Oliver’s amazing cooking.

Donna decided to go to bed not long after, wishing the pair goodnight.

“You cannot be serious.” Moira said sternly into the phone.

“Do I not sound serious?” Malcolm asked. “Does my tone imply I am joking? Because I was under the impression that its easy to understand what I mean.”
“What good will this possibly do?”

“We will finally, once and for all, have an answer about what your son does or doesn’t know.” He answered. “If you’re unwilling to do this, I can arrange it.”

“No.” She said. “I will handle it.” While she couldn’t believe what Malcolm had suggested, she knew the best way to do it, without hurting Oliver too badly, was to make the arrangements herself. She wasn’t willing to risk Oliver’s safety, as tense as their relationship currently was, by trusting Malcolm.

“And you tried to convince me that you were “done”. How’s that working out?” He taunted before hanging up.

“I delivered your message to Malcolm Merlyn. I have yet to complete the other two tasks you assigned to me.” Nyssa reported when she called Nanda Parbat.

“Neither task?”

“It’s been a quiet day in Starling City.” She responded. “And you specified that I shouldn’t attempt to draw either individual out.” Nyssa was here for three reasons. Giving Malcolm his only warning was just one of them. She hoped it wouldn't take her long to complete her other two tasks.

“So I did. I will call in a few days, and I expect a better report then.”

“Yes, Father.” She said before hanging up.

“Did you see them?” Roy asked as Thea drove away from Felicity’s house.

“See what?”

“He had scars. On his wrist. They kinda looked like- like they were from handcuffs or something.”

“Ollie has a lot of scars. I think- I don’t think he was alone on that island. I’m pretty sure someone- someone did that to him.” She said. She kept her eyes on the road, but Roy could see she was tearing up a little bit.

“He said he was alone.”

“And if he told everyone he wasn’t, if my mom knew he wasn’t, he’d be in even worse shape than he already is.” If Moira knew Oliver wasn’t alone, she would’ve been even more tactless than she already was when dealing with him.

“Is your mom really that bad?”

“Yeah. Ollie and I have started to realize that.”

“Oh fuck.” Agent Dinan said as she read the next page of the report in her hands.

“What do you mean?” Anderson asked. He’d been working with the woman for a few weeks at this point, but this was the first time he’d heard her do anything close to swearing.
“Our people started looking into the crew of the Queen’s Gambit, anyone on board, anyone with access, as well as when it last had maintenance performed on it.” She explained. “I wanted to know what they’ve been up to in the last five years.” If the Gambit was a victim of foul play, they needed to know who could’ve tampered with the yacht and why. A number of people could’ve wanted Robert Queen dead, but few would have access to his boat.

“Okay…”

“Read this.” She handed the report to him. “The damage to the Queen’s Gambit could’ve been caused by a mechanical malfunction. Or a bomb. And the last person who worked on the engine before it went down died the day after that yacht went missing. I hope I don’t need to explain what that indicates to me.”

“You don’t.” Anderson said. “Oh, fuck. What do we-?”

“The only thing we can do.” She said. “Talk to the only person who was there.” The entire task force had hoped they could complete the investigation without needing to talk to their one witness. “I think it’s time we interview Oliver Queen.”

‘I should probably go out.’ Oliver told Felicity after Donna had gone to bed.

“You should, or you want to?”

‘Is there a difference?’ He asked. ‘I- there are so many people I still need to-.’

“It’s late. Is there anything pressing? Anyone you need to stop tonight?” She said. “It’s been a very long day for you, and I think we should just go to bed.”

‘I can’t just pretend-.’

“All the people we need to stop, they’ll still be there in the morning.” She told him.

Felicity liked to think she understood Oliver pretty well. She knew how important being the Hood was to him. How dedicated he was to saving the city. Yet, she also knew that he needed to rest at some point. He needed to, occasionally, take a night off to relax and reset. In trying to honor his father’s last wishes, he’d run himself ragged.

Felicity let out a yawn, which Oliver thought was cute. Then again, he thought a lot of things she did were cute. It was probably too late to patrol now anyways, and any targets he could’ve picked would already be at home. He nodded in agreement and followed Felicity into the bedroom.

They got into bed and she curled up next to him, resting her head on his shoulder. “I love you.”

‘I love you too.’
Chapter 50

Chapter Summary

Oliver tries to plan something, but his plans are derailed. He remembers how he escaped his captors on Lian Yu

Chapter Notes

I just want to say thanks to everyone who's read and left comments on this fic. I can't believe we've reached chapter 50 already.

This chapter gets angsty, so prepare yourself.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The morning after the dinner party, Oliver and Felicity slept in. It was a Saturday after all, so they didn’t end up getting out of bed until around 10 o’clock. Oliver had woken up around dawn, as he always did, but he couldn’t find the motivation to get up. He was comfy and warm in bed with Felicity, and more importantly, she was fast asleep on his chest and he was worried moving would wake her up.

Instead, he laid there for a few hours, just watching her sleep and thinking about how much he loved her. He couldn’t believe someone as amazing as her would want anything to do with him, much less love him. Ever since he lost his voice, he was convinced he was too damaged and messed up to deserve anyone’s affection. Yet, thanks in part to Felicity, he now had more support than he ever thought possible.

Felicity yawned a little bit and opened her eyes, using one hand to rub the sleep away. “Hm. Morning.”

‘Good morning.’ He told her. ‘Did you sleep well?’

“Uh-huh.” She said, still sounding half asleep. “Got any plans for today?”

‘Not until nightfall. What about you?’

She shrugged. “Nope. I’m just gonna do whatever I want.”

‘So you aren’t going to be busy this afternoon.’ He said.

“No, unless you’ve got something planned that you didn’t tell me about.” She said. “Did you have something in mind?”

‘I do, but it’s a surprise.’ He told her. They hadn’t gone on any dates recently, and he wanted to rectify that. He got out of bed and went to grab his phone. He’d need either Tommy or Digg’s help pulling this off.
McKenna was woken up early by her phone ringing. She answered the phone, barely conscious but the voice on the other end jolted her awake. It was Agent Dinan, telling her the federal agents needed to see her as soon as possible. She threw on some work-appropriate clothes and ran out of the door. She lived on the other side of the city from her precinct, so it took her some time to drive to the station. She rushed inside and found Anderson, Anderson’s partner Reeves, and Dinan waiting. She noticed most of the other cops on the vigilante task force weren’t there.

“Oh.” She said awkwardly. “Where’s-?”

“We want to keep this as small and quiet as possible.” Dinan explained. “We’ve reached the point in our investigation where we need to talk to Oliver Queen. As one of his old friends, we were hoping you’d come with us when we talk to him. We know he might not react well to being questioned.”

“I don’t- I haven’t talked to Oliver since before the acc- since before he went missing. I don’t- I’ll come, but I think there’s someone we should talk to first. To better gauge the situation.”

“And who would that be?”

“Felicity Smoak.” The officers looked ready to argue, to point out that she was a civilian. “I’m not saying we tell her everything, but from what I know, Oliver doesn’t do well with people he doesn’t know. Having her there will make him less on edge, since he trusts her. She can also interpret for him if need be.”

It hadn’t escaped anyone’s notice, especially the task force’s, that Oliver didn’t make many public appearances these days. This meant knowing how he might react to the officers, or their questions, was difficult.

“Do you think she’ll agree?” Reeves asked.

“I think she will.”

Shortly after Nyssa ended her conversation with her father, she got a lead on the second person she needed to see in Starling City. The man had broken the League’s code and she needed to execute him for it. She supposed a large city was the ideal place for someone fleeing the League to hide, but unfortunately for him, Ra’s al Ghul had eyes everywhere. She decided she would wait and strike the following evening to make sure he wasn’t allied with someone else.

Sara called her in the mid-morning, but she let the call go to voicemail. She needed to focus on her missions and not allow herself to be distracted.

“What are we doing here again?” Tommy asked as he and Oliver got out of the car. They were parked in front of a restaurant that he’d never heard of.

*I’m planning a date for Felicity.* Oliver wrote down. *I want to surprise her.*

“But here? Why not Table Salt, or The Station?”

*Too many people. Besides, we both like hidden-gem restaurants.*
“Okay, but I could’ve just called and made a reservation for you. I don’t- I don’t understand why we had to drive out here.”

This is the first stop. There are a few more we need to make. He answered before heading inside. He didn’t want to admit it, but he hoped that if he made a reservation in person, he could convince the staff to accommodate his needs, such as him not wanting a table with his back to the door or too far from an exit.

The staff were more than willing to do as he asked and Tommy and Oliver left the restaurant and headed to the next destination. Moira had taught Oliver that he shouldn’t arrive to pick up his dates empty-handed. He might not be on the best terms with his mother at the moment, but that piece of advice stuck. Thus, Oliver found himself in a flower shop, trying to figure out which bouquet Felicity would like the best. He asked Lyla to meet them there, since he didn’t know anything about flowers and wanted to make sure he didn’t pick out bad ones. Even Oliver didn’t know exactly what that meant, but she agreed to help. He made his selection, and arranged for them to be delivered later.

“Okay, we have food taken care of. And flowers. What’s-?” Tommy was cut off when he fell to the ground. Then, Lyla fell to the ground too.

Moments later, something hit Oliver in the neck and he lost consciousness as well.

Lian Yu

“...You know, I didn’t believe it before, but you’ve convinced me.” Oliver’s captor told him, almost casually. “You really want to die, don’t you?”

Oliver, as always, didn’t respond.

“I mean, we don’t even know your name. You wouldn’t even tell us that. And you were screaming at one point, so we know you can talk.”

It wasn’t until the man said that that Oliver realized he hadn’t screamed in a long time. He couldn’t remember the last time any sound came out of his mouth. At first, not answering had been a matter of stubbornness. Then, he reached a point where he realized it didn’t matter. He was never going to get home. He’d never see his family again. He might as well die now.

“Does it really matter?” Mr. Smith said, entering the tent. “He hasn’t told us anything, and I don’t think he ever will.”

“Well, we did stop asking questions. And yet, we haven’t released or killed him yet.” The man said.

“It’s not about getting information any more.” Smith said. It might’ve made him sadistic, but he was enjoying this. Oliver had survived more than anyone else he’d had the pleasure to “work” with. “Speaking of which, what should we start with today?”

He started perusing his tools, watching Oliver to see his reaction. Whichever one Oliver seemed the most adverse to was the one he’d start with. When Oliver didn’t react, he shrugged and picked up a lighter. Burning parts of Oliver’s skin was a good place to start, he supposed.

Smith was nearing him with the tool when suddenly, three armed men ran into the tent.
“We have a problem!” One of them yelled.

“What?”

“A helicopter flew over the island.”

“And?”

“It’s turning around.” He said. “And it looks like its military.”

Smith turned to Oliver. “Who did you contact? How did you signal for help?”

“Why are you asking the guy who doesn’t speak?”

“Because he’s the only one on this island that would call for help.” Smith drew a knife and cut the zipties holding Oliver to the chair. He then handed a handgun to one of the mercenaries. “Take him deeper inland and kill him.”

“What?”

“He doesn’t have information for us. He’s useless and if the chopper is military, we can’t let them find him here alive. Who knows what he’s overheard?”

The merc took the gun and dragged Oliver, who was barefoot and bleeding, into the forest. None of the others followed. This was his one chance. If he played his cards right, he could lose the mercenary and escape.

He moved slowly, careful to avoid any traps or explosives still hidden on the island. This seemed to annoy the mercenary, who wanted to kill Oliver and get this whole charade over with.

“Walking slowly only makes me wanna kill you even more.”

Oliver sped up a little bit, but then stopped, slumping against a tree. The mercenary stormed over to him, to drag him to his feet, but made the mistake of having his gun arm closer to Oliver than his free arm. Using the last bit of strength he had, Oliver wrestled the gun away from the mercenary. Before he could react, he shot him in the head, killing him.

Oliver hobbled back to Slade’s wrecked plane. Thanks to the herbs that grew on Lian Yu, his own first aid skills and a lot of luck, he was able to sew most of his wounds closed and heal his other injuries, even though it took weeks.

Once he was healed, Oliver went looking for the mercenaries again. This time, he killed them before they even knew he was there. He wouldn’t let them take him again.

The helicopter that flew over Lian Yu didn’t land. Instead, the ASIS agents flew home and reported that there was no sign of the island being inhabited.

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**Starling City**

When Oliver came to, there was a man in a red mask looking down at him, with two others behind him. He tried to stand up, but found his wrists were restrained behind him. He immediately started having a flashback to the island and didn’t hear what the man said, causing him to get tazed. Tommy was tied up in the corner, and Oliver expected he’d shake off the drugs within a few
minutes. He couldn’t see Lyla, which was concerning since she’d made plenty of enemies working for ARGUS.

“I said, I ask a question and you give me an answer.” Red Mask #1 said. “Did your father survive the accident?”

Oliver just stared at him blankly.

“You don’t really think anyone believes your little mute act, do you?” Oliver didn’t respond. “Have it your way then.” He grabbed the tazer once again.

Felicity and Donna were in the middle of doing some online shopping when there was a knock at the door. Felicity went to answer it and found three people standing on the doorstep, only one of whom she recognized.

“Felicity Smoak? Hi, my name is-.”

“McKenna.” The blonde blurted out. “Sorry. That was probably weird. It’s just- we saw you on the news and Oliver said he knew you so even though we haven’t met, I….know who you are.” She closed her eyes and took a deep breath. “But you didn’t come here to see if I knew who you were. How can I help you?”

“This is Agent Dinan and Agent Reeves. They’re on the taskforce investigating the Queen’s Gambit sinking. We need to speak with Oliver.”

“He’s, uh, he’s not here. He went out, I can call him if you’d like?”

“We’d like to speak with you before we speak with him, if that’s alright. We know things haven’t been easy for him lately.” Agent Dinan said.

“That’s an understatement.” She said. “Sorry, come in.” She moved out of the doorway so the detective and agents could come inside.

Thea walked into the kitchen of the mansion to get a snack. Moira was always discouraging her from snacking, seeing it as something the Queens simply don’t do. But the teenager was hungry and sometimes, she wanted something to eat without asking Raisa to make her a whole meal. She was about to sneak off with her food when she bumped into Walter.

“Hey.”

“Good afternoon Thea.” He said before spotting the snacks in her hand. “It seems you and I had the same idea.” He walked over to the pantry and grabbed some pretzels. “You came home rather late last night.” His tone was curious, not accusatory.

“Yeah, I was- I’ve kinda been seeing someone, and last night, we went over to Ollie and Felicity’s so they could meet him.”

“It went well I take it?”

“Really well. Roy and Oliver were both nervous, but they got along really well. I was a little nervous when I first told Ollie, but he was supportive before he even met Roy. Just said he wanted
me to be happy. He took up cooking, and his food is to die for. Plus, spending time with Ollie and Felicity is always fun. They’re so cute together, perfect for each other even.” She said. “I’m really glad you suggested her to fix his phone.”

“I didn’t intend for this to happen, but I’m happy I suggested her as well.” He said. “When will I get to meet this young man of yours?”

“I don’t know, I can’t- he lives in the Glades, he works a retail job. Mom wouldn’t exactly want “someone like him” to come here for dinner. But I don’t care about that, because he makes me happy.” She said. Then, her eyes lit up. “Maybe next time we go to Ollie’s for dinner, you could come and meet him.”

“I wouldn’t want to impose.”

“I don’t think Oliver or Felicity would mind.” She said.

“And how was Oliver? I can imagine the scene at Applied Sciences-.”

“He seemed fine, then again, Felicity’s the only one who can really tell when he’s upset. We, uh, on the ride home, Roy mentioned something he noticed. About Oliver’s scars.” She said quietly. “He has scars. Around his wrists. They look kinda like- like he was handcuffed for a long time. long enough to leave scars. And he has other scars. I think- I don’t think he was alone on that island. I think someone might’ve hurt him. Why would- who would do something like that?”

Walter put everything in his hands down and pulled Thea into a hug. “I don’t know. I can’t fathom- we can’t undo what happened. But Oliver is home and safe now. He’s loved. If there is some higher power, he’ll live a long and happy life without any more suffering.”

Felicity told the officers what she could, and then her phone rang. “Hey John.”

“Have you heard from Oliver?”

“He’s with Tommy. He said he was working on a surprise for me for later.”

“No, he’s not.”

Felicity’s stomach dropped. “What do you mean?”

“Lyla was meeting them to help with the surprise. Oliver knows you really well, but he wanted her perspective on something. She hasn’t come back, or even called.” He said. “Her phone’s going to voicemail, and so is Oliver’s. I found the car, but not them. It looks like- .”

“Don’t say it. Please don’t.” She said.

“We’ll find him.” He promised her.

“I’m more worried about what shape he’s gonna be in when we do.”

“Ms. Smoak, is everything okay?” McKenna asked.

“Oliver, Tommy and my friend Lyla met to do something. He said he wanted to surprise me with something. Lyla’s boyfriend just told me he hasn’t heard from her. And I haven’t heard from Oliver, which isn’t good.” She said. “John found their car, but- I don’t know where they might be or what might’ve happened.”
The agents looked at one another. Aside from not wanting anything to happen to Oliver in general, he was also their only witness. It was awfully suspicious that he would be missing the day they wanted to talk to him.

“He hasn’t been missing long enough to file a police report.” McKenna said sadly.

“No, but he is a witness we need to locate.” Dinan said. “So we can look for him without needing to wait.” The law enforcement officers left.

As soon as they were out of the house, Felicity tried to track Lyla, Oliver and Tommy’s phones with no luck.

Oliver stopped hearing their questions after a while. This situation was familiar. Too familiar. He never would’ve expected torture to become something that felt routine to him, but it was. Rather than listen, he was trying as hard as he could to stay in the present. He needed not to have a flashback, and even more importantly, find a way to get out of here.

He wasn’t sure how long he’d been here, but by his estimate, Tommy woke up a while ago, and after yelling a lot, hoping to get someone’s attention, the gang had put duct tape over his mouth. When he continued to yell, they dragged him to a different part of the building. Lyla was awake, and while Tommy was making a fuss, she moved so that she was in Oliver’s line of sight, in case either of them were able to break free.

“Did your father make it to the island?” The leader of the gang asked. “Did he tell you anything?”

“He might not be mute, but he sure as hell is stubborn.” One of the others remarked.

The leader put down the knife he was using. “I don’t know about you, but I think we should give Mr. Queen some time to think things over. And I could use a smoke.”

He and another gang member walked out, leaving the third one behind to keep an eye on them.

“Did you really kidnap one of the wealthiest and most famous people in the city?” Lyla mocked to get the man’s attention. “You realize Seal Team Six is probably looking for him right now.” She was pissed. Once again, her partner was in danger. He’d been tortured, again, and she couldn’t do anything to stop it. Not only was she worried about him physically, but emotionally as well. In Moscow, Oliver talked, a lot. Whatever happened after Waller betrayed him had to be incredibly traumatizing for him to stop speaking. Lyla was pissed, but she needed to focus right now. She needed to get Oliver and Tommy out of there before she could give into her anger. She was almost done getting her restraints off, she just needed a bit more time.

Seeing an opening when the man turned to Lyla, Oliver dislocated his thumb, as Anatoly taught him. He snuck up behind the man and knocked him out. He used the knife to cut Lyla’s bonds before helping her up. He’d need her to get rid of the other two without further injury. They needed to be out of the way before he could do anything else. One of the gang members came back into the room and saw Oliver had gotten free. He opened fire, but Oliver ducked out of the way as Lyla picked up the unconscious man’s gun and began firing. Sneaking around, Oliver managed to incapacitate the second man with a little more difficulty than the first. Then, the leader came back in and saw his two friends passed out. Oliver held him off, using as little of his skills as possible. The man clearly depended on his weapons too much, since once he’d lost his gun, Oliver was able to easily overpower him.
With all three men unconscious, Oliver began digging through the gang leader’s pockets. He had no idea where his phone was, or Lyla’s or Tommy’s or where they were. He held out the disposable phone he found to Lyla.

“Do you want me to call Felicity first?”

He nodded, punched in her number and handed the phone to Lyla.

“Oliver?!” Felicity asked frantically on the other end.

“He’s here with me. We were taken. Tommy too.” She reported.

“Are you hurt? Is Oliver?”

Lyla knew Oliver was injured. She’d watched them torture him. She also knew she couldn’t tell Felicity that over the phone. “I can’t say one way or the other. I don’t suppose you could call in an anonymous tip to the police? Maybe the Hood was seen or heard fighting people in this warehouse.”

“Consider it done.” She said. “Can I- can you put Oliver on the phone?”

“I don’t think that’s gonna be enough this time.” Lyla said honestly.

Felicity ended the call so she could tip off the SCPD. Lyla found Tommy, who’d been shoved into a dingy office and told him the Hood rescued them. He wanted to go home, but she mentioned the police would probably be on their way, since the Hood promised to call them.

Expecting a beat officer, they were shocked when McKenna and two people who looked like they were Men in Black agents responded to the call, along with plenty of uniformed officers and EMTs.

Oliver had taken a seat as soon as he heard the sirens. McKenna and the two agents kept looking over at him, but he didn’t look up. An EMT was trying to convince him to let her look him over but he didn’t react at all. Lyla tried, believing it was a trust issue, but he flinched away. He didn’t respond to anyone, didn’t look at anyone. He just stared. That was, until he heard Felicity yelling for someone to let her through. His head shot up and he looked at her hopefully.

McKenna waved her through and she ran over to Oliver. They were both on the verge of tears. ‘I knew you’d find me.’

Felicity didn’t respond. Instead, she wiped the tears away from his eyes. She reached for his hand but saw there was blood dripping onto the floor. The old wounds on his arms had been opened back up. She looked to the EMT. “Can I get some gauze?”

“I tried to bandage those but-.” The woman said.

“He wouldn’t let you, but he might let me.” She said softly. She gestured for Oliver to take a seat and sat in front of him, wrapping up his wrists.

The officers hauled the Red Mask gang away. Dinan and Reeves took Lyla and Tommy’s statements. McKenna was supposed to get Oliver’s but she could tell now wasn’t a great time.

“Let’s go home.” Felicity said once Oliver’s wounds were seen to. As they walked out, she told McKenna she’d let her know when Oliver was ready to talk.
The ride home was silent. Oliver was staring at his feet the entire time. He shuffled into the house after her and let himself be led into the bedroom. As soon as he sat down on the bed, he began crying. Felicity sat next to him, running her fingers through his hair. Donna knocked hesitantly on the door, seeing Oliver sobbing. She didn’t speak, but took a seat on his other side and started rubbing his back. No one spoke for a long time.

He was still sobbing when there was a knock on the door. Donna went to answer it and returned a few moments later with John and Lyla.

“Oliver, I’m so sorry.” Lyla said. “I should’ve-. “ She should’ve done something. She should’ve broken free faster. She should’ve stopped the gang from abducting Oliver in the first place.

Felicity shook her head. This wasn’t Lyla’s fault. Oliver ran out of tears soon after. They moved to the living room, but he was still spaced out.

Half an hour later, Tommy and Thea arrived. Tommy called her after the SCPD left, saying Oliver could really use his friends and family right now.

Oliver spent the night surrounded by his friends and family. Tomorrow, he’d worry about letting them see him like this. Tomorrow, he’d convince himself that this was all his fault. Tonight, he just let them comfort him and felt privileged to have so many people care about him.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 51

Chapter Summary

Oliver, Felicity and friends start to deal with the fallout of the previous day, as do people across the city.

Chapter Notes

The feedback I got last chapters was....wow, that's all I can say. Thank you all so much!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Felicity, Tommy, John, Donna and the rest of Oliver’s support system wound up crashing at Felicity’s house. Donna slept in the guest room. Tommy took the couch while Lyla and John said they could both fit on the loveseat. Oliver slept in Felicity’s bed, with his girlfriend on one side and his sister on the other.

Normally, Oliver wouldn’t sleep easily, but he was so exhausted from his ordeal that he fell asleep soon after lying down. Felicity found herself unable to sleep. She was too upset by what had happened. Too angry that someone had hurt Oliver, again, for her mind to be calm enough to get some sleep.

Instead, she stayed in bed and pondered. The men who kidnapped Oliver were hired to do so. She hadn’t had a chance to talk to Lyla, but based on how the former soldier acted, they took Oliver to question him. Since no one even suspected he was the Hood, there was only one topic they’d ask about. There were only so many people who’d want to know about the Gambit sinking, and even fewer who were desperate enough, or had the proper resources, to organize something like this. It was also mighty suspicious that Oliver was taken the same day the SCPD wanted to talk to him. She laid awake and started making a list of everyone who fit those criteria.

The next morning, Oliver was still asleep when Felicity heard someone moving around her kitchen. She walked out of her room and found Lyla and John making coffee.

“Couldn’t sleep?” Digg asked her.

“Nope. I didn’t get any. I couldn’t. My brain was all- it wouldn’t shut off.” She said. She looked over to Lyla. “I don’t wanna ask Oliver, because I don’t know how he’ll respond to my question, but I need to know. They wanted answers about the Gambit, didn’t they?”

Lyla took a deep breath. “Yes, they wanted to know if Robert survived. What he might’ve told Oliver. That’s all I feel comfortable telling you about what happened.” She liked Felicity, but she didn’t want to invade Oliver’s privacy or break his trust by telling her exactly what the Red Mask Gang did to him to try and get him to talk.

“That’s all I wanted to know. Actually, I don’t even want to know that, but if he’s trying to deal
with what happened, knowing makes it easier for me not to babble about the wrong thing.” She said. “And I can guess they thought he was faking his mutism, too.” Lyla didn’t respond but her face told Felicity everything she needed to know. “It’s not your fault. I can guarantee that’s the first thing he’s gonna tell you.”

“Feels like it is. My gut was telling me something was off and I didn’t-.”

“None of us could’ve seen this happening.” Digg said.

Felicity poured herself some coffee and went back into her bedroom. Both Queen siblings were still fast asleep. She grabbed her tablet and started looking for answers about who’d done this to Oliver. Someone paid the Red Masks and she was going to find out exactly who and make sure they paid for it. Thea woke up just as she breached the SCPD’s firewall to see the gang members’ records.

“Hm. Morning.” Thea said before looking at her brother. “He looks so peaceful.”

“Yeah.”

“And he didn’t- he didn’t seem to have any nightmares last night. That’s good, right?” Thea asked.

“I don’t know. He could’ve been too exhausted, mentally and physically, for that kind of sleep activity. Or it could’ve been that he knew he wasn’t alone.” She answered honestly. “Ever since we started sleeping together, he doesn’t seem to have as many nightmares. And by sleeping together, I mean, literally sleeping. In the same bed, not- not the other meaning.”

Thea chuckled and got out of bed to get some coffee.

As soon as she left the room, Oliver’s eyes popped open. He and Felicity just stared at one another, not sure what to say.

“Good morning.” She said after a while. She figured that was one of the few things she could say without asking a question that would make him shut down or seemingly like she was pretending the previous day hadn’t happened.

‘Hi.’ He answered. ‘Is everyone still here?’

“Yup. Where else would they be?” She said. “They care about you, they wanna make sure you’re okay. And if you’re not okay, they wanna be here in case you need them.”

‘I- they probably have a million other things to do.’

“Nothing that’s that important.” She said. “Look at me, please. There’s something important I need to tell you.”

Oliver cautiously sat up and looked at her. What did she want to tell him?

“It was not your fault. What happened yesterday, it was not your fault. You shouldn’t blame yourself. You didn’t do anything to deserve what happened yesterday. The only people to blame are the monsters who hurt you and whoever hired them. Not you.” Oliver looked uncertain. “When the Dark Archer attacked Applied Sciences, was that my fault?”

‘No. Of course not.’

“Then yesterday wasn’t your fault. I need you to believe that, to believe me, okay?” She said.
“There’s something else I need to say too. And it’s important, it’s incredibly important that you listen okay? You’re not weak. You’re not pathetic, or damaged or broken, or disgusting. You’re not a monster, either. I know you think that, I know that after yesterday, you feel that way, but it’s not true. You’re a good man. You’re kind and strong and loving and the bravest person I’ve ever met. You’re a hero Oliver, and I love you so much. Love doesn’t even do it justice to be honest, but we don’t have a bigger word. And it’s so important, incredibly important, that you understand that.” Oliver leaned over so that his head was resting against her shoulder. “I will wake up everyday and tell you that every single day, even when we’re old and gray and my boobs are all saggy. Because I love you, because you love me and because you deserve to hear it.”

He didn’t respond but cuddled up next to his girlfriend for several minutes. Felicity stomach started to rumble and she got out of bed, knowing she needed to have breakfast soon. Oliver moved to get up to, but when he looked at the door, his expression shifted into one of fear. On the other side of the door, there were people. People that he liked, yes, but he wasn’t ready to see them yet.

“It’s okay, if you need a moment. If you aren’t ready to see them yet. Do you want me to go grab you some coffee?” Oliver didn’t like feeling vulnerable, and last night, he felt incredibly vulnerable. She knew he might want to stay locked in her room all day so that he wouldn’t have to see anyone. She didn’t want that to happen, but if that’s what he needed, she wouldn’t make him go.

‘Coffee, please.’ He said.

She gave him a sad smile, kissed him on the cheek and walked out of the room. Walking into her living room, she saw that everyone else was awake. Donna, Tommy and Thea had tears in their eyes. John and Lyla didn’t, but she knew it was because they were better at hiding their emotions. They must’ve heard what she told him. She gave her mother a look and shook her head. Oliver wasn’t ready to see anyone yet. Donna frowned before asking who wanted breakfast. Felicity poured a cup of coffee and took it into her room to give to Oliver. When she came back into the living room, Thea spoke.

“Is Ollie-?”

“He wants to be alone right now.” Felicity said before she could finish.

“Is he- this is gonna set him back, isn’t it?”

“Most likely, but he has us. We can help him through this.” She said.

The only reason Tommy got any sleep was because he was so exhausted the night before. Now, as he sat in Felicity’s living room, he saw Oliver getting tazed every time he closed his eyes. “How are we-. Thea, will you answer your freaking phone?!” Thea’s phone had been chiming every thirty seconds or so, and the noise, combined with Tommy’s heightened emotions made him snap.

“Sorry, it just- it keeps beeping and after yesterday, I don’t- oh god, I just made it about myself, didn’t I? I’m such an asshole.”

“It’s not a competition.” Digg said. “What happened to Oliver yesterday is traumatic for Oliver, but you saw that happening and couldn’t do anything to stop it and that’s traumatizing for you. But Thea should probably find her phone, since it sounds like someone’s trying to get a hold of her.”

While John had been explaining this to Tommy, Thea was moving the couch cushions and blankets around, looking for the offending device. It must’ve fallen out of her pocket the night before and now she had no idea where it had gone to. There was a knock on the door right as she pulled out from in-between two cushions.
Felicity looked at one of her surveillance cameras and opened the door. A very exhausted Roy Harper was standing on the steps, along with Walter who looked concerned about Roy’s state.

“Roy, are you-?”

“Did Thea…..not….get……my messages?” He asked as he tried to catch his breath. By the look of things, he’d run here from somewhere.

“She just found her phone.” Donna said before going into the kitchen to get Roy some water.

“Oh. Well, I called her last night, and she didn’t return my call. This morning, I woke up and what happened with Oliver was on the news, but they didn’t say if he was okay, and I still hadn’t heard from Thea. So, I thought I’d come over a check. I barely caught the first bus, but I missed the next one, so I kinda….ran here.” He said. “Is he-?”

“He’s…. Sorry, hi Walter.” Felicity said. “I didn’t mean to ignore you, its just that Roy looked like he was about to have a heart attack.” She then introduced him to Donna and Lyla, who he hadn’t met.

“Good Morning, Felicity.” The British man responded. “And it’s a pleasure to meet you all, although I wish it were under better circumstances.”

The group fell into silence. Everyone wanted to talk about how to help Oliver, but no one knew how and they weren’t sure how to address the situation.

“When is this shit gonna stop happening to Ollie?” Tommy asked. “First, the Gambit sinks, then he gets trapped on that island whatever happened there made him lose his voice. Then, Laurel and Moira try to have him declared incompetent and-.”

“His mom tried to do what?!” Donna and Roy both asked in unison. Then, Roy continued. “Is that why he doesn’t want to see her?”

“Yes. He came home, and he was different and she wouldn’t accept it, which is why he wanted to move out. After he left, she hatched the idea in an effort to regain control.” Felicity answered honestly. “He, uh, I think its gonna be a long time before he’ll even consider it.”

Walter looked horror-struck by the news. He thought Moira’s behavior, which was abhorrible, was why Oliver was so reluctant to come to the mansion, but clearly, it was something much worse. He made a vow to himself that he’d be there for his stepson whenever Oliver might need him. He felt foolish and naïve for not noticing this earlier. He wondered if this was part of the reason Thea seemed terrified about Moira learning about Roy or where he was from.

Lyla, meanwhile, had a much different reaction to the news. She was so angry upon hearing that she couldn’t form words. Instead, she took the coffee mug in her hands and chucked it at the wall, where it shattered. Everyone looked at her, and she moved to storm out. Digg grabbed her arm before she took more than a few steps away.

“I need to go.” She whispered to him. “There’s something I gotta take care of.”

“I know you can make her disappear, but that’s not what he needs right now.” He reminded her.

“Fine.” She turned back to the group. “Sorry about your mug, I’ll-.”

“I got it from IKEA for like a dollar. Don’t worry about it.” Felicity said.
“I hope I’m not breaking some unspoken rule, but you didn’t answer Roy’s question earlier.” Walter said. “How is Oliver?”

No sooner had he asked that than the door to Felicity’s room opened. Oliver shuffled out of the room, looking at his feet. Thea told him good morning and he looked up.

‘Roy and Walter are here?’ He asked.

‘Of course they are. They were worried about you.’ Felicity signed back. ‘If it’s too much, I can tell them-.’

‘It’s not. I’m just surprised.’

‘You’re a good friend, and a good brother, Oliver. People care about you.’ She said. ‘We were going to have breakfast. Are you hungry?’

‘Yes. I’ll cook.’

Thea didn’t know enough ASL to completely follow the conversation, and Roy didn’t feel comfortable essentially “listening in” so he didn’t watch them talk, but Donna did. “Oliver, honey, you don’t have to make breakfast. One of us can-.”

‘Please. I want to say thanks and it- I need something to focus on.’ He told her. ‘It’s just a few omelets.’

“I’ll give you a hand then.” Donna offered before turning to the others. “Oliver’s gonna to make breakfast for everyone, to say thanks.” Everyone started to object, but she put her foot down. “He’s very adamant about it.”

‘You need anything, you need a minute alone, let us know.’ Felicity said. ‘We’ll need to change your bandages after, okay?’ Oliver nodded and he and Donna went into the kitchen.

“That was- I don’t know what I was expecting, but it wasn’t that.” Thea said lamely. “Last night, he was-:”

“He still is, he’s just trying to hide it. They had us in that warehouse for over five hours before the Hood showed up.” Lyla said.

Thea bolted into the bathroom. She was going to be sick. She managed to get the toilet seat up milliseconds before emptying the contents of her stomach. Then, she continued retching. Roy had followed after her, and sat beside her, holding her hair and rubbing her back as she began dry-heaving. While Thea was dry-heaving, Tommy had collapsed into a heap on the couch. Those men had tortured Oliver for hours. They tazed him and burned him and while Tommy logically knew he couldn’t have done anything to stop them, he wished he would’ve tried.

Walter was about to ask Felicity a question when Donna walked out of the kitchen. “Breakfast is almost ready. Hope you guys are hungry.”

John and Lyla walked towards the kitchen. Felicity waited for Walter, Tommy, Thea and Roy. “I know this is hard. I- no one like seeing someone they care about suffer. Just don’t- Oliver doesn’t like talking about how he feels or what he’s been through because he thinks it makes him a burden. He thinks if anyone knows how much he’s survived, they’ll think he’s weak or pathetic. So, don’t ask him to talk about it. Don’t get upset if he kinda shuts down, even if you can’t see why or what caused it. And, if he says he’s fine, even though he’s not, don’t push because he’ll clam up, thinking he’s upsetting you by just feeling the way he does. It’s not you, it’s not a trust thing, it’s
about him feeling comfortable sharing the information.” She said. “Other than that, let him drive the conversation.”

They sat down for breakfast. It was awkwardly, unbearably quiet at first, so Donna got the conversation going by asking Walter, Lyla and John, who she hadn’t met before now, to tell her a little bit about themselves. Walter explained a little bit about his interests and hobbies. Lyla mentioned that she’d served with Digg, she worked for the government and was in town on vacation.

“I’m- I was Oliver’s bodyguard.” Digg answered.

“Was?” Thea asked.

“Last night, Moira fired me because I didn’t stop what happened.” To be honest, he was surprised Moira had even remembered that he worked for her, since it had been weeks since she made any attempt to contact him.

“It was your day off, though. It was your day off and Oliver was running errands. No one could’ve known that- that’s a load of crap.” Thea said, not wanting to go on a tangent about what happened. “Not to mention, she hired you mostly to spy on Oliver.”

‘After breakfast, I wanna talk to you for a second.’ Oliver told Digg and Felicity translated.

“I gotta start learning ASL.” Tommy remarked.

“Well, I hope you’re satisfied!” Moira shouted as she walked into Malcolm Merlyn’s house.

“Why would I be? You weren’t able to learn anything and the men you hired were captured alive, thanks to the Hood.” He responded. “Meaning they’ll be questioned by the police, who will wonder how paid them to abduct Oliver.” Malcolm was livid. Moira’s ruse had gotten no results and to make matters worse, Tommy had been with Oliver when he was taken. Those thugs could’ve nearly hurt his son. The purpose of making her find out what Oliver knew was to punish her, not to put his family in danger.

“I used an intermediary. Besides, I’m sure you can find a way to keep them quiet.” She turned to leave.

“We still don’t know what your son knows.” He reminded her.

“I think if he knew anything, he would’ve told them as soon as they started hurting him.”

“And if he really is mute, but does know something?”

“He doesn't. Now, if you'll excuse me, there’s a family brunch I’m missing.” She returned home to find Walter and Thea both gone. She couldn’t shake the foreboding feeling that came over her when Raisa told her they were both gone.

The task force investigating the Queen’s Gambit reconvened the morning after Oliver, Tommy and Lyla were rescued by the Hood. None of the officers had gotten much sleep the night before, but being away from the office at least gave them the illusion of getting some rest.
“We decide it’s time to talk to Mr. Queen and he gets abducted that same day. That seems mighty suspicious to me.” Agent Reeves said. Either it was the world’s most unfortunate coincidence, or Tempest somehow knew the Coast Guard was getting ready to interview Oliver. The last thing they wanted to deal with was a leak.

“Not just to you.” Anderson said. “But if they were trying to get rid of him, as a witness, why would they torture him as well?”

“It might not be about getting rid of him. It might be about finding out what he knows before we can.” Dinan said. “Thankfully, we’ve got all three men in custody and plenty of time to interrogate them.”

“What do we do about Mr. Queen in the meantime? Until we know why, until we find out who’s behind what happened, he’s in danger, as is anyone around him.” The agents all knew the Red Mask gang were just hired muscle. Whoever was the mastermind behind the abduction would try again.

“We can keep his house and Applied Sciences under surveillance for now. If we’re keeping any eye on him and Ms. Smoak, the two people Tempest has targeted so far, we can prevent a second attempt.”

“Are we sure he was the target?” One agent asked. “Sorry, but he was with an ARGUS agent when he was taken. Are we not going to even entertain the idea that-?”

“If Lyla Michaels was the target, why would they have tortured Mr. Queen?” Dinan said. “He was the target, her being there was a coincidence.”

McKenna was about to ask a question when two agents came into the room.

“I heard back from one of our techs. You’re not gonna believe this.” One said.

“No, you’re gonna wanna see what I found out first.” The other said.

After Nyssa confronted her target, she returned to her hideout. The man had broken the League's laws regarding children and he needed to die for the offense. Nyssa took no pleasure in killing a former comrade, but she wasn’t going to lie to herself and pretend he didn’t deserve his fate.

She turned on the police scanner and was shocked to hear activity regarding Oliver Queen. Turning the volume up, she learned he had been abducted and the SCPD took several hours to find him. They weren’t giving much information over the radio, but she assumed he’d been injured in the event, if not tortured for information. One officer reported that the Hood had rescued them, and she supposed that was true from a certain perspective.

After a few hours of sleep, she called her father, informed him their renegade soldier was no longer a concern, and reported it would be a few more days before she could approach the Hood, her final mission. No warrior would return to battle the night after such an ordeal.

Breakfast was wrapping up when there was a knock at the door, Felicity checked her cameras and saw it was a delivery person of some kind. She opened the door and found a large bouquet of flowers being handed to her.
“We tried to deliver yesterday, but received no answer.” The driver said. “Sign here.”

“Who-?”

“Don’t know, i just deliver them. There’s a card in the bouquet, ma’am.” He wished her a good day and left.

Felicity found the card in question and opened it. Oliver had written a very sweet and heartfelt card and she started tearing up. She put the flowers in water before rushing over to Oliver.

“Thank you so much.” She said as she hugged him.

‘You like them?’

“Of course, I do. They’re wonderful.” She said. “And what you wrote in that card? You must’ve been a writer or poet in another life.”

‘It wasn’t that good. I didn’t- I couldn’t put it into the right words to do it justice.’

“I think you said it perfectly.” She said. “You’re too hard on yourself.”

Oliver ducked his head so no one would see him blushing. Since Oliver cooked breakfast, Roy, Thea and Tommy offered to clean up. Everyone moved into the living room and Felicity pulled Oliver aside to change his bandages. They went into the bedroom and Felicity unwrapped one of his wrists in silence.

‘I’m sorry.’

“For what?”

‘That you have to take care of me like this. Again.’

“Everyone needs help sometimes.” She said quietly. “You make sure I eat something other than take-out, and that I don’t spend hours hunched over a computer. I help you with things like this. We take care of each other.”

‘It’s not the same. And we were supposed to have a date night last night, but that was ruined too.’

“Yes, it was, but not because of you.” She said. “You were trying to do something nice for me, to surprise me. You didn’t ask for- I’m angry, but not at you. I could never be mad at you for what happened.” She finished putting a new bandage on his wrist, and put her hand in his. “Come on, let’s see if the others wanna watch a movie or something.” She knew it wouldn’t fix what happened, it wouldn’t make him forget the previous night. But she wanted Oliver to take his mind off of it, just for a little while.

He stood up and followed her out of the room, their fingers still entwined. Everyone was sitting in the living room and Felicity suggested they watch a movie. After going back and forth for a while, they settled on watching Disney’s version of Robin Hood.

“Ollie and I used to watch it all the time when we were younger.” Thea said. “It was his favorite movie.”

“Really?” Lyla asked, trying to keep a straight face. John and Felicity were having trouble not smiling too wide when they heard that.
Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 52

Chapter Summary

The task force gets an interesting update, Digg gets a surprising offer, Lyla and Felicity bond and Waller sucks, just in general.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oliver, Thea, Felicity and the others watched Robin Hood. When that was over, they couldn’t agree on what to watch, but the conversation turned into favorite movies when everyone was a kid. Tommy liked Aladdin, Roy argued for Tarzan, Thea loved The Little Mermaid and Felicity loved Beauty and the Beast. Lyla and John didn’t say what their favorite movies when they were really young were, but they agreed that Mulan was their favorite Disney movie.

“Why Mulan?” Tommy asked.

“Because she’s a badass who saved China.” Lyla responded.

They kept talking about movies until Walter’s phone rang. Without looking, he answered it. “Hello Moira.” He said politely. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Oliver go completely still. He watched his stepson, who was very fidgety all of a sudden. “I decided to take a few hours for myself today. With recent events, I haven’t had much time to devote to my interests. There’s a cricket game on soon that I thought I’d- of course. I’ll see you when I come back, after the game. Goodbye.” He hung up. “I apologize.”

“Why did you lie to Mom?” Thea asked. She wasn’t angry he’d lied. If anything, she was relieved because she had no idea how her mother felt about what had happened, and part of her was a little scared to find out.

“I didn’t want her to come here, using my visit as an excuse, or demand that I put Oliver on the phone. He’s an adult and if he doesn’t want to speak with her or see her, I won’t force him to or play a part in her forcing a confrontation.”

Walter liked to think he was an observant person. That’s one of the reasons he believed he’d become such a successful businessman. Being rather observant, it didn’t escape his notice that Oliver’s reactions to hearing his mother mentioned were seeming uncomfortable at best, and terrified at worst. He refused to cause his stepson further discomfort or pain.

‘Thank you. I’m just- I’m not ready. I won’t be for a while.’ Oliver said.

“There’s no need to thank me, Oliver. This is what family does.” He assured him. “There are a few things I need to take care of, to prepare for Applied Sciences to reopen tomorrow. I hope none of you will be upset if I take my leave.”

“Not at all.” Felicity said. The others nodded or murmured in agreement. She thanked him for stopping by and said she’d see him the next day.

‘I’m glad he stopped by.’ Oliver told Felicity. ‘We aren’t close but- he’s trying, and that means a
‘Me too. And I know what you mean.’

“I really need to learn ASL. I feel like those two are being all adorable and I’m the only one who doesn’t understand it.” Tommy remarked.

“I only know the basics.” Lyla admitted. “So, you’re not the only one.”

“Still, I gotta find a class or something. You two met at an ASL class, right?” He asked Roy and Thea, who nodded. “Any chance there’s a space left?”

The pair looked at one another and burst out laughing. The class usually only had the two of them after all. “I think Steph might have one or two slots left.” Roy said.

“Is there some kinda inside joke that I missed?”

“You’ll see.” Thea said. “It’s Saturday mornings at 10 at the rec center in the Glades.”

Agent Dinan looked between the two agents that were arguing over who had the more important news. The first one had been working on tracking down financials for Tempest, trying to discover who belonged to the group. The other agent was assigned to going over the evidence from the warehouse. Neither gave any indication as to what they found, or why it was important, so the conversation was going in circles.

“Ok. Enough.” She said. “What do you have?”

“We tracked down the money that bought the warehouse.” The first agent said.

“And you?”

“We matched the 9-1-1 call he Hood made to us last night to an older call recording.” The other one said.

“You matched it to a dispatch call?”

“Yes. The Hood uses a voice modulator, but all of the metrics match a call that was made about six weeks ago.” The agent answered.

“What was the first call about?”

“It was the call that led the SCPD to the warehouse where the wreckage of the Queen’s Gambit was found. The Hood’s the one who found the Gambit.”

“If only we could interview the Hood.” Dinan said. “You said uncovered who bought the warehouse?”

“Yeah. And you’re not gonna like it.”

“I don’t like anything about this case, and I really don’t like when people waste my time trying to be dramatic.” Agent Anderson said. “Whatever it is, spit it out.”

“The money was wired from an account belonging from Moira Queen.” He handed Anderson a piece of paper. “Look at the date. It was purchased a week before the search was called off. We’re
still digging into her financials, but there was another large transaction five days later.”

“Keep digging. I wanna know everything you can tell me about transaction she’s had. Every job, every charity, every investment. If she had a paper route when she was eight, I wanna know about it.” The FBI forensic accountant nodded once and left the room. “So, we have a sabotaged yacht, a billionaire who survived against all odds and a wire transfer from Moira Queen that was paid right before the search for survivors was called off. Does that seem fishy to anyone?”

“Looks like we finally have a prime suspect.” Dinan said. “We do need to talk to Mr. Queen, though, soon.”

“Felicity Smoak said she’d let me know when he was ready to talk.” McKenna said. “And we still haven’t talked to the kidnappers.”

With so many things still up in the air, now seemed like the perfect time to interrogate the Red Mask gang. Two refused to talk and demanded lawyers. The third didn’t answer they questions, but did tell them that he didn’t see the Hood in the warehouse.

“If the Hood wasn’t the one who knocked you out, who was?” Agent Reeves asked.

“Queen. I don’t know how he knew what to do, or where he learned it, but it was him.” He said. “And that’s all I’m saying.”

Reeves walked out of the room and turned to the agent who’d sat in on the questioning with him. “That’s not the most unrealistic story I’ve heard.”

“Oliver Queen was tied to the chair, I thought. His two friends said so, and his wrists-.”

“The Hood could’ve cut him loose.”

“And him beating that guy in a fight?”

“None of these guys seem like they’re great fighters to me. You know who definitely is? John Diggle, Oliver’s bodyguard. He wasn’t just Army, he was Special Forces. Oliver Queen comes back from five years away, maybe he doesn’t feel safe, even with someone guarding him, so he asks Mr. Diggle to teach him to fight. He learns enough to deal with that guy.”

About an hour after Walter left, Oliver remembered what Digg had said about his mother firing him. He pulled John aside, saying he wanted to speak with him. The two men went into the kitchen to talk in private.

My mom really fired you?

“Yeah. I’m a little surprised she even remembered I was working for her. I wasn’t there, you were taken and she blamed me.” He said. “Not your fault. Don’t even think about apologizing. I’ll figure something out. Security jobs aren’t hard to find. My next client might actually want me to protect them.”

Maybe not. You know, I happen to be looking for a bodyguard.

“Really?” Digg crossed his arms.

Yeah. I can pay you the same as my mom was, and that way, you won’t need to make up excuses
for our “other” job.

“I do already know all of your escape tactics.” He said. “Okay.”

You don’t know all of my tactics. There were some diversion tactics Oliver learned during his time working with Lyla that he wasn’t desperate enough, or properly equipped, to use yet.

With the matter settled, they walked back into the living room where the others were still talking.

While Oliver and John were talking, Roy, Thea, Tommy and Donna began debating what movie they should watch next. Lyla noticed Felicity wasn’t paying much attention to the argument. The blonde had moved to the dining room, away from the group and was focused solely on her tablet.

“What’s so fascinating?” She asked.

“Trying to narrow down who ordered Oliver’s kidnapping,” Felicity answered. “Those bastards kidnapped you three in broad daylight. They tied him to a chair and tortured him and he was worried about them hurting you or Tommy if he couldn’t stop them. He must’ve been so scared, and felt so helpless. They tortured him, they hurt him over and over and told him his condition wasn’t real. They tried to make him- they ahd him for hours. He probably started having flashbacks because of them. He was starting to get better and they- Someone hired them to do that. That monster is out there, right now. They probably think they’re safe, that there’s no way the SCPD or the feds can find a connection. They hurt him, and they probably don’t feel sorry for it at all. They hurt one of the best people I’ve ever met, the man that I love and I can’t just let them get away with it. They’ve got no idea what they did. So, I’m going to make them pay for it. I’m going to tear away everything they care about. Everyone’s gonna know who they are, what kind of person they are. They wanna hide in the shadow? I’ll force them into the light where the whole world can see what they are. I’m going to make them regret even thinking about coming after Oliver, and everyone else they’ve hurt, everything else they’ve done. When they’ve lost everything, when everyone they love rejects them, when all they feel is complete and unending despair, then I’ll be satisfied.”

“I do not want to get on your bad side.” Lyla remarked. She liked Felicity for the peace she seemed to bring Oliver, but she found herself respecting this side of the blonde as well. Felicity Smoak was sweet and loving, but clearly, she had a dark side and would unleash Hell to protect or avenge someone she cared about. “How can I help?”

“Ever done any hacking?”

“I taught Oliver how to hack, and while he’s not on your level, only because we didn’t have time to teach him more advanced concepts, he was pretty much a prodigy. I’m the one who showed him basic and intermediate-level netrusion procedures and how to counter-act them. Then, he turned out to be a natural and I was the taking notes,” She answered. “Why do you ask?”

Felicity went into her bedroom and came back holding an older model tablet. “I built this myself, as a side project. It’s impossible to hack, impossible to trace. Not as good as this one,” she pointed to the one she was using, “but its pretty badass if I do say so myself. Think you can work with this?”

Lyla took the tablet from her and started looking at the operating system and software already on the device. “Definitely. What do you have in mind?”
“Uh-oh” Digg said, walking out of the kitchen and seeing Felicity and Lyla huddled together. “You two are definitely planning world domination over here. I think we should be scared, Oliver.”

“Maybe we are.” Felicity said. “But don’t worry. We’ll have a place for you in the new world order.”

“Ollie!” Thea called out. “Come here and settle an argument. Tommy thinks Pixar is better than Disney. Roy agrees with me, but Donna agrees with Tommy. We need a tie-breaker.”

Oliver walked over to settled the argument about which movies were better. After he walked away, Digg turned to Felicity and Lyla.

“Whatever you’re planning, I want in.”

“We aren’t planning anything.” Lyla said. “Yet.”

They walked over to join the rest of the group. Felicity sat down next to Oliver right as Tommy spoke. "Oh, by the way, Zita's called me.” Zita's was the restaurant Oliver had made a reservation at for him and Felicity, which they were supposed to go to last night. "They saw what happened on the news. The owner wanted me to let you know that they're gonna leave a spot open in the reservation book for whenever you wanna reschedule.”

"That's very nice of them.” Felicity remarked.

Nyssa crept closer to the warehouse, which was still being processed by the SCPD and FBI, and slipped under the crime scene tape when the nearest officer wasn’t looking. Given how high-profile the kidnapping victims were, she expected more security around the area and was rather surprised to see that wasn’t case. Perhaps they believed they’d already collected all the necessary evidence.

She walked into the open area of the warehouse and looked around. Members of the League of Assassins were meant to be ghosts and trained to leave no trace after they completed a mission. The men who abducted Oliver, Tommy and Lyla clearly were not. She could more or less piece together what happened.

There was a wooden chair knocked over in the middle of the room, with zipties wrapped around one of the vertical bars. No doubt, Oliver Queen had been restrained to this chair and broken free. There was a puddle of blood behind the chair, which could be the result of him breaking free or the methods his captors used to torture him. Nyssa wasn’t sure.

Oliver had broken free, and based on the shoeprints in the blood, he rushed towards one of the kidnappers. Most likely as a blitz attack. Taking down the second kidnapper went nearly the same as the first. The last one put up more of a fight, based on the number of boxes that had clearly been knocked over during the alteration. The second and third fights, he had help with, meaning one of the other hostages, most likely the woman since Tommy Merlyn’s statement said he was locked in another room when the Hood rescued them, knew his secret.

Knowing how the confrontation ended, Nyssa turned her attention to learning what occurred before Oliver broke free and incapacitated the criminals. Based on the amount of blood she saw, Oliver had been kept prisoner for several hours. During those hours, the criminals most likely questioned Oliver, tortured him for not answering, began questioning him again and the cycle continued. He’d
been injured but not hospitalized, so she guessed they might’ve used knives, tazers and other, less deadly weapons as opposed to guns. Methods that would hurt Oliver, but didn’t have a high risk of killing him before they got the answers they wanted.

Oliver Queen had been tortured for hours. He managed to get himself free and took down not one, but three armed kidnappers. He had enough strength left, after hours of torture, to take them down, despite how exhausting and traumatizing the ordeal had been.

Nyssa had been skeptical when her father sent her to Starling, but having seen proof of his strength and capabilities, she was willing to admit that she was impressed. She hadn’t met many people who could’ve done what he did.

“What do you mean we aren’t investigating?” ARGUS agent O’Neil asked.

“The abduction has nothing to do with any open ARGUS investigation, nor does it fall under our jurisdiction.”

“An ARGUS agent was one of the people abducted.” He pointed out. “With a high-security clearance.”

“Agent Michaels wasn’t on a mission, she was on leave. Meaning she wasn’t an ARGUS agent in that warehouse, she was just a civilian for all intents and purposes.” Amanda Waller answered. “Investigating this would be a waste of resources, don’t you agree?”

“Rewind that.” Chien Na Wei ordered one of her lackeys.

The man looked at her in confusion. “Why do you-?” He didn’t understand why the Triad was interested in this video.

“Are you questioning me?” She asked with an edge to her voice.

He shook his head, scared of what she might do, and rewound the video. It was news footage of Tommy Merlyn and a brunette woman being led from a warehouse to a waiting car.

“Well, Agent Michaels.” Wei said with a smirk. “It looks like I’ll be seeing you very soon.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 53

Chapter Summary

Walter learns about public perception, McKenna considers something important, Tommy has a conversation with Malcolm and Thea remembers one of the good times.

Chapter Notes

I'd like to thank RoyArtHan, who inspired some of the wording for certain conversations in the this chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Walter walked into his office where a few department heads were waiting for him. Most notably, the head of Applied Sciences and Public Relations. He suggested they move into the conference room and waited for everyone to get settled.

“Thank you for coming in, Walter. We would've understood if you hadn’t been able to, given….recent events.” Mr. Correll, the head of PR said.

They were meeting to discuss the Robert Queen Memorial Applied Sciences building reopening. The SCPD had declared the building was no longer a crime scene, so QC was able to begin working out of the office once again. Given how high-profile the Dark Archer’s attack had been, the company was expected to hold some kind of press conference, at least, to mark the occasion. They had planned on a small ceremony and the group was now meeting to go over the speeches that were going to be made.

“The last week has been difficult, that is true, especially yesterday. It’s also true that here isn’t where I’m most needed at the moment, but I currently don’t know how to help Oliver. I’m choosing to focus the matters I can control and the problems I’m able to solve.” Walter said.

“I read the statement you prepared. It’s eloquent and well-crafted as always. The only thing feedback I really have involves some changes in wording to convey a consistent message.” He said, handing Walter a copy of the speech. “Even though it may be too soon, I feel we should discuss opinions about Oliver and your wife.”

“May I ask why?”

“As much as we’d like to think your family is separate from QC when it comes to public opinion, that’s not the case. Before the- when Oliver was in the tabloids frequently, his behavior reflected on his father, which in turn reflected on the business. And now, matters such as the court case, and what happened yesterday, also impact how the company is perceived. Which is an unfortunate, and unpleasant reality we need to consider.”

“And how is the company being perceived?” Walter asked. He wished his personal life didn’t impact his professional life, but Correll was right.
“Overall, Oliver’s doing well where public opinion’s concerned. There’s always a faction that will be negative, but according to various field reports from reputable media companies, he’s receiving a lot of support. And press coverage overall has been favorable to him.”

“What are they saying?”

“Since he hasn’t made a statement, and no one’s made a statement on his behalf, most of what’s being reported are rumors. What mental illnesses Oliver may be struggling with. The things that happened on the island he was marooned on. Why he’s now mute. There are a few insane theories suggesting he wasn’t really on the island or that the man who returned isn’t actually Oliver Queen, but his secret twin. Good thing no one believes the National Inquirer. The only things that’ve been confirmed are that he and Ms. Smoak are a couple and he is unable to speak. The falling out with his mother hasn’t been confirmed, but most believe it’s true.”

“That’s good to know.”

“I’m afraid not everyone is being viewed as kindly. There’s very little being said about Thea, since she’s a minor, so I’d say the coverage of her is neutral, but leaning towards positive. Moira, on the other hand, is not being perceived very well.”

“The public doesn’t like Moira?” One of the other department heads asked.

“The record from Laurel Lance’s trial is available to the public. There was nothing damning in it, but it didn’t make her look very good. She then didn’t make any kind of statement about it, which didn’t look good. When Oliver was found, she didn’t seem to take any time off to reconnect with him. She didn’t take a step back from her charities and societies. She was silent when the Queen’s Gambit’s wreckage was found by the police. Most damningly, last night when the news broke that Oliver and the two others that had been taken were found, she was at an event. At best, she looks like she’s completely apathetic to what’s happening, and what has happened, to Oliver.”

“How badly is it affecting our image?”

“Thankfully, it doesn’t seem to be too damaging yet, but we may need to discuss a course of action if the trend continues.” Correll said. “Walter?”

“I will talk with her.” There were many things Moira and Walter needed to talk about. The rest of the meeting consisted of them reviewing details for the re-opening of Applied Sciences, which passed pretty quickly.

With the three members of the Red Mask gang waiting for their lawyers, there was nothing the task force could do with them until the attorneys arrived. They doubted these guys had the resources to hire the best representation possible, so they suspected someone was going to try and make a deal. While they awaited the lawyers’ arrival, the agents looked over the evidence again.

McKenna was reading Tommy’s witness statement, but didn’t get very far before she dropped the file and ran out of the room. Dinan found her in the stairwell.

“You okay, Hall?”

“What? Yeah, I’m fine. I just-.”

“No, you’re not. And you shouldn’t be. A man who’s already been through Hell was kidnapped and tortured. It’s tough for me to read those reports and I don’t even know Oliver Queen. I can’t
imagine what this is like for you. If you need to take a step back-.”

“No. I can handle it.” She said. She didn’t want to say that she “owed” it to Oliver to find out the truth, because it sounded cliché, but that’s more or less how she felt. If they could get to the bottom of what happened, the previous day and five years ago, maybe it would bring him some kind of peace. “I just needed some air before- how did they know?”

“What?”

“Someone paid them to kidnap and…question Oliver. If he’d been with Mr. Diggle, they wouldn’t have been able to take him. But, his bodyguard wasn’t there, so either they lucked out or whoever hired them knew it was his day off.”

“You think someone close to him ordered three men to kidnap and torture him?” Dinan asked. “Well, I suppose its possible.”

She asked one of the other agents to look into who could’ve known Digg’s schedule and that he wouldn’t be with Oliver on Saturday. The lawyers for the three gang members arrived and, predictably, all tried to trade immunity in exchange for information. Unfortunately for them, the task force wasn’t feeling very forgiving. The three kidnapping charges they were facing, alone, meant there was no way they weren’t going to be spending the next decade or so in prison. The Red Mask member who’d been the lookout was the first to make a deal, in exchange for not being placed in general population in prison.

“I didn’t call my dad.” Tommy said in the middle of Donna telling everyone a story about the first science fair Felicity ever participated in. He blurted it out and then looked around sheepishly. “Sorry, I didn’t mean to- I wasn’t trying to interrupt but, I haven’t talked to him in a few days, and last night, I picked up Thea and came here, so I never told him I was okay. I’ll be right back.”

Malcolm and Tommy were not on great terms, by any means, but they were the only family the other one had. He should at least let him father know he was safe.

He went into the guestroom and called his father, who answered on the first ring. “Hey, Dad, I realized in all of the confusion last night that I didn’t call you to let you know I was okay.”

“Are you okay?”

“Physically, yes, but I think I’m still in shock from what I saw. They tortured Oliver. In front of me. I can’t even- he must’ve been so scared, and they kept insisting he wasn’t really mute, which definitely isn’t gonna help, but I don’t know-.”

“I’m sure Oliver will be fine.”

“I don’t think so. They- I’m just glad the Hood showed up when he did. If those guys hadn’t been stopped, I don’t know what would’ve happened. They might’ve- He saved us.”

Malcolm was tired of hearing about how the Hood was a hero and all of the praise that was being heaped on him. He was an obstacle in Tempest’s way, not Robin Hood. No one, especially Malcolm’s own son, should be praising him. “For once, I’m glad your mother is no longer with us. I’m glad she didn’t live to see how pathetic you are.”

“What?” Tommy wasn’t sure what he was expecting. Some comfort would’ve been nice. Or reassurance. Contempt wasn’t something he expected to hear.
“Your mother would be ashamed of you if she could see you now.” He said before hanging up.

Tommy needed a few minutes to collect his thoughts before he left the guest room. Despite him being estranged from his father, he never felt like Malcolm hated him, until now. When he calmed himself down somewhat, he went back into the living room.

“So, did I miss the end of the story? Did you win that science fair?”

“Of course I did. Timmy Wilson’s mom wasn’t happy about it, saying that his volcano should’ve won.”

“You built a computer and his mom thought a volcano was better?” Oliver asked.

“Yeah, because she was the head of the PTA, so her precious baby boy wasn’t allowed to lose.”

“I really did hate Karen.” Donna said. “There are very few people I hate, but she was one of them.” Karen was very judgy towards Felicity’s family, especially the fact that Donna was a single-mother and made no effort to hide it. “I think I’ve embarrassed Felicity enough for one day. So, let’s hear a story from someone else’s childhood.”

“God, I have so many.” Thea said while trying to think of one story to tell. “You know, Ollie used to be quite the Power Rangers fan.”

“Really? I don’t remember that.” Tommy said.

‘I watched it because you wanted to.’ Oliver said. ‘And because you’d get grumpy if I didn’t record it.’

“He’d record it?” Roy asked.

“Our parents, for some reason, they didn’t want me watching Power Rangers. I don’t know why. Anyway, Ollie had a TV and VCR in his room, and he could watch it, so he’d record it.”

Starling-2003

Moira and Robert told their children they probably wouldn’t be home until after very late, and left for the charity event they were going to. They told Thea to behave for Raisa and warned Oliver that the house needed to look exactly the same when they returned. Their eighteen-year-old son nodded and fought the urge to roll his eyes.

As soon as the door closed behind the Queens, Thea grabbed her brother’s arm as if to pull him away. “C’mon Ollie. I wanna watch!”

“Woah, calm down Speedy. The tape’s not going anywhere.” He joked.

“But I wanna know what happens!” The eight-year-old said.

“Okay. Let’s see how the Rangers get out of this mess.” He said, allowing himself to be dragged away.

Moira and Robert had walked in on Thea watching Power Rangers once and banned her from watching it again. Oliver wasn’t sure why, since the show was campy, but appropriate for her age. He didn’t agree with their logic, so he’d been recording episodes and watching them with Thea later.
When their parents traveled for work, or went to events, he and Thea would sit in the living room and watch the show on the biggest TV in the house while eating snacks. Halfway through the second episode, Oliver’s top of the line Nokia phone rang. He paused the tape and answered it.

“Ollie, where are you?” Laurel asked.

“Home.”

“You’re supposed to be my date for Jessica’s party.”

“I can’t come tonight. I’ve gotta watch my sister.” He lied. Laurel was starting to get a little too intense for him and he wanted to slow things down. He was starting to get freaked out. Needing to watch Thea seemed like a reasonable excuse not to spend the night with her.

“Can’t Raisa-.”

“It’s her day off. My parents tried to find anyone else, but couldn’t.” He said. “I’m not coming. I’m sorry.”

“Typical.” Laurel scoffed. “I guess I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Oliver gave a noncommittal noise and hung up. “Now, remind me what was happening?”

“Raisa’s watching me. You don’t have to stay.” Thea said.

“I want to. Who else is gonna watch Power Rangers with me?” He said.

They watched for about three hours before Raisa told them it was time for Thea to go to bed. She grumbled about having to go to bed when Oliver didn’t, but put on her pajamas and got ready for bed. Oliver came in to say goodnight.

“Ollie?”

“Yeah, Speedy?”

“Thank you for watching with me.” She said.

“You’re welcome. We’ll watch more next time Mom and Dad have to go to a boring dinner.” He promised. “Good night.”

“Night.”

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**Starling- Present**

“So, that’s why you needed to “watch Thea” a lot back then.” Tommy remarked. He thought it was a little odd that Oliver hadn’t spent more time partying during their last year of high school and the summer before college.

‘Yeah, it was. I wanted to spend time with my sister.’

“When the Gambit, during that first year, I used to lock myself in his room and watch the tapes he made. For a moment, it felt like he was with me again.” Thea said, finishing her story.

“Aw, that’s so sweet.” Felicity said. “You stayed in to spend time with your sister.”
“He did stuff like that a lot, he just didn’t want anyone to know.” Thea said. “I think he was worried it made him seem less cool.”

‘I cared too much about the wrong things back then.’ Oliver said. ‘Is the show still on?’

“Yeah, it still is. But I couldn’t- watching it alone wasn’t fun.” Thea said.

Walter returned to Felicity’s house after his meeting with the department heads. He could’ve gone back to the mansion, but quickly realized that he didn’t want to. He arrived just as Thea was finishing her story about Oliver watching *Power Rangers* with her. She mentioned she was hungry, so Oliver and Donna volunteered to make dinner for everyone. Felicity and Lyla slowly, and inconspicuously, pulled away from the group so that they could continue searching for answers about Oliver’s kidnapping. Digg, Thea, Tommy, Roy and Walter in the living room.

“This isn’t the first time, is it?” Thea said after a few moments. “I’m not imagining things, or seeing what I want to see, am I? Ollie’s been tortured before. On the island.”

“I don’t- he’s never said it to me, he might’ve told Felicity, but yes, i’m pretty sure he was.”

“I thought he was alone.” Roy said.

“I think everyone assumed that and never asked Oliver, and if they did mention him being “all alone”, he didn't correct them.” Walter said.

“Did I ever tell you how impressed I was with your brother before I even met him?” John asked Thea, who shook her head. “Back when I first heard on the news how Oliver had survived as a castaway for five years, my first thought was to wonder how he managed to do that. Then, when I heard someone was looking to hire a bodyguard for him, I started doing research on him - I always research my clients, to find out if they've got known enemies, allergies, phobias, anything that might come up. With Oliver, one of the topics I focused on was the island he was rescued from, Lian Yu. In English, that name translates to 'Purgatory'.”

“That’s not ominous or anything.” Tommy remarked.

"There's not much information about Lian Yu online, but I found some stuff about the chain of islands that it's a part of - and I can't remember the name of those islands, but I know that in English it translates as 'Dragon's Teeth Islands'. I found some data on the weather they get: usual temperatures, wind speed and direction, frequency and volume of rainfall, stuff like that."

"So... what's it like there?" Roy asked.

"The weather we're getting right now, in January? This is what Lian Yu gets in the middle of summer. It rains heavily most days, too, which is good news and bad news: it's a source of hopefully-clean water; but on the other hand, it makes it real difficult to keep a fire going for warmth and light, and it increases the risk of hypothermia."

"Oh, god..." Thea said.

"I also looked up what happened to the Gambit. By my best guess, the yacht sank in the middle of the night, meaning Oliver probably had some kind of sleepwear on at the time - maybe pajamas, or underwear and an old t-shirt? Or maybe he was naked in the shower when it happened? Bottom line, he didn’t have appropriate clothes for the climate. If he was lucky and made it to a life raft, he would’ve had the contents of its survival locker - but those things are only really meant to last for a
week or so at the most. If he wasn't so lucky, then he wouldn't have even had that much. The Army spent a lot of money and a lot of time training me to survive, operate and fight in remote and dangerous environments and extreme climates around the world before my first tour. So, I know how hard it is to survive somewhere like Lian Yu when you've got the right clothing, equipment, and training to do it, and you're with others who've all been through the same training. Even then, surviving in a place like that is tough. It's dangerous. You let your guard down for one second, make one mistake? Someone possibly dies. After that research, I figured that if it had been me in that situation instead of Oliver? No equipment or supplies, barely any clothes, no backup, just my training and experience to give me an edge? I figured I would've had maybe a five percent chance of surviving the first year. Five years?" Digg shook his head. "Forget it. And from what I could find out, Oliver had no survival training at all."

"There's something else, isn't there? Something else you know, or something you're not sure about..." Thea said. "Please... please tell us."

"Okay. But you need to know up front, this is pretty nasty stuff. On one of the articles about the Dragon's Teeth Islands? I found a note that they were garrisoned by Japanese forces in World War Two."

"Oh, god... Do-do you think some of those soldiers were still on the island? Like the ones who didn't accept or believe the Japanese surrender and holed up in caves on islands in the Pacific?" Tommy said, surprising Thea. "I enjoyed studying history at school, okay? It was the one class I paid attention in."

"I guess that's possible, but... back when I was in the Army, between my first and second operational deployments, my unit was sent out to Okinawa for a training exercise on a nearby uninhabited island. Before we first went out there, we were warned it had been garrisoned by the Japanese during the War... and their standard procedures included laying minefields everywhere. There had been a major operation to clear those islands of mines, but there was a risk that one or two of them might have got missed."

"So... not only did my brother have to worry about dying from the cold or thirst or starvation every single day for five years, but he was on an island covered with landmines, and could've been blown to pieces at any time?"

"I think so, yes. Maybe I'm wrong? Hell, I sure hope I am. But... I'm sorry." "Don't be." Thea said. While Digg had been talking, Roy began to hug her while Walter was holding her hand. "You didn't put the mines there, right?"

"Oliver was cold, wet, and starving the whole time, and had to worry about landmines... AND someone tortured him." Tommy said, rubbing a hand over his face. "I guess naming the island Purgatory fits."

"Yeah, it does." John said.

They sat there in silence, wondering how exactly Oliver managed to survive. Donna came into the living room and everyone Oliver had whipped up some spaghetti and that it was ready. Dinner was a quiet affair, although everyone was sure to compliment Oliver’s cooking. They all had a lot on their minds, especially the group that had been talking to Digg.

Slowly, people began to disperse after eating. Walter went back to the mansion. John and Lyla went
back to Digg’s apartment. Roy had to leave, since he had an early shift the next morning. Tommy felt like he’d been imposing, so he went home as well. Thea asked if she could stay, wanting to spend some more time with Oliver before school the next day, and Felicity and Oliver agreed without hesitation.

The next morning, Oliver borrowed Felicity’s car and drove Thea to school. He would’ve taken his bike, but didn’t have an extra helmet for a passenger and didn’t want to risk something bad happening. He pulled up in front of the school and got out just as Thea did.

“So, I guess I should go to school now.” She said.

“Yes. Go to school. Learn things, get smarter.’ He said. ‘I know I can’t really judge but-.’

“You were smart, but you didn’t have a reason to care. It’s different.” She told him. “Can I- I wanna hug you, is that okay?” Instead of responding, Oliver held his arms open. She immediately hugged him as tightly as she could. “I love you, big brother.”

‘I love you too. Don’t text me during school, but I’ll talk to you later.’

Thea walked into the building and Oliver got back into the car. Unbeknownst to them, another student had snapped a picture of them hugging and posted it online.

“You didn’t need to come, you know.” Donna told Oliver as they walked from the parking lot towards the front doors of the Applied Sciences building. The ceremony to reopen the building was going to begin soon and there were already people gathering. “Felicity would’ve understood-.”

‘I want to be here for her. I don’t like crowds but- I want to support Felicity more than I like avoiding attention.’ He responded. ‘Besides, I’m in disguise. Maybe no one will recognize me.’ Oliver was dressed in casual clothing and wearing a knitted hat. If he stayed away from the cameras, there was a chance no one would see him and there wouldn’t be a scene.

“Yeah, maybe. If this becomes too much, just let me know and we’ll leave.” She told him as she scanned the crowd. “Oh, Digg and Lyla are here. I wonder why we didn’t just carpool.” They made their way over to where the others were standing.

After a few minutes, Walter walked over to the microphone and the crowd grew quiet. “I’d like to thank everyone for attending the reopening of Queen Consolidated’s Robert Queen Memorial Applied Sciences Building.” He briefly spoke about the company’s desire to make the world a better place. “The employees of this department will, no doubt, make this company and this city proud with the accomplishments they achieve here and the stride they will make. Of course, we should not ignore the elephant in the room. This building was temporarily closed following an attack, one that could’ve had dire consequences. The Hood is only one man, but in his selfless and heroic actions, he’s shown himself to exemplify the fundamentally indomitable and charitable nature of the human spirit. He risked his life to save members of the Queen Consolidated Family’ and for that, I’d like to thank him from the bottom of my heart. Our founder, Richard Queen, once said the thing that made Queen Consolidated successful wasn’t our products, but our people. Without the right people, including those standing behind me,” he gestured to the Applied Sciences staff members on stage, “this company would not be what is it, and the Hood’s actions saved lives. Since we’re unable to thank him personally, Queen Consolidated has decided to thank him by following his example. I’d like to announce the Hood Initiative, where the company will fund various charities in the Glades, including programs at Glades Memorial Hospital and the Rebecca Merlyn Clinic. The Hood, whoever he may be, is doing his part to make the Glades a better, safer
place to live, and now we shall do ours. There will always be cowards and bullies and terrorists like the Dark Archer. And they can threaten us. They can even frighten us and hurt us. But we shall neither yield nor break. We refused to be cowed and conquered. We will remain true to ourselves and we will go on to enjoy greater success and happiness in our lives, despite their best efforts to deny us. We will never surrender.”

With his speech done, Walter walked away from the podium. The head of Applied Sciences stood and began making his own speech. While he was talking, Felicity found herself scanning the crowd, seeing who was there. Walter leaned over to speak to her. “Your mother, Mr. Diggle and a certain gentleman we both know who’s trying very hard not to be noticed, are here. Just behind the woman in the red hat.”

Felicity looked out at the crowd and spotted her mother, Digg, Lyla and Oliver standing in the crowd. She gave a little wave to them before turning her attention to the person speaking. It meant a lot to her for Oliver to come, especially after the last few days. The ceremony ended and the crowd dispersed. Felicity told the team she’d been working with before the attack, that she’d be heading into the building in a moment.

“You came.”

‘Of course, I did. I wanted to support you. Besides, I’m in disguise.’ He joked.

“It’s a great disguise. I didn’t even realize it was you.” She said with a smile.

“I don’t wanna interrupt you two,” John said, “but I think someone just saw through Oliver’s get-up.” One of the reporters was staring at them and whispering to her cameraman. “We might wanna go.”

“Go, I’ll see you guys later.” Felicity said.

“I’ll text you later about that….project we talked about.” Lyla said.

The blonde nodded and turned to her boyfriend. “I’ll see you tonight, Oliver.”

‘I love you.’

‘I love you too.’ She signed before heading towards the building. She walked inside as she heard someone calling Oliver’s name. Turning around, she saw Digg closing the door to the car and driving away before the reporter could ask any questions. She smiled and went to the workshop where her team was waiting.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Felicity and Lyla continue their investigation, Oliver starts one of his own, the task force gets some answers and Thea realizes a few things about her friends from school.

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes

Thea was walking through the cafeteria when she felt eyes on her. She was used to the feeling of being watched, but this was different. Students at her school normally either looked at her with envy or distaste. They either wanted to be her or they wanted her gone. Today though, the looks were different. There was a sense of curiosity in their gazes.

She sat down at the lunch table, with her friends, and started picking at her food. Since she didn’t spend the night at the mansion, and thus Raisa didn’t make her a lunch, Oliver packed her one. She’d tried to dissuade him, but he said he didn’t want her to just eat junk food, but something nutritious instead. After she started to get weirded out by the looks, she turned to the girl next to her.

“What is everyone staring at me?”

“You don’t- you really don’t know.” She said. “You haven’t checked Instagram have you?”

One of the other girls at the table, Mandy, scoffed. Mandy and Thea were more “frenemies” than actual friends. It didn’t surprise Mandy that Thea was so full of herself that she’d “broken” Instagram and not even known it.

“No, I’ve been in class.”

“And? Since when do you pay attention?” Her friend challenged. “You and your brother, your little goodbye this morning is practically crashing the app.”

Thea turned back to her food and ate. As she sat there, and the girls around her started talking about boys, drinking and parties, Thea realized how out of place she was feeling. She used to care about that stuff, but now she didn’t. She tried not to think too hard about it though. These girls were her friends, right?

Felicity could tell that the bigwigs at Applied Sciences were trying very hard not to ask too much of anyone today. Even though only a handful of staff had been on sight when the Dark Archer attacked, all of the employees were being treated with kid gloves. After a short, pointless meeting with the department head that everyone needed to attend, she, Curtis and the others went to their work stations.

“So, how was- how are you doing?” Curtis asked her. “What happened was terrifying for me, but to have the Dark Archer be that close to you-.”
“I’m fine. I keep telling myself that I’m okay, everyone’s okay. No one besides the bad guy was hurt. I’m not trying to play it off, but I- I’m fine, I feel great.” She said. “What about you?”

“Still a little freaked out.” He answered. “The bright side was that we got almost a week off of work. What did you get up to?”

“Not much. Spent time with Oliver, and my mom, and a few friends. It was great, until Saturday, but I don’t wanna talk about that.”

“Yeah, I- I thought you might not.”

They turned their attention to their work and the project they’d been working on before the Dark Archer so rudely interrupted them. Before Felicity knew it, it was lunchtime. She went to the office fridge and pulled out the lunch bag with her name written on it. Only her name was on the outside, but inside, Oliver had put a sticky note on top of the Tupperware container her food was in.

_Food to feed your amazing, beautiful brain so you can keep coming up with wonderful things._ was written along with an explanation of what it was. Felicity smiled, while wondering if Oliver debated adding a little heart, before deciding not to.

“That looks delicious, what is that?” One of her coworkers asked.

“A turkey, provolone wrap with avocado mayo.” She answered, after reading Oliver’s note about what it was. “My boyfriend made it for me.” She knew Oliver sometimes felt like he was a burden on her, but the way she saw it was that they both took care of each other when the other needed it. Her coworker looked down at her own lunch, of peanut butter and jelly, before looking back up at her enviously. “Well, I hope it tastes as good as it looks.”

Tommy left the press conference and drove back to his father’s house. He just needed to grab enough clothes to last a few days and then he’d be gone. After their phone conversation yesterday, he didn’t want to even be in the same building as Malcolm. He’d stay at the Ritz Carlton downtown for a few days if that’s what he needed to do.

He walked into the mansion and made a beeline for his bedroom. The less time he was in the mansion, the less likely he was to run into his father. Tommy packed enough clothes to last a week and was coming down the stairs when a voice spoke.

“Sneaking out again?” Malcolm said.

“I’m 27. I think I’m past the point of needing to.” He answered. “You look….better.”

Malcolm still looked like he’d been put through the ringer, but he looked a lot less messed up than he did a week ago. “It’s amazing what some peace and quiet will do.” Peace, quiet, and some tricks he learned in Nanda Parbat had helped with the cuts and bruises, but the more serious injuries, including his knee, could only be healed if he immersed himself in the waters of the Lazarus Pit. He knew Ra’s would never allow that, so he needed to let his knee heal naturally. As soon as he was healed, he’d make the Hood pay for humiliating him like that.

“I’ll get out of your hair then. So you can have even more peace and quiet.” Tommy remarked before walking out.

He was able to get a hotel room and dropped his bags off there before heading to Oliver and
Felicity’s house. He knew that’s where his best friend would be.

Oliver, Digg, Lyla and Donna returned to Felicity’s house. They’d gotten away from the reporters just in time, but now Oliver felt like he had nothing to do. Lyla distanced herself from the others, saying she was helping Felicity with a project and that she wanted to have something to show her after work that day. She took a seat in the dining room and got to work on the tablet Felicity had given her. Before leaving for work that day, Felicity had started running a program to find out everything she could about the Red Mask Gang, including tracking down whatever payment they received to abduct Oliver.

While Lyla was working, Oliver was rummaging around in the kitchen. Donna and John sat at the counter, watching him. Every so often, Oliver would reach for something in his pocket, come up empty, get a look of sheer panic before calming down. It was starting to worry Donna.

“What do you keep looking for?” She asked him.

‘My phone. The police still have it.’ He told her. He knew it seemed odd that he was so fixated on having his phone. Anyone else would’ve just bought a new one. It wasn’t just a phone to him, though. And it wasn’t because he texted everyone either. That phone was the reason he met Felicity. It was an important item to him. And right now, it was in the evidence room at the police station. ‘I keep- I forgot they had it.’

“You can use my phone if you need to.” John told him.

‘It’s not that.’ He said. ‘I had- there were things I’d bookmarked and- I only have them saved on my phone.’

“I’m sure Felicity wouldn’t mind if you use one of her tablets. It might help you find what you’re looking for.” Donna suggested. “Unless it’s a surprise for her and you don’t want her to see it in the search history or something. Then, don’t do that. You can’t hide things from her. Take it from someone who was never able to research birthday or Hanukkah presents unless I went to the library.”

‘The only surprises will be new recipes to try.’ He told Donna.

She left to grab Felicity’s tablet, the one the blonde thankfully used for recreation, from the living room. She was walking back to the kitchen when there was a knock on the door. She opened it and let Tommy in.

“I thought I’d stop by and say hi.” He announced when he walked into the kitchen behind her. “So, what are we doing?”

“Oliver’s looking for some new recipes to try.” She answered. “And I’m sure I’m not the only one excited to see what he makes next.”

‘I might not make something as big as chicken parm for a little bit. I’m trying to think of lunch ideas for Felicity to take to work. Food that’s good that’s also healthy for her.’ He said. ‘I need her to- I want her to know that I care about her as much as she cares about me and-.’

“You don’t have to do that, you know.” Donna said. “Felicity knows you love her. You don’t have to make her lunch everyday for her to remember that.”

‘But it’s- she helps me a lot, she takes care of me. There are times that I can’t- I’m a mess and this
is the only way- it’s the only way that I can show her-.’ He tried to explain. The words just wouldn’t come out right. He needed to feel like he wasn’t mooching off of Felicity. ‘I don’t want her to think I don’t appreciate her. Some days-.’

“Oliver, please calm down and look at me for a second.” She said. She then started signing. This seemed like a conversation just the two of them should be having, without being overheard. ‘I don’t know how much Felicity told you about Emily. I know you know she committed suicide, but I don’t know what other details she might’ve shared. I’m going to tell you the same thing I told her when she was struggling after it happened. She was in a bad place, thinking what happened was her fault. Some days, you feel like nothing’s changed, nothing’s different. And some days, some days getting out of bed is the only thing you can do. I don’t know what you’ve been through, but needing help, having bad days, it doesn’t make you a bad person. It doesn’t mean you don’t love her or that you’re a burden. She loves you. You love her. End of story. If you want to make her lunch everyday, there’s nothing wrong with that, but don’t think you have to in order to prove something. And that’s not the only way you show her that you love her.’ She gave him a reassuring smile. “And don’t try to argue with me. I’m a Jewish mother, I will win.”

Oliver, feeling slightly better, raised his hands in surrender. Using the spare tablet, he started looking for new dishes to try. He knew he needed to run some by Felicity later, so he bookmarked them and tried to decide what he should make for dinner.

“Johnny, can you come here for a second?” Lyla asked from the dining room. Digg walked into the dining room, where Lyla was still hunched over the tablet she was using. “I think I found something.”

“What?”

“I think I found out who paid for Oliver’s abduction.” She said in a grave tone. “When Felicity gets back from work, I think the three of us should talk.”

After an hour of rooting around the cabinets, and seeing what ingredients they had, Oliver realized it was the perfect weather for chili. He also had the right ingredients to make it. He got the base started before heading into the living room. Not in the mood to read, he turned on the TV. He was startled slightly to see his own face on screen. The reporters were discussing the Applied Sciences press conference and Walter’s announcement.

“Hey, at least you’re sober and fully dressed this time.” Tommy joked, having seen Oliver’s face. “Sorry, if that was- sorry.”

“It’s okay. You’re right.’ He said. ‘I just don’t know why they’re so interested in me.’

“Well, you were Starling royalty, and then- anyway, you haven’t done a lot publicly since you came back, so any sighting of you is a big deal to them.” His friend reminded him.

“-and after the announcement of the Hood Initiative was made, and the press conference was over, Felicity Smoak headed into the crowd where she had what appears to be a romantic moment with Oliver Queen.” The anchor said. “I have Timothy Hoffman, a certified ASL interpreter here with me. Tim, are you able to tell me what was said?”

“Due to the angle, I’m afraid I can’t tell you what Mr. Queen’s initial comment was. However, at the end of the conversation, it seems that he signed “I love you” to her and she signed “I love you too” in response.”

“Thank you, Tim. While Oliver Queen and Felicity’s Smoak’s relationship was made public a few
weeks ago, no one was aware of how serious-.”

Before the woman could finish, Oliver turned the TV off. The thought of reporters looking around for a scoop on his relationship made him uneasy. He turned the TV, told Donna and Tommy he was going to go take a nap and went into his bedroom. Digg saw him walk into the bedroom, waited a few minutes and then followed him in.

Instead of Oliver actually trying to rest, or reading, John found him pouring over Robert’s journal. He was studying the List intently, and writing a few names down on a piece of paper.

“‘What exactly are you doing?’ He asked him.

_Figuring out who my next target is._

“I thought you had a plan. That one dealer and then-.” Oliver was more or less going down the List in the order the names were written. He switched it up on occasion, but only in between targets.

_No. They can wait. There’s someone else I need to deal with first._

“Who?”

_The Dark Archer didn’t trip any alarms when he attacked Applied Sciences. He probably had help getting in, knowing the layout, and if I hadn’t almost beaten him, getting out. I need to find that person. We can’t risk something like that happening again._

“You think a QC employee helped him?”

_There are quite a few who’s names are on the List. Only one of whom works in Applied Sciences and miraculously wasn’t there when he attacked._

Digg thought it was weirdly poetic. Felicity was spending her free time trying to track down the person responsible for Oliver’s kidnapping. Oliver, meanwhile, had shifted his focus to hunting down anyone who had something to do with the attack on Applied Sciences. It was impressive, and a little scary, how much each was willing to do for the other.

“Okay, I’m going to make this very clear.” Agent Dinan said as she and Agent Reeves took a seat in front of the Red Mask member who agreed to talk. “If I find out anything you tell me is a lie, if it’s even a slight misdirection, this deal goes away and you’ll wind up in gen pop and there’s nothing I can, or will, do to help you. Understood?”

“Agent, I don’t appreciate the tone you’re using with my client.” The man’s attorney said.

“Your client kidnapped three people and tortured one of them for nearly six hours. He’s incredibly lucky we’re even willing to make a deal.”

“I didn’t torture no one.” The gang member insisted.

“No, you just watched.” She shot back. “Let’s start with who hired you.”

“I don’t know. Thus guy reached out to us.”

“Describe him.”

“Didn’t look like the kind to get his hands dirty. One of those Wall Street types. Said he had a
“client” that needed someone questioned.”

“And you agreed to the job.”

“For the money he offered? I woulda kidnapped the president if that’s what he asked.”

“This Wall Street type have a name? A description?”

“Didn’t give us his name. Looked like some stuck-up rich white dude.”

“Okay, so he hired you on behalf of his client. Wants you to question Oliver Queen. Question him about what?” Agent Reeves asked.

“The freak accident with him and his dad. Did his old man survive? What did the old man tell him? Stuff like that. Client didn’t think his dad died when the boat went down. Seemed convinced he knew something, was told something, before he died.”

“And the decision to torture Mr. Queen, whose idea was that?”

“Not mine.” He said. “That all you wanna know?”

“One last thing. How did you know where to find Mr. Queen?”

“We got a call from the guy who paid us. Told us when he’d be without his bodyguard and what car to look for.”

Between the questions, the amount of money the gang member mentioned and the details of how they were able to grab Oliver, Dinan was thinking that this looked even more like someone very close to Oliver than before. The only reason why she wasn’t sending someone to arrest Moira Queen was because she couldn’t figure out what the motive for having her own son tortured was.

After a few hours of trying to figure out the best time and place to question the Applied Sciences employee who was also on the List, Oliver realized it was almost time for school to let out. He drove across town to pick Thea up, arriving a little early. There didn’t seem to be many other people waiting for the day to end, so he got out of the car. Even though it was January, the weather wasn’t too cold and sitting in a parked car for several minutes always felt strange to him.

Oliver was looking around, trying to keep the boredom at bay when he saw a dark-haired woman who was around his age. She was looking at the map of some kind and not paying attention to her surroundings. A few feet away from him, she turned to cross the road. Seeing a car coming, he darted forward and pulled her out of the street before she was struck.

“Thank you.” Her voice had a slight accent to it, but he couldn’t place it.

“You’re welcome. Are you okay?” He signed as a reflex before realizing she probably didn’t know ASL.

To his surprise, she began signing back. ‘I’m perfectly fine, due to your intervention. I’m normally much more self-aware. I don’t suppose you can point me in the direction of the Grell Museum?’

‘Five blocks that way and take a left on Adams Street.’ He told her.

“Thank you. My name is Nyssa.”
‘I’m Oliver.’

Nyssa thanked him again before walking in the direction he told her. Her first encounter with Oliver hadn’t lasted long, but she was able to glean some information about him based on him “saving” her from the oncoming car.

A few moments after she walked away, the bell rang and Thea’s school day was over. Her day had been slowly going downhill since lunch. Nothing happened, but she was more aware of people staring at her and whispering behind her back. She was glad it was over for now. Thea walked outside, and started scanning the parking lot for one of her family’s bodyguards. Her face lit up when she saw Oliver leaning against a car. She didn’t quite sprint over to her brother, but it was pretty close. She considered running over and giving Oliver a hug, but wasn’t sure how he’d react.

When she was a few feet away, Oliver opened up his arms in invitation and she ran to hug him. He hugged her back tightly and spun her around before putting her back on her feet. She was acutely aware that other people were watching, and probably recording, this.

“Let’s blow this popsicle stand.” She said as she opened the car door.

The video of Oliver picking up Thea broke Instagram even more than the picture of him dropping her off. It even wound up on the news later, since a sighting of Oliver Queen was so rare these days.

Moira was not having a good day. It started when Walter came home very late the night before and didn’t even sleep in their bedroom. Thea was gone before she’d had a chance to speak with her this morning, as was Walter. Then, at the Applied Sciences ceremony, Walter announced the Hood Initiative that Queen Consolidated was going to start contributing to. A change that she didn’t know about and hadn’t been discussed with her. As soon as the press conference ended, she received an angry call from Malcolm, demanding that she kill the initiative before it could start, since it interfered with the goals of the Undertaking. Now, to top it all off, she wasn’t able to get ahold of Walter.

After a few hours of calling his cell, and office, and not reaching him, she started to grow impatient. She parked herself in the sitting room right inside the front door of the mansion so that, as soon as Walter returned home, she’d confront him about the press conference. She was trying to decide the best angle she could use to convince him when she heard the doorknob turn.

“Hello, darling.” She said when he walked into the house.

“Good evening.”

“I’ve been trying to reach you all day.” She stated.

“I know. I apologize but I was in meetings nearly all day. Even my lunch break was spent working.” He told her. He’d been avoiding her. There were a number of things he wanted to discuss with her, her actions towards Oliver his main concern, but he was holding off until he could collect his thoughts more fully. “I went from one meeting to another as soon as the press conference was over.”

“Speaking of the press conference, I saw it. And I’d like to talk about the Hood Initiative you announced. Queen Consolidated will not be funding that.”

“Yes, it will. We’ve already committed the funds to the various groups.” Walter told her. “Short of
the board voting to retract our pledge-.”

“It will. Call a board meeting if you must, but I will not allow this to happen.”

“You may not agree, but the other shareholders may. The largest shareholder I believe is fully in favor.” He hadn’t had a chance to discuss the matter with QC’s biggest stockholder, but he had a feeling he’d be on Walter’s side.

“I’m the biggest shareholder.” She pointed out.

“I’m sorry, but you are not. Oliver’s return from the dead, legally, meant he was given back his inheritance, which includes 35% stock in the company. Your share, along with Robert’s, was around 10% if I’m not mistaken.”

“Oliv- he doesn’t know a single thing about running a business!” She yelled. “Even if he did, he can’t handle the pressure it entails. If he can’t attend the meetings, which he won’t because he avoids responsibility like it’s the plague, he’ll need to select a proxy, someone he trusts. I’ve done a good job over the last five years, so I’m the obvious choice.”

“I think your recent actions, including your conspiracy with Ms. Lance, have made it clear that you may not have Oliver’s best interests at heart.” He said. “But you may have a point, I should allow the stockholders to weigh in on this. I will get a meeting scheduled.”

Moira was annoyed and walked off. Even if Oliver didn’t side with her, or didn’t let her become his proxy, she could still persuade the board. The other stockholders would surely see that she was in the right.

Felicity returned home from work to find everyone on Team Oliver except for Roy and Walter there. She was sure that Walter was dealing with something business related and that Roy probably had work. As she greeted everyone, she asked them how their day had gone and received mostly positive news.

Oliver went into the kitchen to make dinner, along with Thea, who volunteered to help him tonight. Tommy and Donna started discussing a book she’d mentioned to him the previous day. With the others distracted, Felicity turned to Lyla and Digg. “Ok, what did you find?”

“Before I tell you, I need to know you aren’t gonna do something that can be traced back to you.” Lyla said. “I’ll help you make these monsters pay, but not if you get caught and wind up in prison with them.”

“It’s a good thing I don’t plan on getting caught then.” She responded. “But based on that warning, I think I know what you found.”

“I don’t know for sure. My gut says I found something, but I don’t have the same level of skills that you do. Still, its pretty damning.” She said before handing the tablet to Felicity. “I could only trace the wired funds that far but-.”

“But I think, once I run my more powerful program, we both know what account that’s coming out of.” The blonde sighed. “Do you think the Feds know?” She knew how fast her programs worked, but she didn’t know about the FBI or Coast Guard. They had to play by different rules because they were the government.

“Not yet. I’d say, unless they get very lucky, it’ll be a few weeks before they can find out where
the payment initiated.” Lyla guessed. “If they’re even to track it that far at all. What are we gonna do?”

“Exactly what I said I was gonna do. Slowly at first, but eventually so fast she can’t keep up, I’m gonna completely and utterly destroy everything that woman has ever built or done.”

“She?” Digg asked.

“I think you know who I’m gonna say is behind this.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 55

Chapter Summary

Felicity and Lyla plan, the task force tries to catch a break and Oliver makes chili.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

“What are we gonna do?” Lyla asked Felicity after she’d shown the hacker what she discovered about Oliver’s abduction.

“Exactly what I said I was gonna do. Slowly at first, but eventually so fast she can’t keep up, I’m gonna completely and utterly destroy everything that woman has ever built or done.”

“She?” Digg asked.

“I think you know who I’m gonna say is behind this.”

“She’s his mother, why would-?” There was more exasperation than disbelief in his tone. It wasn’t that he didn’t believe them, since Lyla and Felicity hadn’t been wrong at any point so far. He just couldn’t understand, from any angle, why Moira would do something like this. She paid for her own son to be abducted and tortured.

“I don’t know. Why did she keep the Gambit a secret? Why did she try to get Oliver declared mentally incompetent? Why does she suck, just so much?” Felicity responded.

“Everything okay in here?” Donna asked, poking her head in.

“Everything’s fine, I just- I found out some frustrating news.” She said quickly. “It’s nothing to worry about.”

Her mother looked skeptical but turned back to her conversation with Tommy. The blonde then turned to Lyla. “I think we should dig deeper. If I wanna completely destroy Moira, I need to know all of the dirt she has. Besides, it’ll give us time.”

“Time for what?” Lyla asked.

“Anything we weak or expose needs to be minor, but damaging to her image, until February 1st. After that, I’m bringing in the big guns.”

“What happens on February 1st?”

“Thea turns 18 on January 31st. I want Moira to pay, a lot, but I don’t wanna cause Thea problems while she’s still legally a minor.”

Neither Digg or Lyla saw any problems with that plan. They all knew Moira had plenty of skeletons in her closet, even small ones, that they could use to ruin her image for the next few weeks. Lyla was pretty sure that most of Moira’s smaller secrets would only be scandalous if someone found out what she did to hide them. Oliver getting thrown out of a bar two months before
the Gambit sank wasn’t as juicy as Moira paying the bar owner to keep quiet.

Felicity had just started a new program to look into every aspect of Moira’s financials and online life when Thea told everyone dinner was going to be ready in about ten minutes. She just finished saying that when there was a knock on the door.

Tommy opened it and invited Walter inside. Oliver’s stepfather asked if he’d be intruding on their evening if he joined them for dinner, and everyone assured him that he was more than welcome. Roy arrived just as everyone was sitting down to eat.

“Sorry, I got kinda caught up with….work.” He finished lamely. He’d been dealing with an irate customer who wanted to return something that the store didn’t even sell and it took him way longer than necessary to make it clear to her. He was embarrassed that he worked in retail and didn’t want to ruin Walter or Tommy’s impression of him by revealing too much.

“You’re right on time actually.” Felicity said with a smile. “We’re having chili, by the way.”

The young man took a seat and Oliver served him some of the chili. Everyone, except Oliver, immediately dug in. He held back, wanting to see what everyone thought of it.

“This is-.” Felicity started to say before needing to take a gulp of water, “it’s good but it’s spicy.”

‘Too spicy?’ Oliver asked sheepishly.

“No, just-. I’m gonna grab some chips and sour cream.” She said, standing up. She could guess that Tommy and Thea were also having a hard time handling the spiciness. “It’s good, it’s really good, but spicy, so I’m getting some things to alleviate the heat.”

“Don’t look so scared.” Donna told him. “It’s delicious, some of us just like spicy food more than others.”

Felicity came back with the condiments and tortilla chips and everyone continued eating. Throughout the meal, people praised Oliver for his chili and were shocked that this was his first time ever making the dish. Conversation turned from food to how everyone’s day went.

“Roy, you said you were at work and got caught up. I can’t remember if I asked what you do?” Walter asked.

“I- uh- I work in retail.” He said quietly. “Not great, but it pays the bills and- college wasn’t really an option for me.” He was happy to have managed to finish high school without incident and hadn’t tried to get into college or even wanted to go.

“There’s nothing wrong with a job in retail.” Walter responded.

“Very true. I mean, I’m a cocktail waitress.” Donna added. “How long ago did you start taking ASL classes?”

“Stephanie started her program at the end of 2009, so about three years?” He answered.

“Have you thought about getting certified? You’d need to prove you’re fluent in ASL, but if you get certified, you could work as an interpreter. Even just part time.” She suggested. “I did it as a side job for a few years when Felicity was younger. If you wanted some unsolicited advice, I’d say you should at least look into it.”

“I’ll think about it.”
Thea, sensing that Roy was feeling a little uncomfortable, started telling everyone about how school went. She even told the group that she and Oliver broke Instagram twice. Her brother asked what Instagram was and how exactly they “broke” it. She explained in detail and told him about the picture of him dropping her off and the video of him picking her up that were responsible.

“That’s nice, but I don’t understand why anyone cares.’ He admitted. ‘Why is taking my sister to school and picking her up a big deal?”

“You’re kinda- since you don’t go to clubs or make headlines for bad behavior anymore, people are really fascinated whenever they see you do anything.” Tommy said.

“There’s also an image factor.” Walter told him. “You are behaving much differently than you did before you boarded the Queen’s Gambit and many are curious about the “new” Oliver Queen.” He took a deep breath. Now was the perfect time for Walter to mention the meeting that needed to be held. It was good timing, but he wasn’t happy that a shareholders meeting needed to be called. “I need to admit something to you, Oliver. While I enjoy your cooking and being able to eat with everyone here, that’s not why I stopped by.”

“Is something wrong?” Felicity asked the question that everyone was thinking.

“No, nothing’s wrong. There’s just something I needed to tell Oliver. Your mother wasn’t happy about the announcement of the Hood Initiative, although I can’t say I understand why. She wants the company to reverse course.” Felicity, Lyla and Digg all gave one another looks. This was something they needed to look into further. This must have something to do with Tempest. Walter, not seeing their expressions, continued. “She’s….requested that a meeting for all of the shareholders be held so that they can vote on whether the board should retract the pledge Queen Consolidated has made.” He said. “I know it is out of your element, but I believe you should attend at least this meeting. You can also designate a new proxy at the meeting.”

“New proxy?” Lyla asked. She hadn’t missed the CEO’s wording. Based on Walter’s expression, he wished she would’ve.

“For the five years that Oliver was away, given that he was reported dead, his shares were passed to Thea. Since Thea was, and still is, a minor, her mother was serving as the proxy. Now that Oliver is here, he can either continued to let Moira be his proxy, he can name a new one, or he can attend these meetings himself and vote on them.”

‘Can you be my proxy?’ Oliver asked Walter. Felicity interpreted for him.

“I’m afraid, as CEO, it wouldn’t be proper to be the proxy of our biggest shareholder. However, as your stepfather, I can help, and I’d be happy to help, you select a new one.”

“Ollie’s the biggest shareholder?” Thea asked. She’d never taken much interest in the family business and the few times she asked her mother her questions were waved off.

“Your grandfather Richard owned 35% of the company stock at the time of his death, which Oliver inherited.” He explained. “It will take at least a week to get such a meeting scheduled, due to how busy some members are, so no decisions need to be made right now.”

Oliver nodded once before turning to Donna and Roy. ‘If I go to this meeting, could one of you come and interpret for me? If Felicity isn’t able to because of work? I don’t- I want someone I know to speak for me, if that makes sense.’ They both nodded. ‘Thank you.’

The rest of dinner was quiet. Donna, Tommy and Felicity tried to keep the conversation flowing,
but the subject of Moira was an instant mood-killer. Dinner ended, everyone pitched in to clean up and then people started to depart. Roy left to catch the bus. Tommy went to his hotel and Walter told Thea they should head back to the mansion since it was a school night. Oliver and Felicity said goodbye to everyone, and Oliver promised Thea he’d pick her up after school the next day.

“Kinda surprised Mom didn’t call me at six AM, demanding to know where I slept last night.” Thea said as she got into the car with Walter. “Did she say something to you?”

“No, which leads me to believe that she didn’t know.” He answered.

“Seriously? She hired Digg solely to spy on Oliver but she’s so oblivious to me that she didn’t realize I wasn’t there. That’s a new low for her.”

“I agree. However, I think it may be for the best if we don’t inform her that she’s wrong.” He said. “I’ve noticed a change, a good change, in both you and your brother recently, and I’m certain some distance from your mother has contributed to that.”

“She’s my mom but- is it bad that I agree with you? Am I being a bad daughter?”

“I don’t think so, no.” He told her.

When they reached Queen Mansion, Moira was home but wasn’t waiting for them. She didn’t even seek Thea out to say goodnight or anything. The teenager went to sleep and was secretly a little happy that she was less than a month away from being an adult.

After the federal agents had talked to the look-out for the Red Mask gang, they sent a sketch artist into the room. The gang member’s description of the intermediary that was used wasn’t especially helpful, but they hoped having a sketch drawn would at least point them in the right direction. While the artist was in the interrogation room, Dinan went to tell the other officers what she’d learned from the look-out.

“So, we’re looking for someone with deep pockets, who thinks Oliver Queen can talk and wants to know if Robert survived.” Agent Anderson said. “Please tell me I’m not the only thinking our main suspect is--.”

“You’re not, but before we talk to her, we need to be sure.” She said. “And we still need to talk to Oliver Queen.”

“Hall and I will stop by Applied Sciences tomorrow to talk to Ms. Smoak about scheduling some time.”

“Good, in the meantime, I want the other two gang members on lockdown until they get sent to Iron Heights. Task force members are the only officers interacting with them.” Dinan ordered.

“You think something’s gonna happen?”

“I think if Moira Queen is behind the abduction and if it had something to do with Tempest or the sinking of the Queen’s Gambit, then she might try to make sure no one’s able to tell us anything.”

The look-out was able to provide a surprisingly accurate sketch. The task force was able to identify the man based off of the sketch as Jason Fontenot. Unfortunately, Mr. Fontenot was found dead
shortly after McKenna was able to identify him using the DMV database. While the SCPD were processing the scene, Agent Reeves showed up and insisted on taking over the investigation. The assigned detective, Andrew Marks, tried to argue that this was “his turf” but didn’t get very far when Reeves pointed out that the FBI outranked local police. Marks then had a very unpleasant phone conversation with Michael Adams, having to admit that he couldn’t do as Malcolm asked and botch the investigation.

After the others departed, and Donna decided she was going to read for a while, Oliver, Felicity, John and Lyla were the only ones left in the living room. Oliver and Felicity were both full of nervous energy but neither said why they were so amped up.

“So, other than drop off and pick up Thea, and make dinner, which was amazing, what did you do today?” Felicity asked her boyfriend.

‘Found some new recipes.’ He answered. ‘And did some research on my next target.’

“Are you sure- I’m not trying to talk you out of it, but are you sure you’re in the right headspace for that? No one, and I mean no one, would fault you if you needed to take a few days to recenter.” She said. “Your mental health is important and I don’t want you to go back out as the Hood before you’re ready.”

‘I’m ready.’ He told her. He wasn’t completely confident that he was, but he needed to take Doug Miller off of the board, for everyone’s sake, but mostly Felicity’s. ‘I wouldn’t head out if I didn’t think I could handle it.’

“Okay.” She said.

‘What were you, Digg and Lyla being so secretive about earlier?’ He asked. ‘I didn’t want to call you out in front of everyone but- I know something’s going on. Please, just tell me.’

Felicity, Lyla and John all shared a look. When it became clear that no one else was going to answer, Felicity took a deep breath. “It’s about what happened on Saturday. Or rather, who was behind it. The people who took us, who hurt you, are in custody, but we didn’t want to let the person behind it get off scot-free. I found something this afternoon.”

‘It was my mother, wasn’t it?’ He asked. He didn’t look shocked, just sad and miserable. ‘I suspected it might’ve been her. The way they- after everything we’ve learned about my mom’s activities, I can’t say I’m surprised.’

“And today, I spent most of my time, trying to figure out exactly who hired them.” Lyla said. “We didn’t- the people who took us, who hurt you, are in custody, but we didn’t want to let the person behind it get off scot-free. I found something this afternoon.”

‘And, not to sound like a shrink, but how do you feel about this?’ Digg asked.

‘I don’t- I can’t answer that yet.’ Oliver said. ‘Do you need my help? She’s my mother, but she’s a threat. We can’t- something needs to be done, but how do we make sure Mo- Moira is held accountable without causing Thea or Walter to suffer? Or the company?’

“I don’t want you to worry about that. We’ve got it handled.” Felicity said. “And I’m not gonna take her down in one fell swoop. I’m too vindictive for that.”

‘You have no idea how dangerous she is, what she might do. If my mother was willing to pay people to-.’ He started to sign but then his hands started shaking. ‘She let-.’ He stopped again. He
tried a few more times to say what he needed to say before finally, it became too much. He started to break down and cry.

Felicity was already sitting next to Oliver, so he leaned over and rested his head on her shoulder, much like he did the night they found the Gambit. He started shaking and Felicity’s could feel his tears land on her shirt. Lyla took a seat on his other side, and gently wrapped an arm around him. She wasn’t sure how to comfort Oliver, but hoped being there, him feeling her there, would help ground him and help him realize he wasn’t alone.

‘They hurt me, because of her. She paid them to hurt me.’

“I understand you were nearly run over by Asim.” Ra’s said when Nyssa called him to give him an updated report. “Might I inquire as to why you would order one of your own allies to nearly kill you?”

“I decided it was better to first meet the Hood as Oliver Queen. It was the most solid tactic to glean the information I needed to know about him.”

“His fight with Al Saher-.”

“Displayed his skill level and reaction time. It didn’t accurately or effectively demonstrate his character.” She said. “Just because he was a worthy opponent of Malcolm Merlyn doesn’t mean he would become our ally.”

“Why would he not? Our enemy is his enemy.” Her father asked.

“Hence why I wished to encounter him first as a citizen before meeting him as a vigilante.” She said. Secretly, she had a feeling that Oliver’s motivations weren’t as simplistic as the League’s were. They were after Malcolm because he exposed their existence. Oliver Queen had more complex reasons than that.

Laurel was escorted from her cell to the prison cafeteria. She hadn’t had any visitors since Tommy dumped her, and wasn’t too upset about that. Still, no visitors meant that they days all blurred together. When people talked about how they didn’t want to go to prison, they mentioned how they’d miss their families or the loss of freedom. No one ever talked about how boring and tedious prison was. She got her food and sat down at an empty table. Like most days, the other inmates avoiding her like she had a disease.

“Hey Lance? How’s it feel to be replaced?” One of the women yelled in her direction. She didn’t respond. “Oh, you’re ignoring us now? Funny how you couldn’t do that to your ex.”

“What do you want?”

“I wanna know how it feels to be replaced. Something happened to your ex that’s worse than him meeting you.”

“What are you talking about?” She asked.

The woman smirked. “I don’t think I should tell you. It might give you ideas.”
The person on the List Oliver had been tracking before Applied Sciences was attacked, Nick Major, turned out to be one of the smarter names on the List. The Hood had paid him a visit once before the hostage situation. After seeing the Hood fight, and most people agreed that he beat the Dark Archer, Major spent a few days looking over his shoulder, waiting for the Hood to strike, before just turning himself in to the police.

As a side effect, there were no loose ends Oliver needed to tie up before going after Doug Miller, the assistant director of Applied Sciences. QC’s Head of Applied Sciences had been in Gotham for a conference the night of the attack, so Miller was left in charge of the department and facility on the night of the attack. Meaning he had the authority to disengage any and all of the security measures that night.

Even though he was still a little off-balance as a result of being tortured, Oliver convinced Diggle to drive him to the foundry. He suited up and went to Miller’s apartment.

Doug Miller was rummaging through his fridge, looking for a late night snack, when an arrow flew past his face. He spun around and saw the Hood standing there, aiming at him.

“Doug Miller, you have failed this city!”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 56

Chapter Summary

Oliver makes an interesting new acquaintance, the task force learns some troubling information, Lyla discovers something significant even if she doesn't realize it, and Felicity approaches Oliver about something she hasn't had time to discuss with him yet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Doug Miller was rummaging through his fridge, looking for a late night snack, when an arrow flew past his face. He spun around and saw the Hood standing there, aiming at him.

“Doug Miller, you have failed this city!”

“I- What do you want?” Miller asked fearfully.

“Tell me everything you know about the attack on Applied Sciences.” Thanks to some slight modifications to the program Oliver initially used to “talk” as the Hood, Digg was easily able to make his words sound like the Hood’s voice. It made it a little easier for the Hood to ask questions this way. Digg was hiding in the shadows, speaking for Oliver.

“They made me do it! The Dark Archer and Tempest.” He said. “Please- please don’t kill me.” Miller tried to ignore the feeling of wetness moving down his leg. He wasn’t the first person to soil themselves upon coming face-to-face with the Hood, but it was still embarrassing.

“You’re part of Tempest.”

“Unwillingly. They found out I- they’ve been blackmailing me.” He said. “No one was supposed to get hurt. He just told me to shut off all of the security measures around 5.”

“Thank you.” The Hood said calmly before firing another arrow in Miller’s direction. The man ducked out of the way and when he finally looked up, the Hood was gone. Miller shakily got to his feet, cleansed himself in his bathroom and vowed to call Malcolm Merlyn first thing tomorrow and tell him about the Hood’s appearance. He didn’t notice that the arrow that was still stuck in his wall was blinking.

Oliver signed “Thank you” to Diggle for being his voice as they made their way out of Miller’s apartment building. The rest of their plan should go off without a hitch. Digg was going to make an anonymous phone call to the SCPD to report a Hood sighting, prompting them to investigate. While investigating, the SCPD would find the recording arrow and hear Miller’s full confession.

“No need to thank me, but I’m curious about why you didn’t tell Felicity what we were doing tonight.” John said.

“It’s not her fight. I wanted to- I needed Miller to be off of the board. It’s the only way I’ll know
“Fair enough, but she might be grumpy that you did this without her.” He said. “So, are we calling it a night?”

‘You can if you want. I’m a little too riled up to stop right now.’ Oliver said. He could tell that John wanted to argue. ‘I’ll patrol a few blocks near the foundry. I doubt I’ll come across anything going on.’

Digg nodded and left to call the SCPD. Oliver decided he was going to patrol four square blocks around the foundry and if he didn’t run into any situations he needed to intervene in, he’d go home. What he told Digg, about being too restless to go home, was true, but it wasn’t the only reason he wanted to patrol. He’d taken what Roy had told him at dinner, that the Hood had made the Glades safer than it had been in years, seriously and knowing he was helping people made Oliver feel very good about himself. Very few things made Oliver feel better about himself anymore. He spotted one mugging, which he was able to stop very quickly, but the rest of his patrol was quiet. Towards the end of his circuit, he had the strange feeling that he was being watched. At one point, Oliver looked to an adjacent rooftop and saw a figure standing there. As soon as he spotted the figure, the person turned and walked off.

A few moments later, someone stepped out onto the street in front of him. Oliver could tell a few things about this person. First, the person was a woman, based on the way she moved. Second, she was well-trained, given that not many people had the ability to sneak up on him or track him down. Third, she might be connected to the Dark Archer, since the outfit she was wearing looked similar to the Archer’s. Fourth, she didn’t immediately appear to be a threat, but was clearly dangerous.

To his surprise, the woman didn’t attack him. Instead, she held her arms out to show that she wasn’t holding a weapon and waited for him to act. Unsure of what to do, Oliver raised one arm and waved.

‘I hope you do not mind if I sign. A person's voice reveals more about them than most people think, and while I am not your enemy, I am reluctant to give away such valuable information to one I just met.’ The woman signed.

‘As long as you don’t mind if I sign as well.’ He responded. He supposed it made sense that being mute or deaf weren’t the only reasons one might use ASL, especially if the person was a spy, assassin or vigilante. He supposed continuing to sign would work in this context and not reveal his secret identity.

‘I mean no harm to you nor any innocent person in this city. As for my enemies, death is a kindness I am not merciful enough to grant them- save one. You know him as the Dark Archer.’ Nyssa said. ‘I have come to Starling to ask for your help.’

‘It’s been a long night for me. I’m happy to discuss this with you in the next few days. But not here.’

‘Fair enough. I will find you at a better time.’ She said before walking away and disappearing back into the shadows. He hadn’t automatically dismissed her message or tried to attack her, which she saw as a good sign. Oliver Queen was looking more and more like a valuable ally against Malcolm. In addition, based on what he’d been doing prior to stopping the robbery, it seemed that Oliver wasn’t fighting crime simply to fight crime, but for a deeper reason. If he was doing this for the hell of it, he wouldn’t have requested to discuss Malcolm at a later time.
Oliver changed out of his hood and drove back to Felicity’s house. He crept back inside and got into bed next to Felicity. In her sleep, she rolled over to snuggle into his side. She got settled onto his chest and murmured something to him. “Glad you’re safe. Wish you’d asked for my help.”

‘It was something I needed to do myself.’ He responded before closing his eyes and trying to fall asleep.

The next morning, Felicity slept through her alarm. As a result, she was rushing around the house trying to get ready for work. She was in the living room, trying to put on her shoes while also drinking a cup of coffee and making sure her bag had everything she needed for the day. The TV was playing in the background, not that she was paying much attention, until her mother asked Digg to turn it up.

“-Queen Consolidated Applied Sciences assistant director Doug Miller was arrested this morning in connection with the Dark Archer’s attack on the Robert Queen Memorial Applied Sciences building last week.” The morning anchor read. “The SCPD released a statement earlier saying they have evidence that he assisted the terrorist in gaining access to the building and helping him take the employees there hostage. No further comment was made, and while the department hasn’t confirmed or denied any information, there are rumors that the Hood tipped them off about his involvement. We’ll be giving live updates on this story as more details become available.”

Felicity immediately looked over at Oliver, who was studying the toaster, waiting for the bread to pop. She finally got her shoe on and walked over to her boyfriend. “Something you wanna tell me, Oliver?”

‘I didn’t just patrol last night. Digg and I went to confront Miller.’

“Why? I mean, I get why but I don’t understand the urgency.”

‘I needed him to be dealt with. He- as long as he wasn’t in custody, he was a threat to you, and everyone you work with. The Dark Archer wasn’t caught, he wasn’t stopped, what if- as long as Miller was at QC, he could’ve put you in danger again.’ He explained. ‘I- I need you to be safe. He didn’t know how to fight, he didn’t even try. The best “defense” he had in place was a home security system that was a joke. As soon as I knew he was connected to Tempest, I knew he needed to go, to keep you and everyone else safe.’

Felicity looked at Oliver for a few seconds before she lunged forward. She kissed him. It was a gentle, slow kiss at first. When he didn’t seem to mind, she deepened the kiss and put a little more lust behind it. They kissed until they heard John’s not-so-subtle cough from a few feet away.

They pulled apart and Felicity blushed slightly. “I gotta get to work, but I will see you later.”

As Oliver watched Felicity walk away, he found himself wishing that it was 5:00 already.

McKenna, Dinan and Reeves sat around a desk and listened to the recording the Hood had left behind when he visited Doug Miller’s apartment.

“Doug Miller, you have failed this city!” The familiar voice of the Hood yelled

“I- What do you want?” Miller asked fearfully.
“Tell me everything you know about the attack on Applied Sciences.”

“They made me do it! The Dark Archer and Tempest.” He said. “Please- please don’t kill me.”

“You’re part of Tempest.”

“Unwillingly. They found out I- they’ve been blackmailing me.” He said. “No one was supposed to get hurt. He just told me to shut off all of the security measures around 5.”

“Stop the tape.” Dinan said and Reeves did so. “So, we were right. The attack was at least partially an inside job.” The task force was under the impression that, given how easily the Dark Archer managed to get in and out of the building, he had to either one, work inside the facility or two, have an accomplice who worked there. Solving that mystery had taken a backseat after Oliver Queen’s abduction, but it was something a few agents were working on.

“And thanks to our friend in green, the inside man is in custody.” The FBI agent responded. “Then, there’s the matter of the Red Masks’ contact turning up dead. Which lead do we follow?”

“Both. Anderson will talk to Mr. Miller, find out if he wants to tell us about any of his Tempest friends. You should keep investigating Jason Fontenot’s death. Hall and I will go talk to Felicity Smoak and if we’re lucky, we might also get a chance to talk to a few of Miller’s coworkers. Find out what they might know about the group’s plans.” Dinan said.

Everyone agreed to the plan and the group split up. Dinan and McKenna drove to Applied Sciences and asked one of the security guards to escort them to where Felicity was. When they entered the lab, they were surprised to find Walter Steele and another man standing there as well.

“I probably won’t be able to look through his entire system today, he had access to so much, but by end of business tomorrow, I should be able to give you somewhat of an idea.” Felicity told them.

“And if the authorities- oh, they’re already here. Hello, Detective Hall.”

“Hi Ms. Smoak. I hope we’re not interrupting.” McKenna said.

“Are you here regarding Doug Miller’s arrest this morning?” Walter asked. “Because Queen Consolidated will cooperate with your investigation in any way we can.”

“Mr. Miller is part of the reason why we’re here.” Dinan said. “Could I speak with you and Mr.-.?”

“Josiah Hudson, QC’s head of security.” The other man with Walter said, introducing himself.

“Could I speak with you and Mr. Hudson outside for a moment?” Both men nodded and followed Dinan into an office next door. "Given what we now know, we need to treat anything Doug Miller touched as possibly being related to the attack and the Dark Archer. Do you know how much Miller had access to?"

"Most projects Applied Sciences has ever worked on, past and present; the details of a whole bunch of our long-term contracts; and QC's purchase of Unidac Industries back in October. Probably a lot of Unidac's projects, too, but we're still checking on that." Hudson said, sounding angry.

"Does anyone know why the Dark Archer attacked your Applied Sciences division? I doubt we can take his claim that the Hood has a partner who works there at face value."

"We already considered the idea that the whole thing was a smokescreen for some kind of industrial espionage or sabotage: but so far, we’ve found no evidence to back it up. We checked
into the backgrounds of the twelve hostages: nine of them are the most qualified experts on cyber security in Starling City, so that might explain why the Dark Archer figured one of them works with the Hood - he was just starting with the best in town and working his way down. We think the other three staff were just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Right now, we're trying to figure out how badly the company has been compromised, how to beef up our security, and try and identify any other employees who might have a hidden agenda - the only people I can be absolutely sure of at this point are Mr. Steele, myself, and the twelve people who got taken hostage by the Dark Archer. We've already changed all of our access codes and passwords, but that's just a band-aid. We really need a complete overhaul from the ground up after a discovery like this - it's a lot worse than just some rival company trying to steal confidential information. And...well, Mr. Steele, we just don't have the budget for that. I really am sorry to put you on the spot like this."

"That's quite alright, Josiah. I was already in the process of scheduling a board meeting sometime next week to discuss the Hood Initiative; I shall simply add an increase to your department's funding to the agenda. In the meantime--" Walter pulled a check out of his pocket and handed it to Hudson. "--my stepson called me and insisted he helped fund the overhaul in the short-term until the budget increase is authorized by the board."

"Sir... this is for 10 million dollars." Hudson said in shock.

"Oliver cares a great deal about the company, and especially about the safety of our employees," Walter said. "He insisted on providing at least some funding to help protect them out of his own pocket. Oliver also informed me that he will be voting in favor of your budget increase at the board meeting."

"Thank you, Mr. Steele. And please pass along my thanks to Mr. Queen?" Hudson said. "I should get back to the office, if you’ll both excuse me."

"That's... extremely generous, Mr. Steele."

"That's just who Oliver is, Agent Dinan."

"Mr. Queen is a shareholder in Queen Consolidated?" She asked Walter. "I didn’t know that."
"He's the biggest shareholder, actually." He clarified. "Our founder Richard Queen passed his shares down to Oliver, which is around 35% of the stock. Most are unaware due to the fact that, prior to the sinking of the Queen’s Gambit, Oliver left that aspect to his parents to handle and Robert went to great lengths, for unknown reasons, to keep Richard’s will from becoming widely circulated."

The tidbit about Richard Queen’s will intrigued her, but it was another comment that caught her attention. Oliver Queen was the biggest shareholder in the company and his parents, more specifically his mother, had been his proxy before he went missing. It sounded insane, but Dinan was pretty sure she may have stumbled upon a motive for sinking the Queen’s Gambit.

"-would you suggest?" Walter said.

“I’m sorry? I’m afraid I missed your question.” She responded.

“I asked if there were any measures you’d suggest that we take, as a company, while the investigation into Mr. Miller’s actions is ongoing.” He said.

“I’d suggest stopping any major projects he was working directly on, or leading the team for, until you can be sure that the data or designs weren’t compromised or falsified.” She said. “I know that may not be good for business, but-.”
“Our bottom-line isn’t as important as the safety of our employees. Applied Sciences is not our only department creating and innovating. Thankfully, there were a number of projects that Doug wasn’t permitted to see or have any knowledge of.”

“He was the assistant director of the department, may I ask why he wasn’t allowed to work on certain projects?”

“There are a few staff members who are very protective of the projects they propose and insist on having more control of the process and only reporting directly to the head of the department.” He answered diplomatically. There were actually only two employees that that applied to, one of which was Felicity who had never really talked to Miller and didn’t want someone she didn’t know, and hadn’t worked with before, involved in her work.

While Walter, Hudson and Dinan were discussing Miller, Felicity spoke with McKenna. The detective started out by just asking how Felicity was doing and how she felt after the scare last week. Within a few minutes, the conversation turned to Oliver, as Felicity expected.

“I know he’s had a rough few days, and I understand if he needs more time, but I thought I should at least follow up about speaking with him.” McKenna said.

“I thought that might be why you two came here.” Felicity said. “Are you going to ask him about what happened during his abduction or about the Gambit, like you wanted to when you showed up to my house?”

“Both, if possible.”

“I’m not a psychologist, but if you ask him about what happened when those….monsters abducted and tortured him, he’s gonna shut down completely. He might be ready to talk to you about the Gambit though.” She said. “I mean, I’ll ask, if you’ll agree not to question him about the abduction. You have Lyla and Tommy’s statements already, and as much as I want to help, I don’t want to make him talk before he’s ready.”

“I’ll discuss it with the others, but that seems reasonable.” McKenna told her. “Here’s my card. After you speak with Oliver, even if he says he’s not ready, please give me a call.”

Felicity took the card and told the cop that she’d let her know what Oliver said.

During Felicity’s lunch break, which consisted of her eating another delicious wrap made by Oliver, she got a call from Lyla. Today, they were beginning their slow plan to ruin Moira’s image for all of the horrible things she’d done to Oliver. Felicity’s programs had finished digging through most of Moira’s online activity and now, the ARGUS agent wanted to discuss a few of the things it had found.

“I thought we agreed that today, we’d be leaking that clip of her talking about the Starling City Children’s Society.” Felicity said when Lyla mentioned how much data the program had discovered.

The clip in question was a soundbite Moira had paid nearly a quarter million dollars to suppress. It consisted of her saying she didn’t care one iota about the charity, only that she was seen being philanthropic. She stated the funds raised at the event rarely actually went to the cause and more or less blamed the kids’ parents for living close to the poverty line. It wouldn’t completely destroyed
her image, but it wasn’t a good look and it was a good start for Felicity’s master plan.

“We are, but a few of the things your program found stood out to me,” Lyla said. “Mostly because of the timing.” There were two transactions in particular, happening a few months before the Gambit sank, that caught Lyla’s eye. She wanted to explore this instance, and the person who was paid, further.

“In what way?”

“The person she paid? She paid her more than once in a very short period of time.” Lyla said. “I think its worth at least looking into.”

“I agree. Let’s talk about it later.”

When Felicity got home from work, her mother, Digg, Lyla, Oliver and Thea were already there waiting. She suspected that if Tommy wasn’t on his way, he probably stopped by during the day to see his friends. Everyone talked about their day for a while before Oliver asked her what was wrong.

‘You seem….off. I can’t really explain it.’ He said.

“Your old friend McKenna came to see me. She- I didn’t get a chance to tell you, because you were abducted but the task force that’s investigating the Queen’s Gambit, they stopped by on Saturday. They want to talk to you about that day.” She blurted out. The only way to tell him was to just say it outright and not try to sugarcoat it. “I said I’d talk to you, see if you’re willing to talk to them.”

‘I- I don’t know if I am.’ He admitted. He looked over to Thea, who was showing Donna something on her phone. ‘But I think- I need to try. Can you ask if Tommy and Thea can be here when I talk to them? I haven’t told them a lot, and I don’t want them to find out from someone else.’

“I’ll ask.” She said. “After dinner, I’ll call McKenna, okay?”

Dinner was quiet after that. Oliver was a little on the broody side, thinking about how to answer the task force’s questions without revealing too much information. Once dinner was cleaned up, Felicity called McKenna and told her Oliver was ready to talk, about the Gambit and only the Gambit, when the agents were. Since Felicity worked from home every Thursday, it was decided that the interview would take place on Thursday. Oliver and Felicity had two days to get ready for the emotional rollercoaster the questions would entail.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

Due to Thanksgiving/personal stuff, there probably won't be an update next week.
Chapter 57

Chapter Summary

Team Arrow discusses logistics, Walter comes to a realization and the taskforce makes a troubling discovery.

Chapter Notes
See the end of the chapter for notes.

After Oliver and Felicity scheduled a time for McKenna and the taskforce to stop by and ask him about the Gambit, everyone moved into the living room. While they were walking, Oliver pulled Thea aside. He told her he was going to tell the taskforce about the night the Gambit sank soon. He asked if she could be there, since there were a few things he hadn’t told her about that night and he didn’t want her to learn it from someone else.

‘I didn’t mean to keep it a secret but-.’ He started to tell her. He hated lying to his sister.

“Ollie, you aren’t- those memories are traumatizing. I can’t blame you for not wanting to relive that.” She said. “I don’t- you know I won’t be angry, right? Not matter what it is you want me to know, I won’t get angry at you.”

He wasn’t so sure about that, but dropped the subject. Everyone talked in the living room for a little bit before people decided to depart. Thea didn’t want to tempt fate and risk Moira noticing how little she was home, so she drove back to the mansion after dinner. Donna mentioned wanting to explore the city’s night life and tonight being as good a night as any to do it. This left Oliver, Felicity, Digg and Lyla in the house.

“Can I ask a question that’s been bugging me all day?” Felicity asked out of the blue. The three others nodded. “I know the SCPD arrested Doug Miller because they got a very in depth confession from him. How exactly did you-? Because you couldn’t know what he’d say or what you needed to ask, I know you can’t type fast enough to ask the right questions in the moment, and you couldn’t just pause to type them so- I’m just wondering how that worked, logistically.”

‘Digg helped me out.’ Oliver signed at the same time that Digg answered.

“I did the questioning; he did the intimidating.” He said. “The great thing about voice modulation is that it really could be anyone talking. It helped that Miller wasn’t terribly observant, especially after the first arrow went flying past his face.”

“So, you two did what?” Lyla asked. “Oliver confronted him while you stood out of sight and asked questions?”

“Pretty much. We might wanna look into alternatives, though. In case the Hood needs to question someone again and I can’t stay hidden.”

“That’s a problem for another day.” Felicity said.

‘Have you started your revenge against my mom?’ Oliver asked her. His facial expression didn’t give anything away, so she wasn’t sure how he was feeling. ‘For what she did?”
“Yeah, but we’re starting small. You know what I realized about your mom? Image is what matters to her most, so that’s the first thing we’re going after.” She said. “Plus, if we leak small things over the next two weeks, it won’t harm someone I actually care about. I want your mom to pay, but I don’t want it to cause Thea problems. Once she’s 18, I’m gonna take things to a more serious level.”

‘Thank you, for trying to protect Thea.’ He said before taking a deep breath. ‘Something happened during patrol last night. After Digg left. I ran into someone, a masked woman. I don’t know who she is, but she seems to be on our side.’ He didn’t like keeping secrets. Secrets had a tendency to get other people hurt, or worse, killed. So, he knew he needed to tell his friends about meeting Nyssa and what she said to him about the Dark Archer.

“What makes you say that?” John asked.

Nyssa looked at her disposable phone and took a deep breath before answering it. “Hello?”

“Is there a reason you’ve been screening my calls?” Sara asked her. “Did I do something?”

“No, beloved, you did nothing wrong. It’s just- this assignment isn’t as easy as I thought it would be.” She said. It wasn’t that Nyssa was struggling to complete her mission, it was that the reality of meeting Oliver Queen and learning about his life was harder than she expected it to be. How could a person have gone through so much pain and still be an honorable man? “Fortunately, I may have discovered an ally.”

“Really? Who?” Sara had only been told that Nyssa was in Starling City to on her father’s orders to defeat the Dark Archer. Ra’s purposefully made sure that only himself, Nyssa and the one assassin with her knew the full extent of her mission. She wasn’t sure if Sara even knew the Hood existed or Oliver was alive. She didn’t want to tell Sara either tidbit over the phone.

“A man who has as much reason to want the Dark Archer defeated as my father does.”

“Have you- how’s my family?” She asked.

“Your father seems to be doing well. I haven’t had an opportunity to spy on your sister.” She answered honestly. She had no reason to believe Detective Lance was unwell and she hadn’t had time to see Laurel.

“Yeah, I’m sure she’s swamped with work and everything. Just- focus on your mission, but if you do get a chance to check in on her, please let me know how she’s doing.” Sara said. “I need to go. It’s time for training.”

As soon as the McKenna and Dinan came back from Applied Sciences, they got back to work. McKenna decided to help some of the Coast Guard and FBI agents go through the information Queen Consolidated handed over from Doug Miller’s computer. Dinan, meanwhile, entered the office, sat down at her computer and told everyone to leave her alone unless it was an emergency. The FBI portion of the taskforce spared her a look before going back to what they were doing. One of the agents from the Coast Guard spoke up.

“I haven’t seen “Serious Dinan Face” in years.” Agent Andrew Doyle said. He’d been working with Dinan for about five years and knew her well enough to know her demand to not be interrupted wasn’t coming out of nowhere. “You have a lead, don’t you?”
“I have a theory, and for once, I really hope I’m wrong.” She said.

“Well, I supposed it could be worse.” Felicity said after Oliver finished telling her, Lyla and John about meeting Nyssa. “Like you said, she seems to want the Dark Archer gone as much as we do.”

‘She wants to kill him.’ Oliver had killed before, yes, but he was adamant about not doing it again. In Russia, he’d learned from Lyla that killing wasn’t the only way to get things done. After Russia, the only people he killed were the men on the island who tortured him. Even then, he only killed them because he knew if they found him again, they’d continue to torture him and then kill him.

“Unfortunately, it may come to that.” Lyla said. “I know you avoid killing as much as possible. I’d like to think that our adventures in Russia played a hand in that. However, if it comes down to it, if that’s the only way to stop the Dark Archer, we may need to kill him.”

‘I don’t wanna be the person I was when she found me.’ He admitted.

“You won’t be.” She told him.

“Stopping the Archer is only one part of the problem.” Felicity piped up, “He’s been quiet lately, probably recovering from the ass-kicking he got at Oliver’s hands. Tempest, though, they need to be dealt with, and we don’t even know what the Undertaking is or what they’re up to. The Gambit taskforce is looking into the group, but I think we should dig as well.”

‘There’s something I wanna take care of before we dig a little deeper into Tempest.’ He said. ‘Miller said Tempest was blackmailing him, do you know what they were holding over him?’

“Not yet, but I’m on it.” She said. “Let me guess, while I look, you and Digg are gonna go chase down some leads?”

‘Something like that.’ Based on his research, there were five Queen Consolidated employees who were on the List. Miller was in jail, so that meant there were four more people he needed to confront before Queen Consolidated was free of Tempest’s influence.

Oliver decided the first person he’d confront was Ben Hawthorne, from QC’s legal department. The man sputtered and begged Oliver not to hurt him when he saw the Hood standing in his office. Oliver didn’t respond other than to fire an arrow into the wall behind him. Attached to the shaft was a typed note which read “Turn yourself in, admit to everything or our next conversation will be a lot less pleasant.” The note was signed “The Arrow”. Oliver was tired of being called “The Hood” and decided he liked “The Arrow” better. He wanted to be called that from now on.

He returned to Felicity’s house to find her still researching Doug Miller. About half an hour after he got home, she found out Miller was being blackmailed for embezzling. On the 11 o’clock news, Ben Hawthorne turning himself in was a big story, along with the revelation that the Starling City vigilante was calling himself “The Arrow”.

McKenna was usually the first person on the taskforce to make it into the precinct in the morning. She was surprised to enter the bullpen and find Dinan was already there. Closer inspection made McKenna realize that the agent hadn’t left last night. More agents arrived before she could comment.

“You pull an all-nighter?” Reeves asked Dinan when he spotted her.
“Yeah, and this shit just keeps getting worse and worse.”

“How bad?”

“I can’t even quantify it.” She said. “I’ve been looking over satellite imagery of Lian Yu from before and during the time Oliver Queen was on the island.” She pulled up one of the images she’d found on screen. “This was taken October 13, 2007. The Gambit sank on or around September 27th, so about two weeks later. You see this bright orange spot?” Lian Yu was a temperate climate and based on what the US government knew, it was covered in trees. Therefore, the bright orange shape on the image stood out and wasn’t naturally occurring.

Reeves tiled his head slightly and squinted. “That looks kinda like-.”

“A life raft? That’s because it is. The Queen’s Gambit had orange lift rafts. So, we know how he got to the island, but here’s the problem,” she pulled up a map of the North China Sea, “These are the Dragon Teeth islands, which Lian Yu is part of.” She gestured to another part of the map, “this is the area where the Gambit was believed to have sunk. It’s a hundred miles away from that island. No one could’ve swam that far, even in perfect weather, which according to weather reports, wasn’t the case that night. I thought he had grabbed onto a piece of debris maybe? Some furniture that was knocked loose when the yacht cap-sized? He had to have been holding onto something to survive long enough to reach Lian Yu. The raft is the best explanation.”

“Okay. I get the feeling this isn’t all you found.” Anderson said.

“It’s not. Look at where on the beach its stationed.” She pulled up the overhead image again. “It’s above the tideline. He pulled it up there to keep it from getting washed out back to sea. And it stayed there, for three years. I don’t know where it went or why, but in fall of 2010, it disappears from the shore.” She took a deep breath. “For that raft to stay in the same spot for so long without getting blown away by the wind or a storm or just high tide, it would’ve had to be weighed down.”

“He was using it to signal for help.” Reeves said. “Smart. He had to know that he might be there for a while, he might need to leave to find food, drinkable water. Waiting for a passing plane would be too much of a gamble, but having the raft, which is designed to stick out, out in the open would signal that someone was on the island.”

“The fact that he signaled for help is the good news, not the bad news.”

“How much bad news is there?” Anderson asked.

“A lot. By my count, there are at least three pieces of bad news.” Dinan answered as she zoomed in on a ridge on Lian Yu. “Look at this. it’s a regular shape, not natural.”

“Is that- it looks like a pile pf rocks, but they don’t match the terrain. A back-up signal?” Reeves said.

“It’s not high enough to be seen from the air or a passing ship.” Dinan said.

“It’s a grave.” McKenna said. “Someone else on the Queen’s Gambit made it to the island and then died.”

“Possibly. Or even worse, someone from the Gambit made it to the life raft and died.” She said.

“You think he spent days, maybe longer, floating in the middle of the ocean, starving and dehydrated, with a dead body next to him for company?”
“Maybe. It could’ve been someone he knew, even his father. Unless we exhume the body, we can’t know for sure. The person could’ve died from anything: shock, an injury from the accident, starvation, a heart attack.” She said. “And it gets worse.” She pulled up another image. This one showed three more graves. “One showed up in May 2008, another November 2008 and the last March 2009. Four graves in total. I don’t know if they were on the island before Oliver or after, but they died, and he buried them.” She sighed. “There’s some weird activity starting in September of 2008 that I haven’t had a chance to look into yet, but I’m working on it. All I know is that when Oliver was found, there was a wrecked cargo ship offshore and it wasn’t there when he arrived.”

“You think a ship went to Lian Yu, found Oliver, and whoever else, on the island and didn’t call it in? They must’ve been doing something very illegal.”

“That’s not even the worst part.” Dinan said.

“Let’s hear what the worst part is.” Reeves said.

Dinan nodded once and pulled up a schematic. “This is the search grid the Coast Guard used to search for survivors for the Gambit. On November 15th, we started searching the Dragon Teeth Islands. Nine days later, on the 24th, the search for survivors was called off.” She stopped for a few moments, needing to collect herself before she could continue. “A search aircraft was scheduled to fly over Lian Yu the morning of November 25th.”

“Fuck.” Anderson said. “You would’ve spotted the life raft.”

“Definitely. The spotters in the back would’ve seen the raft, and then the graves. They would’ve realized someone had to be alive to dig them and called it in. Getting a search party wouldn’t have taken more than twelve hours. Oliver Queen could’ve been home as early as the 27th.” She said. “We were this fucking close. We nearly had him!”

“That’s not even two months after the storm that sank the yacht. Don’t searches normally last longer?” Reeves asked.

“It varies depending on the situation, but we knew the Gambit had survival equipment. It sank close enough to the Dragon’s Teeth Islands to justify searching them for survivors. We should’ve searched for another month, maybe two.” Dinan answered. “And we would’ve, if Moira Queen didn’t hold a press conference accusing the Coast Guard of using the search to garner publicity. She complained to the right people, brass got antsy and caved on continuing the search.”

“And we know the warehouse holding the Gambit’s debris was purchased before the search was called off. By Moira.”

“Time for the last piece of bad news.” Dinan said. “Did you know that, at the time of the Gambit’s accident, 45% of Queen Consolidated’s stock was owned between Robert and Oliver Queen? Guess who inherited that stock when they were reported dead?”

“Moira.”

“Well, Moira and Thea. Oliver owns 35% of the stock, but when he was declared dead, his share was inherited by Thea, who was 12 at the time so Moira was her de facto proxy.”

“There’s something that’s been bugging me.” McKenna said. “Don’t rafts and life preservers all have GPS equipment these days? Shouldn’t you have been able to locate the raft using that?”

“Yes, we should’ve. Both the raft and the life preservers had transponders. No signals were
received from any of the yacht’s gear, which combined with everything else makes me think all of the survival equipment was sabotaged.” Dinan said.

“So, if I’m hearing what you said correctly, the Queen’s Gambit was sabotaged, as were all of the survival equipment. The search for survivors was called off the day before Oliver would’ve been found. The person who demanded the search end had something to gain from Oliver not being found and she possibly found the wreckage before calling off the search.”

“Yeah. Good news is that that’s the end of the bad news for now.” She said.

“We’re supposed to interview Oliver Queen in two days. What do we- are we going to bring this up or should we not?” Anderson asked.

“Let’s see what he tells us first. He may not want to talk about the graves or whatever else happened to him there.” She answered. “And I definitely think we should leave out the bit about us almost finding him. Until we finish our investigation at least.”

That morning, Walter woke up at his normal time and prepared for the day. He went into the kitchen to grab a quick breakfast and found Thea sitting at the counter, going over something.

“School doesn’t start for another few hours.” He said.

“I know, but I have a test today and I wanted to get some last minute studying in.” She said. “This isn’t for school though, its for Ollie.”

“For Oliver?” He asked.

“Last night, he- he’s gonna talk to the people investigating the Gambit soon. He asked- he said there were some things about that night that he’d never told anyone.” She said. “He wants me to be there, so that at least I can hear it from him. And that got me thinking that maybe I can help the investigators? I was 12, but I can tell them what I remember during that time, and a little bit after. I don’t- I don’t know if what I can tell them is helpful but, I mean, it can’t hurt to offer, right?”

“I’m sure the investigators will appreciate whatever information you have to share.” He told her.

“Is there anyway you can write me a note to get me out of school on Thursday? I wanna be there for Ollie and I don’t know what time-.”

“I’d be happy to. I’ll tell them you have a family commitment, provided you make up the work.” He told her. “What subject is your test today in?”

“History. I’m pretty sure I’ve got it down, but I just wanna go over a few things.” She said. “Especially since I’m doing so much better in school.”

“I always knew you could be an excellent student if you applied yourself.” It was no secret that Thea was very smart, but for years, she just hadn’t cared enough to try. She wasn’t the only member of the Queen family with that problem. “I hope I’m not being too embarrassing when I tell you that I’m proud of what you’ve accomplished.”

“Thanks Walter.” She said with a smile. The smile dropped off her face and she gathered her books when she saw Moira walk into the room.

“I see she’s still giving me the silent treatment.” Moira said. Then, her phone began to ring. She
was in full damage control mode after the recording leaked last night and was trying to salvage her image. Walter ate his oatmeal while she argued with the person on the phone and was finishing up when she finally hung up. “How much longer can she hold a grudge?”

“You think she’s holding a grudge.”

“Of course she is. I didn’t coddle Oliver enough after his five-year vacation ended and he left to spite me and she was looking for another excuse to be a moody teenager.” She said.

Walter was usually a very eloquent man, but when he heard Moira describe Oliver’s time on Lian Yu as a vacation, knowing only what Diggle had told him, he was speechless. If she truly believe Oliver’s experience was anything close to a vacation, or that Thea is avoiding her solely because she’s being a teenager, then she was even more callous and cold than he thought. He was beginning to wonder why he had fallen in love with her. “I need to get to the office.” He left the kitchen before she could respond.

That day was a pretty quiet day for everyone. Thea aced her test. Felicity continued to look into Doug Miller’s projects at Applied Sciences. He seemed to have extra interest in the projects Unidac Industries, QC’s newest acquisition, was working on. She informed Walter and Josiah Hudson of this, who in turn informed the authorities. Oliver spent the day in the foundry with Diggle and Lyla, training. Partially it was because he had gotten into a routine and didn’t want to mess it up, but mostly he was nervous about talking to McKenna and the federal agents the next day and wanted to burn the excess energy off. John and Lyla were more than willing to help him with that. Roy joined Oliver, Thea, Felicity, Donna, Tommy, John and Lyla for dinner at Felicity’s house that night, which consisted of enchiladas. After dinner, Oliver suited up to confront the next QC employee who was on the List. He returned to the house and found everyone was still awake. Lyla was having a heated phone conversation with someone.

“Well, then I guess this is the last time you’ll hear from me.” She said before hanging up.

“What did you just do?” Felicity asked. The other woman hadn’t been very verbal, so it was hard to tell what they’d been arguing about or even who was on the other end of the phone.

“Something I should’ve done years ago.” She answered.

Thursday morning came quicker than anyone would’ve liked. Felicity and Oliver were both up at dawn. John and Lyla arrived around seven and Tommy and Thea arrived a little before nine. Felicity tried to get some work done, and Thea and Tommy tried to spend some quality time with Oliver, but everyone was too nervous about the conversation they knew was coming.

Around 10:30, there was a knock at the door and John answered it. McKenna, Agent Dinan, Agent Doyle and Agent Reeves walked into the living room. Reading the room, the investigators knew any small talk or exchange of pleasantries wouldn’t go over very well.

“I suppose we should just get right to it then.” Dinan said.

Reeves asked if he could speak with Digg in the kitchen, while Doyle asked to speak with Lyla in one of the guest bedrooms. This left Dinan and McKenna to interview Oliver. The taskforce discussed it and felt that Reeves or Doyle might put Oliver too on edge for him to answer questions.

“Before we begin, are you two sure you wanna be in here?” McKenna asked, looking at Tommy
and Thea. “Some parts may be hard to hear.”

“We’re sure.” They said in unison.

“Okay. We can start whenever you’re ready, Mr. Queen.” Dinan said.

‘Call me Oliver.’ He said. ‘Mr. Queen is- please call me Oliver.’ Felicity interpreted for him.

“Oliver. Whenever you’re ready, please tell us about the day the Gambit left Starling’s marina.” She said. The Gambit sank two days after setting sail. The taskforce hoped asking about the day he left wouldn’t be too hard of a place to start.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

I know I ended it right at "the good part" but I wanted to devote an entire chapter to the next part and not split things up.
“Okay. We can start whenever you’re ready, Mr. Queen.” Dinan said.

‘Call me Oliver.’ He said. ‘Mr. Queen is- please call me Oliver.’ Felicity interpreted for him.

“Oliver. Whenever you’re ready, please tell us about the day the Gambit left Starling’s marina.” She said. The Gambit sank two days after setting sail. The taskforce hoped asking about the day he left wouldn’t be too hard of a place to start.

Oliver took a deep breath. He knew this conversation wasn’t going to be easy. There was so much he needed to say, but so little he wanted to share. Sensing his hesitation and anxiety, Felicity reached over and grabbed his hand, squeezing it. She wanted to say something, tell him it was going to be okay, remind him he was loved and nothing would change that. Those words wouldn’t help, so she said something she knew would make him feel a little better.

“The events you’re gonna talk about, they’re in the past. You survived them. Remember that, okay? You survived what happened.”

‘Okay.’ He signed with one hand before he looked over to the two investigators. He was about to start telling the story when the door burst open.

“That took way too long!” Donna exclaimed, with shopping bags in her hands. “You’d think people had better things to do at 10am on a Thursday than go get some bagels.” She stopped, seeing everyone gathered around Oliver. “Is Oliver being interviewed now? Did I miss the beginning?”

“I’m sorry, but who are you?” McKenna asked.

“Donna Smoak, Felicity’s mother. I went out to get some food, because food might make things a little better but there was this huge line and-.”

“I’m sure Oliver appreciates the food, but it may be better if he-.’” She started to say. She wasn’t
sure Oliver wanted Felicity’s mother to hear what he was going to tell them.

“The only way I’m leaving is if you arrest me or Oliver asks me to leave.” Donna said. “If he wants me to leave, I will, but if he doesn’t, I want to be here to support him.” She didn’t mention it, but she also suspected Felicity might need to take a break if Oliver’s experiences were half as bad as she feared. If her daughter needed to “get some air”, Donna was willing to interpret for Oliver. “Oliver, would you like me to go?”

‘It doesn’t-.’ He wanted to say it didn’t matter to him, but deep down, he knew it did. ‘You can stay, but promise me something. And this goes for everyone. If it becomes too much, if you need to leave because its too hard to hear, then go. Don’t stay because of me.’

Everyone nodded or murmured along in agreement.

“Okay, Oliver, tell me about the day you set sail, if you don’t mind.” Dinan said.

‘I was- I didn’t want to go at first. It was a work trip with my dad, where I thought he’d spend the entire voyage lecturing me about my life choices. But I also….Laurel was talking about getting more serious and I- I went to get away from her, just for a little bit.’ He said. ‘Dad seemed….. He was distracted. I thought he was worried about work, the meeting he was attending in China. I don’t- nothing seemed odd or out of place. We cast off. Last thing I saw was my mother waving at us from the docks. The first day at sea was fine. I spent most of it locked in my cabin with Sara, but that night-.’ He paused. ‘We were approaching a storm. Sara and I could hear the thunder. I asked Dad if it was something to worry about, but he said no. I went back to my room, trusting his assessment. Sara and I were talking and then- then, the whole room started to tilt and was filling with water. Sara, she- she tried to reach for my hand but got sucked out into the water. I tried- if I’d been a little closer I could’ve- her hand slipped through my fingers. I was pulled under a few moments later.’ He stopped and rubbed his hands back and forth across his legs, trying to somehow soothe himself. He looked up again, but this time focused on a spot on the wall, not looking at anyone. ‘When I surfaced, I tried to find her. I kept screaming her name. I thought, if I made it, maybe she did to. I was still yelling when Dad pulled me into the life raft.’

Everyone’s jaws dropped, except the two agents’. They were barely able to internalize their shock though. Until now, Robert Queen surviving the “accident” was only a theory to the taskforce and a pipe dream of Thea’s. The teenager looked ready to speak up, but Felicity gave a tiny shake of her head, indicating that she should wait.

‘The bit after he pulled me onto the raft is a little fuzzy. I remember my dad, he- he started messing with something on the raft. I didn’t know what he was doing. He must’ve realized I was lost because he told- he said he was trying to activate the GPS signal on the raft and the life vests. I watched him try to switch the one on his vest on, so I started to copy him. It was the middle of the night, and I was so cold, I- it probably took me seven tries before I was able to pull the cord and flip the switch the right way. But the beacons, they didn’t switch on. Dad started pulling out the spare vests from the locker, maybe the ones we had were duds or the batteries were dead, I thought. They wouldn’t activate, none of them. They were waterproof, they were supposed to work even in the worst conditions. They should’ve worked! I didn’t- back then, it was so cold and I felt so lost that I- I didn’t realize what was going on. Dad figured it out. I think he knew they had to be- someone sabotaged them. I didn’t really make the connection until- until the Gambit was found. I’d blocked out so much of those days, but when I saw the news I started remembering and-.’ Oliver started tearing up. ‘I tried to hard to forget and- I hope I’m wrong, I wanna be wrong. I don’t-.’

“We can take a break if you want.” Dinan told him. “You don’t have to tell us everything today.”
“She’s right. If you need to take a break, we can.” Felicity said gently.

‘I don’t think I can handle doing this again. I need to- you need to know what happened and I can’t- I want to get this over with.’ He said. ‘When I started remembering, I remembered Dad’s face when the GPS wasn’t working and I- The Gambit was sabotaged, wasn’t she? Please tell me I’m not crazy. Someone- someone did this to us, to me. It wasn’t an accident, was it?’

“We can’t say for certain, not until we finish our investigation, but it’s possible.” Dinan said.

“Someone did this to him?” Tommy asked.

Digg sat down at Felicity’s kitchen table while Agent Reeves took a seat directly opposite him. Reeves was a no-frills, no-nonsense type of guy and based on what he knew about John Diggle, he was the same. The agent decided to just dive into the point. “Oliver was abducted on your day off. Prior to the kidnapping, who would’ve known that it was your day off?”

“Oliver and Felicity, obviously. Lyla because we had plans for later that day. Donna and Tommy knew because either Oliver, Felicity or I mentioned it in passing. I can’t say for sure that Thea knew, but it’s possible she did. I just can’t be completely sure.” He answered. “Oh, and Oliver’s mother, of course.”

“Moira Queen knew when your day off was?” Reeves asked, and received a nod of affirmation. “Can I ask why you said “of course” in regards to her?”

“I was on her payroll back then. She knew whenever I was off-the-clock. She fired me after Oliver was found, for not being there. The next day, Oliver found out and hired me himself.” John shrugged. “Oliver’s the first client I’ve had that I’ve actually liked and, I’ll admit, he impressed me, so I took the job.”

Since it hadn’t seemed relevant at the time, the taskforce didn’t look into who hired Digg to protect Oliver. His record in the military spoke for itself and his transition from the Army to working private security wasn’t unusual. “When Mrs. Queen hired you, did she mention any specific threats or worries she had about Oliver’s safety?”

John let out a quiet scoff and shook his head. “Nothing like that. When she interviewed me, she was very clear in what she wanted. She mostly wanted me to stick close to Oliver and report back to her on what he did, where he went, who he saw, et cetera. I’ve had a client ask that before, for me to spy on their kid, or their spouse for them, and I usually say no. I’m a bodyguard, not a babysitter.”

“But Oliver was different, you agreed. May I ask why?”

“I did some research on Lian Yu and Oliver before I met with Moira. I didn’t know exactly what he’d gone through, but just based on the climate of those islands and how ill-prepared some trust fund kid would be on his own, I knew it wouldn’t have been easy. I’ll tell you what I found out on the Internet alone.”

Agent Doyle had been briefed, along with the other agents, on Oliver’s conditions about answering their questions. He couldn’t blame him for not wanting to talk about the kidnapping by the Red Mask Gang when it was still so fresh in his mind. The agreement did put Doyle in an interesting position. Lyla was an eyewitness to the kidnapping, and unlike Tommy Merlyn hadn’t been moved
to a separate room after an hour, and as a federal agent, she was trained to notice things others often
didn’t. This meant that Lyla was the best source of information about the kidnapping and the
events that followed.

“I have to ask, you know how protocol is, but is Oliver Queen a person of interest to ARGUS?” He
supposed it was possible that Lyla knew Oliver through John or Felicity, but it was more likely that
she was captured with him for a professional reason.

“As of last night and according to Amanda Waller, the director of ARGUS? No. In fact, she made
it clear how “irrelevant” he was to ARGUS.”

“May I ask why you were discussing him with Director Waller?”

“I called in a favor. I wanted to find out if someone pinged Oliver’s phone, in case that was how
they knew where to find him. I got my answer, which was no, but Waller found out.”

“And she wasn’t happy?”

Lyla scowled. “Amanda Waller is never happy. About anything. On a good day, she’s an ice cold
sociopath who doesn’t make decisions based on the value of people’s lives. On a bad day, she’s
worse. Yesterday was a bad day, so she didn’t understand why Oliver still being alive wasn’t
enough for me.”

"Can I ask how and when you originally came to meet Oliver? You two clearly have some kind of
history and I think it started before he was found alive"

"We do. And I'm sorry, but the answer to your question is classified."

"Excuse me?"

"I'm really sorry, and I honestly wish I could give you the full answer, I want to give you the full
answer. Unfortunately, the only answer I'm legally allowed to give you is that the circumstances
under which I first met Oliver are classified under SCI access."

"I understand."

"If you want to find out more recent information about whether or not Oliver is a person of interest
to ARGUS, you'll have to find someone who still works for them."

"You're no longer an ARGUS agent, then?"

"No. Waller and I got into it last night, and I ended up telling her I was resigning with immediate
effect. Oliver was in the room, he heard my side of the conversation, and he offered me a job as
Felicity's bodyguard right after I terminated the call. It'll make a nice change to have a boss who I
trust and is a damn good friend: and even better, someone who won't treat me like disposable
garbage."

"It sounds like there's quite a story behind that."

"There is. Oliver saved my life after Waller wrote me off as an acceptable cost of doing business -
and it cost him, you have no idea how bad the consequences were for Oliver, what he sacrificed
because of me."

Doyle wrote down that Lyla possibly had been on Lian Yu at the same time as Oliver. Once the
agents returned to their offices, he’d inform the others. Changing gears, he asked Lyla about the
manner of their abduction.

‘I was so tired, and cold and hungry.’ Oliver told the two agents. He was getting to the part of his story where things would become harder and harder to tell. ‘It was just Dad and I. We- we were drifting for days, the supplies were running low and- I didn’t see the gun, not until he- he told me to survive and then he- he pulled the trigger.’ Tommy and Thea both gasped. Thea also began silently crying. Donna covered her mouth at the revelation. Even the agents were surprised by the turn of events. When they learned Robert had made it to the life raft, they thought he might’ve died from an injury or shock, not suicide. ‘I don’t know how many days the raft drifted after that, but when I reached the island I thought I’d died. As soon as I landed, I dragged the raft up onto the beach, above the tideline and weighed it down. I thought maybe someone would see it and send help. Or I could do what Tom Hanks did in Castaway and somehow put it out to sea. Now, it seems like a stupid plan, but then- I never thought something like that would happen to me.’ He explained. ‘I also- I needed to bury my dad. His body was- birds were trying to- I couldn’t let them have him. I had to chase them away, to keep his body- I found a blanket in the supplies and I covered him with it. I tried to dig him a grave, I had to use my bare hands and the ground, it was so cold and hard, and without any tools- instead I started building this pile of rocks. I build a platform-type thing, to protect him from the elements and any animals that- I had to protect his body. I kept having to chase the birds away while I worked. When the bottom was high enough, I put him on the base. I- I don’t know what made me do it, but before I covered him up, I went through his pockets. In case he had a letter or something- something that Thea or- or Mom would want. Something I could bring home.’

“Did you find anything?” McKenna asked gently.

Oliver nodded, wiped a few tears away and pulled something out of his pocket. ‘This is what I found.’ He held it out so the others could see it, but didn’t let go of it. It was a small picture of Oliver and Thea. He was a teenager and she looked to be around seven or eight. The photo was torn at the edges and faded. He then looked at his sister. ‘Do you- when I first came back, do you remember what I said to you, Speedy? How you were with me the whole time?’

“Y- yeah, you- I thought- I assumed that meant you thought about me a lot. I didn’t- I had no idea-.”

‘I did. I really- this photo was my lifeline, my hope. I wanted to see you again. I felt like I’d missed you so much when I went to school and- I never wanted to leave you. But I- when I found this, I didn’t- I was scared I’d never see you again. I-.’

“Ollie, you- can I hug you?” She asked him. He nodded and held his arms open. She practically dove into his arms and hugged him as hard as she could. It was quiet for several moments as the Queen siblings hugged and comforted one another. Thea had never verbalized it, but she was scared of never seeing Oliver again when he went missing. She had spent so much time drinking and doing drugs because the thought of never seeing her brother again, never knowing what happened to him, was too much to handle at times.

Oliver and Thea broke apart after a few minutes and, while she didn’t move away from him, he returned to telling the story. ‘I kept this picture with me. Everytime it was- when someone took it away from me, I always made sure I got it back. I needed it. I couldn’t- I almost lost it so many times and if I didn’t know where it was, I- I missed you so much it hurt and I- I convinced myself that as long as I had the picture, I could get home. It was my- when things got bad, and then worse, this picture, my memories of you and Tommy, are what kept me going.’ He took a deep breath. He
knew he needed to get back on track. ‘I spent all day making the grave. It was dawn when I started trying to dig and I put the last rock on the grave right as the sun set. It wasn’t for another- I don’t know how long it was. Nothing ever really changed on Lian Yu, or so it seemed, but it was at least six months before I went to that spit again. it seemed okay, undisturbed. I carved his name on a piece of wood and put it on top. That was the same day we buried Yao Fei.’

“Who was Yao Fei, Oliver?” Dinan asked.

‘He was the first person I met on the island.’ It didn’t escape her notice that Oliver said “first person” not “only person”. She nodded, encouraging him to continue. ‘He’d watched me bury Dad, but I didn’t know it. He was being careful. His English wasn’t great and I didn’t even know what language he was speaking. It wasn’t until after I met Slade that I found out it was Mandarin. I didn’t know why he was on the island, all I knew was that he was around Dad’s age and it looked like he’d been stuck there for a while. His clothes were ripped, his hair was crazy and wild. He watched me bury my dad and decided I was harmless, or pathetic. Either way, he guessed I wasn’t a threat to him, so he took me back to his cave. He told me- he said the island was dangerous. I thought he meant because it was an island, the wilderness and we could get hurt or starve or freeze to death.’ He paused again. ‘I was wrong. Very wrong. After a few weeks, we were checking the traps and snares we used to catch food. He was a terrible cook, but we still ate it, there wasn’t an alternative. I went into some bushes, to grab a dead rabbit, and then- then someone grabbed me.’

He started trembling. ‘I didn’t- I thought he was the only other person on the island; I didn’t know where they came from. They- they had a camp that they dragged me to. To their leader, Fyers.’

“Was Fyers someone who was shipwrecked too? Can you tell me his full name?” Dinan asked.

‘Edward Fyers. And he wasn’t shipwrecked, he was there on purpose.’

“Do you know why he was there?”

‘He was a mercenary. His men were looking for Yao Fei when they found me. They were hired to go to the island and find him. They needed him.’

“Do you know what they were hired to do and why they needed Yao Fei?”

‘Later, about two days before- before we buried Yao Fei, Fyers said his employer wanted to create the right economic conditions to cause a huge change in the stock market and make a ton of money. His boss needed him to make that happen, but he didn’t know what needed to be done. He was sent to the island with orders to secure the area and wait for orders. Ferris Air Flight 637, Paris to Hong Kong. Fyers was told to shoot it down.’

“How would shooting down a commercial plane affect the economy?”

‘I didn’t really understand the explanation he gave; I don’t even know if it was true, but he claimed shooting down the plane would cripple the Chinese economy, affecting the market and they’d have to ground all civilian air travel.’ He took a deep breath. Talking about Fyers’ plan was easy because he didn’t have a personal attachment to it. Discussing how they stopped Fyers was a different story. ‘One of Fyers’ men radioed the plane pretending to be an air traffic controller at the Hong Kong Airport. He diverted them off-course from the flight plan. To avoid dangerous weather- instead it put the plane within range of Fyer’s giant missile launcher. Slade said it used S-300s.’ Oliver then described the weapon to Dinan since she didn’t seem familiar with the make and model. ‘Yao Fei was- they needed a scapegoat. They thought Yao Fei, a former general in the Chinese military, was a good person to claim credit for the attack and keep suspicion off of themselves.’
“I assume Yao Fei was killed while stopping Fyers.” McKenna said.

‘Yes. We only survived because of sheer luck.’ He admitted.

“I’d like to back up a bit. Could you tell us what happened when you first met Fyers?” Dinan asked.

‘He showed me a picture of Yao Fei. It was from before he was on the island. Fyers wanted to know where he was. I didn’t- it didn’t feel right, so I said I didn’t recognize the man in the picture.’ His hands started shaking and to calm himself, Oliver began rubbing his finger and thumb together, almost like a nervous tic. ‘That was when I found out I was on Lian Yu, he told me it was Mandarin for Purgatory. He said- he said he was going to make it feel like Hell for me. That was when Wintergreen came into the tent. He didn’t have the same gear as Fyers or his men, his was better. He had- he also carried a sword. It was like a katana but- I don’t know the technical term for it and I’m probably not describing it well, but- I just know how much it hurt when- when he started cutting me. It wasn’t always the same. Sometimes he sliced shallow cuts that hurt but didn’t bleed a lot, other times he stabbed me and- he really liked making me scream. I don’t- I can’t tell you how long I was there, it felt like months, but Fyers decided I didn’t know anything and told him to kill me. That was when Yao Fei showed up. He fought his way into the camp and got me out, but we- we got separated. He gave me a map and told me to run. I was so tired, I should’ve stayed but- he told me to run, so I ran. Wintergreen overpowered him and he was captured. I went to a spot he marked on the map, and that’s where I met Slade.’

Reeves only had one response to the information John had told him about the climate and terrain of Lian Yu. “Wow.” He then remembered that, while this information might interest the others, it didn’t answer the question he asked. “How does this relate you why you accepted Mrs. Queen’s job offer?”

“I figured- he seemed like someone who wanted to be left alone. He’d survived things that would’ve killed almost anyone else. I knew if I said no, the next person she interviewed might be willing to spy on him, who cared more about their paycheck than his well-being. I guess I felt sorry that he was going from being on that island to being watched 24/7. So, I took the offer, knowing he’d be different from the rich kids I usually get hired to protect. The next day, I was introduced to Oliver.”

“How did it go?”

“Not well at first. He was as unhappy at being assigned a “babysitter”, his words, not mine, as I thought he’d be. He knew why I was there, his mom didn’t react well to his mutism, among several things. It didn’t take me long after to figure out that he wasn’t alone on that island.” Digg let out a deep sigh. “He has scars on both his wrists, they go all the way around, like you’d see if someone was handcuffed or ziptied for a long period of time. He’s never said anything to me about what happened when he was restrained, I don’t know if he’s even talked to Felicity about it, but- it’s no wonder he doesn’t speak any more. Hell, I’m impressed the trauma didn’t induce some kinda fugue state or coma.”

Reeves made a few notes, all the while trying to remember that he was supposed to be objective. He wasn’t supposed to get invested in his cases. He was a professional. This case, however, would stick with him for a while.

“Speaking of Moira, how would you describe their relationship?”
“Oh, man.” He paused. “Look, before I answer, you need to know that its possible I misread things. Some people express their feelings better than others. Some people act differently when they’re alone with someone they love and trust than when they’re around someone they barely know, someone like me. I’ve had clients avoid anything emotional or touchy-feely when I’m within earshot. When I met Moira, she’d spent years believing Oliver was dead and that she’d never see him again. Out of the blue, at least to her, he turned up alive and he wasn’t the same kid that got on that yacht, the son she remembered. It was a huge shock to her.”

“I’ll keep all of that in mind, but what’s your opinion on their relationship?”

“They don’t seem to have one. I never saw her make eye contact with him, or look at him more than for a split second or two. When she’d talk to him, it was like she’d look anywhere that he wasn’t. If he wrote something down, she rarely read more than a sentence or two. I don’t think I saw her touch him at any point. No hugs, no kisses, not even accidental touches like their arms touching when one of them moved. She was…cold is the only way to phrase it. I can’t speak for moments I didn’t witness, but it seemed that the only time she interacted with him were in passing or when she wanted something from him, usually trying to make him attend some event or another with her. On top of that, I…..she was obsessed with this idea that Oliver needed to just brush off the last five years, take a job at QC and live the life she and Robert planned for him since birth.”

Digg paused again, unsure of the best way to phrase the next part. “Oliver was…..on a good day, his mom just made him nervous. On a bad day, I think he was genuinely scared of her. Being around her was bad for his recovery and his health. After he moved out, after Felicity managed to get him out of that house, I came to visit and saw that Oliver was more relaxed around Felicity, on what he claimed was a “ kinda” bad day, than I’d ever seen him before. I think it was the first time he felt truly safe. Everytime his mother is mentioned, though, he acts nervous at best and fearful at worst.”

“You said Felicity Smoak “finally managed to get him out” of the mansion. Could you elaborate?”

“Oliver was dealing with a lot. Not just PTSD, but anxiety and self-image issues because of what happened. He knew he couldn’t stay at the mansion, but- his plan was to move out without his mother knowing. He found an apartment, all he had to do was sign the paperwork, but Moira found out first. He told her he wanted to leave and she said he couldn’t. She wouldn’t allow it and he kinda- he shut down, thankfully, Thea was in the room and called Felicity. She raced over to try and help him. Moira didn’t like being told “no”, especially by some “nobody” like Felicity. She said Oliver couldn’t leave and he wouldn’t need to learn ASL any longer. That he wouldn’t need to use it.”

“What happened then?” The agent asked, barely managing to keep his facial expression in check.

Digg smirked for the first time since the interview began. “Felicity turned to Oliver, asked him to grab his bag and wait for her in the foyer. When he was out of the room, she let Moira have it. I don’t think anyone had called Moira Queen out like that in a long time, if ever. After she told her off, she met Oliver in the foyer and they walked out to her car. Mrs. Queen ordered me to tell the family’s head of security to lock the gates until further notice.”

“Did you?”

“No, instead I told her that trying to prevent them from leaving was false imprisonment.” He shrugged. “I’m not a lawyer. I know a case like that wouldn’t have gone anywhere in court, but it would look bad for the family. So, she backed off. She then attempted to get her husband to fire Felicity, but Mr. Steele said it would be wrongful termination and a huge mistake for QC. There was nothing she could do, and she didn’t take that very well.”
“Was that the last time you spoke with her before you were fired?” Reeves asked.

“Yes. To be honest, I thought she completely forgot she was paying me until I got that call.”

Oliver quickly told the others who Slade and Shado were and how he met them on the island before finishing the story about Fyers. ‘Yao Fei died trying to stop Fyers. After we buried him, everything was quiet for a few months. I don’t know how long, but summer ended and winter hadn’t started yet. We- Slade, Shado and I- we were just trying to make it from one day to the next. Fishing, hunting, trapping animals. We trained a lot too, there wasn’t anything else to do so, they taught me how to defend myself. One day, we- a ship appeared off the coast of the island. Slade said it was a freighter. It kept moving closer. We thought- we thought it was a miracle, we were gonna be rescued.’ He said. He started trembling again. ‘We were wrong. We were so wrong. If the Amazo, that was the name of the ship, if it hadn’t come to the island, Slade- Slade and Shado might still be alive.’ Oliver glossed over how he was captured and brought on board the freighter, but told the two investigators that once he was on board, he was shot by the captain and forced to dig the bullet out. That it had been a test.

“The men aboard the ship, the crew, do you know why they’d come to the island?” McKenna asked.

‘I didn’t at first. When I first met Yao Fei, he had a bag of herbs that were native to the island. They had incredible regenerative properties, great for killing infections or preventing them to begin with. After Fyers was…gone, but before the ship arrived, we found this old bunker when we set out to map the island. According to Slade and Shado, it was probably a lab of some kind from during World War II. We searched it looking for supplies- a radio would’ve been like winning the lottery, but clothes, weapons, blankets would’ve made the trip worth it. Instead, we just found corpses. They were everywhere. Some looked normal, but others- it was disturbing to see. Even Slade, an experience soldier, and Shado, a med student, were freaked out by the bodies. We found out that the Japanese Empire discovered the herbs and their military was trying to make something new with them. A medicine, probably. From the notes Slade translated for Shado, the few test subjects that survived the initial injection, the drug, Mirakuru as it was called, worked like a steroid, but even more powerful. Ivo, the scientist who hired the crew of the Amazo, he came to Lian Yu looking for it. Or the recipe. I don’t know why he wanted it. To sell it maybe? Drugs like that would make a fortune, if the side effects were removed.’ Oliver didn’t elaborate much on Ivo’s time. Partially to avoid letting slip about Sara, but mostly because of how things turned out with Slade. He told them that Ivo killed Shado and the Amazo was blown up with Oliver and Slade aboard. Oliver was washed back to the island and Slade drowned.

“Oliver, would you- at a later point in time, do you think you’d feel up to describing some of the people you mentioned, Slade, Shado, Yao Fei, the prisoners on the Amazo, to a sketch artist?” Dinan asked. “It’s possible that some of them might be considered missing persons.”

‘I don’t- I can’t go through this again, but- I can try to draw them? Or Speedy maybe?’ He suggested before turning to his sister. ‘Do you still draw?’

“It’s been a while, but I can try.” She said. There was a slight break while Felicity went looking for some blank paper and pencils for the siblings to use. Oliver started to sketch Yao Fei while he told them about the third year he was marooned. Since he’d been in Moscow that year, he lied and said things were quiet. He was alone on the island and he focused on staying sane and making it from one day to the next. He and Slade had spent months discussing plans to escape the island, but now those plans seemed impossible. He finished his drawing of Yao Fei, and began drawing Shado,
when it was time for him to talk about the next group of visitors to the island. He spent some time describing Slade and a few of the others to Thea to improve the drawings.

‘As much as I hated being alone at the time, it wasn’t long before I wished I was alone again.’ He signed. ‘I don’t know how many days I’d been on Lian Yu at that point, or how long it had been since I buried Shado and made an empty grave for Slade, but one day I went to check on the graves and- and the raft was gone. I’d weighed it down so- someone moved it, or destroyed it. I wasn’t alone. I went back to my hideout and that’s when- that’s when they grabbed me.’

“Who grabbed you?”

‘I don’t know. they never- I never learned their names. I don’t know how long they kept me captive for. Or how long Smith, that’s what I called him in my n head, tortured me. They asked me questions at first, but I didn’t answer. I tried not to scream but I did anyway. It just took longer for him to make me. They asked but I didn’t- I never answered. He liked making me scream. I didn’t say anything. I-.’ He looked at Felicity. ‘I don’t wanna say the next part.’

‘Why not?’ She signed back.

‘Because it- Thea and Tommy will hate me. Your mom will think I’m- and you’ll never want to-.’ He’d never talked about this part of his time away in detail. He was terrified that if the others knew how he felt, what he’d almost let happen, they’d see him as weak or pathetic.

“What’s going on?” McKenna asked Donna. The other woman just shook her head. While she knew what was being said, she didn’t feel comfortable telling the detective. Clearly, whatever happened next was more traumatizing than anything else he’d described.

“Oliver, can you look at me please?” Felicity said softly. He looked in her direction, but not in her eyes. “Please, Oliver, I want you to look me in the eye, okay?” He needed a few moments to work up the nerve, but he did eventually make eye contact with her. “Thank you. Please listen to what I have to say, okay? It’s important. You’re safe. I promise, you’re safe. No one can hurt you. John and Lyla are both here, only a few feet away and they have weapons. If anyone tries to hurt you, they’ll kill them. We aren’t gonna let anyone hurt you.”

‘I’m not worried about someone hurting me.’

“Okay. Well, I need you to listen to something else, okay? It’s even more important than the first thing I said. Nothing you say, nothing that’s happened, will change the way anyone feels about you. We’re Team Oliver, remember? Team Oliver all the way. Nothing will change that you’re Thea and Tommy’s brother.” Thea and Tommy both nodded in agreement, wiping their eyes.

“Nothing you say will change how much my mom loves you. It won’t make Walter think badly about you. No matter what it is you’re scared to say, it won’t change the fact that you are Lyla and John and Roy’s friend. And nothing, not one single solitary thing in the entire universe, can change the fact that you are the man I love with all of my heart. We love you, Oliver. All of us. And we will NEVER, ever hurt you or reject you. Ever.” Oliver pulled Felicity closer to him and hugged her as tightly as he could. After a few minutes, Felicity spoke again. “Now, if you wanna stop, you can. If you want to continue, you can do that too. If you want to give the super short version, you can also do that. It’s your choice, okay?”

‘I wanna- I told this much. I can get through the rest.’ He said. ‘Just- this was- I hate this part the most.’

“This is the part of the story that Oliver dislikes the most.” She told the others. “And he- he says it was the worst part of his time away.”
‘Smith liked to make me scream. I didn’t answer his questions, no matter what they did to me. I wasn’t being defiant, I was- I gave up. I’d given up. I just- I tried to escape, I did everything I could, tried trick I knew to free myself, but nothing worked. I just- I wanted it to be over. I knew I was never gonna make it home. I’d never see Thea or Tommy or my mom again and I hoped it wouldn’t- I just wanted it to end, so I could- I wanted the pain to stop.’ He started crying. ‘I wanted Smith to kill me, but he didn’t; he wouldn’t because hurting me was too much fun for him. They didn’t- they stopped asking me questions at one point. I don’t remember when. All I remember is- I heard Smith and his boss talking one day, about me. The boss said I’d stopped screaming days ago. I didn’t- he was right. They took- they took my voice from me and I didn’t even realize it. The last person to hear my voice was….them.’

He managed to sign the last word before he completely broke down in tears. His hands shook too much for him to continue signing. Felicity moved him so that his head was leaning on her shoulder and she could run her fingers through his hair while he cried. There was nothing she could say to make it better, but she could remind him that he wasn’t alone. Donna, Thea and Tommy moved closer to Oliver as well, and engulfed him in a group hug of sorts from his other side.

Sensing that they were intruding, McKenna and Dinan both excused themselves, saying they needed to speak with Reeves and Doyle. McKenna went to talk to Reeves while Dinan conferred with Doyle. McKenna was looking for a reason to give them some privacy while Dinan had a theory.

“I hope I’m not interrupting.” Dinan asked as she entered the guest bedroom where Lyla and Doyle were talking. “There’s a question I’d like to ask you, based on something Oliver told us.”

“Shoot.”

“Did he ever mention a man named Smith to you?” She asked. “That isn’t his real name, but what Oliver called him. I was wondering if-.”

“No.” Lyla said flatly. “The few times he’s talked about that time, he hasn’t given names. Just “he” or “they”. No names.”

“Smith is- he’s not around anymore, is he, Ollie?” Tommy asked and then immediately regretted. Oliver hadn’t said what Smith did to him, no descriptions of his torture methods, but based solely on his friend’s reaction, this man had to be pure evil.

‘No, he’s not. I killed him. I couldn’t- they untied me one day and- I got away and I couldn’t let him take me again.’ Oliver answered. This was the first time Oliver admitted to someone other than Felicity that he’d killed someone. ’I’m a murderer.’

“No, sweetie, you aren’t.” Donna said. “You were put in an impossible position. You did what you needed to do in order to survive.” She also thought he’d done the world a favor by making sure Smith and the men with him couldn’t hurt anyone else.

Dinan and McKenna returned along with Reeves and Doyle. “We’ve gotten more than enough information. We’d like to thank all of you for agreeing to speak with us. We don’t wanna waste any more of your time.”

“Here.” Thea said, handing out the stack of drawings she and Oliver had done. “These might help
you with…you know. You said these people’s families might still be looking for them, right?” She then went into her bag and pulled out the journal she’d been writing in all week. “I also- I tried to write down everything I remembered from when Dad and Ollie went missing. I don’t- it might not help but I thought maybe-.”

“Ms. Queen, are you 17 or 18?” Reeves asked.

“Seventeen, but only for another two weeks.” She said.

“Okay. We can’t interview you without an adult present if you’re under 18. It’s the law, unfortunately.”

“If I come by tomorrow after school with Walter or Tommy or Felicity, can you talk to me then?” She asked.

“Definitely.”

Thea said she’d see the taskforce members soon before returning to her seat next to Oliver. The agents then showed themselves out of the house. They all piled into one car and drove in silence back to the precinct.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 59

Chapter Summary

Team Oliver, and the task force, recover from the emotional rollercoaster of hearing Oliver's story and try to make sense of it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Digg and Lyla walked out of the kitchen and guest room respectively when they heard the investigators saying they were going to leave now. They waited until they heard the front door close before they came into the living room. They saw Felicity, Donna, Tommy and Thea all huddled around Oliver and went to join the group. Lyla dragged the seat Dinan had been sitting in closer to the couch while John took a seat on the other side of Donna.

No one spoke for at least an hour, instead sitting in silence and comforting Oliver. The archer was the first person to say something.

‘I need to tell Lyla something. Can everyone turn around while we talk?’ He asked. Everyone nodded and turned away, including Felicity. He nudged his girlfriend, indicating that he hadn’t been including her in “everyone” when he made the request. ‘I didn’t tell them about you or about going to Moscow. I didn’t know- I didn’t want you to get in trouble or to give her a reason to-.’ Oliver didn’t know what paper trail, if any, ARGUS left behind when they “recruited” him. He wasn’t sure if he’d signed some kind of agreement to keep quiet and the last place he wanted to be was in the same room as Amanda Waller again.

Lyla leaned in closer so that she could whisper. “I told them we’d met, but said they needed to get the right clearance for me to say more. It was the best answer I could give.” She sighed. “And when they get what they need, I’ll tell them everything. Including what happened to you after.”

‘Thank you, Lyla.’

“You know what I think?” Felicity announced after the pair were done talking. “I think we could all use a nap.”

“I agree with you there.” Thea chimed in.

Oliver, Felicity and Thea headed into the master bedroom. As he was leaving, he pulled Donna aside. Partially to thank her for being there, he hadn’t expected her to be there when he told his story but he was glad that she was, and partially to ask her for a favor.

‘I know this isn’t fair to ask, but- John and Lyla deserve to know what I said, but I- I can’t- telling it all over again-.’

Donna put one hand over Oliver’s shaking ones, causing him to look her in the eye. “You never need to ask. I was gonna offer to tell them, later.” She said with a sad smile. “Go get some rest.”

The trio went into the bedroom to lie down while Donna took her seat back on the couch. She told John and Lyla that Oliver had asked her and Tommy to tell them what he revealed to Agent Dinan.
and McKenna. She started the same place that Oliver did, the day the Gambit set sail.

The members of the taskforce drove back to the precinct in silence. When they entered the office they were working out of, several other agents look up at their arrival. All four looked like they had a lot on their minds, but two in particular looked especially troubled.

“Don’t take this the wrong way, but why do you both look like you’ve been hit by a truck?” Anderson asked McKenna and Dinan.

“It wasn’t the worst part.” McKenna answered.

“I don’t-.”

“Oliver Queen didn’t just tell us about the night the Queen’s Gambit went down. He also told us most of what happened to him on Lian Yu.” Dinan said. “And the Queen’s Gambit sinking, him watching his father die, that was one of the easier parts of the story to hear. I can only imagine what it was like for him to live through.”

“How bad did things get on that island?” Anderson asked.

“I- I’m gonna need some time before I can read those notes but, of all the people I know or have worked with, and I’m including Seals and Special Forces guys in that number, I can only think of a few who could’ve survived what Oliver did.”

“Ok, so I’m thinking we should start with the other interviews first.” Anderson said, looking between Doyle and Reeves, waiting for one of them to start.

“John Diggle couldn’t tell me anything about the Queen’s Gambit, obviously, but in telling me about his time working for Moira Queen, he shared more than I think he realizes.” Reeves said. “She pretty much hired him to spy on Oliver for her.”

“And did he?”

“He said he took the job because he knew if he didn’t, she’d hire someone else, someone who probably didn’t give a shit about Oliver’s mental state of happiness. So, he said yes and spent months telling her as little as possible and using the fact that he’s a bodyguard as an excuse about why he didn’t know more.”

“What do you mean?” McKenna asked.

“His job is to protect Oliver from harm, right? It’s not to be superglued to his side every second of the day and in some situations, being too close makes it harder to properly protect him. I’ll give you an example. Months ago, when Oliver was still living with his mother, he and Felicity Smoak used to meet at the public library on the weekends, so that she could teach him ASL. This was before they were dating, they were just friends, but Mr. Diggle could tell that there was an attraction there and more significantly, Oliver felt comfortable around her. They would meet in one of the reading rooms, so Diggle waited outside, in front of the door, and told Mrs. Queen that Oliver went to the library to meet a friend in one of the reading rooms and that he didn’t know what they discussed because he was outside. She probably thought he joined a book club or something.” He sighed. “Eventually, she stopped asking John to report on Oliver’s activities. He also told me she was aware that he was off-duty the day Oliver was abducted by the Red Mask
gang. Oh, and in his own words, when Oliver moved out of the mansion, and into Felicity’s house, and Moira discovered she couldn’t stop him, and Walter Steele wouldn’t fire Felicity, she didn’t take it very well.”

“That’s not surprising.” McKenna said. They all gave her a look. “I went to school with Oliver, remember? I spent time around his family before everything that happened, and I’ve dealt with Moira Queen. People don’t say “no” to Moira Queen. And things always go her way. She’s a control freak, especially when it comes to her kids.”

“Do you think Oliver leaving might’ve prompted her to-?”

“I don’t know. In all honesty, I really can’t tell you anything.” She said.

The room fell into silence for a few moments. Then, Doyle spoke. “Lyla Michaels met Oliver Queen during the time he was missing.”

“When?” Dinan asked. Oliver hadn’t mentioned meeting Lyla in his interview, but he had been vague about some stretches of time, so it was possible he’d left her out of the story.

“She couldn’t tell me. ARGUS loves making everything top secret.” He said bitterly.

“And she wasn’t stonewalling you?”

“No. I know what it looks and sounds like when someone’s doing that. She apologized to me, multiple times, and said she couldn’t talk about it. I think if she had the choice, if ARGUS wasn’t forcing her to keep it quiet under the guise of “national security” or whatever excuse Waller has this week, she would’ve walked in here the day we arrived, with the entire story ready to tell.”

“So, we need to get the necessary clearance to hear the story.” Dinan said. “I wonder why Oliver didn’t mention meeting her.”

“Maybe he thought it would get her in trouble.” He said. “Look, Michaels wants to talk to us, she just can’t. And I think the fact that she can’t has been eating her up inside for a while.”

“What do you mean?”

“Like I said, she couldn’t tell me the circumstances of how she met Oliver, but she did say that Oliver saved her life after Waller wrote her off as a necessary sacrifice. She said that he sacrificed a lot as a result. For all I know, by saving Lyla, Oliver missed the chance to get rescued.”

“This case is insane. ARGUS, two groups of mercs, a ship of pirates, a psychotic doctor, Australian intelligence. Only thing that’s missing is a wizard.” Dinan scoffed.

“What do you mean, ASIS, mercs and pirates?” Anderson asked.

“Like we said, the Queen’s Gambit sinking was just the beginning of Oliver’s story.” McKenna said.

Not feeling emotionally ready to get into detail, they gave a basic outline of what Oliver had told them and what matched up with the satellite photos they had. They briefly explained who the key players in his story were, including Shado, Slade, Fyers and Yao Fei, as they spoke.

“I should’ve stopped the interview.” Dinan said when she was done. “As soon as he told us about his father’s grave on Lian Yu, I should’ve stopped the interview.”
“You couldn’t have known.” Doyle told her. “No one could’ve known the amount of tragedy he’d been through.”

“The poor man’s mute, Andy. That should’ve been my first clue, and the only one I needed.”

“It was a painful and horrible ordeal for him to experience. It was painful for him to relive in order to tell us what happened, but now we have a chance to make sure it wasn’t for nothing.” Reeves said. “We confirmed that the beacons on the life raft and vests were tampered with. And I don’t know what family they had, but this could give the Gulongs and Wilsons closure.”

“Did he- we know what happened to Robert Queen, but not anyone else on the Queen’s Gambit. Did he say anything about the other crew members?” Anderson asked.

Dinan explained what Oliver had shared about Sara’s death, him believing that if he’d acted a little sooner, been a little closer, he could’ve saved her. When she was finished, Anderson started telling the others what he discovered about the death of the intermediary the Red Mask Gang had been contacted by.

“Anyone know where we go from here?” Doyle asked. “Because we got a lot of information, but I don’t know what takes priority over what.”

“First we need to check the aspects of Oliver’s story that can be verified. Look into the people he mentioned by name: Slade Wilson, Dr. Ivo, Edward Fyers. Shado and Yao Fei might require outside help but-.” Dinan said. “We also should check in with Queen Consolidated next week about the growing list of company employees that the Arrow has gone after. As for the rest, we’ll need to wait and see, and get clearance.”

“I know some people in DC I can talk to about the issue with Lyla Michaels.” Reeves said. “A few of them owe me a favor. They probably won’t release anything to us, but one of the guys I went to the academy with might be able to expedite the process.”

“Not to mention Thea Queen is gonna stop by tomorrow.” McKenna said.

Around 6pm, Roy was walking towards Felicity’s house when he heard a familiar voice call out to him. He turned to see Walter getting out of his car and walking towards the house.

“Hi Mr. Steele.” He said nervously.

“Good evening, Roy. And please call me Walter.” The British man responded.

“Oh, sure. Sorry. Do you think- I don’t know if its okay for me to be here. I mean, I don’t know if Oliver wants just family or-.”

“I think its safe to say that you count as family now.” He assured the younger man.

They reached the door and Roy was about to knock when Digg opened the door and let them inside. They exchanged greetings with Digg and Tommy. Walter could hear people talking in the kitchen, but otherwise didn’t see anyone.

“Tommy, why don’t you see if Oliver and Thea need help in the kitchen?” John asked. Tommy nodded once and went into the kitchen. “Sorry. I know you’re gonna wanna know what happened and I don’t think Tommy wants to hear this for a third time.”
“May I ask where Felicity, her mother and Ms. Michaels are?” Walter asked.

“After the agents left, Oliver was in bad shape. It was worse than after he was abducted. Felicity, Lyla, Thea and Donna, even Tommy, they didn’t wanna let go of him. It was like they were scared if they let go, he’d…. after about an hour, Felicity suggested everyone take a nap because the ordeal had been so draining. Oliver, Thea and her went into their room for a nap. The two Queens crashed within minutes, but I’m pretty sure Felicity didn’t sleep. Lyla and I hadn’t been in the room when Oliver was being interviewed, the feds wanted to ask us a few things about his abduction, so after they went to take a nap, Donna and Tommy filled us in on what he said, with Oliver’s permission. Around 4, Thea and Oliver woke up. They weren’t great, but the nap had helped somewhat. Oliver said he wanted to make dinner for everyone, its one of his coping strategies and they’ve been in the kitchen while I’ve been trying to keep Tommy occupied. Donna and Lyla convinced Felicity to try to get some more sleep and they’re in with her. Hopefully she’s getting some rest, but they might also be talking, or crying it out, or both.” Digg said. “He gave us permission to tell you what he told the feds, if you guys want to know. He doesn’t- he said if you’d feel uncomfortable, he’d understand. He made everyone promise that if the story was too much, they’d leave. He’s worried, terrified, that you’ll have nightmares because of what happened.”

“I’ve had nightmares before,” Roy said. “And I know it sounds dumb, but he survived. When I think about what I already know, that’s what I keep telling myself. He survived. That’s what matters, right? Count me in.”

“Well said.” Walter commented before taking a deep breath and preparing himself. “And I concur.”

“Okay.” Digg said, gesturing for the two men to sit down. “Oliver started- well the feds asked Oliver about the day they set sail first. He said he didn’t want to go on the trip at first.”

Nyssa waited for the task force members to move onto discussing the death of Red Mask gang’s intermediary before she lowered the volume on the receiver. A few days ago, she’d had Asim, the assassin traveling with her, plant a bug in the task force’s office. At the time, she claimed it was to make sure they didn’t interfere with the League’s plans for Malcolm. It was also partially to learn more information about Oliver.

She was holed up in a safehouse a block away from the precinct. She hadn’t left the building all day, knowing that today was the day Oliver was going to be interviewed and wanting to know what he shared. As she listened to McKenna and Dinan retell Oliver’s story, she found herself growing more and more upset. When one of the agents asked about other passengers on the Gambit, and Nyssa heard Oliver’s account of how Sara slipped through his fingers that night, she couldn’t hold her emotions in any longer. One, possibly two, tears fell down her cheek and she wiped them away, stunned that she’d shown such emotion.

Asim returned from his mission, which was to check in on Malcolm, and found her in the same position as when he left. He was about to comment when Nyssa’s phone rang.

“Hello?”

“When were you going to tell me?” Sara asked, angrily.

Nyssa froze in panic. There were a lot of things she hadn’t told her beloved. Was it that Oliver was
alive? His mutism? That he was the Arrow? That Laurel had been sent to prison? “I’m not sure what you mean.”

“Ollie’s alive. I’m guessing you know that because you’re in the same city as him.” She said. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“Father ordered me not to, and I think you know why.”

“You can’t keep living like this, Quentin.” Lucas Hilton, Lance’s old partner, said as he looked around the man’s apartment. “It’s unhealthy.”

“I’m telling you, Queen’s up to something.”

“The only thing he seems to be “up to” is trying to recover from the last few years of trauma. He’s not the Arrow, man.” He said. “And this fixation of yours is making you a laughingstock.”

“He is! What? Are you saying its just some coincidence that this vigilante shows up a few days after Queen was found?”

“I think you’re upset about Laurel going to prison. You’re angry about Oliver being alive when Sara isn’t and I think you never recovered from her death. He’s alive and she’s gone and that makes you so angry that anything, any excuse to hate him, is justified. Oliver Queen is trying as hard as he can to just figure out how he’s supposed to live. He’s not a vigilante, he’s not some monster. He’s just a kid who’s been through a lot.”

“And I’m saying-.”

“You remember Ted Grant?”

“Yeah. I took the girls to one of his fights.”

“He runs a boxing gym in the Glades now. Do me a favor, as your partner, go to his gym, hit a bag for a while. You need to find something to do that doesn’t involve Queen or booze.”

“I’m not that bad.”

“I could smell it when I walked in.” Hilton said. “I know IA’s taking a while, but you need something to do, some way to keep busy, or you’re gonna drive yourself crazy and to drink. At least give it a shot?”

“Fine. I’ll give it shot. Who knows? I might even have fun.”

It took two hours for the news of Oliver Queen’s abduction to travel from Starling to Central City. It took Dinah Lance the better part of a week to decide if now was the right time to visit Oliver and apologize for her family’s behavior towards him. She ultimately decided that she’d waited long enough and that she needed to at least try. If he didn’t want to see her, she’d respect his wishes and leave, but she knew she needed to at least try. Sara may have gotten onto the Gambit with Oliver, but Dinah was the one who didn’t stop her from leaving.

As with everyone else who’d heard Oliver’s story, even the very abbreviated version that Digg was
telling, Walter and Roy couldn’t hide their horror at what he’d been through.

“It was even worse than we imagined.” Walter said. He could practically hear Moira’s comment about Oliver’s “five-year vacation” and wanted to vomit. “And I let Moira treat him the way that she did.”

“We knew you couldn’t have.”

“I knew he was struggling and I didn’t- I convinced myself to give him time to reconnect with Thea and Moira before trying to get to know him. I-.”

“Digg’s right. You couldn’t have known.” Felicity said, walking into the living room. Her eyes were red. Clearly, she’d been crying. Judging by Donna and Lyla’s expressions, she wasn’t the only one. “None of us could’ve. We- even though Oliver told me a little bit about what happened on the island before today, I- you were doing what you thought was right with the information you had at the time.”

Walter was about to respond when Tommy came out of the kitchen and said that dinner was ready. Everyone moved into the dining room and sat down. Oliver walked in carrying a large casserole dish and Thea followed behind him with a bowl of pasta.

“You made chicken parmesan.” Felicity said with a wistful smile.

‘Of course. It’s my favorite.’ Oliver signed. It was his favorite because it was her favorite and it was her favorite because it was the first thing he’d cooked for her. Today had been a very long day for him and he wanted some comfort food. Nothing said “comfort food” to Oliver like chicken parm. ‘Thank you.’

‘For what?’ She signed back to him.

‘I don’t think I could’ve gotten through today if I didn’t have you in my life.’ He said.

Dinner wasn’t very lively. Wanting to avoid the elephant in the room, or anything that might upset Oliver, the conversation started out as small talk before the subject of the Arrow came up. Everyone was a little surprised to learn that QC had multiple employees that the Arrow had brought to the authorities’ attention. Walter and Donna both expressed gratitude that they were caught before anything else could happen. Oliver didn’t say much during dinner, but Felicity could tell that listening to the others talk, and not being able to dwell on the events he’d recounted, helped keep him calm. After dinner, everyone talked for a little while longer, mostly idle chit-chat, before people started to depart.

Tommy drove back to his hotel, having not informed anyone that he’d moved out of his father’s house. Roy had an early shift the next day, and Tommy offered him a ride home. Walter also excused himself, knowing Moira would notice his absence. He asked Thea if she was going to come home, and she said no. She was going to spend the night at Oliver and Felicity’s. She wasn’t ready to leave her brother just yet. Moira already thought she was spending the night at a friend’s house. Lyla and Digg both stayed behind as well.

About an hour after everyone left, Donna decided to go to bed. Thea didn’t want to impose any more than she already felt like she was, so she slept on the couch. Lyla and Digg agreed to share the loveseat again.

After everyone was situated, Oliver and Felicity went to bed themselves. As they were lying in bed, trying to fall asleep, Felicity rolled onto her side so that she was facing Oliver. She ran her
thumb along his cheekbone gently. He wrapped one arm around her waist and looked at her.

“I love you so much.”

‘I love you too.’

“I know today was hard, and I know the next few days are gonna be hard too.” She said. “But I want you to remember something. You’re the strongest, and bravest, person that I know. You’re a good man, Oliver.”

‘I’m not that-.’

“No, you are. I went to MIT, remember? I’m a genius. Are you telling me, a genius, that I’m wrong?” She asked playfully. “I love you; you deserve to be loved. And I’m gonna tell you that, every single day, because you need to know how important you are to me.”

Oliver let a small smile form on his face. It was the first real smile he’d had all day. He loved the way Felicity made him feel, the way he felt warmer every time he was near her. ‘I love you so much. I used to think it wasn’t possible to feel this way about someone, to love someone this much. I was wrong.’ The only person he could think of that he loved this much was Thea, but she was his sister. It was a different type of love.

“I didn’t think I could either.” She admitted quietly. They fell asleep in that position, facing one another with Felicity gently caressing his cheek.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 60

Chapter Summary

Oliver has a pretty good day, Thea gives her interview, Tommy gets some reassurances, Malcolm get bad news and Felicity tries to get back into her normal routine.

Chapter Notes

There's some tooth-rotting fluff at the very beginning and very end of this chapter. I regret nothing because Oliver deserves ALL of the nice things.

Oliver slowly felt himself wake up. When he first came home, he had trouble sleeping past dawn, due to the sleep schedule he’d developed on Lian Yu, and would wake up abruptly at the slightest noise. Ever since he started living with Felicity, however, he found himself sleeping for longer and not waking up so suddenly. Since they started sharing a bed, her sleep patterns more or less became his. His body knew now was the time to wake up because this was around the time Felicity woke up every day.

Oliver opened his eyes and found Felicity already awake and looking at him. “I like watching you sleep.” She said. “Wow, that sounded less creepy in my head. What I meant was, when you’re asleep, you look so relaxed and peaceful and I like watching you not have to worry about anything. Sorry if I just made it weird.”

‘You didn’t. I….watch you sleep sometimes too.’ He admitted before he leaned forward to kiss her. ‘Good morning.’

“Good morning.” She said, kissing him back. It wasn’t a deep, passionate kiss, just a little peck but it put a smile on both of their faces. She looked over her shoulder to check the clock. “Woah, I woke up a little earlier than usual. Do you know what that means?”

‘Does it mean we can stay here for a little longer?’ He asked. He knew he’d need to get up eventually, that Felicity would need to go to work. It didn’t necessarily mean they had to do those things now.

She kissed him again. “You bet your ass it does.”

‘Good.’ He said as he pulled her closer to him. ‘Because I’m not ready to let you go yet.’

They cuddled together for a little bit longer, chatting about gift ideas for Thea’s birthday and debating what they should watch for their next movie marathon. When Felicity’s alarm went off, they finally got out of bed.
“Have any of you had a chance to look through the journal Thea Queen gave us?” Agent Reeves asked when he walked into the office. “I feel like one of us should at least skim it before she comes in.”

“I’ve started to.” Dinan said. “And I’ve read official reports that are less organized than this.”

“What do you mean?”

“She put a table of contents, kinda, in the front of the journal. She’s got a section of events right before the Queens Gambit set sail. The next section is about the immediate aftermath, what she remembers from the search, the funerals and so on. The next is stuff that happened over the next few years that caught her attention. The last part chronicles everything from the day Oliver was found to the day he was kidnapped.” She explained. “I’m still in the first section, but nothing stand out to me.”

“That’s….wow. I didn’t expect her to be so thorough.”

Oliver made Felicity, Thea, Donna, John and Lyla pancakes for breakfast before Felicity needed to leave for work. Lyla, Felicity, John and Oliver walked out of the house towards the former ARGUS agent’s car.

Oliver handed Felicity her lunch bag and she hugged him. “I’ll see you tonight, ok Oliver?”

He nodded and bent down to kiss her goodbye. ‘I’ll be waiting.’

Lyla and Digg were saying their own goodbyes and when they ended their hug, Lyla turned to Oliver. “I wanna thank you, for trusting me, even though I-.”

‘We all know who’s really to blame.’ He signed. ‘I didn’t know before, but I know now.’ He moved closer to her and hugged her for a few moments before pulling away. ‘You didn’t do anything to make me not trust you.’ He gave her a small smile.

The two women got into the car and drove away. Digg and Oliver watched them drive off and only went inside once the car had turned off of Felicity’s street. Walking inside, Thea was rummaging through her backpack while Donna was on the phone with someone.

“I realize that….yes, I know…..I don’t know yet.” She said to the person on the other end. “Yeah, I guess that is what I’m saying….no, I won’t change my mind…..thank you for everything over the years.” She hung up the phone.

“Everything okay?” Digg asked her.

“I kinda just….lost my job. Well, technically I quit when Bobby threatened to fire me, but it’s the same principle.” She said. “It was time for me to move on anyway.”

“I thought you loved it.” Thea said.

“I did, I do, but it’s not the most important part of my life and when Bobby tried to make me choose, I chose the part that matters most to me.” She said. Donna knew if she went back to Las Vegas, Felicity and Oliver would understand why she needed to go. The problem was that she was not comfortable leaving them so soon. Maybe it was time for her to finally leave Las Vegas behind. “I’m gonna go get more coffee.”
She walked into the kitchen. Oliver watched her leave before following. ‘Did you quit because of me? Because of what happened?’

“Oh, honey, no. Truth be told, this has been a long time coming.” She told him. “I’d like to tell Felicity myself, if that’s okay. I know she’s gonna think this is her fault, just like you thought it was yours. She needs to hear from me that I’m happy about this.”

Oliver agreed to let Donna tell Felicity what had happened. He then asked Thea if she needed a ride to school.

Lyla and Felicity were halfway to the office when the brunette noticed how worried the blonde looked.

“Am I doing the right thing here?” She asked. “Should I hav- I should’ve taken today off. After yesterday, leaving him wasn’t a good idea.”

“Felicity?”

“This isn’t gonna help him, me leaving. It’s too soon, isn’t it?”

“Felicity!” Lyla said, raising her voice slightly.

“Sorry, I’m babbling, aren’t I? I’m sorry, it’s just-.”

“You’re worried about Oliver, about being away for most of the day after what happened yesterday. Don’t worry. I hate leaving him too.”

“So, are you going to turn around or-? Because I can take the day off and-.”

“Oliver seemed to be in a pretty good place when we left.” Lyla pointed out. “Did anything happen last night to worry you?”

“No, he- he slept soundly. And he didn’t go out as the Arrow. I think he slept for a solid six and a half to seven hours.”

“And he’s not gonna be alone. Your mom, Johnny, Tommy, they’re gonna be with him. They’ll help him keep his mind off of things that upset him, they’ll make sure he’s okay. And Oliver knows when to press his limits and when not to. I think one of the reasons he’s been doing so well is that he has a routine, a sense of normalcy. We should try to keep things that way, which means Thea going to school and you going to work. Go to work, be the genius that you are and help change the world. When the day’s over, we’re gonna go home and eat dinner and you can tell Oliver about your day and he’ll tell you all about his.”

Felicity took a deep breath. “You’re absolutely right.”

Oliver drove Thea to school, arriving with about twenty minutes to spare. Rather than get out of the car immediately, Thea turned to her brother.

“Are you sure you’re gonna be okay today Ollie?”

‘I promise I’ll be fine. I’ve got Donna, Tommy and Digg, I won’t be alone. If I ask for a minute to myself, they’ll give me some space, but- I’ll be able to keep myself busy until its time to pick you
up and wait for Felicity, Lyla, Roy and Walter, if he can come, to eat dinner with us.’

“You- I kinda asked Tommy to pick me up today.” She admitted. “I’m sorry, it’s just- That way I can go straight to the SPCD and tell them- I didn’t wanna ask you to-.”

“That’s okay. I guess I’ll see you a little later then.’ He said. He didn’t want Thea to see that he was upset that she needed to talk to the feds in the first place, because he knew this was something Thea needed to do for herself. If she thought he’d be upset, she might not do it and then feel conflicted about it later. So, he tried his best to reassure her.

“And you’re sure you don’t mind doing this? Driving me to school I mean?”

‘Speedy, if I’d gotten my way after I graduated high school, I would’ve done all online classes so that I could’ve spent more time with you. That’s what I wanted to do, but Mom and Dad- they wouldn’t let me. I’m glad I’ve got the chance to do this with you now.’

Thea was glad she didn’t put on mascara today, because if she had, it would’ve been ruined. She wiped her eyes before she started signing. ‘I love you Ollie.’

‘I love you too, Thea.’ He held his arms open, offering her a hug and she threw herself into a warm embrace, squeezing tightly for a few moments before loosening her grip.

‘I love you so much. I never stopped loving you all those years you were gone and I always will. I don’t care how much you’ve changed or what happened to you in that hellhole. I will always, always, love you and I promise I’ll never, ever hurt you or treat you like Mom did.’

‘I love you too. I’ll see you later, okay?’

‘Okay.’ Reluctantly, she got out of the car, needing to head to class. Oliver also got out of the car and gave his sister one last hug. She headed into school and barely noticed how many people were staring at her.

Tommy was already at the house when Oliver returned from taking Thea to school. He and Digg were talking at the kitchen table, so he waved to his friend before taking a seat on the couch. Not in the mood for reading, Oliver started flipping through the channels on the TV. He didn’t see anything worth watching and was about to turn the TV off when Donna sat down next to him.

“How about a movie?” She asked. “We were debating kids movies a few days ago, and Felicity has most of them…”

‘Does she have Beauty and the Beast?’ He asked. ‘I remember her saying she liked it, and I don’t think I’ve ever seen it.’

“Well, we should fix that.” She said with a smile before getting off of the couch and looking through her daughter’s DVD collection. “Found it.”

They started the movie and Donna sat next to Oliver, filling in some of the quiet parts with stories about Felicity’s favorite parts of the film. Belle and the Beast were dancing to “A Tale as Old As Time” when Donna realized Oliver was asleep.

“I’m so happy you and Felicity found each other, Oliver. All of us will be here for you. You’re never gonna be alone again, I promise.” She said in a gentle tone. “You’re not a monster Oliver. I know its hard now, but hang on and remember that.” When the movie ended, Oliver was still asleep so Donna put in another DVD.
Diggle, meanwhile, was trying to talk Tommy out of his belief that he was a horrible person. So far, he seemed to be as stubborn as Oliver.

“Ollie spent five years fighting everyday to stay alive and what did I do? I spent most of that time in a drunken stupor, trying to talk Laurel into sleeping with me. And, I wasn’t there for Thea when she needed me. I’m a total screw-up. I’m the worst.”

“No, you’re not.” John said. “There are plenty worse than you. Edward Fyers, Billy Wintergreen, whoever the hell Smith actually was. I could keep going.” The younger man shifted uncomfortably. “Are you saying you’re worse than them? Not just one of them but all of them? You’ve made mistakes, its true, but unless Felicity gives you a time machine, you can’t change or erase them.”

“Felicity has a time machine?” He asked, dumbfounded.

“Maybe not yet, but if I had to bet money on who’d create one, I’d pick her. Nothing stops Felicity Smoak when she sets her mind to something.” Digg responded. “And you’re trying to change the subject. You made mistakes, but you stopped sooner than you wanna admit. When you got called out when Oliver left the mansion, you didn’t just ignore what Felicity told you, you re-evaluated things. First thing you did after Laurel called you about testifying against Oliver was to warn him. You’ve done everything you could to help him since then. He doesn’t know how to put it into words, but he’s thankful to have you. And, after everything you heard yesterday, you’re here, supporting him. Seems to me like you’re very, very far from being the worst.”

“I was useless when he needed me though. They took us, those men in the masks, and I couldn’t- I couldn’t get loose or yell loud enough for help or- my dad was right. My mom would be ashamed of me. I’ve always been useless and I always will be.”

“So, Oliver and Lyla are useless?” Digg asked rhetorically.

“Wait, what?”

“I’m asking if you think Oliver and Lyla are useless.”

“No, I wasn’t saying that at all. Of course not.”

“I agree. I just wanted to make sure you hadn’t completely lost your mind. Lyla and I? We were soldiers, the Army spent a lot of time training us to be aware of our surroundings. And Oliver? He’s probably experienced more than I have. He was trained in a life-or-death situation in one of the most dangerous places on Earth. Oliver and Lyla are trained to deal with the unexpected and still, those assholes in red masks got the drop on the two most capable and dangerous people I’ve ever met and took you three down in seconds.” He sighed. “You don’t have training or experience like we do. So don’t beat yourself up for what happened. it wasn’t your fault, and its not Oliver’s or Lyla’s, even though they both blame themselves. You three got taken by surprise by a group of capable and experienced guys.”

Tommy was quiet for several moments.

“Oh, and one other thing. I don’t know your father, but he sounds like an asshole. You shouldn’t go around listening to assholes. It’s a waste of your time.”
The day passed quickly and soon Thea was walking out of school. She saw Tommy leaning against the door of his car and he waved to her when she walked out of the building. They got into the car and drove towards the SCPD.

“You know you don’t need to do this, right?” He asked her. “At least, not today.”

“I wanna get this over with. If this helps them find the person who sabotaged the Gambit even a little bit faster, its worth it.” She said. “If you don’t wanna be there when I talk to them, I can give Felicity or Walter a call.”

“No, no. I’ll be there the whole time, I just- I didn’t want it to be too much for you.” He admitted.

“This isn’t- its not too boring for you, is it?” Felicity asked Lyla. The day was almost over, but the blonde just wanted to make sure Lyla wasn’t dying of boredom. She’d spent most the day sitting off to the side while Felicity worked and reworked her blueprints for a project. The blonde loved geeking out over tech and science, but not everyone liked the same things she liked. She hoped Lyla wouldn’t be too bored being her bodyguard.

“It’s not boring, it’s quiet. And trust me, quiet is better.” She responded.

“Okay, because I- I know you’re mostly doing this because Oliver asked you to. Because he’s worried that something else is gonna happen and-.”

“Do you- you were talking to your mom when Oliver offered me this job, do you know why I took it?” She asked.

“I could guess, but I’ll probably be wrong. I’m guessing it wasn’t the free food.” Felicity joked, trying to lighten the mood.

“He said he was asking me to work for him because he trusts me with your life, you and Thea’s. He trusts me to keep you safe.” She took a moment and collected herself. “For two years, I was scared that if I ever saw Oliver again, he’d hate me. He’d think I’d betrayed him. And- when we met, Oliver and I, we didn’t just work. He told me about Thea, and the way he looked when he talked about her, he gets the same way when you’re around. You and Thea, you’re not just important to him. You’re….you’re sacred to him. He doesn’t care if he gets hurt, but if you or Thea are in danger? It destroys him. For him to trust me with both of you after everything, I couldn’t say no to that.” By now, Lyla had a few tears running down her face.

Unsure of what else to do, Felicity moved closer to Lyla and gave her a hug. “I trust you. And thank you, for helping him survive Moscow.” They hugged for a little bit before breaking apart. “I just remembered, we didn’t get a chance to talk about those two transactions of Moira’s you noticed. What made them stand out to you?”

“Who she wrote the checks to.”

Dinan read Thea’s journal while taking notes about what to ask during her interview with the teenager. Thea’s recollection of what happened before the Gambit set sail wasn’t very eye-opening, but her entries after the Gambit went missing were enlightening, especially where her mother and Malcolm Merlyn were concerned.

As far as she remembered, Moira had hidden in her room for the entire time the Coast Guard was
looking for Oliver and the only person she let in was Malcolm, completely ignoring Thea’s needs. The first time Thea saw her mother for more than a few moments after the Gambit went missing was the day she held her press conference demanding that the search for survivors be called off.

Dinan started to wonder if Moira called off the search so that she could move on to Malcolm Merlyn? The only reason she didn’t think that was the case was Walter Steele. If Moira killed Robert in order to be with Malcolm, why would she marry Walter?

As thought-provoking as Thea’s memories of the days around the Gambit sinking were, it was the section about Oliver being found and returning home that grabbed her attention the most. That part held the most promise for getting some much needed answers about Moira.

Dinan looked up from her notes when she heard McKenna call her name. The detective walked in, followed by Thea Queen and Tommy Merlyn. They took a seat near Dinan’s desk and the Coast Guard investigator was about to greet Thea when Tommy spoke.

“So, uh, who’s in charge here?” He asked. “That probably sounded really demanding, but I was curious on the drive over. I mean, one agent here has to be in charge, right? Or at least, more in charge than some of the others?”

“Agent Anderson and I are the senior agents.” She answered. “He’s FBI, I’m with the Coast Guard. You haven’t met him because he was working on a different part of this case yesterday.” While she’d been interviewing Oliver, Anderson was investigating the Red Mask gang and Jason Fontenot’s murder. “And we drafted Detective Hall here into helping us out.”

“Did you have a chance to read through what I gave you?” Thea blurted out.

“I did. I wanna ask you about-.”

“Wait, before you ask, Ollie asked me to tell you something. He’s sorry that he had to skip over a few things and that he couldn’t give you more information. He just-.”

“Please tell your brother that he has no reason to apologize. Summarizing five years of events in a few hours is nearly impossible. On top of that, the events he was telling us about? He told us more than he needed to.” She said. “He’s a very brave man. I’d like to ask you about when Oliver came home. We can talk about some “pre-Gambit” events in a bit.”

“What do you wanna know?”

“Those first few weeks, tell me a little more about them.”

“Well, Ollie- we didn’t know about his voice until Mom told us, and I guess she didn’t know until the hospital. The first time I saw him, I…” She began telling Dinan about everything between Oliver leaving the hospital to the day he moved out with Felicity.

“Sir, I apologize for interrupting you while you recover, but we’ve run into a slight problem.” Michael Adams said, walking into Malcolm’s study.

“What is it now?” He barked.

“Queen Consolidated has halted all Unidac projects. As a result of Doug Miller’s arrest.” He said. “I’ve begun making inquiries with our other conta-.”
“Don’t bother. I’ll handle this, since you clearly can’t.” Malcolm said before turning around, dismissing his lackey. He reached for his cell phone. He had no idea what Moira thought she was doing, but it needed to stop, now.

In telling her story, Thea reached the moment Moira and Oliver began arguing about Dr. Brown, his therapist. While she’d been talking, a few of the other agents had moved closer to hear what she had to say. She explained that Oliver had asked her to read out his message about not wanting a therapist and that she’d agreed with him and asked her mother why she was being so pushy.

“And then she- she said- my mom said-.”

“Miss Queen? We can stop if you’d like-.”

“No, I need to do this. You need to know this. it’s part of why I told Oliver I wanted someone else to come with me. In case this came up. I knew it would hurt him to- you need to remember, Oliver was standing right next to me when this happened. He was looking right at her and she said- she said “I want my son back”. Even not knowing what I know now, about what he’d been through, I-how can you say that to someone? Especially your own son?”

“It’s a good thing Lyla doesn’t know that that happened.” Tommy remarked. The agents turned to look at him, all intrigued by what he’d just said.

“Could you elaborate?” Reeves asked.

“I, uh, did Digg or Lyla tell you what Moira tried to do? Her and Laurel?”

“He mentioned they seemed to be planning something.”

“They were trying to have him declared mentally incompetent.” Tommy said quietly. “This was after Ollie moved out. I don’t know what they were thinking, what their justification was-.”

“Control.” Thea said. “You weren’t there until the end the day he left, but Mom told him if he moved out, she’d cut him off. Except she can’t because Ollie’s old enough to access his trust fund. So, they- she asked Laurel to find a loophole, and the only one she could think of was having Oliver declared incompetent because the court would assign him a guardian and they wanted it to be my mom.”

“And what does this have to do with Ms. Michaels, if I may ask?”

“I might’ve accidentally blurted it out a few days ago.” Tommy said. “Everyone was shocked, and angry, but Lyla- she smashed a mug against the wall, grabbed her jacket and looked like she was gonna go have a word with Moira but Digg stopped her.”

Dinan added the incident to the list of things to bring up with Lyla when they finally got clearance to talk to her about her history with Oliver.

“Right after Laurel started working on that with Moira, she tried to talk me into testifying about Oliver’s mental state if they went to court about it. I turned around and called Ollie. It just didn’t sit right.” He said. “I’m just glad Thea overheard them talking and told him what they were planning.”

“Is that why they pressed harassment charges?” McKenna asked.

“Yes and no. I think they would’ve reached a breaking point eventually, with how…..adamant
Laurel was that she needed to talk to Ollie, but knowing what they were doing? It gave them a reason not to wait for her to go away.” Thea answered before moving on to sharing a little bit about Moira’s behavior since Oliver moved out.

Soon, the sun was setting and Thea mentioned they should head home. Before she left, Dinan asked her if she could look at a few photos and say if she recognized anyone.

While Thea was doing that, Tommy pulled McKenna aside.

“I didn’t get to say this yesterday, or Saturday, but its nice to see you.”

“Thanks. I just wish it was under better circumstances. Much better ones.”

“I know what you mean.” He said. They stood in silence for a few moments. “I know this might not be allowed, because of you helping the feds and investigating, and I’ll understand if you say “no”, even if that’s not why, but- I don’t suppose you wanna grab a cup of coffee and catch up?”

She smiled. “I’d like that, but maybe not in the next few days. Why don’t you text me Monday or Tuesday?”

He agreed just as Thea was finishing up. They walked out of the precinct together and drove to Felicity’s house.

When Felicity came home, Oliver was reading in the living room. She kissed him hello before Donna asked to talk to her. She told Felicity that she had quit her job and was moving to Starling as soon as she figured out what she was going to do. To her satisfaction, Felicity seemed excited that her mother was going to move closer.

Thea and Tommy arrived, looking upset but not distraught. Everyone agreed not to ask them how the interview went, since they probably wouldn’t want to talk about it. Roy arrived next, but Walter didn’t join them for dinner. He had a very late conference call with an overseas affiliate, so he was stuck at the office.

Oliver reheated some leftover chicken parmesan from the night before and everyone sat around the table enjoying themselves. Being Friday night, everyone wound up staying and crashing at the house.

As Oliver and Felicity were getting into bed, he turned to say goodnight to her. ‘Today was a pretty good day.’ It had been a better day than he expected it to be.

‘Good, I’m glad.’ She responded. ‘You deserve to only have good days.’

He wasn’t sure that he believed that, but didn’t argue with her. ‘I love you.’

‘I love you too.’ She signed back. He started to curl up behind her, the way that they normally laid while cuddling. She put a hand on his arm. “Wait, I wanna try something.” He looked at her curiously. She gently moved him so that he was laying down with his head on her chest. She began running her fingers through his hair. “I feel bad that I’m always the cuddlee, and I wasn’t sure how you’d feel about being the little spoon, so- is this okay?”

‘It’s perfect.’ He told her before relaxing into the mattress. Felicity’s fingers carding through his hair lulled him to sleep.
Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 61

Chapter Summary

Felicity makes a mistake, Laurel gets a visitor and Lyla hears some promising news.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Felicity started to wake up, the first sensation that she felt was that there was something heavy on her chest. Her brain wasn’t fully awake yet, so she briefly wondered if something had fallen on her overnight. Then, the weight on her chest moved slightly, she felt a tiny gust of air on her collarbone and she remembered. Opening her eyes, she looked down to see Oliver, still asleep with his head lying on her chest.

He had one arm around her waist, holding her close to him. He looked so comfortable and happy in that position that she almost wished she could reach her phone so that she could capture this moment on film. She watched him sleep for a bit, enjoying the quiet of the morning.

After a while, Oliver’s breathing changed and his eyes blinked a couple of times as he started to wake up. He gave his girlfriend a sleepy, but happy smile and tightened his grip around her waist a little bit, pulling them even closer together.

When Oliver woke up in bed with Felicity, the first things he felt were warm, happy and overall, loved. He didn’t need to wake up suddenly. He never felt like he needed to jump out of bed and do anything. Here, in bed with Felicity, he could enjoy some peace, even if it was only for a little while. Once he was awake enough to do so, Oliver raised himself up slightly so that he could kiss her.

“Good morning.” She said when they pulled apart.

‘Good morning.’ He signed back, reluctantly letting go of her in order to respond. ‘I wish there was a way I could sign without needing to stop hugging you.’

“How about we come up with a secret code?” She suggested. “Like, three quick taps mean “I don’t wanna stop hugging you, but I need to sign something”. Or is that too lame?”

‘It’s a good idea, but maybe not three short taps. I do fidget sometimes and if I start tapping, it might send the wrong message.’ He moved back to his previous position with his head on her chest and her running her fingers through his hair.

“Well, we don’t need to figure it out right now.” She assured him. “Did you sleep well?” He nodded but didn’t say anything. “That’s good.” The conversation died off there, and they were left in a comfortable silence.

After several minutes of the couple cuddling together, Oliver pulled himself into a sitting position and turned to Felicity. ‘Do you think Tommy’s okay?’

“I think he’s as okay as he can be right now.” She answered. “Do you think something’s wrong?”
‘He’s been weird the last few days, off. And he was like this before I got interviewed.’ He said. ‘I think it has to do with the kidnapping. I wanna ask but-.’ Oliver knew first hand how annoying it was to constantly be asked if everything was okay when he wasn’t ready or willing to talk about things. He wanted to know what was bothering Tommy, but he didn’t want to seem like a hypocrite.

“Well, I think we leave Tommy be for right now and when he’s ready to talk about it, he’ll tell us.” She suggested.

‘You’re right, as always.’ He said before kissing her again.

This time, instead of it just being a quick peck, Felicity tried to deepen the kiss. Oliver seemed to have the same idea, and soon they were French-kissing. The position they were in was awkward for Oliver, so he maneuvered so that he was hovering over her, but not lying on top of her. One of his hands was in her hair with the elbow holding his weight, while the other was cupping her cheek. Felicity had one hand caressing his stubble with the other one wrapped around his torso.

Felicity moved her head slightly after a few minutes, causing the hand around Oliver’s midsection to slip lower by accident. Like a bucket of cold water had hit him, Oliver pulled away from Felicity and moved so that they were no longer touching at all and he seemed a hundred miles away. He started breathing erratically as well.

“Oliver?” She asked in confusion.

He held up one shaky hand. She didn’t know if it meant “Stop” or “give me a moment” or something else. She sat up all the way and watched him take several deep breaths and try to calm himself down.

“So you want me to leave you alone for a little bit?” She asked when his breathing seemed calmer. He shook his head vigorously. He didn’t want her to leave. “Okay. You’re safe, Oliver. It’s January 19, 2013. You’re in Starling City, you’re at home. Whatever you’re remembering, it’s over. No one can hurt you. You’re safe, Oliver.”

Oliver was able to calm himself down after a few minutes and when he came back to himself, he gave Felicity a sheepish look. ‘I’m so-.’

“Don’t apologize. You don’t have anything to be sorry for.” She told him. “Can you- are you up for telling me what caused you to have that reaction? You don’t have to tell me the story, you don’t have to answer at all if you don’t want to, I just- if its something I did, I wanna be sure I don’t do it again.”

‘Your hand, it- it was- I don’t like being touched where your hand was.’ He answered. He knew it was Felicity, he knew she’d never intentionally hurt him, but the memories he couldn’t escape made it impossible for him to separate Felicity’s touch from much crueler hands in that moment.

“Okay.” She said. “It won’t happen again, I promise. And I’m sorry.”

‘You didn’t know.’

“I can still be sorry, and I am. It was an accident, yes, but it made you uncomfortable. It made you feel unsafe, and that’s not okay.” She said. “I’m gonna make some coffee. I’ll be back in a few minutes, okay?”

Oliver needed a little bit of time alone, she could tell. She also wanted a few moments to collect her own thoughts. Seeing Oliver in pain wasn’t easy for her and being the one to cause it, even if she
hadn’t meant to, was difficult. He gave a small nod and she walked into the living room.

She was partway to the kitchen when Lyla spotted her and saw she had tears in her eyes. “What’s wrong?”

Felicity just shook her head. She didn’t want to talk about it right now. She started to make a fresh pot of coffee. The pot had just finished brewing when Oliver came into the kitchen. She poured him a mug and handed it to him. When he took it from her, their fingers brushed for a few seconds and he gave her a tiny smile. He wasn’t mad, he just needed a little bit of time to recover from his flashback. He took a few sips as Donna and John wandered into the kitchen as well.

‘Where are Roy, Tommy and Thea?’ Oliver asked, noticing they weren’t in the living room, dining room or kitchen.

“They left about twenty minutes ago to head to their ASL class.” Donna answered. “We thought you two were still asleep and they didn’t want to wake you.”

After Oliver finished his coffee, he asked the others if scrambled eggs were okay for breakfast. Everyone agreed and he started getting out the ingredients to make them. Breakfast was quiet and once it was over, Felicity mentioned she needed to head out to get something. Lyla went with her, hoping she might get an answer about why Felicity was so upset today.

“Umm….are we in the right place?” Tommy asked as Thea and Roy led him into the room of the rec center where the ASL classes were held. He entered the room and was surprised that there was only one other person in the room. “Did the location change or something?” Thea and Roy looked at one another before they started cracking up.

“I see we have a full house, and then some, today.” Stephanie said, looking up from her phone. “I’m Stephanie, the instructor.”

“Tommy, Merlyn.” Tommy replied.

“Oh, I know.” She said. “Roy, why don’t you and Thea do some more of what we were working on last week while I see where Tommy’s at skillwise?”

“Oh, I’m- I’m not anywhere. I’m at level zero, if I could go into the negative, I’d be in the negative.” He said.

“I doubt that, but let’s see.” She said, leading him to two chairs.

Felicity drove to the foundry and as soon as she made it to one of the computers, she started typing furiously. She hadn’t said anything to Lyla the entire drive over either. The former ARGUS agent let the behavior slide for about fifteen minutes before she spoke up.

“Felicity, you wanna explain to me what’s going on?”

“I need to- the girl Moira wrote those checks to, I’m trying to find her like we’d talked about.” She answered, not looking at the other woman. She needed to take down Moira, she needed to make things better for Oliver. This was the only way she could do that right now.

“That’s not what I meant and you know it.” Lyla said. “Clearly, something happened this morning,
something that upset both you and Oliver. Do you wanna talk about what it is?”

“I- we were kissing, one of my hands slipped and- I made him have a flashback.” She said. Tears started to fall. “Everything was fine until I messed it up.”

“What was his reaction?”

“He froze and started to panic.” She said. “I made him- he had a panic attack because of me. What if-?”

“Okay. Stop before you talk yourself into believing you’re a terrible person. Because you’re not. I’m guessing whatever the trigger was, you didn’t know about it until it happened.” She waited for Felicity to nod before continuing. “I’m also going to assume that you’re never gonna do that particular thing again. And I’ll go a step further and say you’ve apologized to Oliver and he’s tried to downplay it, as something like “you didn’t know” or “he should’ve told you”. Oliver’s gonna be okay, he’s a little off-kilter and this happening after the last few days doesn’t help, but it’s going to be okay. They’re called “accidents” for a reason.”

“Why do I feel like a complete monster right now, then?”

“Because you love him. You love him and you accidentally did something that hurt him.” She said. “So, if you wanna stay down here for a few hours, looking for Samantha Clayton to make yourself feel better, I’m not gonna stop you.”

“I need to do something. Something useful.” She said. “You recognized the name. You told me he mentioned her in Moscow, but you didn’t really say how she came up, or what he said.”

“He told me he’d had a fling with her during one of his and Laurel’s “breaks” and that he got her pregnant.”

“Oliver has a child?”

Lyla shook her head. “A few weeks after she told him about the baby, she had a miscarriage.”

“Or Moira found out, stepped in and made her get rid of the baby.”

“I don’t know, which is why I wanna find her and see what she did with those two checks.”

Felicity kept typing. “Well, I can’t tell you what she did with those checks, but I found her. She lives in Central City.”

“What else can you find out about her?”

After a lot of debate, the agents ended up having to draw lots to decide who was going to go to the Cassidy Women’s Penitentiary to interview Laurel. They knew, based solely on the court transcript, that interviewing her wasn’t going to be easy and that the conversation would take up more time than it needed to.

Reeves was unfortunate enough to draw the short straw, so he drove out to the prison and requested to see Laurel Lance. He was taken to a private visitation room, normally reserved for inmates to meet with their lawyers. About five minutes later, Laurel was shown into the room.

“Who are you?” She asked as soon as she sat down.
“My name is Agent Reeves. I’m with the FBI.’ He answered. “I’d like to ask you a few questions.”

“About what?”

“A few different things. The wreck of the Queen’s Gambit for one. Moira Queen for another.” He said. She just looked at him for several moments. “I can wait for your lawyer to arrive if you’d like to-.”

“I’m my lawyer.” She said sharply.

Reeves’ research indicated that while Laurel had been a lawyer, the state of Washington had disbarred her. He could’ve pointed this out to her, but if she hadn’t been informed by the state bar, it wasn’t his job to tell her.

“Right, my apologies.” He said.

“Why are you investigating the Gambit?” She asked. “We already know who’s responsible for what happened.”

“We do? Who is it then?” He asked, wondering if the truth about the “accident” was some kind of open secret in Starling. Something every knew about but no one dared mention.

“Ollie, of course!” She yelled. “it’s all his fault.”

“You’re saying Oliver Queen caused the Gambit to sink?” He repeated.

“He didn’t- no, he didn’t make it sink, but what happened to Sara, that was all his fault.” She insisted. “And he’s the reason I’m in here. If he’d finally grown up and stopped faking his “condition”, I wouldn’t be in here.”

Reeves made a note that asking Laurel about the Gambit was a waste of time, as it was clear that the yacht only led to her ranting about how Oliver had killed her sister and that everything that had happened to her between then and now was his fault.

Laurel’s rant about Oliver faking his mutism died down and the FBI agent was finally able to get a word in edgewise. “Switching gears for a moment, I’d like to discuss Moira Queen with you. More specifically, something we uncovered during an investigation unrelated to the Queen’s Gambit. Someone we spoke to informed us that Moira Queen approached you about having her son declared mentally incompetent.”

“I can’t talk about what one of clients discusses with me. Attorney-client privilege.” She said.

“Yes, but you’re no longer an attorney.”

“What?!”

“The Washington State Bar Association disbarred you.” He said. “Did Moira Queen ask you to help her have Oliver declared incompetent?”

“Yes.” She spat out.

“Did she specify why she wanted that to happen?”

“He wasn’t listening to her, he wouldn’t do what she wanted. He was faking being mute to avoid having to apologize to me. He needed some kind of a wake-up call and we were the only ones willing to do it!”
As she spoke, she grew angrier and angrier. Yes, Oliver had ruined her life, but Moira played a hand in that too. She came to Laurel for help, but when their plan went awry and Laurel needed help, Moira did nothing. She should’ve done something, pulled some string or another behind the scenes, to make this whole situation go away. Oliver and Felicity were at the top of Laurel’s shitlist, and now, Moira was right below them.

Reeves asked a few more questions, mostly centered around what Moira’s plan was to prove Oliver’s mental state, which Laurel answered in as few words as possible, still too angry. He thanked her for her time and left. A guard escorted her back to her cell.

“Where were you?” Her cellmate asked in disinterest when she returned.

“Some agent wanted to talk to me.”

“Talking to cops, not a very smart move in here.” The woman said before going back to her book.

Lyla insisted that Felicity didn’t spend the whole day hiding in the foundry, so after the blonde got a few searches up and running, Lyla announced they were going to Jitters for a snack before heading back to the house. She was pretty sure that Oliver was having as much of a bad day as Felicity was because of what happened and she didn’t want both of them to mope around.

Lyla got a regular coffee when they reached the coffee shop while Felicity ordered one of their seasonal lattes, which took longer to make. Given that it was broad daylight and they were in a busy coffee shop, Lyla left Felicity by the counter to wait for her drink so that she could put a little bit of cream in her coffee. She was putting the lid back on the cup when someone called her name.

“Agent Michaels.” Dinan said, adding a few sugar packets to her coffee. “Didn’t expect to run into you here.”

“Not an agent anymore. It’s just Ms. Michaels now.” She said. “They don’t have coffee at the SCPD?”

“They don’t have good coffee there.” Dinan answered. “Besides, I get a little stir crazy being in that office for too long.” She could only reread her notes so many times before she couldn’t stand looking at them anymore and felt the need to be anywhere except in the office.

“Understandable, but I get the feeling you didn’t approach me just to say hi.”

Doyle had asked some of his buddies in different agencies if they recognized the name “Lyla Michaels” after he interviewed her. He wanted to know what the taskforce might uncover when they got the clearance they needed to talk to her. One of his buddies, in DC, had plenty to say about her. She served six years with Army intelligence and three tours in Afghanistan. After she was discharged, Waller personally selected her for ARGUS. She then became something of a legend within ARGUS and others in the Beltway Set were convinced she’d be the director once Waller moved on.

Knowing that, Dinan wasn’t surprised that Lyla saw through her act. She looked to make sure that Felicity was still waiting for her order before answering. “We’re working on getting the necessary clearance to be read in on how you first met Oliver. I thought you should know.”

Lyla nodded. “Good. The second you do, call me. I don’t care if it’s 2AM. Don’t wait a single minute. Call me.”
“Of course.” She was slightly taken aback by how serious the other woman was acting.

“What happened- what Waller did to me was bad enough, but what she did to him, I- someone needs to know, someone needs to make sure she doesn’t- the very second you get that call, you understand me?”

“We’re working on it. I promise, we’re gonna get that clearance.” Dinan said. “And, no matter what you say, what we find out, we aren’t going to interview Oliver again. Not about this, or anything else. He- we wanted to solve this without needing to talk to him and I’m very sorry we couldn’t.”

“Okay, I got my cookie, I got my latte. Crisis averted.” Felicity announced, walking over to Lyla. “Oh, Agent Dinan….hi. How are- should I ask you how you are? Is that appropriate? Sorry, I’ve just never- I don’t know what to do in this situation.” She trailed off.

“Hello, Ms. Smoak. I’m doing well. I should probably get back to the office. I hope you both have a nice day.” She answered before leaving.

“Did I interrupt something?” Felicity asked.

“Nothing important.” Lyla answered. “Let’s go.”

After Sara had confronted Nyssa about Oliver being alive, and Nyssa not telling her, Sara yelled for a few minutes before hanging up. She vowed they’d finish this argument in person. Nyssa didn’t hear anything from her girlfriend on Friday, and decided to leave Sara to calm down rather than call her and try to explain.

Mid-day on Saturday, her phone rang again. “Ra’s is refusing to let me leave Nanda Parbat right now.”

“I suspected he wouldn’t allow you to come here. That’s why I didn’t tell you about Oliver Queen being found alive or returning to Starling City. You’d want to come here and Father wouldn’t react well.”

“Have you seen him?” She asked.

“A few times in passing, yes.”

“Probably when you went to check up on Laurel, I’m guessing. Those two are-.”

“I was doing something related to my assignment both times I’ve spotted him. And he and your sister don’t seem to be together.” Again, Nyssa didn’t want to lie to Sara but at the same time, she couldn’t very well recap the entire saga of Laurel’s arrest and subsequent imprisonment over the phone.

“Just wait. It’s only a matter of time before-.”

“With all due respect, beloved, the Oliver Queen you knew isn’t the same man who returned home last year.” Nyssa cut her off. “I need to go, there’s a task I need to complete.”

They said goodbye and hung up. Nyssa suited up to toy with Malcolm a little more. It would be a shame if he thought she’d left him to his own devices.
After ASL class was over, Tommy decided to treat Roy and Thea to lunch. He was starting to feel guilty for all of the food of Felicity and Oliver’s that he was eating. He also wanted a chance to talk with the couple in front of him without an audience.

“How are you both doing after the last few days?”

“I’m….doing as well as I can be.” Thea said. Roy only nodded in response.

“That’s good.” He said. “I didn’t have any nightmares last night, which is an improvement from Thursday night.”

“You had nightmares too?” She asked.

“Of course I did. After hearing what happened, the little bit that Ollie shared, I-.”

“I know.” Roy said, understanding what he was trying to say. “When Digg offered to fill Walter and I in on what was said, you know what I said when he mentioned Oliver’s worried about upsetting us? I said I’d had nightmares before. I was such an idiot, how dumb of thing to say.”

Thea was about to respond when her phone rang. It was Walter, so she answered it. “Hello?”

“Your mother is wondering where you are.” He said. “I think it would be a good idea if you spent a few hours at the mansion today so that she doesn’t become suspicious.”

“Ugh, fine. Tell her I went to visit Tommy but I’m on my way home.” She said before hanging up. “Why can’t my birthday come faster?”

She explained to Tommy and Roy what was going on. Tommy drove Thea back to the mansion. Moira tried to confront her daughter about where she’d been but the teenager just stormed upstairs and slammed her door shut. After dropping Thea off, Tommy and Roy went to Oliver and Felicity’s house.

After Felicity and Lyla left after breakfast, Oliver walked over to the couch and just sat there, staring into space. He’d messed up this morning. He’d had a flashback and now Felicity didn’t want to be around him. He shouldn’t have reacted the way he did, he should’ve pretended like he was okay. Why didn’t he just pretend he was fine?

Donna, sensing something was wrong but not sure what to do, asked Oliver if he wanted to watch a movie or something. He just shrugged and slumped against the couch. Donna, Digg and Oliver sat there in silence for a while before Donna decided enough was enough.

“Did you and Felicity have a fight?” She asked. He shook his head. “Do you wanna tell me what’s wrong?”

“What’s wrong is me.” He signed. “My brain’s fucked up. I can’t- sometimes I can’t make the images and the memories go away and- this morning, I couldn’t and she finally realized that I’m not worth the effort. So, she left as soon as she could.’

“There are so many things wrong with that sentence that I don’t know where to start.” She said. “Oliver, Felicity loves you. There’s nothing you can do or say that will change that. And Felicity doesn’t run away from anything.”
‘Why did she leave with Lyla then?’ He asked.

“I think she wanted to give you some space, after whatever happened this morning happened.” She said. “Or maybe, whatever happened, whatever memory you had to relive, she thinks it’s her fault it happened. So, she needed some time.”

Oliver shrugged again, not believing the reassurances Donna was trying to give him. Digg was about to add something when the front door opened. Lyla and Felicity walked in.

Felicity gave Oliver a nervous but hopeful smile, which he returned. “Any space on that couch for me?” She asked. She wasn’t sure what to do here.

‘For you? Always.’ He signed, moving over slightly. His girlfriend took a seat next to him, close enough that their legs were touching, but not much else. She wanted to let him decide what he was comfortable with. After a few moments, Oliver took her hand in his.

‘I’m sorry about this morning.’ She signed to him. ‘I know you wanna say I shouldn’t be or that it’s not my fault, but I hurt you. I made you relive some really sucky things, and I’m sorry. I never wanted to hurt you, but I did.’

‘You don’t think I overreacted?’

‘Not at all.’ She assured him. ‘And you aren’t bad or weak or stupid because of how you reacted. You’re human Oliver, a wonderful human, but we all have our limits. I’m sorry for hurting you. Do you forgive me?’

‘I forgive you.’ He told her as he wrapped his arm around her waist, pulling her a little bit closer to him.

Donna, Lyla and Digg all smiled, happy that Oliver and Felicity seemed to be recovering from what happened this morning. Donna was about to say something when Tommy and Roy walked in.

“Thea’s at the mansion. She doesn’t want Moira to notice she’s not there as often. She’ll probably be here later.” Tommy announced. “While she’s away, though, we’ve got some planning to do.”

“Planning for what?” Donna asked.

“Her birthday’s on the 31st. She’s turning 18. Do any of you know what she wants? Have you started coming up with plans?” He asked. Everyone shook their heads.

“I don’t think she’s gonna want anything big, like a huge blow out.” Felicity said. “Maybe something that’s just us?”

Everyone started suggesting ideas, but they couldn’t decide on anything. Tommy thought they should have a small party. Oliver mentioned dinner. Donna suggested a day of total relaxation. Lyla and Digg both mentioned that they should also include Walter, in case Thea had mentioned anything to him or if Moira had planned something. They couldn’t come to a consensus about what to plan.

“Well, her birthday’s a Thursday, so we could do something small on the actual day and then something a little bigger or longer on the Saturday after.” Roy cut in. “Like, dinner, presents and cake on her birthday and then on Saturday we have a movie marathon or treat her to a spa day or something.”

“Roy Harper, you’re a genius.” Felicity said.
“You know my last name?” He asked.

“If it’s online, I can find it.” She replied.

Thea stormed out of the mansion. She knew she just needed to get through the next week and five days. Once she was 18, she could move out and only have to see her mother if she wanted to. Twelve days never felt so long though.

Moira cornered her and made a comment, pretending to care where Thea had been and the teenager lost it. All of her anger at her mother for the way she’d treated Oliver, all of her resentment for the way she locked herself away after the Gambit sank, neglecting Thea, it was all so fresh in her mind that when Moira made her comment, she snapped. She pushed past her mother and walked towards the door.

“Where are you going?”

“Away from you.” Moira ran after her. Thea made it outside and plopped down on the grass of the front lawn.

“Thea-.”

“No, can you please just- whatever you’re gonna say, just….dont.”

“My son pretends I don’t exist and all I ever get from you lately is contempt.”

“Maybe you should think about why that is.” She remarked. “I wanna be alone right now. Please, just go.”

Moira watched her daughter for a few moments, and when it was clear that Thea wasn’t going to move or look at her, she sighed and went back into the house. Thea stayed sitting on the grass, looking out at the driveway and let herself get lost in thought.

She only came back to reality when she saw a car drive up to the gate and someone step out of it. The woman looked familiar, so Thea stood up and walked over to the gate. She froze when she got close enough to see that the driver was Dinah Lance.

“Thea, I don’t know if you remember me, but-.”

“I know who you are.” She said.

“I’m looking for Oliver. There’s- I need to talk to him.”

“I think Ollie’s had his fill of Lance family members.” She said.

“Laurel and Quentin, I won’t try to justify what they did. It was wrong, the way they’ve treated him is horrendous and unfair. I don’t- I’m here to apologize to Oliver, not to upset him.”

“Well, he’s not here.” Thea said.

Dinah started fidgeting with something in her hand. She held out an envelope to Thea. “I spent my train ride trying to figure out what I was gonna say if I got a chance to talk to him. Can you- will you pass this along to Oliver when you see him? That’s all I ask.”

“How do I know this letter isn’t gonna upset him?” She asked. “You say you just wanna talk, that
you wanna apologize but-.” Dinah had always been the nicest of the Lances, she was the only one who was willing to let Thea attend Sara’s funeral, but Quentin and Laurel nearly caused a scene when they saw her. Dinah was nice, from what Thea remembered, but that was five years ago and people changed.

“The envelope’s unsealed. You can go ahead and read it if you’d like. Just, please, give it to Oliver.” She said before turning to get into the car.

“You came all this way to deliver a letter?”

“No, I’m in town for work for the next few days.” Dinah lied. “I came a little early to deliver a letter.”

Dinah drove away and Thea stood in front of the gate, staring at the envelope in her hands. What was she supposed to do?

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 62

Chapter Summary

Thea continues to avoid her mother, Malcolm gets a visitor, Oliver tries to recover more from his flashback that morning and the task force gets some interesting, but unsurprising, news.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Walter tried to pay attention to the meeting he was sitting in, but his thoughts kept drifting to Oliver and Thea. Were they both okay? He hoped he hadn’t made a mistake by suggesting Thea spend some time at the mansion that day.

“-need to discuss the press’s reaction to the announcement of the Arrow Initiative and a few other things.” Mr. Correll, the head of QC’s PR department said. “While there are some who are skeptical of our motives in setting up such an initiative, response has been mostly positive.”

“And what do the detractors say?” Another man asked.

“Mostly that we’re doing it solely for PR, given how the closing of the steel working plant meant higher unemployment in the Glades. That our contribution will be spare change compared to the revenue we see. Some of the less blatantly biased concerns surround whether this is a one-time donation or if we’ll be donating on a regular basis.”

“I will be sure that’s addressed when the stockholders discuss the Initiative next week.” Walter noted. “Provided they don’t vote to end the Initiative, which I don’t see happening.”

“Some of the stockholders want to end the program?”

“Only one has expressed that desire. They will be discussing that. As well as funding for security upgrades. A few other matters might be added to the list as well.” He said. “I suspect it will be a long meeting.”

“Well, I hope they don’t mothball the project, because it’s announcement helped raise the share price and we didn’t see as much of a decline following Miller, and other employees, arrests as we expected. It’s been good for PR, even though we didn’t create the project solely for that reason.” Correll said. “While we’re on the topic of the board, or more accurately board members, I feel I should mention Thea and Oliver’s public profiles. It’s good news. Thea learning ASL has attracted attention, good attention. As have the public sightings of Oliver with either Felicity or Thea. One person on Twitter referred to the pictures of them out and about as their daily dose of wholesome content. I wish I could say that feeling was shared among the whole family but.-.”

“My wife’s been experiencing a great deal of bad publicity lately. I’m aware.” Walter said. “Do I even want to ask for specifics?”

“I feel that you should know, even if its unpleasant.”
After Dinah left, Thea stared at the envelope in her hands for several moments. Should she read it? Burn it? Call Oliver and ask him what he wanted her to do with it? Unsure of what to do, she went back into the mansion and tried to avoid her mother. As she neared her room, she heard footsteps coming towards her and tried to hide.

“You’re a little old to be playing hide and seek, Miss Thea.” Raisa said with a smile on her face when she saw Thea hiding behind a large vase.

“Sorry, I thought you were- it doesn’t matter.” She said.

“Are you going to go visit Mr. Oliver tonight?”

“You know where I’ve been going?”

“I had a suspicion.” The Russian woman answered. “Come to the kitchen before you leave. I made some of those cookies he liked when he was a boy.” She said before continuing down the hallway.

Thea watched Raisa walk away and a small smile formed on her face. Moira had never been the most maternal person, and after the Gambit sank, she felt like Raisa was more of a mother to her than her own mother. It was nice to be reminded that Oliver hadn’t been as alone as he thought he was. The teenager went to her room and locked the door before pulling out her phone. She hit the button to FaceTime Felicity and hoped she wouldn’t think something was wrong.

Everyone at Oliver and Felicity’s house was talking about ideas for Thea’s birthday when Felicity’s phone started going off. People were still talking so, after seeing who it was, she raised her voice slightly.

“I love all of you, but shut up. Thea’s trying to FaceTime me.” She said. “So, let’s not ruin the surprise, okay?” Everyone quieted down and Felicity slid her phone across the screen to accept the call. “Hey, everything okay?”

“Everything’s fine, I just- there was a visitor at the mansion today.”

“What is your mother trying to do now?” Donna scoffed. “Sorry, I just- I’ve got some opinions about that woman and- never mind. Not the time.”

“It was Dinah Lance, Laurel’s mom.” Thea said. “She stopped by wanting to talk to Ollie, I told her he wasn’t here and she gave me this letter she’d written him. I didn’t- I wasn’t sure what I should do with-”

“What does it say?” Oliver asked his sister. ‘You don’t- can you open it and tell me if she’s- if it’s gonna upset me?’ He could see that Thea looked a little uncomfortable. ‘If you don’t wanna do that, it’s okay. I’ll ask someone else.’

“No, I will, I’ll do it. I just- I’m nervous about what it says.” She explained. She set the phone down and opened the envelope. “Here we go.”

Everyone with Oliver was huddled behind Felicity so that they could see Thea reading the letter and watch her expression. She didn’t seem to be angry, which was good, but after a point, she did start tearing up. When she finished, she cleared her throat before speaking.

“This letter, its- there’s nothing mean or intentionally hurtful written. She doesn’t seem to- this wasn’t written to be malicious or cause you pain, its- after the Gambit was lost, after the search
was called off, my guidance counselor told me to write you and Dad a letter, to get my feelings out. This reads like something like that.” Thea explained. “She- it doesn’t say anything hurtful, but it won’t be easy to read. There are parts that are kinda heavy. Especially after the last few weeks.”

It was hard to believe that the hostage situation at Applied Sciences, and Oliver’s abduction by the Red Mask Gang and his interview with the task force had all happened in the last two weeks. It was a lot to deal with.

‘You’re right. I think- thank you, Speedy, but I don’t think I should read the letter now.’ He told her. ‘Can you bring it the next time you visit though?’

“Of course.” She told him. “Oh, and I’ve got a surprise for you the next time I see you. Don’t worry, it’s a good surprise.” They said their goodbyes and the video call ended. Thea, reluctantly, was having dinner at the mansion to make Moira less suspicious of where she kept disappearing to.

“Thea’s gonna move out of the mansion the moment she turns 18, isn’t she?” Donna asked. “I think she should, and not just because I need a roommate.” Everyone gave her strange looks.

“Oliver, Felicity, I love both of you, but I can’t stay in your guest room forever. Besides, I’m sure you want a little more privacy sometimes.”

“I don’t….not like having you here,” Felicity said. She liked her mother being around, but it was true that there were times that having her mother living with her got a little annoying. Donna staying with them was nice, but sometimes she needed her space.

“Which is Felicity-speak for saying that you like me being here most of the time, but sometimes I get on your nerves. It’s okay to say you need your space.”

“Well, I don’t want you to think I want you to leave, it’s just-.”

“Felicity, it’s okay.” Her mother said. “I love getting to spend more time with you, but I think I need a place of my own too.”

“Have you started looking for places Donna?” Digg asked.

“Not yet. I need to pack up everything in Vegas and see how much space I need before I go looking.”

“I should probably do that too.” Tommy muttered. Everyone looked at him. ‘I might’ve- I don’t wanna talk about it right now, but I don’t wanna live in my dad’s mansion anymore. So, for the last few days, I’ve been staying at a hotel.”

‘Why didn’t you say anything?’ Oliver signed. He signed a little slower than usual so that Tommy could try and understand what he was saying. His friend sheepishly asked him to repeat himself before he understood what he was being asked.

“Ollie, you were dealing with a lot and it just seemed like- I didn’t wanna be that friend. A hotel is fine for now until-.”

“Oliver, whatever happened to the apartment that you found?” Felicity asked her boyfriend. “Did the realtor relist it or- because if you own it, Tommy could move in there for a bit, until he finds his own place. Or Thea or Mom.”

‘I don’t- I’ll call Jean and ask. I kinda…. I forgot about it, with everything that happened right after and-.’ He said. ‘I’ll find out from Jean on Monday.’
Felicity was about to say something when her phone went off again. This time, it was an alarm for something. “Sorry, I gotta go…do something real quick.” She leapt up from her seat and walked into her bedroom. Oliver followed right behind her, confused about what was going on.

‘Everything okay?’ He asked her as she walked into the ensuite bathroom.

“Everything’s fine. I just need to do something.” She said, rummaging through one of the cabinets. She pulled out a small box with a smiling woman’s face on it.

‘Can I sit with you while you do it?’ He asked. ‘Or is it something…..too personal?’

“It’s not. I just- this isn’t my natural hair color.” She said. “I get it dyed at a salon, but every six weeks, I need to touch up my roots. You can sit in here with me, but it might be boring.”

Oliver took a seat on the edge of the bathtub and waited for her to start. Her leaving after what happened this morning really messed with him. He thought he’d ruined everything and she might not come back. Now that she was here, he didn’t want to let her go. He knew he was being a little bit clingy, but couldn’t bring himself to care.

Felicity started taking things out of the box and laying them out on the counter. While she was getting ready, she told Oliver about some of the things she was working on at QC and how her progress finding out more about Tempest was going. She didn’t want to bring up the incident this morning, or her reaction. Soon, she had all of the dye applied to her hair and just needed to wait until it was time to wash it out.

“Will you be my timer?” She asked him. He nodded and took the kitchen timer from her. “I tried using my phone once, but I ignored the timer when it went off and it made my roots the wrong color. It was annoying to even out.”

‘I dyed my hair once.’ He said. ‘I lost a bet against Tommy and he made me dye it pink.’

“Why aren’t there any pictures? You’d think the press would love that.”

‘My parents came home, saw me with pink hair and drove me to a salon outside of town to get it fixed.’ He answered. ‘They could only do so much, so I wore a lot of hats for a while.’

“Probably a smart move. Still, I wish there were pictures of it.” She said. “Then again, I made sure the pictures of me in my goth phase can’t ever make the light of day.”

‘You had a goth phase?’

“I was fifteen and wanted to rebel.” She said with a shrug.

They talked while they waited for the timer to go off. Once the time was done, Felicity washed her hair to rinse the excess dye out. She let it dry for a little bit before walking back out into the living room holding Oliver’s hand. The others were in the middle of a conversation, so they just sat and listened for a bit.

Malcolm hobbled slowly from his bedroom to the kitchen. He was somewhat surprised that Tommy hadn’t come rushing back home, deciding that life was too hard already. He supposed it was only a matter of time.

“You’ve become quite the hermit.” A voice said from behind him.
“What are you still doing here, Nyssa? You delivered your message your mission’s over.”

“You don’t know what my mission entails. Perhaps, it is just beginning.” She countered. “Or maybe, I doubt you fully comprehend the seriousness of the message my father sent me to deliver. Make no mistake, we are watching you. Closely. I would advise that you do not further anger my father or bring attention to the League of Assassins. In any manner.”

Nyssa disappeared into the shadows before he could respond. Malcolm, still recovering from his battle with the Arrow, and annoyed by the Undertaking being delayed, did the only thing he could think of in that moment. He grabbed the closest thing to him and chucked it at the nearest wall.

Belatedly, he realized it was a clay statue Tommy had made for Rebecca when he was five. He never understood why she held onto their son’s crappy art projects to begin with. He hobbled out of the kitchen towards his training room. He needed to hit something.

A few minutes after Thea walked into the mansion and went upstairs to lock herself in her room, Walter came home. He’d been in a business meeting for a few hours, although he wouldn’t tell Moira what the meeting was about.

“I heard that Applied Sciences has put all of its projects on hold.” Moira said when she saw him.

“Not all of them. A majority of ours and all of Unidac Industries’ projects have been temporarily suspended.”

“You can’t do that. Some of those projects can’t be delayed. The projects are suspended, unsuspend them.”

“Moira, there is a team of federal agents investigating the attack on the Applied Sciences Building by the Dark Archer. All of Queen Consolidated’s employees that the Arrow has targeted are known accomplices of that man. The same task force investigating the Queen’s Gambit.”

“What does any of that have to do with Unidac?”

“Miller had access to those files, those projects and we don’t know what he might’ve done at the behest of his blackmailers. And, remember, the Dark Archer is still at large. As long as he’s free, there’s no telling what they might do next. Some of Unidac’s projects, as beneficial as they may be, have the potential to be weaponized. I can’t, in good conscience, let those projects see the light of day under these conditions.”

“Surely, if Miller was going to do something, any damage would already be done by now.”

“We don’t know for certain. There hasn’t been enough time to thoroughly audit everything. And until we have absolute certainty, I stand by my decision, a course of action the authorities recommended we take. If you wish to discuss this further-.”

“I do.”

“I’ll add it to the agenda for the board meeting next week. You’re welcome to try and muster support from enough members to win the vote. Given you will need a minimum of 41% to agree with you, instead of 6%, I believe it will be an uphill battle.”

“I’m sure I can convince Oliver to-.”
“I doubt it. He knows who Doug Miller is, following his arrest, and what his job involved. He actually reached out to me and suggested I take the same steps the federal agents advised us to. He was relieved when he heard I’d already done so. Because someone he cares about very much was attacked and could’ve been killed by the Dark Archer and Miller admitted to helping facilitate the attack.” Walter said.

“What does the attack have to do with the Gambit?” She asked. Had they somehow figured out the Gambit was sabotaged?

“I’m not sure. They’ve been rather tight-lipped about parts of their investigation that don’t involve me, so I can’t say why they’re investigating both or what possible connection the two matters might have.”

It had been a very long day for the task force. There were so many facets to this case, and each new piece of information they uncovered made the investigation more and more complicated. They’d spent the day chasing down leads on various things. Some were looking for answers about Jason Fontenot’s death, others were looking into Oliver’s kidnapping. A team was working in things related to Applied Sciences, another on IDing the people Oliver mentioned in his interview. And, of course, there was the group of agents investigating the Gambit’s wreckage itself.

Some of the new aspects of the case had overshadowed the fact that they still didn’t have confirmation about what had happened with the Gambit and it began to fall by the wayside. Then, Doyle got a call.

“Shit.” He said as soon as the techs finished explaining their findings to him. “Yeah…uh-huh. Okay. Send it to me now. We need to- ok, I got it. Thanks. Come to the precinct once you’re done there, in case someone has questions about this.” He hung up and turned to Dinan and Reeves, who were working nearby. “It’s official. The Queen’s Gambit was sabotaged. Forensics sent their results over to our explosive experts and they confirmed their findings. Definitely wasn’t an act of God.”

“Someone put bombs on the yacht?” Dinan repeated. “Do they know how many or what kind?”

“Just one IED. Placed against the inner hull on the port side. Based on the residue and a bunch of stuff the techs could explain better, it was well hidden. Crew only would’ve found it if they were looking and did a thorough, top-to-bottom search. The placement was picked to cause maximum damage and make the Gambit sink as quickly as possible. You’re gonna get the reports in just a second but- soon as that bomb went off, nothing could’ve saved that boat.”

“Did they find anything else in the wreckage?”

“All the liferafts, except the one, were still on board along with the vests. Only a handful were mostly intact and not corroded or decayed, they looked like they’d been tampered with too. It’s amazing there were any survivors.”

“So, it’s official then.” Reeves said. “This isn’t an accident, its mass murder. Or terrorism.”

“The mechanic who mysteriously died after the yacht set sail? He was a Marine, served as a combat engineer.” Dinan added. “He’d know enough about explosives to sabotage the Gambit.”

“How long can we sit on this? When do we legally need to go public with this information? Not the details, obviously, but that the Gambit’s “accident” is now a homicide and/or terrorism
“Protocol says a week at most, which is enough time to redo any testing that’s been done to confirm results. It also doesn’t account for any open investigation immediately related to the discovery at hand.” Dinan said.

“What?”

“Only way we can hold off for longer than a week is if the Red Masks suddenly remember something they didn’t mention or we exhume the mechanic’s body.” She explained.

“That’s a no-go.” One of the other agents said. “Records say he was cremated.”

“I swear to god, there are spy novels with less complicated plots than this.”

“You’re telling me. And now we’ve got Thea Queen’s interview to add to everything.”

“What do you mean?”

“Between what John Diggle said in his interview, and the woman’s own actions, it’s fair to say that Moira Queen is either connected to the sinking of the Gambit or she knows something about it. She bought the building where we found the wreckage for god’s sake. And yesterday, Thea mentioned that, in addition to ignoring her after the Gambit sank, every time she asked her mother about the family business, her questions were brushed off.” She said. “That, combined with everything else, reeks of a woman trying to maintain control over the company.”

“You think she arranged for the Gambit to be sabotaged?”

“It’s a theory that’s looking more and more plausible. Robert and Oliver dying gave her 45% of the shares and telling Thea not to worry meant she could rest easy for at least six years, ten if she could talk Thea into going to college before claiming her inheritance. Oliver turns up alive and one of the first things she tries to do is have him declared incompetent and put him under her influence.”

“Is there a chance Thea’s in danger by living with her mother?” Doyle asked.

“I don’t think so. From what I can tell, she’s close to everyone on “Team Oliver” as Felicity Smoak called them. If she goes MIA, stops responding to their messages, Moira Queen’s gonna have one very angry ex-ARGUS agent on her hands, at least.” She said. “Once the 31st comes, Thea’s an adult, there’s nothing Moira can do. It’s 11 days, eight of which, she’ll be at school for most of the day.”

After talking with the others for a little bit, Oliver decided he should start making dinner. He was a little upset that Thea and Walter couldn’t join them, but planned to make enough so that they could have leftovers when they stopped by tomorrow. He squeezed Felicity’s hand to get her attention.

‘I’m going to make dinner. Will you lend me a hand?’

“You know- I’ll try, but I’m not great in the kitchen, just to warn you.” She said.

‘You aren’t that bad.’ He assured her. Mostly, he wanted to stay near her for as long as possible. ‘Come on, maybe I can teach you something new.’

She nodded, stood up and walked towards the kitchen with him. In the doorway, she stopped and
turned around. “Hey Lyla, you know that *email* we talked about?” Felicity put a little too much emphasis on the word “*email*” but no one said anything. “I forgot to send it, but its loaded onto my tablet. Can you send it while I help Oliver?”

“Yeah, no problem.” Lyla said, grabbing the tablet. She typed a few things in before pressing send. “And, done.”

“Thanks, I didn’t wanna forget to do that.” She said with a smile before following Oliver into the kitchen.

The “*email*” in question was a series of documents showing that one of the charities Moira donated to frequently, and was once on the board of, used less than 1% of its funds on the actual cause and the rest on parties and events for the charity as well as “travel expenses” for donors. Like Felicity had vowed, she was going to slowly chip away at Moira’s reputation, long enough for Thea’s birthday to come and then, she was going to sink her.

“What was that about?” Oliver asked Felicity.

“If it works, you’ll know. If it doesn’t, I’ll explain later.” She said. “I wanted to help Thea out.” She clapped her hands together once. “So, what are we making?”

Thea stormed into the dining room at the mansion and slumped down in her seat. Walter gave her a sympathetic smile. She didn’t want to be here. She didn’t want to have dinner with her mother, but she couldn’t see a way out of it that wouldn’t make Moira more suspicious than she already was. The teenager kept telling herself that she was so close to being an adult. She just needed to get through a few more days.

Moira told Thea not to slouch, which was ignored. She was about to repeat herself when her phone began ringing. She’d told Thea, many times, no phones at the table, but clearly, Moira didn’t make rules that she herself needed to follow. She looked at the screen and hit “ignore”. It started ringing again a nanosecond later.

“Now is not- what?....Well, where did they get that information?” She asked. “How can you not know? It’s your job to know.”

“Mom?”

“Not now Thea, this call is important.” She said before turning back to her call. “No, I don’t want you to “go find out”. I expect you to already know.”

Thea’s eyes went from Moira to Walter. “She insists I be here for dinner, and then she does this. I don’t- I’m not gonna sit through listening to this. I’m gonna head out. Get dinner somewhere that there’s less drama. You coming?”

“Not tonight.” He said reluctantly. “Tell Tommy that I say hello.”

Tommy was the only “safe” person they could mention within earshot of Moira. When Oliver was mentioned, she either tried to minimize how she treated him or acted heartbroken in an attempt to manipulate Thea or Walter into siding with her. If Felicity was mentioned, she became enraged. Everyone else was a non-entity to Moira.

Thea nodded, went to see Raisa about the cookies she promised and snuck out of the mansion. Someone came in and cleared Thea’s place setting after she left. After more than half an hour on
the phone, Moira came back into the dining room.

“The press have gotten ahold of some private documents related to one of my causes. We need to get Correll on damage control.”

“I will give him a call, but given that this is a personal matter, I’m not sure what he’ll be able to do.” He said.

For dinner, everyone at Felicity’s was having white chicken chili, since it was cold out. While Oliver and Felicity cooked, though mostly Oliver, he made sure he wasn’t too far away from her for more than a few moments. Felicity picked up on this and started to realize that leaving after Oliver’s flashback this morning to “give him some space” wasn’t a good idea. Today had been an emotional enough day, so she decided she’d bring it up in a few days when it wasn’t so fresh. The chili was just about ready when the door opened.

“Finally!” Thea exclaimed. “I’m free!”

“I thought you were having dinner with your mother.” Tommy said.

“I was, but then something happened. She got a call right as we were sitting down, some charity issue she’s blowing out of proportion. Anyway, I wasn’t gonna sit around and wait, so I left.” She said. “And I come bringing goodies. Where’s Ollie?”

“Kitchen.” Digg responded.

Thea walked into the kitchen and found Oliver and Felicity straightening things up while holding hands. “I’ve got a gift for you.” She said in a sing-song voice before holding out a container to her brother. “Raisa made those cookies that you loved as a kid.”

‘She knew you were coming here?’ He asked. Did that also mean that his mother knew?

“She didn’t know, but she gave me the cookies in case I happened to run into you.” She explained. “After everything she’s done for us, I couldn’t just tell her no. And I think we both know that she wouldn’t tell Mom anything at this point.” She pulled a cookie out of the container. “Come on, eat one. You know you want to.”

‘After dinner, okay? Double chocolate chip cookies and chicken chili don’t mix.’ He said. He had missed Raisa’s baked goods.

Everyone sat down and ate. Oliver sat next to Felicity and held her hand for most of the meal. The conversation went all over the place, from Donna’s future move, to asking Thea what she wanted for her birthday to Digg sharing a story about his nephew AJ. After dinner, Thea brought out Raisa’s cookies and everyone tried one. When Oliver bit into his, he started to tear up.

“What’s wrong?” Felicity asked him.

“They don’t taste the same, do they?” Lyla asked. She knew people who’d encountered the same thing. They had a dish from their childhood they were nostalgic about, but it didn’t taste the same as an adult. “You have good memories associated with these, but now that you’re eating them again, it’s not the same.”

‘No, I- it tastes exactly the same.’ He said. ‘They taste….’ Like home, they tasted the way he felt around Felicity. ‘Do you think Raisa will give me the recipe if I ask?’
“I’m sure she will.” Donna said.

They saved the rest of the cookies for Oliver to have later, knowing they were his favorite. After dinner, everyone went into the living room to talk. After a few hours, Oliver realized how tired he was and said he was going to bed. Felicity made her excuses a few minutes later and went to bed as well. Lyla and John went back to Digg’s apartment. Donna slept in the guestroom while Tommy slept on the loveseat and Roy and Thea fell asleep on the couch.

‘Can I ask you something?’ Oliver asked Felicity as they got into bed. She nodded, preparing herself for whatever he might ask. ‘Can we sleep like we did last night? I liked- I like being the big spoon, but I also liked the way we fell asleep last night?’ He liked the feeling of laying his head down on Felicity’s chest and falling asleep in her arms.

“Of course.” She told him. He laid down in the same position as the night before. “You never need to ask, and if you wanna change positions, just let me know.”

‘Okay.’ He signed.

Felicity started to run her fingers through his hair, after making sure he was okay with that. She began to whisper, not really saying anything important, but talking, hoping that her voice would lull him to sleep. It worked and soon, Oliver was fast asleep.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

I don't know if there will be a chapter next week. It will depend on how the finale goes, in all honesty.
Chapter 63

Chapter Summary

Oliver, Felicity and friends have a nice day. Just a nice, quiet, fun day with only a little bit of angst.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is mostly just fluff and people bonding because I couldn't bring myself to write something even a bit more angsty or serious this week.

Sunday morning, Felicity woke up the same way that she did on Saturday. She felt a gust of air on her neck and slowly opened her eyes. Oliver was cuddled up next to her with his arms wrapped around her somewhat tightly. His hold wasn't uncomfortable, but it seemed like subconsciously, he was scared of letting her go. His eyes were closed and he looked very peaceful. There was a small, happy smile on his face as he slept and Felicity had to make a huge effort not to start babbling to herself about how nice it was to see her boyfriend so at ease. She didn’t want to wake him up.

One of her arms was underneath Oliver, but the other one was free. Turning her head slightly, she saw that her phone was sitting on her nightstand near the edge. She grabbed it, it was close enough to grab without disturbing Oliver, and took a few pictures of Oliver peacefully asleep. She then switched it to video mode and propped it up against her alarm clock so that she could get a short video of Oliver fast asleep. She watched Oliver sleep and was about to turn off the camera when he began to stir.

He blinked a few times before looking up at her lovingly. He wasn’t fully awake yet, but he gave her a sleepy, content smile as he leaned up to give her a quick good morning kiss. He laid his head back down on her chest and a few moments later, felt her lips on his forehead. He leaned up again to kiss her and when he pulled away, he spotted the phone.

Felicity gave him a sheepish look, she wasn’t sure if he was okay with her recording him sleeping. Oliver looked at the camera for a moment before giving a wave and turning back to his girlfriend. They spent the next few minutes kissing. He started by giving her short little pecks, which turned into soft and tender, but longer kisses. As time passed, their kisses became more passionate and heated. When they needed to pull apart for air, Felicity put one finger against Oliver’s lips. She loved kissing him, but didn’t have that much endurance or skill at holding her breath.

Instead of just waiting for her, or pulling away, Oliver kissed her fingertip playfully. He then took her hand and kissed the rest of her fingers, causing her to giggle.

“If you keep doing that, things are gonna get too hot for video.” She said. Felicity was attracted to Oliver in every way, including sexually. She wanted to become more intimate with Oliver, but knew their relationship wasn’t ready for that yet. They were taking things slowly and if yesterday’s incident taught her anything, it was that she needed to pay closer attention to his body and reactions
to her touching him. “Which is something I think we’re both on board for soon.”

Two things crossed Oliver’s mind as he shifted to face her better. One, he had no idea how he was so lucky to have her. And two, his growing erection had been rubbing against her leg while they kissed. His cheeks turned red and he went to pull away.

“Oh, none of the guilty-Oliver-face.” She said. “You’re attracted to me. I’m attracted to you, and if there weren’t other people in the house, I’d suggest we explore this part of our relationship a little better. Just not right now.”

His eyes darkened in arousal as he processed what she was saying. Even after seeing his scars, she found him desirable. It was a great ego boost, at least. He moved to kiss her again, passionately, but not as fevered as before. He wound one hand through her hair and used his other arm to circle her waist. She started to run both hands through his hair as well.

Roy didn’t know what woke him up. Maybe it was his body’s natural clock, or something completely random. All he knew was that when he opened his eyes, Thea was still laying on his chest fast asleep. He bent down and kissed her on the forehead, and then heard a snort from next to him. Tommy was awake and looking at Roy with a shit-eating grin on his face.

“What?” He whispered.

“Nothing, it’s just- you two are cute.” Tommy answered. “Second cutest couple I know, after Olicity of course.”

“Olicity?” Roy asked. “As in- oh.”

“Yeah, it was trending yesterday. And that’s the only reason I know.” He said. “Beats “Feliver” which would be the other way to Bennifer their names.” He let out a chuckle. “Anyway, I know I’m not Ollie, and it won’t mean as much coming from me, but I’m glad she has you.”

“Just because you two don’t share parents doesn’t mean you’re not her brother.” Roy pointed out.

“I don’t deserve to be called that.” He said. “When the Gambit- when she needed me most, I wasn’t there for her. Between my dad and- she needed me and I wasn’t there.”

“Maybe, but according to her, you did the best you could and you at least tried. Unlike some other people.”

“Yeah, I guess that counts for something.”

John and Lyla decided that, since it was Sunday, they should have breakfast, just the two of them, before they drove to Felicity’s house. Not only was there no reason to rush over there, but there were a few things they needed to talk about regarding their own relationship.

“At the risk of you telling me not to overthink it, what does you no longer being an ARGUS agent mean for us?” Digg asked Lyla.

“Well, what do you want it to mean?” She responded. “Because our problem wasn’t that we fell out of love. We just- we didn’t know how to be us without a war to fight.”
“Looks like we might’ve found one.” He said, referring to Oliver’s mission. “I still love you.”

“I love you too.”

It was quiet for a few moments and then Digg spoke again. “I didn’t get a chance to ask, but how are you doing with everything Oliver said?”

“I don’t-.”

“The two of us and Oliver and Felicity are the only ones who know about what Waller did to him. Hearing what happened after she double-crossed him, it couldn’t have been easy for you to hear.” He said. “So, honestly, how are you dealing?”

“Not great. He saved me from being- from a terrible death and when he needed me to return the favor, I couldn’t. I kept telling myself that I needed the connections I had at ARGUS, that by staying I could somehow use the agency to help him, but I- he was my friend, my partner and I couldn’t save him.”

John didn’t say anything, but he walked over to where Lyla was standing and engulfed her in a hug. He knew Lyla did everything she could once she learned about Waller’s treachery. Lyla knew that as well, but hadn’t learned how to accept it. They stood there, holding one another for several moments before deciding to head to Felicity’s house.

The sound of Roy and Tommy’s conversation woke Thea up and she started chatting with them about things while they waited for everyone else to wake up. It wasn’t very late and there was nothing pressing that warranted waking the others up. In the midst of their conversation, Felicity and Oliver came out of their bedroom holding hands. Both of their lips were swollen and Felicity was blushing. Her hair was incredibly tousled and Oliver’s was sticking up at weird angles. They seemed completely at ease and greeted everyone happily. Oliver then led Felicity into the kitchen so that she could have her first cup of coffee of the day. The couple seemed lighter and more carefree than they had been in weeks. Thea, Roy and Tommy thought their current behavior was adorable. They liked seeing the people they cared about so happy. Donna came out of the guestroom a few moments too late to see Oliver and Felicity in their blissed out state, but Thea made sure to tell her that both of them seemed to be doing much better this morning.

Felicity was on her second cup of coffee, and Oliver was jokingly trying to convince her to eat some real food before she had more caffeine, when John and Lyla arrived. With everyone except Walter present, Oliver decided they should have brunch and set about making pancakes for everyone. As everyone sat around eating, Donna spoke.

“Thea, I know your birthday’s coming up soon, and it’s a big one. Any plans you’ve got in mind? Any gift ideas you wanna share?” She asked. “The last time person I bought a birthday present for was Felicity, and she always just asks for tech or tech-related stuff so….please give me an idea.” Donna was the only person, besides maybe Lyla, who could ask Thea a question like that and not risk making it seem like she was fishing. Yes, she wanted to know what Thea wanted for her birthday, but the group needed to know what she had in mind for the festivities.

“You don’t- you don’t need to get me anything.” She said. “I- I’m not gonna say that I don’t want anything but…” The only thing Thea had truly wanted for the last five birthdays was for Oliver and her father to be alive. She got half of that wish granted and asking for anything else seemed
selfish. “I guess I haven’t really thought about it. I don’t wanna make it a big deal though.”

‘Fair enough’ Oliver said. ‘Are you going to- will you stay at the mansion after your birthday?’

“If I could move out today, I would.” She said. “Being there is- Mom switches between ignoring me and wanting to know everything I’m doing at all times. It’s- I’ve got so many memories there, but it just doesn’t feel like home anymore.” She sighed. “But I can’t just pack up all of my stuff and crash on your couch indefinitely. I wanna find a place before my birthday comes, but I’ve been putting it off.”

“Any area in particular?” Tommy asked.

She shrugged. “Don’t know. If all else fails, I’m sure Roy would let me move in with him.” She looked at Oliver to judge his reaction.

‘If that’s what you want to do, do it. I’d have to be a hypocrite to say you can’t do that.’ He said, squeezing Felicity’s hand under the table before continuing. ‘Living together is a really big step, though, so you might wanna think it over and discuss it as a couple before you make any decisions.’ He then looked at Roy, who looked uncomfortable. ‘And Roy? It’s okay. I trust you.’

Roy wasn’t uncomfortable because he thought Oliver wouldn’t react well. That was part of the reason, but mostly he was worried about Thea. He lived in the Glades; there’s no way she could live there, or even visit him there. There were a lot of people who hated the Queen family, and all rich people, in the Glades. Roy was pretty convinced that Thea was the one, even so early in their relationship, but he couldn’t ask her to move into his rundown house in the Glades, nor did he want to live off of her money and feel like a burden. Roy nodded distractedly at Oliver’s statement, and made a mental note to talk to Donna after breakfast.

“Well, if you two talk and decide you’re not ready to take that step, I’m looking for a roommate as well.” Donna said. “We could share an apartment. It’ll be like Friends!”

“I love that show.”

“Me too. Felicity and I used to watch it together when it was first airing.”

“Yeah. I loved Monica and Chandler’s story, but I hated how they treated Ross and Rachel for so long.” Felicity added.

“You mean having them dance around each other for no reason?” Thea said. “I hated that too. The writers didn’t need to put in drama for drama’s sake. Let them be happy!”

‘Yeah. Why can’t characters be in happy and healthy, stable relationships? It’s more entertaining to watch them unite to overcome problems than just making them get together and split up 14 times.’ Oliver said. He didn’t watch Friends regularly, but remembered everyone complaining about Ross and Rachel’s relationship.

“Exactly!” Felicity said. “I couldn’t have said it better myself.”

After brunch was over, and everything was cleaned up and put away, Felicity suggested that Team Oliver have a lazy day just watching movies and hanging out at the house. Everyone agreed and moved to the living room to decide what to watch. After some debate, they started watching *A Bug’s Life*. About twenty minutes into the film, Roy asked Donna if he could speak with her in private.

She nodded and led Roy over to the dining room table so that they wouldn’t be overheard. Based
on his expression, she was expecting to hear bad news and prepared herself for that.

“I’ve been thinking a lot about my future and-.”

“You’re leaving Starling City?” She whispered in shock.

“No, no. I’m- not at all. I couldn’t- I’m not leaving.” He assured her. “But I was thinking about what Thea said, about moving in with me, and I- she can’t move into the Glades. It’s not- the Arrow has made things better but some people- as Robert’s daughter, she wouldn’t be safe there. But I can’t afford to move working retail, so- you suggested that I could become an ASL interpreter. I wanna know how I’d go about doing that.”

Happy that Team Oliver wasn’t about to lose a member, Donna relaxed and leaned back in her chair. “Well, there are two roads you can go. You can get the certification and work for an agency, or go it alone and work in a freelance capacity.”

“Do they- if I applied to an agency, would they run a background check?” He asked nervously. “I….did some dumb things when I was younger.”

“I don’t know what Washington’s requirements are, but they probably will.” She admitted. “Since agencies work with government departments, doctors and law enforcement, they have to do a certain level of due diligence. But you also might not need to find an agency.”

He knew what she was thinking. If Oliver found out he was going to start working as an interpreter, he’d hire Roy in a heartbeat. “I can’t ask Oliver to hire me to do that.” He said.

“What if he’s the one asking?” She replied. “What if he asks you to be his interpreter, not because he feels like he has to, but because he trusts you?”

“I’d probably mess everything up.” He said.

“No, you wouldn’t.” She sighed. “QC’s gonna have a board meeting sometime this week. If you’re off, I think it would be a good experience for you to see if you wanna become an interpreter.”

“Aren’t- if I interpret for Oliver, what are you gonna do?” He asked. Oliver only needed one interpreter after all. Having both of them there seemed pointless.

“In day-to-day situations, or short interactions, one interpreter is fine, but for meeting and events, especially long ones, its perfectly normal to have two or even three interpreters there to tag in and out as the event progresses.” She said. “Think about it, okay?”

He nodded and they went back to where the others were watching the movie. *A Bug’s Life* was followed by *Toy Story*, but partway through the movie, Thea stood up and ran into the guestroom. Everyone was startled by this, and Oliver stood up to go talk to his sister, but Felicity rested a hand on his arm.

“I’ll go. I think I might know what this is about.” She said with a smile. “When we’re ready for hugs, I’ll come get you, okay?”

‘Okay. I’m sorry if I did something to upset her.’ He said.

“I don’t think that’s what happened.” She said sadly before going into the guestroom.

When Felicity closed the door behind her, Thea looked up and tried to wipe her tears away without
letting the blonde see it.

“Hey, sorry I ran in here. I killed the mood, didn’t-.” She started to say.

“Please don’t pretend like you’re okay if you’re not.” Felicity said. “You’re allowed to be sad. You’re allowed to cry. In this house, we acknowledge our feelings, the good ones and the bad.” She took a seat next to Thea. “Can I ask why the movie upset you?”

“I forgot that- it’s stupid.” She said.

“No, its not. Did the movie remind you something from before the Gambit?”

“Yeah, it- the night before Dad and Ollie left, he tried to cheer me up because I was upset he was gonna be gone for so long, So, we watched Toy Story. And I- Buzz fell out of the window and it was like I was back in the mansion five years ago.” She said. “Which is stupid because-.”

“One, stop calling your feelings stupid. Two, it’s the furthest thing from it. For years, that was your last memory of Oliver. Now, you’ve got plenty of time to make more memories with him, but for a long time, that was the last time you saw him. I still- certain things remind me of my cousin and I have the same reaction as you just did.” She said. “It’s not a bad thing.”

“I ruined the movie marathon.”

“You didn’t ruin anything.” Felicity sat with Thea until her tears subsided and then stood up. “Now, I’m gonna go get Oliver, because I told him I’d grab him when we were ready for some hugs. I’ll be right back.”

Felicity asked Oliver to come into the guest room and told him Thea could use a hug from her big brother. After each one convinced the other that they were okay, they started to hug. Felicity left the room, giving them some privacy. Everyone else was in the living room with the movie paused, trying not to look like they were eavesdropping.

“What happened?” Tommy asked.

“They just need a few moments.” She responded.

A few minutes later, Thea and Oliver walked out of the guestroom and sat back down on the couch. Diggle pressed play on the remote and Oliver sat there with one arm around his sister and another around Felicity, keeping both of them close.

Once Toy Story was over, it was around lunchtime and Oliver went into the kitchen to start cooking. Even though not everyone was needed to help cook, the group gravitated towards the kitchen so that they could keep the conversations going. As Oliver was walking Roy through how to cut onions the right way, Tommy pulled Felicity aside.

“I kinda need a favor.”

“A favor or a favor?” She asked.

“I- there’s a difference? What’s the difference?” He asked. “Anyway, you know how yesterday, I said I was staying in a hotel? Well, I’ve got some things at my dad’s house, things I don’t wanna- when he realizes I’m not coming back, I’m sure he’s gonna dump all of it, but-.” After Malcolm returned from wherever he went after Rebecca’s death, he’d tried to purge the house of everything that reminded him of her. Unbeknownst to him, the housekeeper went through the pile and pulled some things out to give to Tommy. She felt like he should have some keepsakes and things that had
been his mother’s. He kept some of it, and it was those items that he was worried about his father getting rid of.

“But there are things that are important to you, things you don’t want him to throw out or destroy.” She finished. “What do you need from me?”

“Can I borrow your scary, ex-spy bodyguard to help me sneak in and out without having to see my father?” He blurted out.

“Well, you’d have to ask her, but I think she’ll agree.” Felicity said. “Digg probably will too.”

“Thanks.” He said. “If my dad throws out some of that stuff, I don’t-.”

“We’re not gonna let anything like that happen.” She said firmly. “And if you wanna talk about why you moved out, consider this my open invitation to do that.”

“Thanks, but- I’m not ready yet.” He said with a tight smile.

There was a knock at the door and, after Felicity checked the cameras, she let Walter inside. He greeted everyone and apologized for stopping by unannounced. Nearly everyone told him that he didn’t need to call ahead before coming to visit. He came by to tell Oliver that the date for the board meeting had been set for Tuesday and which topics were going to be discussed. Oliver hadn’t chosen a proxy, so he’d be attending this meeting in person.

“I don’t know if you’ve made arrangements for an interpreter, but-.” Walter began to say.

‘Roy, I know its short notice, but Donna agreed to help me out, and I read online that for meetings, having two interpreters is better than one. Do you think you could-?’ Oliver asked the younger man. He might’ve picked up on part of Roy and Donna’s conversation earlier, and was testing the waters.

“You- you trust me that much?”

‘Of course I do.’ He said. ‘You’re my friend. I feel comfortable around you and I- I don’t do well with social interactions. This meeting is important and I- I want the person being my “voice” to be someone I trust and feel comfortable around. And its not fair of me to rely on Felicity to do that all the time.’

“Okay. I’ll do it.” He said.

“I assume you’ve made arrangements for interpreters then.” Walter said. “Fantastic. As the CEO, I look forward to a productive meeting. As your stepfather, I feel I should warn you that your mother is preparing for a fight.”

“What do you mean?” Donna asked, with a slight edge to her voice.

“Many of the items on the itinerary were added at her request. And, she’s become accustomed to these meetings going her way. Things may get…..unpleasant when they don’t.”

Walter joined them for lunch, after a tiny bit of convincing from Thea. In truth, he wanted to join them, but didn’t want to intrude or invite himself. After everyone was done eating, Felicity volunteered to clean up, and Oliver lent her a hand. Lyla suggested that the others go into the living room so that they wouldn’t be in the couple’s way.

“I’m really glad they found each other.” Tommy said, watching his best friend and Felicity move
almost in sync as they cleaned up from their meal.

“They are adorable, aren’t they?” Donna said. “And I understand we’ve got Walter to thank for that.”

“Well, all I did was give Oliver the name of someone who could fix his phone. I didn’t know he’d meet…well….” Walter said modestly.

“The love of his life?” Thea said. “None of us could’ve known.” She didn’t want to say the words, but Felicity saved Oliver in more ways than one. Thea was scared to think about what might’ve happened to Oliver, or what state he’d be in, if he’d never met Felicity.

In the kitchen, oblivious to what the others were talking about, Felicity was trying to put a dish away, but couldn’t reach the right shelf. Oliver walked up behind her and effortlessly lifted her up slightly so that she could reach the correct height. When he put her back down, she spun to face him.

“I could’ve just gotten a step stool.”

“I wanted to show off how strong I am to my beautiful girlfriend. Is that not allowed?” He asked playfully.

“I’ve decided I’ll allow it.” She said, before leaning up to kiss him. He returned the kiss, and when they stopped kissing, they stood there for a few moments, rubbing their noses together.

“They’re so cute! I can’t take it.” Thea exclaimed, causing everyone to look at her and start laughing.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 64

Chapter Summary

Oliver takes care of a few things, Lyla and Digg help Tommy with something and the one of the federal agents gets a surprising phone call.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Felicity and Oliver slowly but surely cleaned up the kitchen after lunch, stopping a few times to kiss as they went, while the others sat in the living room pretending that they weren’t watching the couple being adorable in the kitchen. When Oliver and Felicity joined them, still holding hands, everyone quieted down.

“Gossiping about us?” Felicity teased.

“About how happy we are that you two found each other, yes.” Walter said. “You deserve to be happy.”

Oliver ducked his head so that no one could see him blush and was about to argue, but Donna spoke first. “You’re damn right about that. You give the rest of us hope.”

Now, Oliver was really blushing and Felicity threw her arms around him and let him rest his head against her shoulder until the blushing subsided. He wasn’t used to being praised and she knew he’d convinced himself that he didn’t deserve to be complimented.

“I certainly was lucky to meet him that day, wasn’t I?” She said.

‘I was the lucky one.’ He signed, still hiding his face.

Everyone seemed to sense that Oliver wanted to change the topic of conversation, so Walter asked everyone if they’d seen Planet Earth yet. With the attention no longer on him, Oliver calmed down a little bit and was able to relax. Halfway through the discussion about the nature documentary, Tommy blurted something out.

“Can I talk to Digg and Lyla for a second?” His earlier conversation with Felicity was fresh in his mind and the more he thought about the things left behind at Merlyn Mansion, the more anxious he was to get those things to his hotel.

Digg and Lyla both gave each other confused looks, wondering what the problems was, but stood up and followed Tommy into the kitchen.

“Sorry if I made it seem like there was this huge issue, it’s just that- when I moved out, I didn’t take all of my stuff with me. And I’m scared that my dad’s gonna just trash everything of mine when he realizes I’m not coming back. Most of that crap, I don’t care about, but there are some…..sentimental things I wanna hang onto. If that makes sense. I know it’s not your job to help me move but-.”

John and Lyla looked at one another. They wanted to help Tommy, and they knew helping him
would give them the perfect time to gather information about Malcolm and the mansion. They knew he signed for the explosives that sank the Gambit, plus Frank Chen had claimed that Merlyn was the leader of Tempest. They couldn’t just pass up an opportunity like this.

“We can go over there now if you want.” Digg said. “Or tomorrow. Oliver and Felicity are having a lazy day at home so-.”

“I- I don’t wanna sound neurotic, but if we could go today, it would make me a lot less anxious.”

“I’ll go tell everyone we’re gonna give you a hand with something.” Lyla said, walking towards the living room. She told the others that Tommy asked for their help with moving. Walter was the only one fazed by this news, but he didn’t seem upset by it. Tommy, Digg and Lyla left a few minutes later.

Tommy drove straight to Merlyn Mansion from Felicity’s house. As they entered his neighborhood, Digg spoke.

“So, your plan is to be able to get yourself out from under your dad’s thumb for good right?” He asked. “Do you know how that’s gonna work? Money-wise I mean.”

“I- I’m not exactly sure. I know my mom set up a trust fund for me, but beyond that…”

“Can your father access it?” Lyla asked him. He looked even more uncertain. “Can I give you some advice?”

“Yeah, go ahead.”

“First thing tomorrow morning, go see your lawyer. Your mother’s and grandparents’ lawyers as well. Find out what assets you have and which ones your father also has access to. I don’t just mean the trust fund your mom set up, but everything you own. Your grandparents could’ve named you in their will and you just don’t know it. If you have to depend on that trust, and your father is a signatory, he could cut you off and that would be a big problem.” She said. “You can open an account, with just your name on it, and transfer money from the trust to that account and your dad won’t be able to touch it.”

“My mom’s will was read when I was seven. My dad knows what she left me.” He pointed out. “Same with her parents’ wills.”

“That’s true, but if your mother wanted you to have something, with your father having no access to it, her lawyers would’ve found a way to phrase it as such in her will. I’m not just referring to money or stock either. She might’ve left you a letter or something she knew you’d want that was sentimental.”

Tommy nodded along with what Lyla said. “Thanks for helping me with this. I seriously owe you. I know it makes me sound like a total wimp, but my dad’s kinda-.”

“An asshole.” Digg said.

“I was gonna say terrifying, but asshole works too. He was just- after Mom died, he was always so cold. I mean, he lost his wife, but I lost my mom, and he acted like he was the only- anyway, lately, he’s gotten even worse. I think I’ll do a lot better with two ex-soldiers, including an ex-spy, there to keep me from backing out.”
“Tommy….what exactly did that part about an ex-spy mean?” Lyla asked carefully. “And who have you mentioned it to?”

“Oh, I was joking. It’s just- you’re all mysterious. And other than making a joke to Felicity earlier, I haven’t- Wait, did I accidentally blow your cover? Were you really a secret agent?” He said. “You know, that actually makes perfect sense. I mean, you said you worked for the government but-.”

Lyla sighed. “Yes, some of what I used to do could be considered “spy stuff”, but you can’t mention it to anyone. Anyone. Okay?”

“Judging by the fact that Digg doesn’t seem surprised, I’m guessing he knew. Can I ask who you worked for or is that one of those “if you tell me, you’ll have to kill me” things?”

“I used to work for ARGUS, which you haven’t heard of because that’s exactly how they like it. That’s the most I can really say. For now at least.”

“Well, I feel even better about bringing you both with me now.” He said as they pulled up outside the mansion. The garage door automatically opened and Digg and Lyla saw a number of high-end cars.

“Tommy, how many cars do you own?” Digg asked.

“Four. This one.” He said, referring to the car they were in. “Plus those two,” he gestured to two cars near the front of the garage, “and there’s a Range Rover behind that red sports car.”

“And you own them? Your name is on the registration? They aren’t just your dad’s that he lets you drive.”

“No, they’re mine. Why do you ask?”

“Well, there are three of us. Lyla can drive one, I can drive another, and we can get them out of here. We’d need to come back for the last one, but we can take them to the Ritz and you decide if you wanna keep them or sell them.”

“That would- yeah, if we could do that, I’d appreciate it.” Tommy said. “Even if we can’t get all of them out, I- I wanna take the cars, but I’m more worried about the rest of my stuff.”

“Okay.” Lyla said, getting out of the car. “Let’s get packing then.”

The trio made their way inside. Tommy stopped at every door, expecting to run into his father. They didn’t see Malcolm, so he was either out or in another part of the house entirely. They reached Tommy’s room and he started pulling out which items he refused to leave without. It took them about three hours to get everything packed and into the cars, but Tommy wanted to be absolutely sure he hadn’t missed anything and didn’t want to have to come back. The manager at the Ritz, wanting to keep a guest happy, arranged for a valet to be dropped off at Malcolm’s house as they were leaving to drive Tommy’s fourth car back to the hotel.

After Nyssa reminded Malcolm that he was being watched, she spent that night patrolling the streets of Starling. Even though she and Oliver weren’t formally allies, she intended to do what she could to protect the city while he was recovering from a few emotionally charged days. After sunrise, she returned to her hideout to rest. When she awoke, Asim was already awake.
“Have there been new developments?” She asked.

“The authorities have found evidence that the vessel was sunk by an explosive charge, Warith.”

“Which begs the question: why would Al Saher want to kill Robert Queen in the first place, and what is he trying to hide from us?”

“Indeed. Robert Queen was not a trained warrior. The only threat he could have posed, that would warrant such a drastic response, would have to be in the form of information. It was possible he did not fully understand the significance of what information he had.” Asim said. “Although, that leads to another question. Why would Al Saher wish to conceal his actions from the League?”

“I can only assume that what he is doing violates our laws and would incur the wrath of Ra’s al Ghul.”

“We should simply slay him now. His death would bring his plot to an end. He is injured, vulnerable. Easy to kill.” He said. “Regardless of what plans he has, he revealed the League’s existence to the world. It would be an honor to slay him on your behalf, for that transgression alone.”

“No. Killing him may not cause his plot to die with him. We could turn him into a martyr for those who may follow him.” She said. “While he lives, we can determine what his intentions are, through questioning or surveillance. We cannot act rashly.”

Asim bowed his head. “As the Warith al Ghul commands.”

“We are not alone, either. The Arrow is a skilled warrior and knows far more than we presently do. He struck me as reasonable when I encountered him and I feel he will make an excellent ally in this endeavor.”

“The Demon Head was wise to send you to approach him.”

With the main question about how the Queen’s Gambit sank answered, some members of the task force turned their attention to the Queen Consolidated employees who turned themselves in for being part of Tempest after the Arrow confronted them. The other people he’d confronted made narrowing down his procedure even more difficult.

Dinan and Reeves turned to McKenna when they were trying to find a connection. “The SCPD was tracking the Arrow weeks before we showed up. Any theories you can share?”

“Not much. The thing about him is that he kinda has two different approaches. He doesn’t seem to be fighting crime at random.”

“Meaning?” Reeves asked.

“Some of the people he’s…confronted, I think he targeted on purpose. He attacks their offices or homes. Businessmen, drug kingpins, gang leaders and so on. But sometimes, he fights street crimes, things he can’t really predict will happen. Muggings, street-level drug deals, rapes, they’ve all dropped drastically since he showed up. It’s almost like he’s got a strategy, but I don’t know what it is. He’s hitting both ends of the criminal underworld though, bosses and street-level.”

“Well, he could be patrolling the Glades maybe?” Dinan said. “That would explain the random, everyday, low-level arrests that are happening. But you can’t work out how he’s finding his
“deliberate” targets?”

“I kinda- I’ve got a theory, but no way to prove it. Not unless he walks in here or calls us and tells us I’m right.” McKenna answered. The two agents gave her a look that indicated she should continue. “I know the SCPD is off the Dark Archer case, but in the video, right before the Dark Archer name-dropped Tempest, he said something about a list. Mentioning Tempest got you guys interested but, I’m thinking that, maybe, the Arrow’s targets, the ones he’s purposefully confronting, are on a list, possibly connected to Tempest, and he got a copy of it.”

“That would explain a few things. I’ve got no clue what that list could possibly be for, and I don’t think I wanna know, but it's not a bad theory.” Dinan said.

After taking everything to the Ritz Carlton, Tommy, Digg and Lyla returned to Felicity’s house just in time for dinner. Since Oliver had done a lot of cooking over the last few days, everyone feasted on a collection of leftovers. Dinner was quiet, but delicious and one-by-one, everyone went their separate ways. Walter drove Thea back to the mansion and remarked on how refreshed he felt after spending only a few hours with the rest of Team Oliver.

The next day, Felicity woke up at her normal time and had to talk herself into getting out of bed and going to work. For one thing, she was comfy in bed with Oliver. For another, she didn’t want to leave him again so soon after the incident on Saturday. When she asked him if he’d be okay after she left, he waved her off and told her he’d be okay for a few hours.

‘I was gonna surprise you, but…..I was planning on stopping by at lunch to take you out.’ He said. ‘I’m hoping that can maybe start being a regular thing with us?’

“Lunch dates with you are always welcome.” She told him. “I’ll see you at lunchtime then.”

He smiled and kissed her goodbye. She and Lyla got into her car and drove off. Oliver told Donna that he had a few errands he needed to run and left with Digg. They went to Jean’s office and asked her about the apartment he’d been in the process of purchasing when he moved out of the mansion. She admitted that she wasn’t sure what the status was, and told him she’d look into the matter. After leaving her office, Digg was surprised when Oliver asked to be taken to the foundry.

“So, what are we doing first? Sparring? Salmon ladder? Shooting at tennis balls?” Digg asked.

‘Later. I need to cross those last two QC employees off of the List first. I want the company free of Tempest before the meeting.’

“It’s daytime.”

‘I know. I wasn’t gonna wear my suit.’ He smirked. ‘And I figured I shouldn’t let the skills Lyla taught me in Moscow go to waste or get rusty.’

“Okay, that makes sense, but…..they’re gonna be at work.”

‘Exactly. Trust me, Digg. It’s all part of the plan.’ He said. ‘I hope I won’t need to confront them, not after the way the others made headlines. I’ll break in, leave a note where David Judge and Alex Melissi will see as soon as they walk in and leave. If I’m right, they’ll turn themselves in at 7pm at the latest and the cops won’t know I was there until hours after I’ve left.’

“Makes sense. And I’m not gonna complain about not staying up all night to bust these guys.”
‘I’m hoping we won’t go out tonight. I wanna be well-rested for the board meeting tomorrow. I think I’m gonna need it.’

Around 10am, Felicity and Lyla were getting snacks in the cafeteria when Lyla brought up something she’d heard Felicity and Curtis discussing earlier.

“Can I ask you something about the spinal implant you’re working on?”

“Yeah, of course.” Felicity said.

“What security features will it have?” She asked. “If people can ping cellphones, and some hackers can hack into cars and mess with the brakes, what’s gonna stop them from doing the same with the implants?”

“I- Curtis!” She yelled, causing her colleague to come over to the table.

Lyla repeated her question and then continued. “I also think you should consider a way to protect the chip from being accessible remotely. If they can be accessed remotely, there’s a chance a criminal could shut down the implant or send instructions to the body parts the implant effects.”

“Oh, my- we gotta make sure the implants’ security are better than airtight.” Felicity whispered with a look of horror on her face.

“You’re absolutely right, I can’t believe someone would think to do something like that but-.” Curtis started to say. “What kind of monster-?”

“Unfortunately, there are plenty of people in this world who’d try.” Lyla said. “I only understand bits and pieces of the technical jargon, but I thought I should bring the subject up while the project’s still in a design stage.”

Curtis looked thoughtful and said he was going to go run some numbers on the issue. Lyla turned to Felicity who looked shocked. “Sorry if I derailed-.”

“You didn’t derail anything. In fact, it’s possible you just saved someone from experiencing something traumatic.” She said. “I need to talk to Walter.”

“About the chip?”

“Not just that.” She said. Lyla’s job was as Felicity’s bodyguard, but her comments made it clear that she’d also be a valuable consultant. Her contributions made it at least worth broaching the topic with Walter.

The task force agents were each working on their own parts of the investigation when McKenna walked into the bullpen. A few people seemed surprised to see her since she mentioned that she was spending the day with the SCPD, catching up on a few of her other cases.

“I thought you all should know that two more Queen Consolidated employees turned themselves in. They’re downstairs and they’ve already confessed to working for Tempest, and decided to come clean after a visit from the Arrow today.”

Doyle looked at McKenna, then out of the window, and then back at her. “It’s broad daylight. I
thought he operated solely at night.”

“Until now, he has.”

“He clearly didn’t come to their offices, because we would’ve heard about it, meaning he confronted them at home. Shouldn’t they have been at work?” Anderson said.

“They were. They both told the same story. They were at work and got a call from a blocked number tell them to take the rest of the day off and go home. As soon as they walked in, they found a note instructing them to report to the nearest police station and tell us everything they know about Tempest and everything they’ve done for the organization.”

“And they actually did what the notes said?”

“Without a second thought. You might wanna go down and talk before the commissioner closes the case, and carts them away to save face.”

“Andy, Reeves, why don’t you go relieve the SCPD of interrogation duty.” Dinan said. “I’ll-.” Her phone began to ring. She hit a few buttons before accepting the call. “Dinan…..you’re who?….Yeah, and I’m just supposed to believe-….Okay, yeah….We appreciate that….so there is a List….ok, I’ll do that. Thank you.” She then hung up. “Well, that’ll probably be the weirdest call I get in my whole career.”

“You wanna fill the rest of us in?”

“That was the Arrow. I recorded the conversation to review later, but he claims the five Queen Consolidated employees that are in custody are the only ones on the List, yes there actually is a list, and it’s the one that Dark Archer mentioned. He just sent me a copy.”

“Did he say anything about the List that stood out to you?” Doyle asked.

“He didn’t say where he got it from, but said it’s a list of names with no contextual information. He investigated the names and discovered they are all criminals with connections to Starling. He said he wanted to clean house at QC before getting in touch with us, and Tempest only has one asset left with ties to the company.”

“Let me guess, Moira Queen.”

“The one and only. He seemed sure that by now we were at least suspecting Mrs. Queen of being up to something, and promised to send us any evidence he finds that will stand up in court.”

“Helpful.” Anderson said. “His voice give anything away?”

“He used a modulator and didn’t use any slang terms that might help us narrow down his identity.”

While on his lunch break, Roy stepped out of Sink, Shower and Stuff to give Donna a call. He couldn’t believe Oliver was going to put so much trust in him and he was scared of messing it up. As he’d been working, more questions and worried occurred to the younger man. What if he wore the wrong thing? What if he broke some unwritten rule? He hoped Donna could give him some answers and help him stay calm.

“Hi Roy, how is-?”
“I’m kinda freaking out. What do you wear to a board meeting? Because I don’t own a suit and-.”

“Do you have slacks and a button-down shirt?”

“Somewhere…I think.”

“Check when you get home tonight. If you don’t have one, I’ll bring one of Oliver’s for you.” She said. “Some people might be there wearing suits, but business casual, which is what I just described, is fine. any other worries?”

“Is there- you’ve done this before. Are there any rules that I should know? Am I allowed to interpret while Oliver’s still signing or is that some huge faux pas?”

“With ASL, you can interpret as he signs. Unlike with say, translating English to Spanish, you don’t need to hear what he’s saying, translate it into another language and then repeat it.” She said. “The one thing is that you can’t editorialize.”

“I don’t- I don’t know what that means.” He admitted.

“It means you can’t change what he said to make it sound better or more polite. If he signs “that’s a stupid idea”, you can’t turn around and tell the others that he said “I’m not sure if that would work”. Outside of cursing, you need to tell them what he said as close to verbatim as possible.” She explained. “Also, unless you don’t understand what he’s saying, or it doesn’t make sense, like maybe he used the wrong word, I wouldn’t respond back to him in ASL. Non-speakers tend to think we’re talking about them if they aren’t hearing at least half of the conversation.”

“Oh. Good to know.”

After Oliver dealt with the two QC employees who were part of Tempest, he and Digg took Lyla and Felicity to lunch before they returned to the foundry. Oliver said he wanted to work on some arrows, so John took some time to work out while he did that.

When he reached a reasonable stopping point, he walked over to Oliver to see what he was working on. There were about two dozen flechettes laid out on the table in front of him.

“I’m noticing you’re not using green. Thinking of changing your look?”

‘No, the green is….it’s important to me. I’m not changing it.’ The green motif came along with his hood, which was the only connection he still had to Shado and Yao Fei. ‘These aren’t for me. Remember the archer I met last week?’

“Yeah, the mystery woman Felicity dubbed “Libby”.” He said and Oliver raised an eyebrow. “Short for Lady in Black.”

‘I said I’d see her in few days, and that was a week ago. I thought I should bring her a gift. Partly as an apology, but also as a gesture of goodwill.’ He explained. ‘These match the fletching of her arrows, and the carving on this box,’ he gestured to the wooden box he set down to his left, ‘matches a pattern I noticed on her quiver.’

“Wow, that’s…..you’ve got an eye for detail. Do you always put this much thought into gifts?”

‘Wait til your birthday and you’ll see.’
Oliver sent Felicity message telling her there was something Arrow-related he needed to take care of, and he wouldn’t be home when she got back. He also messaged Donna and Tommy and told them he needed to stop by the apartment he’d bought, which Jean learned he still owned, and that once he was done there, he’d head to the house.

Instead, Oliver put on his suit and started to patrol the Glades. In truth, he was hoping his presence would lead to running into the mystery woman once again. He was just happy that it got dark pretty early this time of year.

Oliver had leaped from one roof to another when he heard light footsteps behind him. Slowly, he turned to see Nyssa standing there.

‘I wish to apologize that I have not been able to meet with you before now.’ She signed before he had a chance to greet her.

‘I was going to apologize for the same reason.’ he admitted.

Even though he couldn’t see her face, he saw a change in her eyes and guessed that she was smiling. ‘I suppose this means neither of us need apologize then. I have noticed the media coverage of your recent actions, so I am at least somewhat aware of what has kept you occupied since our last encounter. I was pursuing leads of my own, unfortunately to no avail.’

‘I’m sorry to hear that. Any way I can help?’

‘I am hoping we can help one another in the near future. First, simply by comparing our information and perhaps, if we are able to make sense of it all, we can develop a plan together.’ She said. ‘But not tonight, as there is another matter I must see to. One unrelated to my desire to stop the Dark Archer.’ She decided it was time to tell Sara a little bit more about what was really happening in Starling with her family.

‘I wish you luck with your other task.’ He said. ‘Before you go, I have a gift for you.’ He removed a bag he had strapped to his back and pulled out the wooden box he’d shown Digg earlier. ‘I wasn’t sure what was expected or polite when meeting an ally, so I thought a gesture of goodwill might suffice. The only thing I know about you is that you are a warrior and well-trained in using different weapons. I don’t know how to forge a blade, and us archers are specific about our arrows, so I hope these are acceptable.’ He opened the box so that she could see the flechettes inside.

Nyssa removed one from the box and tested the weight and feel of it. ‘These are excellently crafted. Thank you.’

‘Thank you for the compliment. I hope they serve you well.’ He said. ‘I should go. I don’t want to keep you from your other tasks.’

‘Until our next meeting then.’ She signed before leaping off of the roof and onto a nearby shorter roof.

Having delivered his gift, Oliver returned to the foundry and changed into his street clothes before heading home. Since Oliver wasn’t able to make dinner, Felicity decided it was the perfect day for tomato soup and grilled cheese sandwiches, which everyone was enjoying when he arrived. No one mentioned the board meeting the next day, but it was clearly on everyone’s minds.

Felicity and Oliver turned in early and as they were lying in bed, she asked him how he felt about the meeting.
‘I think I’m as ready as I’ll ever be.’

“I’m sure you’re going to knock their socks off. Where did that phrase come from anyway? I mean, it kinda rhymes, but I can’t figure out how that became a phrase that means good luck. I don’t know. English is a really weird language.”

‘I heard from someone that it was the second hardest language to learn.’ He told her.

“Doesn’t surprise me. Who told you that, if I’m allowed to ask?”

‘You can always ask.’ He said. ‘It was Shado, actually.’

Felicity just hummed in response. She wasn’t sure what to say and she didn’t want to pester Oliver to explain either. This was the first time Oliver had mentioned Shado, or anyone else from the island, casually in conversation. It felt like a big milestone.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 65

Chapter Summary

Oliver goes to the board meeting, Tommy reconnects with McKenna and Nyssa makes a confession.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oliver woke up way earlier than he meant to on Tuesday morning. Part of him wanted to think he woke up so early because he’d gone to bed earlier than usual the night before, but deep down he knew the truth. He was nervous about the board meeting and that made it difficult to sleep in.

Knowing he was going to be surrounded by people he didn’t really know was enough to make him anxious, but Moira would also be there. This would be the first time Oliver had seen his mother since Laurel’s trial and the first time she might try to talk to him since the day he moved out of the mansion. He was dreading it a little bit.

Waking up early did have one advantage, though. He was able to watch Felicity sleep peacefully. Laying partially on top of him, she slept on, letting out cute snores occasionally. Oliver watched her sleep and gently ran his fingers through her hair as he stared up at the ceiling, reminding himself of all of the reasons why he shouldn’t be nervous about the meeting. Walter would be there. Digg would be there. Roy and Donna, both of whom he trusted, were going to interpret for him instead of someone he didn’t know. He knew what items were on the schedule, so he was prepared to discuss them. Seeing his mother would be uncomfortable, but he wasn’t alone or unaware of what he was walking into.

Oliver felt Felicity shift slightly on his chest and he looked down just in time to see her open her eyes and look up at him with a sleepy smile.

“Good morning.” She said, leaning up to kiss him. “Sorry if I have morning breath.”

‘Morning. Your breath smells wonderful.’ He replied.

“You’re my boyfriend. You have to say that.” She countered. “Couldn’t sleep?”

‘I’m a little nervous.’ He admitted. ‘What if the rest of the board thinks I’m still the same stupid playboy?’

“You’ll prove them wrong.” She said. “No, you didn’t graduate from college, or go to business school, but you’ve been keeping up-to-date on the company since you came back, and you aren’t the type to start talking about something you don’t understand.” She sighed. “Proving to people that you’re better, or more qualified, than they think is a Smoak Family rite of passage. Do it. Become one of us. One of us! One of us!”

‘I feel like that’s a reference to something I haven’t seen.’

“It is.” She shrugged. It was quiet for a few moments and she looked over at her clock and noticed the time. “I’m up early. And you’re up early. What should we do with all of this extra time?” She
said with a smirk.

‘I can think of a few things.’ He said before he moved them so that he was laying on top of her. They began kissing, and after a few minutes, he moved his lips away from hers and down to her neck. He reached a spot at her collarbone and she squirmed before letting out a laugh.

“Sorry, its just- with your stubble, that tickled.” She said. Oliver got a very mischievous look on his face as he went back to what he was doing.

Digg woke up, had a cup of coffee and was about to jump in the shower when he noticed Lyla waking up. He kissed her good morning and told her he was going to take a shower.

“Are you telling me or inviting me?” She asked suggestively.

“Oh, there’s always an open invitation.” He said as he walked into his bathroom. He was starting to turn the water on when she got into the shower behind him. “You decided to join me after all.”

“You made me an offer I just couldn’t refuse.” She said with a smile.

Digg and Lyla ended up leaving later than they meant to and arriving at Felicity’s house a little later as a result.

Walter, keeping with his tradition on board meeting days, was up at six AM and out of the house before seven. While he didn’t have a voting interest, as CEO he was responsible for running the meeting. Heading into the office early gave him time to narrow down any last-minute details and give him enough time to confront any problems with the meeting that popped up. Today, he had another reason for leaving Queen Mansion so early: avoiding Moira.

Walter wasn’t the only resident avoiding Moira, as Thea had arranged for Tommy to pick her up while Moira was still getting ready for the board meeting and taking her to school.

Felicity and Oliver got out of bed when Felicity’s alarm began to go off. They walked into the kitchen where Donna was already enjoying a cup of coffee. Oliver said hello to her and went into the kitchen to start making breakfast.

“Your morning is clearly off to a great start.” Donna said knowingly to her daughter. “If the giggling I heard was any indication.”

“Mom, we- Oliver and I haven’t- you didn’t hear what you thought you heard.” She explained. “We’re not…there yet.” This morning was the first time Oliver had seen Felicity topless. Sex was on the horizon, but still a little while off.

“Oh, I didn’t think you were, but you’ve clearly moved beyond just hugging and kissing.” She said. “Just remember that these walls aren’t very thick.”

“Mom!”


“Yeah. He hasn’t been in the same room with his mother since the trial, not to mention the nerves
about being around a bunch of new people.”

Donna was about to say something when the doorbell rang. She stood up to answer it and found a very nervous Roy standing on the other side. She let him in and asked him if he’d had breakfast or coffee yet. He said he hadn’t and followed her into the kitchen.

“Is this- am I dressed okay?” He said, trying to smooth out the wrinkles of his shirt. “This is the only button down I have, but I don’t own an iron and-.”

“Give me a sec.” Felicity said. “I think Oliver has a few shirts that don’t fit him anymore.” She went into the guest bedroom and walked out a few moments later holding a light blue Oxford shirt. “Try this on.”

“I can’t- I don’t wanna steal Oliver’s clothes.”

‘It’s just a shirt, Roy.’ Oliver said. ‘And it doesn’t even fit me anymore. See if it fits.’

Roy took the shirt from Felicity and went into the bathroom to change. He walked out, still feeling anxious but looking a little more prepared for the day. They sat around the dining room table and began eating the scrambled eggs Oliver had made for breakfast. Halfway through eating, John and Lyla let themselves in. “Sorry we’re late. We….got sidetracked by something at home.” Lyla said.

Judging by the look on both John and Lyla’s faces, Felicity, Donna and possibly Oliver knew what that “something” was. No one said anything though, other than ask if they wanted breakfast as well. After breakfast, and the clean-up, Felicity and Oliver both went to change out of their pajamas. Felicity barely had time to appreciate how good Oliver looked in his suit before she needed to leave.

As always, Oliver walked Felicity and Lyla to the car, this time accompanied by Digg, Roy and Donna. He handed Felicity and Lyla lunchbags.

‘I hope we can go out to lunch like yesterday, but in case the meeting runs too long, well-.’

“You wanted to make sure we still had yummy, and healthy, lunches.” Felicity said with a smile.

‘Exactly.’ He said before kissing her. ‘I love you.’

“I love you too.” She said, giving him a quick peck. “Go knock the board’s socks off.”

“Oh, you two!” Donna exclaimed before hugging Felicity. “Have a good day at work.” She pulled away from her daughter and hugged Lyla, much to the woman’s surprise. “You take care too, Lyla.”

“I will, Donna.” Lyla said, still a bit surprised by the hug.

Felicity and Lyla got into the car and drove away. After Felicity’s car turned off of the street, everyone else piled into Digg’s car.

The board meeting was scheduled to begin at 9, but most of the board liked to arrive early so that they could talk amongst themselves. Oliver was the first to arrive, and walked into the boardroom while the staff was still setting everything up. Walter was talking to a man Oliver didn’t recognize in his office, but when his stepfather spotted him, Walter introduced him as Daniel Correll, the head of Public Relations.
“It’s a pleasure to meet you in person, Mr. Queen.” He said.

‘Please call me Oliver.’ Oliver signed, and Donna interpreted for him.

“Oliver. If you have a moment, after the meeting, there’s something I’d like to speak to you about.” He wasn’t sure how Oliver felt about the press or what he might want to do about making a statement, but he didn’t see the harm in asking.

‘It will depend on how long the meeting is, so I don’t want to promise something I can’t commit to.’

“If not today, then we can find another time, I’m sure.” Correll said, before saying he needed to head to his own office.

Board members started to trickle in soon after. A few had known Oliver before the Gambit sank and clearly weren’t sure how to approach him. One man, Charles Winston III, a friend of Richard Queen, was the first to approach Oliver.

“Hello Oliver. I don’t know if you remember me from when you used to visit your grandfather at the office. Charles Winston.” He said. Winston was in his mid-80s, but still sharp as a tack.

‘I remember you. Your assistant gave me the best candy.’ Oliver replied with a fond smile. There had been a few times that Oliver visited his grandfather before his retirement when Oliver was eight. They only part of the visits that he really remembered, being a kid, were the people who gave him candy or soda. Donna told Winston what he’d said.

“I suppose that would stand out to a five-year-old.” The man said with a laugh. “I’m sorry, I’ve been rude and not asked either of your names.” He said, addressing Donna and Roy. “I hope I haven’t made a bad impression.”

Donna waved his concern off before introducing herself and Roy and saying they were here to interpret for Oliver. He simply nodded and asked Oliver how Thea was doing and what he thought about the company’s recent market performance.

Once Charles broke the ice with Oliver, a few other board members approached him to talk. Between Oliver’s lack of public appearances since returning and this being his first board meeting, most shareholders wanted a chance to at least speak with him, but weren’t sure how to approach him.

Moira entered the board room and was surprised not only to see that Oliver had arrived before her, but that he was talking to Charles Winston, one of the board members from her father-in-law’s time as CEO and one of the stockholders who always seemed to oppose her suggestions. Him speaking to Oliver wasn’t good if she wanted Oliver to side with her. She was about to greet Oliver, breaking up their conversation, but was caught offguard by Digg’s presence.

“Mr. Diggle. I’m not sure why you are here. I thought I made it clear that you are no longer an employee of mine.” She said.

“You’re right, I’m not. My new employer, however, insisted that I be here.” Digg said, looking over at Oliver.

She didn’t stop think about what that meant, instead walking over to speak with Oliver. Part of her was proud that he had at least worn a suit to look the part of a respectable stockholder, even if he was out of his depth and didn’t realize it.
“Oliver, honey, it’s nice of you to come, but you didn’t need to. I’m sure there are other, more personal matters, you need to focus on at a time like this.” She told him. “I’ll happily keep serving as your proxy.”

‘This company is Dad’s legacy, it’s also Grandpa Richard’s.’ He responded. This time, Roy interpreted for him, after Donna encouraged him to. ‘I might not be interested, or qualified, in working here, but I think I should at least fulfill my duties as a shareholder and come to meetings.’

“I’m sorry, who are you?” Moira asked Roy.

“My name’s Roy Harper. Donna and I are here to interpret for Oliver during the meeting.” He responded.

“I can speak for Oliver perfectly well myself.”

“Oliver, I didn’t know that your mother knew sign language.” Donna said. This was a trap. Donna hadn’t expected Moira to set-up her own trap, but she wasn’t going to complain at the opportunity. Oliver didn’t look away from his mother, but just shook his head. “Oh.”

“Oliver, I wish you would’ve told me you were thinking of coming to this meeting.” His mother said. “I would’ve happily discussed the agenda with you, and as your proxy, shared any concerns or ideas you had with the others.” Moira’s plan to get what she wanted out of this board meeting was based on Oliver not showing up and having not appointed a different proxy so that she could swing the vote in the direction she wanted. “You’re not quite- I hope you didn’t come here to try and prove something.”

‘I don’t want or need a proxy at the moment. I might appoint one later, just in case. There are some things I wanted to address with the board. Thank you for protecting Thea’s interests when I was gone, but that time is over.’ He signed. ‘And I wouldn’t have come to this meeting if I didn’t think I could handle the pressure.’

Charles Winston, and few other board members watched this interaction with interest. Clearly, there was a rift between Oliver and Moira, as the press had started to speculate. They weren’t sure what to make of Oliver as a shareholder yet, but it was safe to say he wasn’t squarely on Moira’s side. A number of them didn’t like the way Robert had run the company after his father’s retirement or the way that Moira had voted against the company’s best interests over the last several years. Now that Oliver had claimed his shares, they wanted to see how the power shift would go. Additionally, a few of the men in the room were insulted at how condescending Moira was being towards her own son, implying he was too weak or stupid to handle a meeting.

Before Moira, or anyone else, could comment on Oliver’s statement, Walter called the meeting to order. While there usually weren’t assigned seats, for this meeting, everyone had a name plate. Moira’s seat was nowhere near Oliver’s due to Walter’s intervention.

“I didn’t know we had assigned seats like in elementary school now.” Daniel Bowen, one of Carter Bowen’s uncles, joked as he took his seat. He had been a part of Moira’s alliance since Robert’s disappearance.

“We have some new faces joining us and given that our agenda is rather long, I thought it best to avoid needing to make introductions.” Walter explained. “Now, before we discuss the first item, I believe Mr. Queen wanted a chance to address the board.”

Oliver and Donna both stood up. He took a deep breath before he started to sign. ‘I want to thank Walter for allowing me to address the board as a whole. I apologize for not being present at the last
quarterly meeting in October.’ The last board meeting took place while Oliver was still living at the mansion and, for obvious reasons, he wasn’t in the right mental space to even consider attending. ‘The time that I was away changed me, I doubt most of you realize how much, but the trials I went through also gave me a sense of clarity. This company is my grandfather’s life’s work, it’s my father’s legacy, and I have every intention of doing all that I can to honor their memory. Since I came home, I’ve paid close attention to Queen Consolidated and taken great interest in how the company performs and operates. I hope that, together, we’re able to make this company the best that it can be.’ Oliver sat back down after he finished his statement.

“Thank you, Oliver.” Walter said. “Now, the first order of business is to discuss funding for security upgrades. The head of our security division has informed me that upgrades will cost an estimated $20 million.”

“That price is unrealistic and outrageous.” Moira said.

“A man, a suspected terrorist if the news is to be believed, was able to walk into one of the company’s facilities easily, while armed. That….break-in could’ve turned into a massacre, on live television. And we later found out that he had a man on the inside who was doing who knows what to aid him.” A woman named Elizabeth Pelletier, who normally served as a swing vote, pointed out. “We should at least discuss what upgrades are being proposed.”

“I’ll second that.” Richard Deckard said. “Is this proposal covering all facilities, all Starling facilities or just the Applied Sciences building?”

“We’re focusing on headquarters and Applied Sciences at the moment.” Walter said. He started to explain what Josiah Hudson had recommended and how it would benefit the company. When he was finished, Moira was about to argue against every point he made, but Oliver started to say something.

‘This company became what it is because of its employees. In all of the number crunching and penny-pinching, we shouldn’t forget that this company would be nothing without its employees. And they shouldn’t be afraid or feel unsafe when they’re at work.’ He said. ‘Studies show that companies that don’t make improvements after an attack like the one that took place lose value and some of their most valuable employees soon after.’

“Oliver, you don’t- $20 million dollars is a lot to ask.” Moira said. He shouldn’t be here and his comments just now proved it.

‘Purchasing Farlow Unlimited, which the board voted to buy four and half years ago, cost over five times as much, and that subsidiary not only has made no profit, but every year for the last three has reported a loss.’ He countered. ‘Unlike the proposal for that purchase, which you championed, the proposal from Mr. Hudson has clear and tangible goals and benchmarks.’

Moira seemed to be at a loss when Oliver referenced one of the many decisions made by the board, against Walter’s advice, that Moira had pushed through at Malcolm’s request. Charles Winston, meanwhile, gave Oliver a look of respect before turning to look at the next person who spoke.
“Hey, thanks for meeting me.” He said, standing to hug her.

“Well, it has been a long time.” She said. They went to the counter to order before returning to the table. “So, what have you been up to?”

“Well, I spent the last few days unpacking.”

“You moved?”

“Yeah, my dad- we’ve never been close, as you know, but after he got hurt, he became even more of a dick than usual.” Tommy explained. “And then after- after what happened to Ollie, Lyla and I, he said something that I don’t think I’ll ever be able to forgive.”

“Your dad was hurt? I didn’t hear about that.”

“I think he wanted to keep it quiet. He crashed his car awhile back.” He said. “Actually, I think all of the press from the “Arrow vs. Dark Archer fight” kept the attention off of him. It happened that same night.”

“Huh, weird.” She said. “Well, I’d tell you what I’m up to, but you already know everything I’m allowed to disclose.”

“You don’t have a life outside of work?” He joked.

“Lately? Not really.” She answered. “As an old friend of Oliver’s, so not as a cop, how’s he doing?”

“I think he’s doing the best he can. Just trying to take it one day at a time.” He said.

They stayed at Jitters for about an hour. When the baristas started to give them weird looks for hogging the table, they took it as a sign to leave. On the way out, Tommy asked McKenna if he could take her out to dinner soon. She agreed.

The board approved the budget increase with a vote of 64%. Moira realized bitterly that the shareholders that were part of the “old guard”, those who hadn’t been supportive of Robert as CEO or her proposals since Walter took over, sided with Oliver, giving him enough votes, in addition to a number of “neutral” shareholders, those who weren’t solidly against Moira but also weren’t allied with her on everything.

After the vote on security measures, Donna and Roy swapped seats and Walter raised the subject of the stop-work order on most of Applied Sciences’ projects since it was connected to the need for increased security. Once again, Moira was very vocal about her opinion that work should start once again. She made it clear that, as far as anyone was reporting, Miller had been working alone and that one bad actor shouldn’t derail the company’s entire future.

“I ordered those projects be put on hold out of concern for what Doug Miller may have tampered with or sabotaged. He had access to most of the department’s files.”

“Most of them?” Daniel Bowen asked.

“Certain technology and software are proprietary and owned by specific employees. Said employees weren’t always willing to allow Mr. Miller access to that property.”
“And by certain employees, I assume you mean-.” Moira started to say.

“There are several, and the projects those employees are working on haven’t been effected by the stop-work order.” Walter said.

“You haven’t explained why you put that order in effect.”

“The day after Doug Miller’s arrest, I was visited by two federal agents who were investigating him and the attack on the building. They advised the company stop any and all projects Miller was involved with until would be sure that nothing had been compromised or tampered with. An associate with experience in the military and intelligence community made a similar suggestion.” Walter answered, referring to Lyla. They hadn’t finalized her position as a part-time consultant, so he referred to her as simply an associate for now. “Additionally, a few shareholders, including Mr. Queen, reached out to me about their concerns.”

All eyes turned to Oliver. Moira’s eyes narrowed when she heard that Oliver had been communicating with Walter without her knowledge.

‘After I saw the news, I was concerned that something he was working on could be turned into a weapon or something. It might not have been my place, but I wasn’t sure what steps the company might take.’ He said.

Oliver didn’t want to make it seem like he didn’t have faith in Walter as a CEO, so he played the “I don’t know much about business” card.

Moira and a few of her allies argued that whatever damage Miller had done was done and they believed work should start up again. If the company hadn’t found evidence of foul play by now, then maybe there wasn’t any.

“You can’t audit something like this in less than two weeks.” Deckard said. “Not when we’re talking about months or years of work.”

“And putting those projects back into the production too soon opens us up to liability. Not to mention we could be the victim of corporate espionage.” Winston said. “He could’ve sold our designs to Kord Industries, or Star Labs, or Wayne. What percentage of projects are still active?”

“About 15% of the projects that were active prior to Doug Miller’s arrest. There are also a number of projects that have been proposed since then that Miller wouldn’t have known about or seen.”

“So, they aren’t just sitting around, twiddling their thumbs.”

“No, they’ve been quite busy.”

Nyssa put off calling Sara for as long as she could reasonably justify waiting. First, she blamed the time difference between Starling and Nanda Parbat. Then, she claimed she needed to focus on the discussions of the task force. Lastly, she decided she couldn’t call Sara on an empty stomach, so she ventured out to get food. When she ran out of excuses to delay, she called her beloved.

“Hey.” Sara said when she answered the phone. “Is this a social call or-?”

“There are a number of things I’ve kept hidden from you recently, and I believe now is the best time to be honest with you.” She said. “If you recall, during our last conversation, I claimed the Oliver Queen you knew is not the same man who returned to Starling City.”
“Yeah, I remember. I’m curious why you’re bringing this up.”

“I don’t know what happened to him after the events with Slade Wilson that you told me about, but whatever he went through was traumatic for him.” She said. “So traumatic that he no longer speaks.” Nyssa explained that Oliver had struggled to adjust to being home, until he met Felicity and started building a support system. She explained that he’d started fighting crime as the Arrow and how he seemed to be doing better mentally recently. She even told her about how sightings of Oliver and Thea, or Oliver and Felicity, tended to break social media. After discussing Oliver, she told Sara about her mother’s career, then her parent’s divorce and how her father had hit a professional snag.

“Okay, but Laurel- she’s doing okay, right? Kicking butt as a lawyer.”

“I’m afraid not. Your sister, from what I understand, didn’t have the best reaction to Oliver’s return or his mutism. In fact, she maintains that it’s all an act so that he doesn’t have to apologize to her.” She said. “I don’t know how to tell you this but-.”

“Please, just say it.”

“Laurel is in prison. She began stalking and harassing Oliver and his girlfriend. They were granted a restraining order, which she repeatedly violated. After too many violations, her probation was revoked and she’s currently serving a three-year sentence in a minimum security prison.”

“I- thank you for being honest with me.” Sara said. She was saddened to hear that her father and Laurel weren’t doing well, but the blow was softened by knowing her father had begun getting sober and that her mother was doing well.

The board voted to wait until the federal agents or the team auditing Applied Sciences had finished their investigation before starting work on the projects that were on hold. Once again, the vote was decidedly not in Moira’s favor, much to her annoyance. When she controlled 45% of the stock, the biggest victory she’d won was a 54% vote, so seeing Oliver manage to sway 30% or more to his side was frustrating. The board agreed to break for lunch before addressing the last item on the agenda. Everyone stood up, and Oliver left the room followed by Digg before Moira could reach him.

“So, how did I do?” Roy asked Donna.

“Pretty well so far.” She said. “I think the hardest thing to get over is the nerves, but you’re doing great.”

Oliver left the boardroom, and snuck into the stairwell. Yesterday, the task force had given Oliver his cellphone back, informing him that nothing on it was evidence related to his abduction. He decided to FaceTime Felicity, wanting to hear her voice.

She picked up almost immediately. “Hi, honey! Lyla, Curtis, say “hi” to Oliver!” He could hear two voices saying hi from farther away. “How’s the meeting going?”

‘It’s a little boring and my mom being here isn’t exactly ideal.’ He told her. ‘I think a few of the board members are starting to like me.’

“That’s good.” She said. “Any important developments?”

‘There’s still one topic we need to talk about, but it’s been going well so far.’ He said. ‘I’m sorry we
can’t meet for lunch today. This meeting is taking forever.’

“You can take me out to lunch tomorrow. I’m fine with my turkey wrap that my very thoughtful boyfriend made.”

‘I wish I could have lunch with you, instead of a bunch of old guys though.’ He said with a pout.
‘You’re more fun to talk to.’

“Of course I am.” She said. “Go eat lunch. I’ll see you at home. Love you.”

‘I love you too.’

He and Digg went to a sandwich shop around the corner from QC and picked up food for themselves, Roy and Donna. They sat together in the board room eating and chatting. Moira returned from her own lunch to see Donna and Oliver talking.

“You’ve done great so far.” She told him. “You should be proud of yourself.”

‘Thanks, Donna. I kinda- I expected this to go badly. After everything that’s happened-.’

“You’re more than just the things that have happened to you, remember?” Donna’s way of talking to Oliver seemed very maternal. Moira found herself feeling jealous that her son was opening up to this random woman more than he’d ever opened up to her.

Curious, she walked out of the room and into Walter’s office. “Darling, I was hoping to speak with you about something.”

“As long as we’re not discussing the two matters the board has already voted on or the topic we’re about to debate.” He said. Years ago, when Moira was the biggest shareholder by proxy and she kept making the board vote against Walter’s suggestion, she’d enacted a rule where they wouldn’t discuss board meetings after the fact. To keep the peace, she claimed. Walter was reminding her of that agreement, in case she wanted to try and sway him.

“I wanted to ask you which agency you contacted to hire Oliver’s interpreters.”

“I didn’t. Oliver informed me that he was bringing his own people to the meeting.” He said.

“How did he find them?”

“Donna is Felicity’s mother and Roy is a friend Oliver met a few weeks ago.” When Donna introduced herself, she didn’t reveal her last name. No one thought it was odd, since she was basically there as support staff, and knowing her name didn’t seem critical.

“Felicity’s mother is his interpreter? Surely that’s a conflict of interest.”

“I don’t see why it would be.” He said. “She knows ASL, she’s worked as an interpreter before and he trusts her. She’s here as a favor to him, since he wasn’t given much notice to make other arrangements.”

“I don’t see why he’d need an interpreter, I can--.”

“As a shareholder, Oliver has a right to be present and given his condition, he needed an interpreter, whether it be provided by Queen Consolidated or he bring his own.” Walter didn’t want to have this argument now, but it could be said that Oliver was disabled, seeing as his mutism was a type of speech-impairment, not to mention his PTSD. He had a disability, and as a result of
several federal laws, he had a right to an accommodation, in this case an interpreter.

Moira was going to respond, but Walter’s watch beeped and he realized that the lunch break was over. The stockholders filed back into the boardroom and the meeting began once again.

Walter announced that the last item on the agenda was the Hood Initiative, now called the Arrow Initiative. He claimed that one shareholder was against the company being associated with the Arrow and didn’t believe the funds being dedicated to the initiative should go towards it.

“Should we even be getting involved with this?” One man asked. “The Arrow is a criminal.”

“We aren’t working with him, its just using the name.”

“The question still stands.”

‘I think we should.’ Oliver said.‘The company has slowly been giving back less and less for years, even before my father’s death. And the charities Walter mentioned in his speech are critically underfunded.’

“It’s not our duty to save the Glades, if that’s even possible.”

‘No one’s saying we have to save the Glades, but we can help make the area better.’ He responded. ‘People in this city used to help one another. We don’t anymore, and that’s very sad. At least to me.’

“This is a business. We can’t decide things based on emotion.”

“Stock prices, and profits, have risen since the Arrow Initiative was announced.” Winston said. “Whether you’re feeling philanthropic or not, the announcement is good PR and thus good for business.”

“We all give back, but this company-.“ Moira started to say.

“With all due respect, Moira, given recent reports, you aren’t exactly the best person to talk about donations and charity.” Elizabeth Pelletier said. “The Glades have improved over the last year, I think we all know who the biggest cause of that is, but even before that, the area was never unsalvageable.”

“Why are we even arguing about this?” Someone asked. “Queen Consolidated committed the funds. If we back out now, we’ll look unethical and might have a mob, whether physical or online, on our hands for reneging. Besides, who argues against giving to a good cause? Or several in this case?”

The board members were tired, and a little annoyed. They wanted to get this meeting over with. Walter asked if they were ready to vote, which they said they were.

Moira’s proposal to abandon the Arrow Initiative failed with a vote of 18% to 82%. Even some of her allies voted against the move. With the agenda completed, Walter ended the meeting. On the way out, Moira finally managed to get close enough to Oliver to speak with him.

“You came to a meeting. You proved that you’re taking things more seriously, but I think I should be your proxy. I’ve done well by you and your sister.”
‘Every matter we talked about in there, we differed on. If I hadn’t been here, you would’ve used my shares to vote the way you wanted, not the way I wanted.’ He said. ‘I think that shows that you shouldn’t be my proxy, since we don’t have the same intentions.’

“Oliver-.”

Oliver looked at Donna and began signing. ‘I wanna go pick up Thea. I don’t wanna continue this conversation. Does it break some kind of rule if I ask you to lie right now?’

“Oliver says he has an appointment he really needs to get to. You’ll have to continue this conversation later.” She told Moira. Oliver, Roy, Digg and Donna all got into the car before she could say anything. “The “rules” only apply in the meeting, and you can always ask us not to say something if you preface it with “please don’t repeat this”. Team Oliver, remember?”

‘You’re right.’ He said with a smile. Digg, Donna and Roy returned to Felicity’s house and Oliver drove to Thea’s school to pick her up. The meeting had gone a lot better than he’d hoped.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

Sorry that this chapter had a lack of Olicity goodness, I wanted to have the board meeting contained in just one chapter.
Chapter 66

Chapter Summary

Oliver tells the others about the board meeting, Dinan develops a theory and a blast from someone's past shows up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After the meeting adjourned, Moira disappeared to give Malcolm the bad news. The silence she received in return spoke volumes louder than any amount of yelling or berating he could’ve done. She attempted to offer to fix the issue, but he hung up on her. When the call ended, Moira rushed back to Walter’s office to talk to him.

“How could you do that to me?” She asked. “Allow me to embarrass myself like that?”

“I didn’t do anything other than run the meeting, which is part of my duties as CEO. Aside from provide additional information when, and only when, it was relevant or a shareholder asked.”

“You contradicted everything I said.”

“Because the numbers didn’t agree with the point you made, or I objectively didn’t believe what you proposed was in the company’s best interests.” He said calmly. “You were not the only person whose views contrasted mine, either. Mr. Winston, Mr. Deckard, and Oliver were all-.”

“Speaking of Oliver, how could you tell him about this meeting?” Moira lost her edge because Oliver had been there. Oliver was there, according to her logic, because Walter told him about the meeting and convinced him to show up. “He didn’t have any business being here.”

“He owns a substantial amount of stock in the company.” He said. “The date of this meeting came up while we were discussing Queen Consolidated.”

“You’ve been talking to him?” She asked. “He refuses to answer any of my texts, or call, but he’ll communicate with you.”

“When he first came home, I told Oliver to come to me if he needed anything. After he moved out, he reached out to me with questions about the company.” Walter lied. Soon, he’d tell Moira how shocked and appalled he was by her actions, and her colluding with Laurel, but he wanted to wait until after Thea’s birthday at least. Until they had that conversation, he wasn’t going to say that he sought Oliver out to apologize for being complicit in Moira’s behavior. “If Oliver chooses not to respond to your messages, I can’t force him to.” Moira scoffed and stormed out.

While Moira and Walter were arguing, Charles Winston III and Richard Deckard were discussing the meeting as they made their way out of the building. “This was the first time in years one of these meetings has felt even the slightest bit productive.” Deckard said.

“I agree. The debate was an actual discussion instead of a waste of time.” Winston said.
“Why Moira insisted on making us debate at all, for years, is beyond me.”

“It’s not that complicated. She did it for the same reason why she does everything: for appearance.” He grumbled. “Oliver surprised me though.”

“Really?”

“Five years ago, we all know what kind of person he was, or at least seemed to be. He was acting too much like Bobby for my taste.” Charles explained. Having known Robert since he was young, Winston never stopped calling Robert “Bobby” no matter how many times the man tried to correct him. “Today, though, it was like Richard Queen had come to the meeting.”

“I was certainly impressed by how he handled himself, even with his mother trying to baby him.”

“Baby him? Ha! She wouldn’t look at him, didn’t even try to touch him. She was only acting that way because, if she convinced him he couldn’t handle the meeting, like a big boy, she’d get her advantage back.” Winston said as he reached his car and his driver opened the door for him. “I wouldn’t have been nearly as polite if someone spoke like that to me.”

The two men said their goodbyes and went their separate ways.

Oliver pulled up outside of Thea’s school right as the bell rang to dismiss the students for the day. He got out of the car and leaned against it so that she’d see him as soon as she came outside. He watched the doors open and his sister make a beeline straight for him. When she was a few steps away, she leaped slightly, and Oliver caught her in his arms and spun her around before placing her down on the ground.

‘Good day at school?’

“Eh, it was okay. I’m happy it’s over.” She shrugged. It wasn’t that Thea didn’t like school because she found herself liking it more recently. She was happy it was over because it meant she could spend the next few hours with Oliver and Felicity. It also meant that she was one day closer to being 18. She threw her bag into the backseat and got into the passenger seat. “Looking good, by the way.”

‘Thank you.’

“I’m guessing Felicity also enjoyed the sight of you in that suit.” She teased.

‘She did, but I haven’t seen her since this morning.’ He admitted before starting the car. ‘I had to miss our lunch date, because the meeting ran long. And I need to change before I start dinner, or I’m gonna ruin this suit.’ Felicity told him that he looked “so sexy it shouldn’t be legal”, her exact words, in the suit and he wanted to give her more time to appreciate the outfit, but it didn’t seem possible now.

“I’m sorry.” Thea said sympathetically. She looked upset for a few moments before she perked up. “Hey, just because you can’t keep the suit on until she comes home doesn’t mean you can’t dress up for her another time. Maybe your next date night? Or the next time you have a meeting or something? There’s also Valentine’s Day coming up soon.”

He nodded, thinking about what she said, and they drove home. Thea told Oliver about her day at school and, while she wanted to hear everything about the board meeting, she knew they’d probably talk about it at dinner, when the rest of Team Oliver was there.
While Oliver was picking up Thea, Donna, Digg and Roy were relaxing at Felicity’s house. Today had gone pretty well, much better than anyone had expected, but they were all happy the meeting was over. Digg got a call from Carly and went into the kitchen to answer it while Donna and Roy stayed in the living room.

“I think today went great!” Donna said.

“Yeah, Oliver and Walter really kicked butt back there. They won every argument, and I didn’t ruin everything or get so nervous I passed out or puked.” He responded. He was only half-joking, since he didn’t know if he’d done a good job interpreting or not.

“Roy, sweetie, you did great. If I didn’t know better, I’d say you’ve been doing this for years. I bet, if you ask Oliver later, you’ll find that he was even more anxious than you.”

“He looked so calm the whole time though.” He said in confusion.

“I think he didn’t want his mother to see how nervous he was, use it against him. He has this tic, I first noticed it because of my old job at the casino, where he rubs two of his fingertips together. He did that multiple times when he wasn’t signing, usually right after he’d finished signing and waited to hear reactions. You both did awesome jobs covering your nerves.” She assured him. “And if Oliver offers me a job, I think I’m gonna take it. I think you should too, we make quite the dream team.”

“I- I mean, it sounds like a good opportunity, I just- I don’t know. I don’t wanna get this job only because I’m dating his sister, you know?”

“That’s not why he’d offer you a job at all. You’re not just Thea’s boyfriend. You’re Oliver’s friend. After all, he’s not just my daughter’s boyfriend, he’s also my friend. I like him, he’s become like a surrogate son to me. If Oliver offers you a job for personal reasons, it’ll be because you’re his friend, who he feels comfortable around and trusts. And today, you proved that you’re qualified for this job.” She could tell that Roy wasn’t completely convinced, but was coming around to her position. “You don’t have to decide anything now, okay? And if you’re worried for some other reason, John and I have your back.”

“Yeah, we do.” Digg said, coming back into the room. “What do we have his back on? I missed that whole conversation because Carly called me.”

“Everything okay?”

“Yeah, it just- Andy’s birthday is on Friday and that’s always a tough day for her and AJ.” He said.

After his lunch date with McKenna ended, Tommy went to a meeting with his mother’s and grandparents’ lawyers. His grandparents hadn’t left him much money, at least compared to his father’s current net worth, but there were a few heirlooms in the family vault that they left him. He also learned the current value of the trust fund that his mother had set up for him before her death. It wasn’t quite as large as Oliver’s, but he could live comfortably for the rest of his life without needing to work. He made sure to get copies of every document they showed him so that he could discuss it with his lawyers the next time he stopped by their office.

He left the attorneys’ office and drove to Felicity’s house. He arrived just as Thea and Oliver were pulling up and walked inside with them. Oliver asked for someone to start boiling some water
while he changed out of his suit.

Felicity’s lunchtime FaceTime call with Oliver was the highlight of her day. She spent the rest of her workday trying, and failing, to figure out why the user interface for one of her programs wasn’t connecting properly to the backdoor coding she’d done. She was finding it hard to focus, knowing that the board meeting was today and hoping it had gone well. When she spoke to Oliver at lunch, he said things were looking good, but there was a chance that might’ve changed. Around four, she decided she needed to take a step back and stop obsessing about the problem until tomorrow. When five o’clock hit, she and Lyla were the first ones out of the building.

“I don’t usually run out of the office at full speed but-.”

“Hey, you don’t have to explain anything to me.” Lyla said. “I wanna know how it went too.”

“It went well. At least, I hope it went well. I feel like if it hadn’t my mom or Digg or Roy would’ve at least texted to give me a head’s up. Unless he asked them not to. Which would be bad. Oh my god, what if it became a complete disaster and-.”

“Felicity. I’m sure it went as well as it could’ve gone. And, while Roy, Donna and Johnny would listen to Oliver’s request, if they felt like we needed to know, they would’ve said something.” Lyla said, trying to calm the blonde down. “Let’s not make a mountain out of a molehill.”

When they left the parking lot, they didn’t notice a sedan with tinted windows parked down the street. The driver pulled out his cellphone and dialed a number.

“Yes, I have confirmation.” He said. “Agent Michaels is undercover at Queen Consolidated.”

“Any sign of a partner?”

“Nope. I think she’s solo on this one.” He answered.

“Excellent.” Chien Na Wei said on the other end. “We will strike tomorrow.”

Felicity and Lyla arrived at the house and as soon as they entered, an alluring smell caught their attention. Felicity loved Oliver for many reasons, and Lyla loved him, platonically, for countless others, but neither woman would lie and say one of those reasons wasn’t because he was an amazing cook. Lyla walked over to Digg to kiss him hello while Felicity went into the kitchen where Oliver was.

She was a little disappointed that he’d changed out of his suit, but greeted him and gave him a big kiss as soon as he knew she was there. When they broke apart, after Thea cleared her throat and warned them about a pot simmering, Felicity sighed happily.

“I know you love your Henleys, but you looked very handsome in that suit.” She told him. She then lowered her voice to a whisper. “And it made me think very grown-up things.”

‘Oh, I plan on wearing it again very soon.’ He told her. ‘I didn’t think it would look good covered in food though.’

“Yeah, Armani and raw chicken really don’t mix.” She joked. She was about to ask how the meeting went when Tommy jokingly asked if they were ever going to be fed.
Roy playfully hit him on the back of the head while Donna put him to work setting the table. In a few minutes, everyone sat down to eat.

“So, this is where we usually talk about our days.” Felicity said. “Anyone feel like going first?”

“I had a date.” Tommy blurted out. “Well, it was coffee, but she agreed to an actual date afterwards.”

“Ooh, who’s the date with?” Donna asked.

“McKenna Hall.” He said. “I just wanted to catch up with her, so we got coffee but it turned out that we just really clicked. If that’s weird, Ollie, I understand and I-.”

‘It’s okay. You deserve to find someone.’ Oliver told his friend. ‘The date went well?’ he signed slowly, but there were a few signs the others needed to explain to Tommy before he could answer.

“Yeah, we really hit it off. I mean, we were friends in school, but- it went well. I think she likes me.” He said. “I almost got us kicked out of Jitters because we were so chatty and kept hogging the table.”


Oliver sighed and put his fork down before he started signing. ‘The board meeting happened. It was better than I thought. The other shareholders didn’t- I think I’ve earned the respect of at least a handful of them. They didn’t treat me like- they listened to what I had to say.’ He said. ‘And we “won” the fight on all three issues being discussed.’

“You can tell me that you don’t wanna talk about it,” Tommy said, “but this was the first time you’ve been around your mother since you moved in here. How did that go?”

‘During the meeting, it was okay. I didn’t have to sit near her, but before and after-.. She still doesn’t get it.’ He said. ‘She acts like this….rift between us is because I’m upset she threw out an old stuffed animal or something.”

“Um, I hate to contradict you, Oliver, but during the meeting, it wasn’t okay.” Donna said quietly. “She talked to you like you were a child, trying to convince you that you couldn’t handle being on the board and that you should really let her worry about all of those complicated things. You handled it like a champ but- her behavior wasn’t okay.”

‘It made her look bad, not me.’ He pointed out. ‘I wanted part of the board to respect me, and the way I reacted to her helped do that, I think. Plus, the more she tried to convince me to leave, the more desperate she looked, especially since she kept losing.’

“The majority sided against Mom?” Thea asked in surprise. Moira was used to getting what she wanted, and probably reasoned that enough of the board might side with her, or at least side against Oliver, that she could push things through, but clearly, she’d been wrong. “I wish I could’ve seen her face.”

“So, to recap.” Lyla said. “Tommy’s coffee date went well. Felicity and I were productive at work. Thea had a good day at school and the board meeting went better than any of us thought it would. A good day all around.”

“I’d say so.” Roy said. He then saw that Oliver had a concerned look on his face. “Something wrong?”
‘Daniel Correll. I was supposed to stop by his office after the meeting, but I forgot. I was eager to get away from Mom and-.’

“He didn’t say you needed to meet today. I’m sure you can stop by tomorrow or we can give him a call and explain. He’ll understand.” Donna said.

‘I should apologize in person.’ He said. ‘That seems like the responsible thing to do. Would either of you mind coming with me tomorrow to speak to him?’

“Not at all.” Roy and Donna said in unison.

The rest of dinner was quiet. Thea’s upcoming birthday was a big topic of conversation, as was Donna trying to figure out the logistics of her moving to Starling. After a few hours, everyone went their separate ways, with Thea deciding to crash with Tommy at the Ritz.

Felicity and Oliver decided to call it an early night and retreated into their bedroom. Felicity changed into her pajamas and laid down on the bed. Oliver joined her and started unbuttoning her pajama top.

“Can I help you?” She asked playfully.

‘I was doing some very important recon this morning, until we had to get dressed.’ He answered. ‘I wanna get back to what I was doing.’ He returned to unbuttoning her shirt. While seeing Felicity shirtless was nice, he hadn’t had the chance to truly appreciate the sight that morning. Soon, her shirt was completely unbuttoned and he had an unobstructed view of her chest. ‘There we were.’ He smirked when he saw that one of her nipples was already hard.

“Don’t judge. It’s cold in here, okay?” She said.

‘I’ll warm you up then.’

He rubbed his hands together a few times, to warm them up, before he started to caress her breast. He was gentle at first, worried that he might get a little too excited or rough. After a few minutes, he started to massage one of them and his girlfriend let out a tiny moan.

“Do that again.” She told him. He repeated the motion and she let out a blissful sigh. He moved so that it was easier for him to touch either breast and gave her left one the same treatment her right one had been getting. She noticed how mesmerized he seemed to be by her chest and let out a giggle. “Anyone with boobs can get a frat boy to do anything.”

‘I was a frat boy.’

“I rest my case.” She said. “Not that I’d want a different frat boy touching my boobs.”

‘You better not. They’ll need to fight me for the honor.’ He half-joked.

They fooled around for a little while longer before falling asleep.

Nyssa leapt down from one roof and went into a roll as she landed on the next one. She hadn’t seen Oliver tonight, but supposed he might need a few more days before he was ready to resume vigilante duty. She would do what she could to protect the streets of Starling during his respite. The patrol gave her a way to keep her mind off of her earlier conversation with Sara anyway.
The next day, Felicity went to work, like normal, and Oliver promised they’d get lunch together later that day. Remembering both Felicity’s reaction to him wearing a suit, and Thea’s advice, Oliver changed into a different, but still very nice, suit from yesterday after she left and told Donna he was ready to head to Queen Consolidated to talk to Correll whenever she was. She changed and they headed out with Digg.

They arrived at the company headquarters and Oliver found Correll’s office, knocking on the door. He looked up from his paperwork and greeted Oliver.

‘I’m sorry about not stopping by to see you yesterday after the meeting. I don’t want you to think I’m ignoring you. I came by stop make an appointment so that we could talk when it’s convenient for you.’ Oliver said.

“I have some free time right now, if you’d like?” Correll offered. “If we need to make an appointment to talk in more detail, we can set it later.”

‘Thank you.’ He said, stepping further into the office. ‘I meant to stop by yesterday, but- after the meeting, my mother-.’

“I’ve heard things are strained between you two, and frankly, well your mother’s recent behavior has been….well, I don’t know how to describe it. But I completely understand why you might’ve wanted to get out of here as fast as possible yesterday.” He said evenly. “I wanted to speak with you about your public profile. You’ve become very popular recently and for all of the best reasons.”

‘You mean those pictures and videos people keep taking and putting on that Instagram thing that Thea keeps saying we broke?’ Oliver said. ‘I don’t quite understand what it is, but she told me a bit about it.’

“Yes. People are still posting photos and videos of you and Thea. A clip of you two from yesterday made the news. The fact that you were in a suit made some people think you might be taking a job here or on track to become CEO.”

‘I can’t- I don’t- I didn’t even graduate college, and after- I can’t handle a job like that, or much of any job to be honest. I need to- I didn’t mean to cause anyone problems. Walter’s doing a great job as CEO and I-.’

“Oliver, it’s okay. It’s just speculation. No one’s taking it seriously. You didn’t cause any problems for Walter or this company.” He said. “To be honest, you’ve only made him, and all of us, look better in the last few months. The reason I wanted to talk to you is to ask how you’d feel about a press conference or even just releasing a statement.” He took a deep breath. “You should know that there are a lot of rumors flying around about you that no one’s gone public with because the media can’t get anyone on the record.”

“Rumors about what?” Digg asked. “Is there something we should be concerned about?”

“The rift between Oliver and his mother.” He said before looking back at Oliver. “There’s always been speculation about what happened on that island and how it’s impacted your physical and mental health. What your plans for the future are. There’s also a great deal of interest in your relationship with Ms. Smoak, though a lot of that’s been publicized already. The general consensus is that you’re in a happy, healthy relationship. Felicity being so successful and well-regarded in her field has been well-received. I’m not sure if you saw the pieces, but a few weeks ago, several
articles detailing her career path were run. I hadn’t known that she marketed and sold her first piece of software at the age of 14 until I read it.”

‘Good.’ Oliver signed with a smile. ‘I’m glad people are starting to realize how amazing Felicity is. She deserves more recognition than she gets.’

“You’re damn right about that.” Donna said. “Sorry, just- having a proud mama moment over here.”

“You’re Felicity’s mother?” Correll asked and Donna nodded enthusiastically in return. “I can only imagine how proud you are of her.”

They talked for a little while longer before Correll had another meeting he needed to get to. Oliver hadn’t made a decision yet about what to do, but he made it clear that a press conference was out of the question. He believed it would be too much for him to handle. They dropped Donna off at Felicity’s house before stopping by Applied Sciences to pick Lyla and Felicity up for lunch.

McKenna walked into the task force’s area right when her shift started. She’d tried to meet up with her team, but they had no real leads and it was common knowledge that the commissioner wanted the Gambit investigation wrapped up so that the federal agents would lead and he didn’t have to play nice anymore.

“You left in a hurry yesterday afternoon.” Dinan remarked as she was reading over her notes for the fifteenth time.

“I was meeting Tommy Merlyn for coffee.”

“You could’ve just said you had a date.”

“It was just coffee, two old friends catching up….but he did ask me on a real date when we parted ways. And I said yes.”

“Turned on the charm, huh?”

“Nope. He was just- well, it was nice and he wasn’t trying too hard to be cool or mysterious, you know? It wasn’t an act.”

“I had a guy ask me out like that once.”

“How’d that go?”

“Well, I married him and we have three wonderful, but somewhat aggravating kids, so I’d say it went well.” Dinan said. “Anything interesting come up over coffee?”

“He talked about his college days, a few things that happened after Oliver went missing. A bit about Oliver’s first few weeks home. I shared some stories from the academy and my time as a beat cop. The most surprising thing he told me was that he’d moved out of his family’s house. His dad was a huge dick to him after he got hurt and said something after the situation with the Red Mask Gang that was the final straw.”

“Malcolm Merlyn was injured? I didn’t hear about it. The again, I can’t remember the last time he was spotted anywhere.”
“Yeah, because the same night he crashed his car, the Dark Archer attacked Applied Sciences.” McKenna said. “Kinda buried the story and Malcolm probably wanted to keep it quiet anyway.”

“Did Tommy say where his father was hurt?”

“He said his hand was bandaged and he was limping. He didn’t know if he had any broken ribs, but the one time he saw him, Malcolm was moving like his whole body hurt.” She answered. “Why?”

“Malcolm Merlyn vanished for two years after his wife died. He was the only person Moira would see after the Gambit went missing. And the same night that he was in an accident where he injured his leg, hand and possibly ribs, the Dark Archer fought the Arrow and took an arrow to a knee, a hand and might’ve gotten some busted ribs.” Dinan said. “I could be grasping at straws but I think it’s worth at least entertaining the idea that Malcolm Merlyn could be the Dark Archer.”

Digg, Lyla, Oliver and Felicity had lunch at a small, family-owned deli in the middle of the city. Digg and Lyla made an excuse about “needing to see the whole restaurant for security purposes” so that Oliver and Felicity could have a table to themselves. A few other customers snapped some covert pictures, but overall, the couple’s presence wasn’t a huge deal.

The end of Felicity’s lunch hour came far too soon and it was time for her to head back to work. Oliver and Felicity kissed each other goodbye, which another customer got a picture of, before she and Lyla got into the car and drove away.

They were halfway back to the office when Lyla realized someone was following them. She made a sudden right turn, much to Felicity’s surprise.

“Uh, you were supposed to go straight and-.”

“We’re being followed. I need you to call Johnny.” She said. Felicity pulled out her phone right as someone leaned out of the passenger side of the car tailing them and fired, hitting the side mirror. “Keep your head down until I say so.”

“Who is-?”

“I don’t know.” Lyla admitted.

Felicity remembered that she needed to call Digg and finally dialed the number. “Hey, John? Lyla and I are kinda- someone’s chasing us and shooting at the car.”

“Where are-?”

“Tell him we’re at 18th and Crenshaw, heading towards Nelson.” Lyla said. “He needs to meet us at Adams Street.” Felicity repeated the directions and John told her they’d be in position shortly.

Behind them, Chien Na Wei was getting very annoyed that Lyla had so easily spotted the car chasing her.

“I don’t know where she thinks she’s going. It’s not like we can’t just follow her.” The driver said.

“You should be doing less talking and more driving. You were supposed to run her off the road before she spotted us.” She said. “I want her taken alive.”
“And the passenger?”

“Doesn’t matter.”

Lyla accelerated in front of them and they followed suit, not wanting to lose her.

‘Drive faster.’ Oliver signed to John.

“I can’t speed too much or we’ll get pulled over and we won’t be much help to them if we’re busy getting ticketed.” He said. “It’s less than a block away. We’re gonna make it.”

He brought the car to a stop where Lyla said and within moments, Lyla’s car was rushing towards them. Followed by a blacked-out SUV, a sketchy looking sedan and two men on motorcycles with machine guns.

“I kinda wish you were wearing your other suit right now.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 67

Chapter Summary

Lyla faces-off against someone from her past, other people react and Felicity gets asked a question no one's asked yet.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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“I kinda wish you were wearing your other suit right now.” Oliver didn’t find himself disagreeing.

McKenna was walking through her old precinct when suddenly, every cop around her jumped to their feet and started rushing towards cruisers. A passing officer, who she’d gone to the academy with, told her that there was a high-speed chase slash shoot-out happening nearby.

She pulled out her phone to check for alerts and brought up a live news feed. “-haven’t confirmed who the pursuers are, but sources have told me that they saw Felicity Smoak in the front car.”

She ran into an empty hallway and dialed her phone. “Have you seen the news?....That’s Felicity’s car. I recognize it from the warehouse.” She hung up and two seconds later, her phone rang again. “Yes, I saw it....” She did her best to wrap up the second conversation as quickly as possible as she headed to her car.

“How close are we to 18th and Adams?” Doyle yelled as soon as he hung up the phone. Dinan picked a bad day to decide to go back to the warehouse where the Queen’s Gambit had been found. “We need to get there. Now!”

Around him, the field agents on the task force scrambled to get what they needed and leave. They hadn’t known that the car being chased and shot at was Felicity’s until McKenna called him and told him.

Lyla was reaching the intersection where Digg and Oliver were idling and Felicity noticed, from her position hiding her head, that she kept looking out of the passenger side window.
“Okay, when I tell you to, I want you to recline the seat back as far as you can and sit up at the same time.” Lyla told her.

“I- my hand-eye coordination isn’t really-.”

“Felicity? Do you trust me?” She asked.

“Of course!”

“Then trust me that this will work.” She said. “Okay? And….Now!”

Felicity sat up and yanked on the lever, reclining the seat as far as it would go. She was practically lying on the backseat by this point. As soon as Felicity’s head was behind Lyla, the former ARGUS agent slammed on the brakes.

One of their pursuers who was on a motorcycle and directly behind them, crashed into the back of Lyla’s car at the sudden stop. The rider flew off of his bike, which took the brunt of the hit. Felicity was about to say something when Lyla raised her handgun and started firing through the passenger side window at the other biker. One bullet managed to wing him, causing him to pull back. Lyla sped off again.

Digg watched the vehicles that were chasing Lyla and Felicity. The two bikers were alone. The sedan had only one person shooting at them, while the black SUV had at least three armed men inside of it, all shooting at the car. One from the front passenger seat, one shooting from behind the driver and another who was leaning out of the sunroof. Wanting to take care of the biggest threat first, he waited for Lyla, the two bikers and the sedan to pass them before he stepped on the gas, colliding with the SUV and sending it into a spin.

The vehicle was still drivable, but now Digg was blocking its path and the man shooting from the sunroof was hunched over, likely due to a few broken, or at least cracked, ribs from the collision.

Oliver was about to get out of the car, but Digg motioned for him to stay put. “I’m the bodyguard here, remember? If you get out, ready for a fight before I do, it’ll look suspicious.”

The archer reluctantly nodded and watched Digg get out of the car, firing a few shots at the gunmen. One fired back, while the passenger got out of the car and made to slip past Digg, on Oliver’s side. Seeing his chance, Oliver waited for the gunman to get closer enough before throwing the door open, hitting him with it. Before the Triad member could react, Oliver hit him in the face and wrestled the gun away from him. The man tried to take it back, but Oliver used his fighting experience to his advantage and overpowered the man.

Digg was still exchanging gunfire with the other gunmen when something flew past his ear. A second projectile flew past him a moment later. Sirens started to blare from nearby. Then, one of the gunmen started yelling to his cohorts in Mandarin. Oliver honked the horn, getting Digg’s attention. Digg hit the last man standing before walking over to his own vehicle to see what Oliver wanted.

‘We should go.’ He signed. ‘They’re stuck here.’

“What do you-?”

‘Tires.’ He responded. Digg looked back at the SUV and noticed there were arrows sticking out of each of the tires on the van’s driver’s side. The tires were completely deflated.

“Your mysterious friend, I’m guessing.” He remarked. They drove away and made it to the next
street as three police cruisers surrounded the SUV. “Wait, do you speak Mandarin?”

‘Yes. Drive.’

Nyssa peered out of the window of the abandoned apartment she was hidden in. There had been just enough time between Oliver driving away and the police arriving that she was able to retrieve the two arrows she fired. Thankfully, this road wasn’t very busy, so no one spotted her or saw her fire her arrows. Without the arrows, it would look like the tires had been shot out and the authorities wouldn’t know about a third archer active in the city.

She told herself that she’d only intervened in the shoot-out because the sooner the Triad was dealt with, the sooner Oliver would return his attention to Malcolm Merlyn, his real enemy. The fact that she felt a warm feeling for helping didn’t have anything to do with it, or so she told herself.

“This was the best strategic move.” She said. “It’s not as if he is my friend or anything.”

Lyla was starting to think she and Felicity were in the clear after the two bikers were out of commission and Digg separated the SUV from the sedan. She was proven wrong, since soon after the sedan became the only car trailing them, a fire truck came to a stop at the next cross street, blocking her exit.

“What the fuck do they think they’re doing?” She yelled.

In the sedan Chien Na Wei smirked. There was nowhere for Lyla to run.

“Where’s my- ah, there it is.” Felicity said, picking up her phone. “What year’s the car they’re in?”

“I don’t- why does it matter?” Lyla asked her. She knew Felicity probably had a reason for the question, but was a little preoccupied at the moment. “It’s not new.”

“Do you think it’s older than a 2008?” She asked.

“No, newer. Why?”

“Gimme just a- got it.”

To Lyla’s surprise, the car swerved and crashed into a pole. The driver’s airbag deployed. “How did-?”

“I kinda….hacked into the car’s computer, messed with the brakes and made them crash.” She said. “The passenger does not look happy.”

Lyla saw a woman with white hair, very distinct white hair, step out of the car. She was a little taken aback that the Triad would come after her in broad daylight. It seemed much more reasonable, to her at least, to think the attack was caused by Tempest instead.

“Do not get out of the car.” Lyla told Felicity in a serious tone. “No matter what happens, stay in the car.”

“Okay.” She said. She wasn’t planning to get out of the car anyway.

Lyla reloaded her ammo and stepped out of the car. The only reason she was willing to meet Wei
face-on right now was because she knew the Triad leader preferred blades to guns.

“How’d you find me anyway?”

“You were all over the news after you got kidnapped with two billionaires. It made things easy.” Wei said. “I told you I’d make you pay for disrupting my business.”

“Are we gonna talk or are we gonna fight?” Lyla responded. She could see John making his way towards her. She just needed to keep the Triad at bay long enough for him to take care of anyone else in the car and get Felicity to safety.

The other woman didn’t respond, but kicked a leg out at her opponent. Lyla blocked with her arm and they started to fight.

“What the fuck is this?” Doyle yelled when he arrived at the spot where the majority of the SCPD was responding to the call. They were positioned on the other side of a parked fire truck.

“We’ve cut off their escape so that we can move in once we get into position.” One officer said.

“Move the engine. Now.” He yelled.

“You don’t have jurisdiction here, Navy Boy.” Commissioner Nudocerdo said smugly.

Doyle didn’t bother pointing out that he was Coast Guard, not Navy. “Yes, I do. The car being chased, and shot at, belongs to one of my witnesses and you just blocked their only exit.” He said before turning to one of the firemen standing there. “Move the truck, now, or I’ll have you charged as an accessory.” One of the firemen, Danny de la Vega, gestured to his buddy to move the engine so that it wasn’t blocking the exit. “Rathbone, get this idiot away from my crime scene.”

“Idiot? The mayor will here about this. You’re done. Your days working in this town are-.” The police commissioner ranted as Agent Rathbone led him away from the scene.

Digg’s car reached Lyla as the fire truck started to move and Lyla managed to land a particularly hard hit on Chien Na Wei’s stomach. Both women had taken multiple hits, but Wei was looking slightly worse for wear than Lyla.

“Is that all you’ve got?” The white haired woman asked, despite sounding pained.

“Not at all.” She responded, aiming a kick and hitting her in the ribs. She was about to hit her again when a voice called out.

“Federal agents! Drop your weapons and stand down!”

“Heh. Your friends finally showed up.” Wei said. “I knew you couldn’t beat me by yourself.”

Lyla was still close enough to her to strike her, so she hit her in the face, hard enough to make her reel backwards. Lyla then took a step away and raised her hands to show Doyle and the other responders that she wasn’t armed or looking for a fight. Now surrounded, Wei let the task force arrest her. As soon as she was in handcuffs, Oliver bolted out of Digg’s car to check on Felicity.

‘Are you okay?’ He asked as he started checking her for injuries.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Thanks to Lyla.” She told him.
Digg told Doyle that there was an SUV full of Wei’s accomplices behind them, having already been apprehended. The agent asked how this fight started and Digg admitted that he wasn’t sure, just that Lyla called him saying they were being followed.

“Oh obviously, we didn’t expect it to turn into….that.” He said.

“Are there any recent threats to Mr. Queen or Ms. Smoak recently that you’re aware of?” Doyle asked. “A broad daylight attack is bold, and whoever is targeting them-.”

“Felicity wasn’t the target.” Lyla said. “I was. The woman I was fighting, I encountered her when I worked for ARGUS. She’s a member of the Triad. I didn’t expect her to find me here, or attack while I was- Felicity could’ve been-.”

“You’re okay. She’s okay. Your nemesis is stopped. That’s what matters.” Digg said.

Felicity and Oliver were still off in their own little world, each assuring the other that they were okay. He was overcome with worry, even though the Triad had been stopped. He had no idea who they were or why they’d target him. Was this an attempt by Tempest to silence both of them?

Thea was in the middle of math class when the PA system came to life. “Mr. Nanes? Can you please send Thea Queen to the front office?” The secretary asked.

“Certainly.” Thea’s math teacher said before gesturing to her to pack up her things. Students started muttering to themselves, wondering what Thea had done to get into trouble.

Thea herself didn’t know, but grabbed her stuff and walked to the office. She saw Tommy standing there, looking worried. “I talked to Walter, and he agreed that it would be okay if I signed you out early.”

“Why? What’s going on?”

“Right. You were in class, paying attention and didn’t see the news.” He said. “Come on, I’ll explain on the way.”

“No, tell me now. What’s going on? Is Ollie-?”

“I don’t know, okay? All I know, all anyone knows, is that Felicity, Oliver and their bodyguards got into a car chase with people shooting at them. We’re going to Felicity’s house and hopefully, by the time we get there, we’ll know more.”

“So, you don’t even know if they’re-.”

“Ollie was able to keep himself alive on the island. Digg and Lyla were both special forces. I think they’re gonna be fine. A little banged up, maybe, but okay.” He said. “Let’s go.”

Thea threw her backpack over her shoulder and followed Tommy out of the building. They got into Tommy’s car just as a news van came racing down the street and parked as close to the school as it legally could.

“Freaking vultures.” She muttered under her breath. Yes, she was rich and famous, but it creeped her out that paparazzi would wait outside of her school to ambush her. She was still a minor after all, and they’d been doing this for years.
Tommy made an agreeing noise and they drove off, heading to Felicity’s house.

The SCPD officers who’d responded to the car chase and shoot-out wanted to start questioning Oliver and Felicity, but after Agent Doyle kicked their commissioner off the scene, they wisely decided to hold back. One officer that had been on the Anti-Vigilante Task Force with McKenna asked Doyle if they should start getting their statements once Chien Na Wei and the other Triad members had been arrested and taken away.

“Now wouldn’t be a very good time to interview them.” Doyle answered. “They’re still shaken from what happened.”

Oliver was still fussing over Felicity and she was trying to convince him that she was okay, all things considered. He didn’t want to interrupt them.

“So, when should-?”

“I’ll talk it over with the rest of my team and we’ll get in touch with Ms. Smoak and Mr. Queen when we feel its appropriate.” He said, brushing the cop off. He didn’t want to involve any more members of the SCPD than were already assisting on the Gambit investigation, especially after his confrontation with the commissioner. Now, more than ever, he wished the task force could be read in on Lyla’s past with ARGUS and how it related to Oliver’s time as a castaway.

“I don’t wanna make your job harder, but if you don’t need to speak with Oliver or Felicity, I’d like to get them out of here before every photographer in the city shows up.” Digg said, walking over to Doyle.

“Dinan, Hall or one of the others can get a statement from them in the next few days.” He said. “I know there’s some information Dinan’s been trying to figure out how to tell Oliver.”

“Felicity teleworks on Thursdays, so if she wanted to tell Oliver, when he’d have as much support as possible, tomorrow would be a good day to do that.” John said before walking away.

Digg nodded, making a mental note to tell Dinan that later. He expected Lyla to get into the car with Felicity and Oliver, only to be surprised when she walked over to where he was standing.

“Any ETA on getting that clearance?” She asked.

“Still working on it. The joys of bureaucracy.” He said. “Do you- is there a time-sensitive issue you’re worried about?”

“No, I just- I’m worried. I don’t trust Waller and she’s got a vindictive streak like you wouldn’t believe.” She said. “I don’t wanna give her time to plan anything, if you catch my drift.”

“Believe me, it’s a high-priority.” Doyle said. Lyla nodded and walked away. He was astonished at how much she wanted to discuss sensitive information like this.

Lyla’s car was considered to be evidence, so they had to leave it at the scene, but the group piled into Digg’s vehicle, which just had a dent from colliding with the Triad’s SUV and drove away. Lyla and John sat in silence in the front seat, while Oliver spent the whole car ride practically wrapped around Felicity. The attack earlier had made him extra clingy.
Felicity’s phone ringing a few minutes away from the house was the first sound anyone in the car made since the chase came to an end. It surprised Felicity and she jumped, before pulling the device out of her pocket.

“Hi Walter…..we’re okay. Shaken but okay. I don’t think- well, they do say that great minds think alike…..oh, I don’t know if- not the whole day, I don’t think its necessary…yes, I’m sure….okay, bye.” She said before hanging up. “Walter told me that I could take the next two days off, to recover from- I don’t know if I’m gonna do that. I might try to get some work done from home, I don’t wanna feel like I’m letting Curtis or my team down, you know?”

“I think they’ll understand.” Lyla said. “Felicity, I’m so-.”

“If you’re apologizing, stop it.” She said. “I’d make a threat, but I can’t think of anything specific right now, but it’s gonna be dramatic and slightly annoying, so just use your imagination.”

“The people chasing us were-.”

“Please, just- not today, all right?” She asked, tiredly. “I wanna go home, take this bra off and eat brownies. Oliver, will you make me some brownies?”

‘I’ll make you as many brownies as you want.’ He told her.

“Good.” She said with a smile.

They pulled up outside the house and got out. As soon as they stepped inside, they were surrounded by people asking them if they were okay and what happened. Donna, Thea, Tommy and Roy meant well, but it was a bit much.

“Mom, Mom. Mom!” Felicity yelled, cutting her mother off mid-sentence. “And everyone else, I love all of you, and I know you’re worried, but right now, Oliver and I just wanna change and have a few moments to calm down and breathe, okay? We’re okay. Everyone’s okay, but we need some space. And Oliver promised to make me brownies.”

The others seemed to realize they were being a bit overbearing and let Felicity and Oliver retreat to their room to change and take a breather. This gave Donna and the others time to hug Digg and Lyla and thank them both for keeping Oliver and Felicity safe.

“Good thing Felicity’s bodyguard is an ex-super spy.” Tommy remarked as he watched Donna hug Lyla. He then got a guilty look on his face. “Sorry, I wasn’t supposed to-.”

“It’s fine.” She said. “Oliver and Felicity both already know and there’s no way I’m going back to the agency so-.”

“You were a spy?” Thea asked. “What agency are you-?”

“Wait, Ollie and Felicity know about-?”

“That’s….a story for another day.” She said, just as Oliver and Felicity came out of their bedroom, now dressed in casual clothing.

Oliver was holding Felicity’s hand and only let go to ask the others if anyone wanted to help him bake some brownies. Thea and Tommy both offered to be assistant bakers while Donna said she’d help Felicity “supervise” the process. Roy didn’t give an excuse, but followed the others into the kitchen anyway.
No one wanted to ask for details about what happened, so Donna asked Felicity how things at work were going. Asking Felicity about one of her projects had always been one of the easiest ways to get her talking. She started explaining her latest project, which slowly got her to open up more and distract everyone from what had happened, they didn’t forget about the chase, but it took their minds off of it while the brownies baked. Roy then asked Oliver how his meeting with Correll went, after the conversation tapered off.

Dinan stormed into the task force’s office and looked pissed. The other agents weren’t sure if she was pissed about the attack happening, pissed she wasn’t able to be involved with the Triad’s arrest or pissed for a different reason.

“What do we know?” She asked.

“The target was Lyla Michaels, not Felicity Smoak. It seems she’d had encounters with the leader of the group, a woman named Chien Na Wei, while with ARGUS. It could be just bad timing.” Agent Rathbone said.

“With this case, we can’t be too sure.” She responded. “Anything else?”

“They’re shaken, but otherwise unharmed. And Michaels really wants us to be read in on her mission already.” Doyle said. “Her….enthusiasm is-.”

“If what she needs to tell us is half as bad as what I’m imagining, I don’t blame her.” Dinan said.

“How’d your search go? Find anything at that warehouse that we missed?”

“Nothing we missed, but something we didn’t know.” She said. “I was talking to Hall this morning, and she mentioned that Malcolm Merlyn was in a car accident the night the Dark Archer attacked Applied Sciences and just so happened to be injured in the same places that the Dark Archer was.”

“You think there’s a connection?”

“I think it’s possible, but I needed to ask Agent Mars if she could track Merlyn’s movements over the last two decades.” Agent Mars excelled at finding people, and uncovering their tracks when they reappeared. The joke at the FBI was that if even God couldn’t find someone, Mars could. Everyone joked that in her past life, she must’ve been a spy or a bounty hunter.

“Two decades?” Doyle repeated.

“Call it a hunch.”

After all of the brownies Oliver made were eaten, everyone moved into the living room and continued their conversations. About an hour passed and Oliver realized the adrenaline was wearing off and how tired he was. At Felicity’s encouragement, he laid down to take a nap, with his head on her lap. The others started talking, but at a lower volume so that he could get some sleep.

Once Oliver was sleeping, the group broke apart. Thea went to work on her homework, while chatting with Roy. Digg and Lyla talked amongst themselves and Donna announced that she was going to clean up the mess from the baking earlier. Tommy wasn’t entirely sure what to do, so he
sat in the living room in silence with Felicity.

Felicity absentmindedly ran her fingers through Oliver’s hair as she sat there, deep in thought about something. Soon, the quiet became too much for Tommy and he blurted out something he’d been wondering for a while.

“You can yell at me for being nosy, or insensitive for asking this, but- Does it ever bother you?” He asked Felicity. “That Ollie can’t speak?”

Felicity stopped her ministrations. “And you want my fully honest and complete answer?”

“Well, I wouldn’t have asked if- if you don’t wanna answer, you can tell me buzz off.” He couldn’t tell if he’d upset, or angered her, or not.

Felicity looked down at Oliver for a moment, muttered something Tommy couldn’t hear, and then looked back at Tommy. She took a deep breath before opening her mouth to answer. “Yes and no.” She said plainly. “Oliver doesn’t speak. He could regain his voice, or he could never speak again. He doesn’t have a voice in the same way that you and I do, but I don’t love him any less because of that. I love Oliver for who he is, exactly who he is, and that includes his limitations.”

“But it does upset you somewhat?” Tommy asked.

“Well, it’s not easy for him to live the way that he does. It’s not easy seeing him struggle and get frustrated when he isn’t understood or he feels like he isn’t being listened to.” She said. “There’s also- Oliver wasn’t born this way, something happened that made him lose his voice, and there’s a part of him, I don’t know how big that part is, but there’s a part of him that believes that if he gets his voice back, if he could speak, he’ll be “fixed”. All of his problems will go away, it’ll be like nothing ever happened and I- I love Oliver, but….it doesn’t work that way, I wish it did.” Her voice started to crack, remembering what happened when Oliver tried to speak but couldn’t, in the hopes it would make the mess with Laurel and the trial go away. How distraught he was. “Oliver being nonverbal doesn’t upset me, but seeing how upset, discouraged and frustrated he gets at his condition does upset me. That’s….the best way I can really explain it.”

It wasn’t until Oliver reached up to wipe away Felicity’s tear that she or Tommy realized he was awake. “Ollie, I-.”

“How much of that did you hear?” She asked him, worried he might take her words the wrong way.

‘Enough. I love you.’

‘I love you too.’ She signed back. ‘I hope we didn’t upset you.’

‘You didn’t. We never- we talk about how I feel about it all the time, but not how you feel. How you feel matters too.’

‘I love you. You love me. Voice or no voice, that’s what really matters.’ She said before she bent her head down to kiss him.
Special bonus points if anyone gets some of the references I made in this chapter.
Chapter 68

Chapter Summary

The task force gets a few surprises, while Team Oliver gets some surprises of their own.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

After the arrest of Chien Na Wei and the other Triad members, Doyle decided to leave them in interrogation rooms for a little while. He wasn’t in any rush to question them, knowing that Wei wouldn’t break very easily and needing to give her an incentive to tell him what he wanted to know. The US government’s counter-terrorism legislation was working in his favor at the moment.

Doyle was surprised then, when about two hours after Wei’s arrest, he was walking towards the interrogation room and found two armed men leading her out of the room.

“Where the hell do you think you’re going with my perp?” He asked the two men.

“I’m afraid Ms. Wei will be coming with us.” Someone said from behind the trio. A black woman with her hair pulled back in a bun stepped out of the room. “Amanda Waller, director of ARGUS.”

“I’ll cooperate. I’ll tell you everything.” Wei said, her eyes had widened in fear. She wasn’t stupid. She’d heard about some of the things that happened to ARGUS prisoners, people who were never seen again. “Whatever deal you wanna make, just- don’t let them take me.”

“This isn’t an ARGUS case. You have no authority here and I can’t just let you take our prisoners.” He said.

“I don’t want your prisoners, plural, just Ms. Wei here.” She said with an eyeroll. “Pittman.” One of the agents handed Doyle a document. “And this gives me the authority to take Ms. Wei into ARGUS custody, in the interest of national security.”

Doyle read it and had to fight the urge to start yelling expletives. The paperwork did give her that authority and, short of making the Justice Department fight against Homeland Security for Wei, there was nothing he could do to stop Waller from taking Wei into her custody. “Our investigation isn’t concluded yet. If we have questions for Ms. Wei-.”

“You should’ve asked them during the two hours she sat waiting in an interrogation room.” Waller said. “We’re done here.”

The team from ARGUS continued on their way and Doyle headed back to the task force’s office to tell Dinan, Reeves and Anderson what had happened with Waller.

“I really don’t get that woman.” Reeves said. “Lyla Michaels gets kidnapped, while she’s an ARGUS agent, and Waller does nothing. She gets attacked as a civilian and she’s already here.”

“Didn’t Michael’s say that Waller places no value on her agents’ lives?” Dinan asked. “Do we think Waller saw an opportunity when the chase was televised or was she just waiting for this to
You think the director of ARGUS suspected something like that would happen and did nothing?" Anderson asked.

"I think it’s kinda convenient that she managed to get here, with the necessary paperwork to take Chien Na Wei into ARGUS custody, in under two hours."

"What do we do now?"

"Nothing we can do." She said with a sigh. Dinan had half a mind to go find McKenna, tell her Waller had sniped Wei and then not-so-subtly imply that she should inform Tommy, and by extension Oliver, of the news. She decided that route would cause more problems than it solved. “Until we get that clearance for Michaels’s story. Waller didn’t say anything to you about it, did she?"

"Nope."

"She wouldn’t know, anyway." Reeves pointed out. "My buddy made sure that paperwork went to someone higher up the food chain than Waller." Amanda Waller was the director of ARGUS, but there were a number of people she still answered to. People who were much more visible to public. People who got a little twitchy when Oliver Queen or the Queen’s Gambit were mentioned. "She’s not gonna know until after we get the whole story from Lyla."

Oliver and Felicity listened intently as Tommy brought them up to speed on things with his move and finding out more about his mother and grandparents’ wills. In hindsight, it was stupid of him to let his father worry about all of those things, knowing what he now knew and having realized what kind of person his father was.

“And I- I’ve got another meeting with my lawyers in a week, but- I think I’m finally turning into a real adult.” He said, finishing his explanation.

“I’ve been known to have that affect on people.” Felicity joked. “In all seriousness, that’s good to hear. I know you were never close to your father and you two have grown even further apart-.”

“He called me pathetic and told me he was glad my mother was dead.”

“What?!?” Not only did Felicity exclaim that, but Donna, Thea, John, Lyla, and Roy did as well. Judging by the look on Oliver’s face, he was thinking the same thing.

"After Ollie, Lyla and I were kidnapped, I called him to let him know I was okay. I was little emotional, understandably and I kinda started babbling about how terrifying it was and how scared Ollie must’ve been and- and he said he was glad my mom was dead so that she didn’t have to see how pathetic I was now.” He said. “I knew we weren’t close, but I never- I didn’t know he hated me until that night.”

“Well, your father just skyrocketed to Number 3 on my shit list.” Lyla said.

“Only #3?"”

“I can’t talk about #1 and #2 is Moira for what she tried to do to Oliver.” She said. Unless Waller died a horrible death, she’d always be #1 on Lyla’s shit list. Malcolm was already pretty high, since they knew he was shady, but the way he treated his son, his only family, pushed him even
‘Your dad’s full of shit.’ Oliver said. ‘He’s so wrong it’s not even funny. When I think of Aunt Rebecca, when I think about your mom, I always remember how kind she was, how much she cared about everyone, whether they were her family or complete strangers. She loved you so much, Tommy. I don’t know if you remember this, but I slept over at your house when we were five, and your dad asked you what you wanted to be when you grew up. You didn’t know, you were five, you hadn’t decided what you were gonna be, and he- he made a joke, a mean one, and you started crying a little bit and I-.’

“You said I promised to show you my GameBoy, and I hadn’t.” He finished. “I remember that.”

‘After you showed it to me, and you didn’t seem upset, I left your room saying I was gonna get a drink. I was looking for your nanny when I heard your parents arguing. Your mom was furious at your dad, at what he’d said. She lit into him for making fun of you like that. She told him that it didn’t matter if you became a business man, like him, or an astronaut or a chef or whatever you wanted. She said the only thing she cared about was that you got to be happy, that you felt fulfilled and loved. Your mom only ever wanted you to be loved, more than anything else. Your mom would never think you were pathetic. Ever. I think it made him jealous, that Rebecca loved you more than she loved him.’

“Look what I’ve done with my life, though. For five years, I-.”

“For five years, you were mourning your best friend, and Sara and Robert, who, if the stories I’ve heard are true, did more to raise you than Malcolm has.” Felicity said. “That’s not nothing.”

‘Your dad never deserved you or your mom.’ Oliver said. ‘He’s a dick and he’s wrong. And your mother would’ve torn him a new asshole if she had heard what he said.’

“Tommy, I know I’m not your mother,” Donna said, “but I am a mother, so let me just say that I know she’d be proud of you, proud of the man you’ve become. And I’ve got half a mind to drive to your dad’s house and give him a piece of my mind.”

“As funny as that would be, yelling at man who’s barely able to walk wouldn’t be much of a victory.” Tommy said, letting out a laugh.

“Your dad can’t walk?” Digg asked.

“Yeah, he- I guess I didn’t tell any of you, but he crashed his car, kept it quiet for the last month because of stock prices or something. I don’t care. I’m done caring about him.”

“Can we- I don’t wanna be a downer, but can we stop talking about heavy things?” Thea asked. “Between what happened earlier and all this stuff about Malcolm Merlyn, I- doesn’t anyone have good news?”

“My seven-year-old nephew has decided that he’s no longer going to be a zookeeper for Halloween. He’s gonna be an astronaut.” John said. “I got to hear all about the costume he’s gonna get to go trick-or-treating in.”

“It’s January.”

“I know, and I’m sure the next time I talk to him, he’ll have changed his mind, but for right now, he’s settled on astronaut.” He shrugged.

This turned into a conversation about Halloween costumes everyone had worn and which one they
thought was the best or funniest. Most of Tommy and Oliver’s costumes after the age of 13 were, admittedly, stupid but they were teenage boys so it was to be expected. Thea’s were pretty standard and some of Felicity’s took people by surprise.

“You were Death? Like with a black cloak and fake scythe and all that?” Roy asked.

“No, more like- did you ever read the comic Sandman? Death in that story is this chill Goth girl, and since I was Goth at the time, it just kinda fit.”

“You were Goth?” Thea repeated. “You, Felicity Smoak, who lights up every room she walks into, were Goth? You wear pajama pants with cupcakes on them!”

“I was fifteen and wanted to be edgy.” She said. “I was too smart to pull off being a slacker so….everyone makes bad style choices at 15.”

‘Are there pictures?’ Oliver asked.

“No, I destroyed them all.” She said.

“Not all of them.” Donna said. “I’ll show you the ones I kept after I’ve moved.”

“Not if I get to them first.” She warned.

Dinner was quiet that night and everyone headed out or to bed early. As they were lying in bed, Felicity told Oliver that she’d overheard Doyle telling Lyla that Dinan had some news she needed to share with the rest of them.

‘Do you think they found something about Tempest or about the Gambit?’

“I don’t know. I’ve decided not to think about it, because if I try to guess what it is, I’m not gonna be able to sleep tonight.” She said. “We’ll find out when she reaches out to us. I hate not knowing though.”

‘I know what you mean.’

The next morning, Oliver was driving Thea to school when there was a knock on Felicity’s front door. She opened it to see Dinan, McKenna and Reeves standing on the porch. “We’re sorry to stop by without prior notice, but we were hoping for a chance to speak with Oliver?”

“He’s- uh, he’s not here right now.” Felicity said. “He went to take Thea to school. He’ll be back in- how long does it normally take him?”

“Like half an hour.” Donna answered.

“This isn’t good news, is it?” Lyla asked.

“No, I’m afraid not.”

“I know it’s an open case and everything, but has that woman, the one who tried to kill Felicity and Oliver yesterday, said anything?”

“Ms. Wei is- she’s no longer in our custody.” Reeves said.

“She was rel-.”
“Waller stormed in and took her, didn’t she?” Lyla said, cutting off Donna’s question. It didn’t really surprise her that Amanda would do something like that. “Yeah, she does that.”

“Yes, she’s in their custody now.”

“And Waller’s agency is DOD?” Felicity asked.


“And Eric Graves is the current Secretary of Homeland Security, correct?” She asked. Reeves and Dinan both nodded. “Good to know.” Felicity was starting to get an idea, a terrible, wonderful idea.

The three investigators sat in the living room in silence while they waited for Oliver to return. No amount of small talk would make the upcoming conversation easier and they didn’t want to go down that road just to fill the silence.

Finally, the door opened and Oliver walked in, followed by Tommy. Walter, Roy and Thea were the only members of “Team Oliver” not in Felicity’s house at the moment. They greeted him and Dinan suggested that he sit down so that they could talk.

“I’m sorry, Mr.- Oliver, I have been trying, and failing to find the right time to give you this information, but- we recently got confirmation that our forensic analysis has determined beyond any doubt that-.” Dinan started to say. She saw Oliver reach over to grab Felicity’s hand for support. “That you were right. The Queen’s Gambit was sabotaged. It wasn’t an accident.”

“Oh, fuck.” Tommy said.

Oliver was pretty sure this was what an out-of-body experience was like. He could see Dinan, McKenna and Reeves in front of him. He could feel Felicity’s hand squeezing his and hear Donna, Tommy, Lyla and Digg say something. He knew all of this was happening, but his brain couldn’t process it. It didn’t feel like reality to him.

“Oliver?” Felicity asked softly. “Do you wanna take a minute, have some time to yourself?”

He shook his head. He already knew the Gambit was sabotaged, he’d known since he and Digg found the wreckage, but hearing someone else say it, knowing all other possibilities, no matter how insane they sounded, had been ruled out, meant the whole thing was real. It meant that some of the truths about his mother and Tommy’s father couldn’t be ignored any longer. ‘Thank you, Agent Dinan. Thank you.’

“I- I am so sorry. I really am.” She knew what she was supposed to say, the script she was supposed to stick to, but something about this case made it impossible to repeat the boilerplate offer of sympathy. “I wish-.”

“I don’t mean to interrupt, but maybe we should give them a moment.” McKenna suggested. “Ms. Smoak, we’ll be in the kitchen if you need us.”

Felicity and Donna both nodded and turned back to Oliver.

Correll spent most of Wednesday afternoon fielding calls from every news source in the country about the attack on Felicity and Oliver. His department gave the same response to all inquiries, which was that neither Queen Consolidated nor the people involved were ready to make a
statement at this time. He was choosing to focus on the fact that Oliver and Felicity were both alive and unharmed, and he was thankful that he didn’t have Moira Queen, or anyone else, pushing him to release a statement to calm everyone down.

He ended up staying late on Wednesday and getting into work early on Thursday. He knew it was going to be a busy day, and he wanted a chance to talk to Walter before anything else grabbed his attention. Thanks to a head’s up from Walter’s EA, Correll knew the exact moment that Walter arrived and jumped into the elevator to head to his office.

Walter had just taken a seat at his desk when Correll knocked on the open door before entering.

“I gather this is about the attack on Oliver and Felicity?” Walter said.

“Yes. Footage from cell phones of what happened, the short bits that were caught on film, have gone viral. Some clips are of the car chase, others depict Oliver tackling one of the armed men and there are some of Oliver and Felicity- I mean, Ms. Smoak, reuniting and making sure the other is okay. Some ASL interpreters have been making the rounds on news programs-.”

“What has the reaction been?”

“We’ve been getting calls since the chase started yesterday, questions about how and when Oliver learned to fight, and by who. Rumors floating around that Oliver was never on an island, but was away working for the CIA, or an alien race, or both. Other theories say the attackers were sent by the Dark Archer or that Felicity Smoak was the target because of one of her unreleased projects.” He took a deep breath. “From the “how does it impact the company” perspective, it hasn’t. No one knew what to make of Oliver until only a few weeks ago. Until he was spotted with her at the reopening of Applied Sciences, he wasn’t making public appearances, and he hadn’t made any kind of statement, but after yesterday- can I speak frankly?”

“Please do.”

“People are calling him a hero. Some more skeptical sources phrased it as him only fighting the gunmen because Felicity was in danger but- a heroic act is still a heroic act.” He said. “There is a slight problem, and I feel Oliver might react better if he were to hear this news from you. I spoke to a lot of reporters yesterday. None of them believe that Oliver was actually alone on the island. They’re convinced that there were dangerous people marooned with Oliver, and someone taught him how to fight. There are also- in some clips, you can see scars on Oliver’s wrists, ones he didn’t have before he went missing. I’ve been fielding questions about how he got those scars.”

“Close the door, please, Daniel.” Walter said. While Correll was doing that, Walter hit a button on the intercom, telling his EA that he wasn’t to be disturbed by anyone, including Moira, unless it was an emergency. Correll sat back down and gave Walter a perplexed look. “What I’m about to tell you cannot leave this room. I don’t want to see it in any press releases, official statements, or any other kind of documentation. Not only does it pertain to an ongoing federal investigation, but it’s not something I want being shared regardless of that.”

“Okay.”

“Oliver has admitted to me, and a select few other people that he trusts, that he was not alone on the island. He hasn’t shared with me what happened beyond very basic and sparse details. I know he spoke to you about PR and possibly making some kind of statement soon. Normally, I wouldn’t reveal information like this without talking to him first, but after yesterday’s events, I don’t think asking him about this right now would be helpful to anyone. And with the added interest, I’m telling you so that you can better advise him on what to do moving forward. I hope I can rely on
your discretion.”

“You can, and I hope I have proven that I can be trusted with sensitive information such as this.” He said. “I will release a very brief statement, letting the media know that Oliver and Felicity Smoak are safe, unharmed, and asking for privacy after what happened. I’ll also start narrowing down my list of potential interviewers for when Oliver’s ready, to those who I know will respect the boundaries Oliver wants to set.”

“Thank you.” Walter said. “The last thing anyone wants is for his experience to be turned into a spectacle.”

Correll left Walter’s office to give his department an update on what to say when news sources reached out with questions. Even though Oliver wasn’t an employee of the company, he needed to be sure that everyone toed the company line.

Donna told McKenna, Dinan and Reeves that Oliver was ready to hear more after about half an hour. Giving everyone time to breathe and process was appreciated and while no one seemed happy, they seemed slightly calmer and less blindsided by the news.

“We will do everything we can to find whoever is responsible for this.” Dinan said firmly. “And….we have received some assistance from the Arrow, despite his need to keep his distance due to-.”

“I’ll say what Dinan is too polite to. The SCPD, in general, and our commissioner specifically, is why the Arrow’s helping us from the shadows. He’s been pushing for the Arrow’s arrest for months.” McKenna cut in.

“Yes, that. Although, I can say that the Arrow’s aid has been invaluable to our investigation.” She sighed. Time for more bad news. “Due to rules and regulations, we have to publicly release this information by Saturday and announce that the investigation is formally considered a terrorism case. We didn’t want you, or the families of those who died, to learn this information at that time.” As they were talking, Agent Anderson was visiting Moira Queen, Doyle was meeting with Quentin Lance and one of the other agents was trying to get ahold of Dinah Lance to give her the news.

‘The Dark Archer- when he attacked Applied- in the video, he mentioned something called Tempest. Is that the name of the group that did this?’ Oliver asked.

“We believe so. The Attorney General’s Office has determined that they fit the description of a terrorist organization and we’re treating its members as such.”

“Is there- there’s gotta be a way you can help the Arrow.” Tommy said. “Can’t the warrant be cancelled or something?”

“I really wish it could.” McKenna said. “If it were up to me, I’d do it in a heartbeat, but the commissioner- this comes down to politics.”

“We want the same things you do, in regard to the Arrow, but we haven’t figured that part out yet. We’re trying, but without a clear path forward…..we don’t want his involvement to be generally known just yet.” Dinan said.

“Yeah, then the commissioner can’t screw everything up trying to get reelected.” McKenna scoffed.

“Get out of my house.”

“I beg your pardon?” Anderson said. He’d told Moira Queen the truth as plainly as possible. The Queen’s Gambit had been sabotaged. They believed it was an attempt to kill Robert. Sara, Robert and the crew members’ deaths were now considered murders. As soon as he finished telling her that, she’d told him to leave.

“You heard me. You told me what you needed to tell me. I want you to leave.” She said. “I need to be with my family.”

Anderson doubted that, since her family seemed to be avoiding her, but left because he wasn’t going to waste time arguing with her. After he was gone, Moira sat in the living room, staring into space. The federal agents had finally uncovered the truth. The rest of the world didn’t know yet. Her part in what followed wasn’t known yet. Moira could use this, their findings, to her advantage.

“Is this all you came to tell us?” Felicity asked. She could tell by the look on Dinan’s face that the agent wanted to say something else.

“Not exactly. Mr. Merlyn-.”

“Please call me Tommy. Every time I hear “Mr. Merlyn”, I think it means my dad’s here and he’s terrifying on a good day, not that he has that many and I-. Not the point. What did you wanna ask me?”

“Just a few questions about your father’s recent injuries and the timing. If I understand correctly, he was in an accident the same night as the attack on Applied Sciences. Since that was the same night as the Dark Archer’s attack, we just wanna be sure he’s not a potential target.”

“Um, yeah. Sure, what do you wanna know?” Tommy said.

“Could you describe them?”

“Well, his knee is busted and he’s got one hand all bandaged up. And he was moving really slowly, like he had hurt his ribs.”

“Which knee and which hand?” Reeves asked.

“Left hand, right knee.”

“And he said he was in a car accident?” Felicity said. “That doesn’t make any- oh my god, you think Malcolm Merlyn’s the Dark Archer!” She clapped a hand over her mouth. “Sorry, I probably could’ve- but that’s it, isn’t it? Because there’s no way a car crash could hurt his left hand but his right knee? How could that even happen with just one car? But the Dark Archer, he got an arrow through his left hand and another through his right knee. Plus, his ribs got cracked during his fight with the Arrow and- what Tommy just described fits his injuries, and its convenient that his “accident” happened the same night as the attack and-.”

“Crap, you’re right.” Tommy said. “My dad’s- fuck, my dad’s a freaking supervillain. I mean, I wish I could say that doesn’t make sense but-.” Dinan opened her mouth to point out that she
hadn’t said they thought Merlyn was the Dark Archer, but he kept going. “I mean, he spends hours a day doing “fencing” and works out a lot, and he also vanished off the face of the earth after my mom- that’s probably when he- if Shado and Slade could teach Ollie enough to take down those men yesterday, without any equipment on an island, then my dad could’ve learned in-.” He started to hyperventilate. “If he’s the Dark Archer, and the Gambit, you think my dad sank- Ollie, I’m so sorry, I- why can’t I breathe?”

“You’re hyperventilating.” McKenna said. “You need to take a deep breath.”

“I can’t, I-.”

“Tommy? Look at me.” Lyla said. “Do exactly what I do.” She spent a few moments just taking deep breaths so that Tommy could mirror her and not pass out.

Everyone then turned back to the agents. “I can’t confirm or deny who is considered a suspect. Hypothetically speaking, however, if you did happen to guess the identity of a suspect, we’d strongly advise you to be careful not to do or say anything that might alert them to our suspicions.”

“Not gonna be a problem.” Tommy said. “I’m the only one on Team Oliver that’s ever been around my dad and I moved out. Walter doesn’t- does QC have any business deals with Merlyn Global, does anyone know?”

‘Not that I know of. All of the projects I’ve seen in reports don't mention the company.’ Oliver said.

“We started- in the last few years, the two companies have started moving in different directions.” Felicity said.

“Good, because if my father is-.” Tommy’s response was cut off when Reeves’s phone began to ring.

“Reeves.” He said. “You did….I’m gonna be owing you favors for the next decade…..no, send it to me right now….yeah, once you email it, follow the normal procedure….I gotta go, like now.” He said. A second later, his phone pinged, indicating he had an email. He read it and turned to Dinan. “We’ve got it.”

“Got what?”

Reeves handed her his phone. “Exactly what we were waiting for.” He turned to Lyla. “I called in a favor with a buddy of mine. I think its time to talk about what you couldn't tell Agent Doyle.:”

“You got the clearance?” Lyla asked.

“See for yourself.” Dinan said, handing Lyla the phone with the document pulled up. “I think we should have this conversation elsewhere.”

“That’s not gonna be necessary.” Lyla said. If she’d gotten a call when she was alone or with John, that would’ve been one thing, but now, most of Team Oliver was there. “I did some digging, after I talked to Doyle. While I couldn’t tell you anything, because of the clearance issue, Oliver’s never had that restriction, so hypothetically, he could tell everyone here what happened anyway, so- us leaving the room would just waste some time.” She’d tell the agents some of the details she didn’t want Oliver to hear at another time, but for now, for telling the basics of the story, there wasn’t a reason to leave.

“Fine.” Dinan said. “Why don’t we begin with how you came to be on Lian Yu and how you met
Oliver?”

“I’ve never been to Lian Yu. Oliver and I met in Moscow.” She said, bracing herself for the reaction Tommy, Donna and the agents would have.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 69

Chapter Summary

Lyla reveals how she met Oliver and what went down in Russia.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Why don’t we begin with how you came to be on Lian Yu and how you met Oliver?” Dinan asked Lyla.

“I’ve never been to Lian Yu. Oliver and I met in Moscow.” She said, bracing herself for the reaction Tommy, Donna and the agents would have.

“You weren’t there the whole time?” Donna asked.

“How could you have met Ollie in Moscow if he was- Ollie got off the island. I don’t-.” Tommy trailed off.

“I lied about what happened after the Amazo sank.’ Oliver admitted. ‘The Amazo sank, and I was on Lian Yu for weeks afterwards, I don't know how many, but then one day I woke up in-sorry, Lyla, this is supposed to be about you, not me.’ When Oliver woke up, on an actual bed, in Moscow, he’d thought everything had been a dream at first. The Gambit, Fyers, Ivo, he thought it was all some crazy nightmare. He expected his mother, Tommy or Raisa to walk through the door at first. Then, he looked around the room and didn’t recognize it. He looked down at himself and saw his scars from his encounters with Fyers’ men and the Amazo’s crew. Seeing the scars snapped him back to reality.

“We’re interested in hearing whatever information any of you wish to share.” Reeves said.

Lyla looked over to Oliver and knew he wasn’t going to continue. Talking about this was difficult for him and his statement of “you came here for Lyla, not me” was his out for stopping. She cleared her throat and spoke. “I can only tell you what I know about how he got to Moscow and that’s either what Waller told me or gossip around ARGUS. It seems Waller had been keeping an eye on Lian Yu the year the Amazo was there. After it was said and done, she sent a team to retrieve Oliver from the island and bring him to Moscow.”

“Director Waller knew there was someone on Lian Yu, and did nothing?” Dinan asked.

“Just wait. If you think you’re mad now, it gets worse.” She responded. “Oliver was my partner when I was in Moscow.”

“He worked for ARGUS?”

“Technically yes, I’ve got no clue what his exact legal status was. I don’t think he does either. That’s why he lied about his third year on the island when he first talked to you. He doesn’t know what he signed, a contract, an NDA, so he just skipped over it. At first, I was his training officer, then I became his handler.”
“Handler? You went into the field, Oliver?” Dinan asked.

Oliver nodded while Lyla answered. “Oliver’s main assignment was to infiltrate the Bratva, he was to get close to Anatoly Knyazev, learn the location of the site where they were storing eight tons of stolen U-235, material they were arranging a black market auction for, and relay that intel to ARGUS so that the material could be recovered before it was sold. My job was to be his back-up and extract him once his part was done.”

“U-235, as in-?” McKenna asked.

“What’s used to make nuclear weapons, yes.” She said. “I think I first should give you all some context in order for the whole story to make sense. I’ll start with Knyazev.” She sighed. “Trained to be a naval engineer in the USSR. He was about to be deployed when the KGB found out about him and recruited him. They trained him as an interrogator. He had a knack for it, extracting information no one else could. With the KGB, he started being known as “The Beast”, a couple analysts at Langley found out about his moniker and dubbed him “The KGBeast”. Everything we know about him points to him being a high-functioning sociopath and borderline psychotic. Only thing he cared about was power and his own ambition. When the Soviet Union collapsed, he moved from the KGB to organized crime. He did even better in the Bratva than he did in the KGB, rose quickly through those ranks. In December of 2006, he disappeared. Fell right off the face of the earth. The Solntsevskaya Bratva got into multiple skirmishes with the Hong Kong Triad because the Pakhan thought they had something to do with it.” She took a breath. “March of 2009, Knyazev turns up alive with no explanation. Within the next five weeks, he’s the Pakhan. Then, he’s wiping out every one of the old Pakhan’s loyalists and their families. Then, he started targeting other gangs, wanting to be the Pakhan of all Pakhans. Some other organized crime syndicates united under a man named Konstantin Kovar. In September of 2009, Knyazev masterminded a heist which stole eight tons of Uranium-235 from the Russia military, which put him, and the Bratva, on ARGUS’s radar.”

“So, Knyazev had enough nuclear material to build several bombs, or a couple thousand dirty bombs.” Reeves said. “How did Oliver get involved?”

“Director Waller sent me to Moscow Station and assigned me to the task force searching for the uranium. In six weeks, we got nowhere. Then Waller turned up in person and told me I was being assigned a new partner. She told me he was a civilian who knew Knyazev - more importantly, he had saved Knyazev's life, and Knyazev was very grateful to him for it. My partner's job would be to exploit that relationship, infiltrate the Bratva and Knyazev's inner circle, get the intel we needed, relay it to us, and then get out. Then Waller introduced me to Oliver Queen.” At another time, Lyla would tell the agents about Oliver’s mental state when they first met, how he’d been clearly traumatized and shouldn’t have been in the field.

“You knew Knyazev?” Dinan asked Oliver.

‘He was on the Amazo. One of the prisoners Ivo used as a test subject.’ He answered. ‘I didn’t even know his last name. I thought-.’ Oliver thought Anatoly was a normal person, his friend possibly. He didn’t know what kind of person Anatoly really was. ‘I- I’m gonna go- I don’t wanna hear this next part.’ He didn’t want to hear Lyla explain the kinds of things the Bratva did or see everyone’s reactions. ‘I’m gonna go read. If anyone needs to step away, come sit with me. Lyla, come get me when you start talking about the actual assignments we went on.’ With that said, he walked into his and Felicity’s bedroom.

After the door closed, Lyla took a deep breath. “This might sound bad, but it’s good that he left because I don’t wanna talk about his mental state back then in front of him, but it matters for what
comes later. But it was obvious even during our first meeting that Oliver was deeply traumatized. He didn't have scars around his wrists back then, but the way he was reluctant to let anyone touch him suggested he had been abused. He reacted badly to loud noises, he was hyper-vigilant - it was obvious he'd seen combat, more than once, and wasn't handling it well. He barely slept, maybe for one or two hours a day at the most; and when he was asleep, he had such horrible nightmares that it was not a restorative activity for him. He threw himself into training so intensely that I guessed it was a form of displacement activity for him - it kept him from thinking about whatever had happened to him. The good news was that Oliver let his guard down around me. I realized he didn't see me as a threat or someone who would deceive him. He was scared of Waller, though. I later discovered that Oliver was very perceptive, he excelled at noticing microexpressions and other indicators in people's body language that revealed hidden hostility and deceit. Early on, I briefed Oliver on Knyazev's history. It all came as a complete shock to him. To Oliver, Knyazev was just a man who spoke bad English with a heavy accent. I also briefed Oliver on the Bratva and their criminal activities, and Knyazev's career with them, what he'd been mixed up in. He'd run an orphan farm and been mixed up with slave trading, and learning about those was what destroyed any goodwill Oliver might have had left for him."

“O- orphan farm?” Donna asked.

“Before I explain, I wanna repeat something Oliver said during his interview with Agent Dinan. If you need to leave, there’s nothing wrong with that. You can go sit with Oliver, you can take walk or whatever. I'm not gonna make you stay and hear something that’s gonna upset you. And it probably will.” Lyra said. “The Soviet Union had a large number of orphans in state run orphanages. The situation isn’t that different today. Criminals have always seen orphans as revenue sources and exploited them as such.”

“I think I’m gonna go sit with Oliver.” Donna said. Tommy sat there for a moment before following her out of the living room.


"In some cases, yes. The best-looking orphans in Russian state institutions are the most at-risk of that: they're young, easily controlled, and have no one looking out for them - the administrators are easy to bribe or threaten into cooperating, and the rare one who defies the gangs ends up dead very quickly. Russian intelligence also 'recruit' pre-teen orphans and train them as 'swallows' - to sexually blackmail foreign nationals. After a couple years, their 'careers' are over - the lucky ones get to walk away, while most of are killed to keep them from talking about the operations they were involved with." She grimaced. “However, Russian gangs make even more money by 'adopting' orphans and then 'farming' them - for blood and bone marrow, at least to begin with, taking large quantities on a regular basis. The orphans are held within the 'farm' and kept fed for years: then when they're old enough, when their bodies have grown enough, they get 'harvested' - their organs, blood and bone marrow all get sold on the black market, their hair gets sold to wig-makers, their teeth... you get the general idea. One such farm that I saw while with ARGUS was an apartment with a single bedroom: thirty kids were being held inside. I didn't realize it at first, but learning that things like this even existed was heart-breaking for Oliver. About five minutes into that briefing module, he leapt out of his seat, grabbed a trash can and puked up into it. I later found out he kept thinking about Thea - he kept - he kept imagining- I'm-I'm sorry, I can't--"

"It's okay, Lyra. We understand." Reeves said. Dinan and McKenna both looked like they wanted to vomit and Felicity and Digg both had tears streaming down their faces.

She took a moment and wiped her eyes before continuing. "Th-thank you. Uh... yeah, learning that 'Anatoly', this strange friend and ally of his from the island with a weird accent, had been involved with things like that? It hit Oliver hard." Lyra said. "Director Waller was... satisfied by the end
result. She never feels happy about anything: satisfaction is as close as she ever gets."

"Why did Director Waller feel satisfied by this?" Dinan asked.

"Because it meant Oliver had no divided loyalties: there was no risk of him sympathizing with Knyazev and endangering the operation." She said. "I don’t wanna relive that anymore, if that’s okay. I wanna talk about what training Oliver was like, because it was enlightening."

"Enlightening how?"

"I could teach a new skill to Oliver over the course of three or four weeks, either one hour a day or one hour every two days. By the end of that time, not only would he have mastered that skill, but he would have taken what I had taught him and figured out how to build on it. Unarmed combat techniques were a great example of this: I would spend a couple weeks teaching Oliver a martial art, he would master all of the moves I had shown him, and then he would start coming up with his own moves, completely original stuff that fitted with the overall style of that particular martial art - and then he taught them to me. He never got arrogant or overconfident, either - he always paid attention, he stayed focused... he was the perfect student, and a great teacher. Truth is, I learned nearly as much from him as he did from me. By the end of my first hour of training Oliver, I concluded that the only way he could possibly have flunked out of college even once, let alone so many times, had nothing to do with his intellect or his ability to apply himself - it had to have been because he simply didn't want to be there. And whenever we ate together or had downtime together, it was pretty obvious why: Thea. Oliver talked about her constantly, he opened up to me about how much loved and adored his sister, and he was terrified that if he went home, he would somehow screw up the lives of everyone he loved. He thought he was somehow toxic, damaged goods, and they would all be better off without him... and that just broke his heart. He was torn between how badly he wanted to be loved by his family and feel safe again, and his fear that they would reject him, or suffer because of his presence, or both. I think that played a large part in his original motive for agreeing to work for ARGUS - Oliver thought that after everything that had happened to him, and the things he had done, he didn't deserve to go home and be loved, to feel happiness. And I can't be certain, but I think Waller may have exploited that." Lyla scoffed. "She certainly exploited the fact that all he wanted to do was see his sister again."

"What do you mean?"

"At the end of my first week partnered with Oliver, I filed a report on our progress. I noted that Oliver had already given me all of the information he possessed regarding Knyazev, and that his traumatized mental state was of such an advanced degree that it would be a mistake to deploy him in the field. I also noted that Oliver was pessimistic about his chances of success: he felt that if he deployed in the field, he would somehow screw everything up, and the best thing he could do is stay out of the way and leave everything to trained and experienced professionals. I concluded with a recommendation that we give Oliver a cover story and send him home as soon as humanly possible, as he was not capable of completing the mission. I also outlined six alternative approaches we could take to locate and secure the U235 before it was sold."

"So what happened?"

"Waller told me she had already considered and discarded the alternatives I suggested as unworkable, and that Oliver was ARGUS's only realistic chance of mission success. She then told me I had two choices: either I could remain Oliver's partner and carry out my orders, or she could assign one of the agents on Moscow Station to replace me as his new partner."

"What did you do?"
"The agents from Moscow Station treated me like crap, and Oliver even worse. It wasn't enough to cause us problems, but if Oliver had had to rely on one of those assholes to keep him alive?" She scoffed and shook her head. "There was no way he would survive. The mission might be a success, but Oliver could not have survived - they would have used him then abandoned him after he was no longer necessary. Look, I liked him, I felt sorry for him. We weren't friends yet - we simply didn't know each other well enough at that point - but I cared about Oliver. Sure, I wanted that uranium taken out of play: but getting Oliver home safely had become a big priority for me. So, I told Waller I'd stick with my current assignment, and hoped I could do a good enough job of teaching Oliver the skills and knowledge he would need to stay alive that we could pull off both objectives: recover the uranium and get Oliver home safely."

Dinan felt like she was starting to put the pieces together of how Lyla and Oliver became so close. “I’m guessing Waller didn’t give you very much time to train him either.”

“Nope, and she kept interrupting the training I did to send us on “milk runs”. Yeah, those turned out to be anything but, always becoming something bigger. By the time we started on our actual assignment, we’d captured a terrorist mastermind, exposed an ARGUS mole, and recovered a French bioweapon that they lost back in the 1970s. And then there was the Starling assignment.”

“Starling assignment?” McKenna asked. “Oliver was here? While he was-?”

“I’m gonna go tell him to come back out here. The rest isn’t too bad, except for the end, of course.” She said. Lyla stood up and walked over to Oliver and Felicity’s bedroom. She knocked on the door and told Oliver, Tommy and Donna that they were done with the heavy stuff at the moment. The others returned to the living room and sat back down.

‘Where are we?’

“Our mission to Starling.” She answered.

“So, to clarify, you’re saying that you and Oliver traveled to Starling when working for ARGUS?” Reeves said.

“Yeah, that's exactly what I'm saying. There was another operation running: Oliver and I never got looped in on it, what its objective was, so I can't tell you anything about it, I honestly don't know. But there was a Queen Consolidated employee - Kang, Peter Kang, I think his name was. He was pretty high up in the company. He had some data that ARGUS needed access to, data which was somehow relevant to the other operation, and he had stored it on the company's servers. QC's cyber security had recently advanced by an insane amount - I later found out that's because Felicity had just been hired, and she licensed the company to use her proprietary security software, so a cyberattack was a no-go. Waller was convinced Oliver still had biometric access to the company's security system, and that he could use that to find and download a copy of the data."

"Oliver was inside Queen Consolidated's headquarters?" Felicity asked. “Was this the night of February 17?”

"Yeah, it- How do you know the exact date?"

“And he accessed the system using a fingerprint scanner, I’m guessing.” She said. Both Oliver and Lyla nodded. “I know because I thought my system had a massive flaw when someone who was supposed to be dead managed to open a bunch of files. I spent weeks trying to find out why that glitch happened.”

‘Sorry, honey.’ Oliver signed.
“Oh, I can’t stay mad at you.” She smiled. “But I’m glad I wasn’t crazy.”

“That mission was... a lot happened while we were in Starling outside of that mission.” Lyla said, steering the conversation back on track. She didn’t know if she could do this again.

“Could you elaborate on that?” Reeves asked.

“We were staying in an apartment safehouse, anonymous, way off the grid. We flew in before dawn, collected our gear and reconned QC in the early morning, then headed to the safehouse to rest up ready for the night. I was beat from the jet lag, I fell fast asleep before my head even hit the pillow. Oliver didn’t sleep, but that was hardly unusual back then - like I said, he always had horrible nightmares, sleep was something he avoided as much as he could. Several hours later, I got woken up by Oliver tripping over something while he was trying to be stealthy. And, no, he wasn’t sneaking out. He was sneaking back in. That’s... well, that was when I learned exactly how much, how completely I can trust Oliver.”

“I’m sorry, I don't understand.”

“’He’d snuck off to see how Thea was doing. He easily breached the Queen estate's perimeter security - using the training I gave him, I might add. He saw Thea; Thea didn't have a clue he was there. She was... she was standing by a couple gravestones, and they hadn't been there before Oliver boarded the Gambit that last time. Thea was talking to them - to her dad and Oliver. He could have gone home, right then. Hell, Oliver should have done just that. Just walked right in, and held a press conference live on the front lawn within a half hour - Waller could never have got him back after something like that. Too high-profile.”

“Why didn’t he?”

“Yeah, I wondered the same thing at first. He told me. He was scared of Waller, and the other ARGUS agents he’d met had treated him badly, so it wasn't the agency. And while he wanted to see that uranium taken off the board, Oliver was convinced he would just screw up the whole operation if he was involved, so it wasn't that.” She looked away. “Me. It was because of me. I was the reason he stayed. Oliver told me I was his friend, he cared about me, he trusted me, and he didn’t want to get me in trouble. For him, it was as simple as that. I had no clue what to say, what to think, how to react. I-I knew how much going home meant to him... for him to give up on a chance to do that, to be with his sister again... all for me? I was amazed. The night after Oliver infiltrated QC, Tommy was holding his twenty-fifth birthday party. Oliver was worried that Thea would try and crash the party, and maybe get in trouble - there would be a lot of booze there, and... well, he was really worried about what could happen. I agreed to help Oliver to get in there without anyone recognizing him: he wore a hoodie with the hood up, and we went in together; if anyone got close, I would block their line-of-sight of Oliver's face. We were just two more anonymous faces in the crowd. Thea showed up with her friends, but I tripped a guy so he spilled his drink on her: she was pissed and left right after that, she was there for only a few minutes. Mission accomplished. Oliver and I followed her: he wanted - he needed to see as much of her as he could. She got in her car, and drove off home. We had a near-miss when Oliver bumped into Tommy, it was a total accident, Tommy just came right out of nowhere - but he was so drunk, he could barely keep his eyes open, and passed out shortly after.”

“Ollie was- he was right there and I was too drunk to realize-? What if I hadn’t been, what if I’d-.” Tommy started to say.

‘Don’t go down that road. Trust me.’ Oliver said. ‘It only- don’t blame yourself for not knowing.’

“Oliver slung him over his shoulder and we took Tommy upstairs to his room: Oliver put him to
bed, and I put a glass of water and a couple painkillers on the nightstand for when he woke up.” Lyla said. “Oliver... he broke down crying. Told Tommy how much he missed him, that he was his brother and loved him, kissed him on the forehead. Tommy never woke up the whole time we were there.” She didn’t mention her and Oliver finding Laurel Lance in a compromising position with Carter Bowen when they walked downstairs, but it had bothered Oliver at the time. “And that was it. We went back to the safehouse, then caught our flight back to Moscow the next morning.”

"Why were you in Starling City for so long after you completed your assignment at Queen Consolidated?” Dinan asked.

"I wish I knew. I mean, my best guess is Waller wanted us on hand in case the agents assigned to the operation we were helping with needed backup? But for all I know, it could have been something else completely. I really don't know, she never bothered to tell us. That was one of the many reasons I hated working for her. She told us to stay at the safehouse after we got the data she wanted: then the morning after Tommy's party, she told us to return to Moscow." She said. “The next few weeks consisted of Oliver getting the last key details from the Bratva about the auction and preparing for the bust.”

“The auction gets interrupted, the material was secured and all of the mobsters were arrested, I assume.” Reeves said. “What happened next?”

“I fucked up.” She said. “I got made. It was the day the auction was happening. Oliver slipped me the last bit of intel. I relayed it to Waller and headed back to Moscow Station. They grabbed me en route.”

“Knyazev’s men?”

“No, Kovar’s. He’d been watching Anatoly and I was either stupid or careless but they figured out who I was, that I was an agent. I’m not going to go into what they were threatening to do to me. I’m sure one of your colleagues whose knowledgeable about the Bratva can fill you in, but I thought I was going to die there. No one would know what happened to me, and I knew Waller wouldn’t try to rescue me. By this point, she had what she needed, my death would be an acceptable loss.” She said. “I was sitting there in the dark, an effective intimidation tactic, when I heard screaming and gunfire, followed by footsteps. Then, someone yelling my name. It was Oliver. He’d found me. He took down every one of those bastards by himself.” She sighed. “We spent that night, while the rest of ARGUS was dealing with the Bratva, at a safehouse we’d set up, no one else at Moscow station knew about it. The next day, he asked me what we should do, what our next move should be.”

“And what was it?” Dinan asked.

“God, I was such a fucking idiot, I- in hindsight, I did the stupidest thing imaginable. We could’ve gone to the US Embassy, we could’ve made up some story, but I- fuck, I said we should report in with Waller, at Moscow station.”

“What happened after you returned to ARGUS’s Moscow Station?” Dinan pressed. Oliver was found on Lian Yu, after being in Moscow. She didn’t know how he’d wound up back on the island.

“Waller, she-.” Lyla started to say, but couldn’t get the words out. Oliver was holding Felicity’s hand as tightly as he could without hurting her and kept his eyes planted on the floor.

“I think I can answer that.” Felicity said. “I know- this part of the story is one that I’ve already heard. I think it might be better if- do you mind if I-?” As much as this part of the story infuriated her, she already knew how it ended. She wasn’t there when it happened and Oliver was alive, he’d survived. She could tell this part without breaking down because Oliver and Lyla both made it out of the situation alive.
“Please, I can’t-.”

“Waller sent Lyla to catalogue evidence from the operation. Then, she drugged Oliver and had two agents fly him back to Lian Yu.” Donna, Tommy and McKenna gasped. Reeves and Dinan both looked disgusted.

“Why would she do that?”

“When Oliver first arrived in Russia, he didn’t want to help Waller. He didn’t trust her and then she promised he could have his life back when it was over.” Lyla said. “After I was done cataloging evidence, after she’d already double-crossed him, I confronted her about it, and she said she kept her promise. She gave him back his life on Lian Yu. She even had the gall to say he should’ve been more specific and when I got angry, she said it wasn’t like anyone would miss him, since he was already declared dead.”

“How could anyone do that to another person?” Donna asked.

“She can’t- we can’t let her get away with this.” Tommy said.

“She will, because it’s Waller.” Lyla said. “She’ll hide behind “national security”, the same way that she always does.” She took a deep breath. “I wanted to quit ARGUS right then and there. But I knew that wouldn't do any good, it wouldn't help Oliver. So, I was patient and waited and watched for an opportunity for something, anything at all that I could use to help him. Whenever I had a big block of leave, a week or more, I used my savings to finance expeditions to Lian Yu, to go there myself and try to rescue him; I tried every trick I could think of to get someone, anyone at all, to go to the island so they could save him. Nothing worked. I failed, every single time. I failed him. I even thought of approaching his family, but I guessed Moira wouldn't believe me. I could have convinced Thea, but she was fifteen, sixteen years old at the most, I doubted she could help me to bring him home. Tommy, I would’ve approached you, but ran into the same issue. Besides, what could I have told them? Illegally disclosing classified material is a big deal, no matter the reason for it. And then one morning, I switched on the TV and saw a news story about how Oliver had been found, rescued. I finally felt like I could breathe properly, as if a huge weight that had been pressing down on my chest for two years had finally been removed. I just needed to find a way to make things right with him, and time to go see him.”

“I wouldn’t count on Waller getting away with what she did.” Reeves said. He wondered what his buddy, who helped them get the clearance, would think about this information.

“You don’t know her very well. She’ll find a way, a scapegoat.”

“Lyla, I love you, but I’m gonna go with Agent Reeves on this one.” Felicity said. “Because Waller has never dealt with me before, but she’s about to learn an important lesson. Never piss off a Smoak woman.” There was already a plan forming in Felicity’s mind.

‘Please don’t put yourself on her radar.’ Oliver said. ‘She will- what if she tries to do something to you? She’ll come after you. I don’t want anything to happen to you, because of me.’

“Oh, honey, please don’t worry about me. Everything’s going to be okay.” She said, hugging him. “I was just talking a big game.” That was a tiny lie, but since Felicity didn’t have a finalized plan, she could justify not being truthful. Tommy was right, though, Waller couldn’t get away with this.

‘I’m gonna go lay down.’ Oliver said. Even though he didn’t need to do much during Lyla’s interview, the experience was exhausting for him. He felt drained. He stood up and Felicity followed him, wanting to make sure he was okay. They ended up cuddling in bed in silence.
“Where the hell are Dinan, Hall and Reeves?” Doyle asked the other agents on the task force.

“Hell if I know. They should’ve been back by now.” Rathbone said. “Do you think something bad happened?”

“Or something good.” Anderson cut in. “Think about how much we learned after one conversation with Oliver Queen. Maybe, knowing what he now knows, he, or Tommy Merlyn, have more information to share.”

While Oliver and Felicity were cuddling, Dinan asked a few questions about the car chase the day earlier. She wanted to ask more about Moscow and Waller, but knew that right now wasn’t a good time to do that. This was how she learned that Wei thought Lyla was still an ARGUS agent and had found her as a result of Oliver, Tommy and Lyla being kidnapped by the Red Mask Gang.

“Given what you’ve told us about the abduction, we have reason to believe that-.” Dinan said.

“Whoever sank the Gambit paid the gang to kidnap and question Oliver.” Digg summarized.

“You think it’s my dad, don’t you? Makes sense, I mean, if he’s really the Dark Archer then-.”

“We haven’t conformed anything about your father, other than the fact that he’s injured, and we can’t rule out any suspects.”

“You think someone else is involved, don’t you?” Lyla said. “You suspect someone, but you can’t discuss it because it’s an open investigation. The Red Mask Gang attacked on Johnny’s day off, and you don’t think that’s a coincidence. There’s only one person not on Team Oliver who’d know that he was off that day.”

“His mom. You really think she’d-?” Tommy asked.

“She already tried to have him declared mentally incompetent. When we were found, Moira was spotted at a charity event, she didn’t leave after the news broke. From the photos, she didn’t look worried, didn’t look like she felt much of anything. No one’s that good at hiding their emotions.”

“Oh my god, you think- I guess it makes sense. Tempest can’t be just my dad, he’d need minions and my dad was always close with Robert and Moira.” Tommy said. He remembered a few of the details Thea mentioned in her interview as well. Moira hid in her room after the Gambit went missing. She didn’t let anyone in to see her, except Malcolm and the next day, she demanded the Coast Guard call off the search. Had Moira helped cover up what happened?

“That’s- I think I’m gonna be sick.” Donna said. “What kind of person- what kind of mother-?” Before she could finish the thought, Oliver and Felicity came out into the living room again. About an hour had passed between then taking a break and now.

‘I need to go pick up Thea from school. Can you- I know you’re busy, but I don’t think I can- someone has to tell her the truth. About the Gambit.’ Oliver signed. He didn’t want her to know too much about the Bratva or Moscow yet, but she deserved to know about the Gambit right away. ‘I don’t wanna- I’ll figure out how to tell her about Russia another day, but-.’

Felicity told the agents what he said and Dinan answered. “I’ll break the news to her, if that’s what you’d prefer.”
‘Thank you.’

While everyone wanted to come with Oliver to pick up Thea, his car could only fit so many people. In the end, Oliver, Tommy and Felicity piled into the car and drove to Thea’s school.

When Thea saw the trio waiting for her, she knew something was wrong. “Oh god, what is it now?”

“She’s not here.” Tommy said.

The teenager rolled her eyes and got into the car. “I’m not just some kid. You need to-.” She argued.

“Do you trust me?” Felicity asked. “Do you trust Tommy and your brother?”

“Of course!”

“Then, please, trust us when we say this isn’t the time or place for this.” She said. “How was your math test?”

“You’re really asking me about school when there’s clearly something-.”

‘I wanna hear about your day. We all do.’ Oliver said. ‘Please.’

Thea told them about her classes and a few exciting moments she’d experienced, all while she tried to figure out what Oliver, Tommy and Felicity weren’t saying. Her story about her day took up the ride to Felicity’s house and she was about to ask them what was going on, again, when Digg opened the door and she saw the three investigators in the living room.

“Oh.” Thea said. “You learned something didn’t you? That’s why Ollie and Tommy are acting weird and wouldn’t tell me what’s wrong. It’s bad, isn’t it?”

“Thea, why don’t you sit down?” Donna suggested.

“Ollie was right, wasn’t he?” She blurted out. “His theory that the Gambit was sabotaged was right?”

“I’m afraid so.” Dinan said. “We- due to some rules regarding transparency, this information is being released on Saturday, and it’s being announced that what happened is now considered an act of terrorism. We needed to inform the families before then.”

“I- someone did this to them. Someone killed my dad, they killed Sara, they tried to kill Ol-. I felt that much out before she started sobbing.

The agents decided that now was the right time to leave. Dinan and Reeves both left their cards in case anyone had questions or concerns later. Team Oliver sat in the living room, recovering from the series of bombshells the day had dropped on them.

Dinan, Reeves and McKenna returned to the police station and shared the information Lyla had given them regarding her mission in Moscow with Oliver. Nyssa’s bug picked up every single word and, by the time Dinan was relaying how Oliver ended up back on Lian Yu, she was far past the point of speechlessness. One thing that struck her as odd was the level of loyalty Oliver Queen inspired within people, as compared to Ra’s who relied on fear and force to keep his men in line.
After hearing about Waller’s underhanded tactics to “get rid” of Oliver after he prevented the sale of nuclear weapons, Nyssa found herself wishing she could have a few moments alone with Waller, and no witnesses.

Dinah’s brain didn’t even process the agent leaving her hotel room. After a few hours of agents from Central City’s FBI office trying to get in touch with her, she answered the phone and informed them that she was in Starling City at the moment. Shortly after that, an agent named Mars arrived at her hotel and said she had information to share.

The woman, who reminded Dinah of both her daughters, explained that the task force had concluded that the Queen’s Gambit hadn’t sunk during a storm but had been tampered with.

The professor was so in shock that she couldn’t manage to get any questions out before another one hit her. After several moments, she asked for Agent Mars’s card and thanked her for telling her the truth. Later, after she’d had time to wrap her mind around the news, she’d ask about Sara’s body and if her daughter had suffered. For now, she was too shocked to even think about those kinds of things.

Thea stopped crying at some point and wiped her eyes. She then asked if Walter had already heard the news. When no one seemed to know, she said that one of them should tell him. Felicity called Walter and asked if he’d be coming over for dinner.

“I wouldn’t want to impose.” He answered.

“I really think that you should come over.” She said. “There’s been- there’s something we need to tell you. A few things, actually.” She wanted to make sure he came, but at the same time, she didn’t want him to think that something even worse than Oliver’s kidnapping had happened. “Please, if you can make it for dinner, that would be-.”

“I will see everyone at 5:30 sharp.” He said. “It’s unpleasant news, I take it.”

“Yeah. It is.” She said before ending the call.

“A scene from the streets of Starling City has gone viral tonight.” A news anchor read aloud. Most of the bar patrons ignored the broadcast, not caring about the area. “Billionaire and former castaway Oliver Queen was spotted fighting off armed, masked men during an apparent shoot-out.”

Hearing Oliver’s name led to one patron’s head snapping up to look at the screen.

“Authorities haven’t given a motive for the attack, but one things clear: Oliver Queen can fight.” The anchor said.

“Not bad, Kid.” The man said, watching the video.

“You say something, mate?” Another patron asked.

“Just saying he fights pretty well for some American trust fund brat.” Slade said before returning to his drink.
Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theries?
Chapter 70

Chapter Summary

Team Oliver deals with the aftermath of the information revealed last chapter, the task force regroups and learns something new and Nyssa, once again, has to be the bearer of bad news.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After Walter got off the phone with Felicity, he headed downstairs to talk to Correll. While he didn't know what exactly she and Oliver needed to tell him, he had a feeling whatever it was, it wasn't good.

Correll looked up from his computer when he heard a knock on his door. While his expression didn’t change much, Walter could tell that he was nervous about whatever he needed to say. The CEO couldn’t say that he blamed his colleague one bit for a reaction like that.

“How bad is it?” Correll asked.

“To be honest, I don’t know. Felicity wouldn't tell me anything over the phone, other than try to impress upon me that nothing was wrong, but she and Oliver would really like to talk to me.” He said. “Which, I believe, means that nothing additional has happened, but maybe some new information was discovered.”

“About what, do you think? The Gambit? The attack on Applied Sciences?”

“I don’t want to begin to speculate, as the last time I tried to assure myself that things couldn't be “that bad” I was horrifically wrong.” He said. “If what they tell me is something that I feel you should know, so that you’re prepared for inquiries, I’ll let you know tomorrow.”

“Thank you, Walter.” Correll said. “And I hope the news doesn’t turn out to be as bad as you fear.”

After Dinan, Reeves and McKenna were finished discussing what Lyla had told them about Oliver’s trip to Russia and the evidence supporting their theory about Malcolm, they asked the other agents how telling the respective families went over. Doyle reported that Quentin Lance was a mix between angry and devastated, and Agent Mars said a similar thing about Dinah. Agent Rathbone hadn’t returned from Cassidy Women’s Prison, where he’d been meeting with Laurel, and Anderson waited to share his experience with Moira until last.

“Well, she kicked me out, saying she needed to be “with her family”, but other than that, she didn't really have a reaction.” Anderson said.

“Do you think she was in shock?” McKenna asked, because someone had to. As investigators, they needed to be objective, which meant they couldn't just assume that the reason why Moira didn't seem upset was because she was guilty.
“Either in shock, or she already knew. I think the best way to see which one it is is to wait and see what she does on Saturday, when the press release comes out. Not to mention the fact that, while we suspect she knew, we haven’t figured out how long she’s known. Did she know from the beginning? Did she find out at some later point?”

“I’m really hoping it’s the second one.” Dinan said. “Not just so that Oliver doesn’t have to find out his mother tried to kill him, but because if she knew beforehand, I don’t think Oliver, John Diggle or Felicity Smoak would be able to stop Lyla Michaels from trying to hurt her when that comes to light.”

Reeves was about to say something when Agent Rathbone walked through the door. “So, how did breaking the news to Laurel Lance go?”

“That woman is certifiably insane.” He said. “Because, even though Oliver Queen was on the Queen’s Gambit, and not to be rude, but he wasn’t worth killing at the time, it being sabotaged is somehow still his fault.”

“You know, she’s kinda had this obsession with Oliver since, like, the sixth grade, so the fact that she went from “he and I are destined to be together” to “everything that goes wrong is his fault” really isn’t that surprising.” McKenna said.

After the agents left Felicity’s house and Thea had calmed down somewhat from the revelations, the teenager walked over to Tommy and threw her arms around him. “Not that I don’t love hugs, but what exactly did I do to deserve this?” He asked her.

“It’s because you were right.” She said. “When you said that the school parking lot wasn't the right place to tell me what was going on, you were right. How are you doing?”

“I’m fine, I just can’t believe-.” He stopped himself before he blurted out what Lyla had shared, which Thea didn’t know yet. He’d almost said that he couldn’t believe Oliver had been in his house three years ago and he was too drunk to realize it. “This is like something out of a soap opera.”


Felicity, meanwhile, was sitting in the corner of the room wedged between Oliver and Lyla. It didn’t take a genius to be able to tell that today had been a very, very trying day. Especially for the two of them who had to relive one of the worst times in their lives. While she wanted to comfort them, she knew that there wasn't anything she could say that could make things better. Instead, she just sat there, with one arm brushed up against Lyla and her other hand holding Oliver's.

“Hey, can I ask you a question?” She asked. “It's about your tattoos.”

“Sure, what is it?”

“Did you get them when you were...partnered with Lyla?” She had been curious about how Oliver got his two tattoos and what the reason or symbolism behind them were. He had a dragon tattooed on his left shoulder blade and a strange star symbol on his left pec.

‘Just the one I have right here.’ He said, patting his left pectoral.

“Oliver, you still have that?” Lyla asked, sounding panicked. “You need to get it removed or covered up.”
“I don’t- why does he need to get rid of it?” Felicity asked.

“It was his initiation tattoo, for joining the Bratva.” She said. “And everyone who knows that he joined them is rotting in some ARGUS black site, so-.”

“So, if anyone else in the Bratva saw Oliver’s tattoo, something bad would happen.”

“Exactly. I meant to- there wasn’t-.” Lyla had meant to say something to Oliver after he was done with ARGUS, but obviously things hadn’t gone the way she thought they would. She’d completely forgotten about Oliver getting the tattoo until Felicity mentioned it. If someone in the Bratva saw that Oliver had that tattoo, they’d come after him and everyone he cared about, as punishment for having tattoos that he didn't “earn” in their eyes. “I can make some calls. An old Army buddy of mine became a tattoo artist, he’ll do a cover-up if I ask.”

‘I don't wanna cover it up.’ He signed. ‘I wanna get it removed.’ The tattoo was a reminder of what happened in Russia, and what he’d done there, to stop the Bratva, to have Waller keep up her end of the deal, haunted him and made him hate himself. He wanted to erase that time completely, with the exception of him meeting and training with Lyla. ‘Do you think there’s someone in Starling who does that?’

“Tattoo removals?” Felicity said. “I can find you one. just like that.” She snapped her fingers. “You could get it removed by this time next week.”

‘I wanna do that. I don't wanna- I’ll keep the dragon because of what it means, but the other one, I never wanna be reminded of that time.’

“I’ll see what I can find online.” She said with a small smile. She was happy that she could do something to help Oliver now, as opposed to what she and Lyla were doing, which would help him in a more long-term sense.

She started searching for tattoo removal procedures in the city and after a while, Oliver decided that maybe he should get started on dinner. When he mentioned he was going to start cooking, Tommy spoke up about something he felt was being overlooked.

“So, are we not gonna talk about the other revelation we had today?” He asked. “Because McKenna and Dinan weren’t just here to tell us about the Gambit.”

“They weren’t?” Thea asked.

“No, they- they wanted to know about my dad and his injuries. He got into a “car accident” on the same night as the attack on Applied Sciences.” He said. “Except, his injuries match up with the ones the Dark Archer would have.”

“They think he knows the Dark Archer?”

“I’m pretty sure they think he is the Dark Archer.” Tommy responded. “And then there’s the bit about your mom.”

“What about her?”

“So, the Dark Archer is connected to Tempest, who own the warehouse where the Gambit was found, and an organization like Tempest wouldn’t have just one member.” Digg said.

“Okay.”
“Tempest would wanna know what happened when the Gambit sank, and there’s only one person who could answer those questions. They might hire someone to ask Oliver about it.” Lyla said. “Your families have always been close. And the only person not in this room who’d know that Johnny wasn’t working the day Oliver, Tommy and I were kidnapped was-.”

“My mom. You think she-?”

“Is there any chance that we’re wrong? About Malcolm and Moira?” Donna asked. “That we aren’t trying to connect a bunch of unconnected dots?”

“Not likely. If we were completely off the mark, Dinan or Reeves would’ve just flat-out said we were wrong. But they didn’t. They went with the “cannot confirm or deny information about an open case” route, which means it’s pretty likely.” Lyla pointed out.

“They wouldn’t want us starting a witch hunt.” Digg said. “So, they said they couldn't comment and then started talking in hypotheticals.”

“That was legal tightrope walking - she did everything by the book and upheld the letter of the law.”

'But she made it very easy for us to read between the lines. Telling us we're right without technically telling us anything.'

"So, it's true. My dad's a supervillain."

"And Mom-- Mom had Ollie tortured." Thea said, tearing up. Oliver held his arms open and she rushed over to be comforted by her brother. “Oh my god, if she did that to him then, she- it’s probably too late for me to try and get emancipated, isn’t it?”

“Six days, six hours and fifty-nine minutes.” Lyla said.

“What?”

“Sorry, it’s- something I started doing on assignments.” She said. “If I knew I was going to be finished with an assignment at a certain time on a certain day, I’d keep track of how close I was to it once I was more than halfway there. Your birthday is next Thursday. As of midnight, that night, you’ll be an adult and can do whatever you want, as long as it’s legal. You can move out of the mansion and never have to go back there again. Midnight on Thursday is six days, six hours and now fifty-eight minutes away. And you’ll be in school for most of that time. You’re almost at the finish line.”

“Huh, I guess I never thought about it that way.” She said. “Can we- Walter and Roy are gonna stop by tonight. I don't know when Roy will be here, but Walter’s gonna be here in less than half an hour and I don’t wanna be- I don’t think he should walk in on us debating to what extent Mom is- if we could change the subject, I think that would be best.”

No one disagreed with Thea’s reasoning, so Donna decided to start telling some funny customer stories she’d gathered over the years. It was a good way to get everyone’s minds off of the heavy topics they’d talked about that day, and would be discussing later. While Donna told her stories, the others helped Oliver prepare dinner and put plates and silverware out on the table. At exactly 5:30, true to his word, Walter arrived for dinner. As soon as he entered, the others could tell that he was as nervous as they were about the news that needed to be shared. Felicity argued that they should have dinner before they had any serious conversations, and no one found themselves disagreeing. Roy arrived about five minutes later and everyone ate while making awkward small
“Okay, I think I’ve stalled having this conversation for as long as I can.” Felicity said. “We had a visit this morning, from Agents Dinan and Reeves, and SCPD Detective Hall. It was about the Queen’s Gambit.”

“The task force has concluded their investigation?” Walter asked.

“Not exactly.”

In the two hours between the task force regrouping at the police station and now, Nyssa had picked up her phone to call Sara and stopped herself from initiating the call over two dozen times. News traveled slowly to Nanda Parbat, but she knew news would eventually reach the League’s fortress. Meaning sooner or later, the announcement of what happened to the Queen’s Gambit would reach Sara.

Nyssa didn’t think Sara should be the last person to know the truth. Steeling herself for the unpleasant conversation that was about to happen, she dialed the phone.

“Hey Nyssa.” Her beloved said when the call connected. “I’m sorry for ending our last call so abruptly but-.”

“It was a lot to hear. And I’m afraid I have more information you need to know.” She said. “Are you alone?”

“Yes. Why? Did something happen? Is my dad-?”

“Your father, mother and sister are all fine, beloved.” She said. “But I have become aware of something troubling. It relates to the Queen’s Gambit. As you know, Oliver Queen has been protecting the city as the Arrow. Several weeks ago, he discovered the wreckage of the yacht in a warehouse in Starling City and alerted the authorities. A task force made up of multiple agencies has been investigating the wreckage and the accident ever since. They recently made an important discovery about why the Queen’s Gambit sank. It appears-.”

“Nyssa, I love you, but you’re stalling. Just come out and say whatever it is.”

“The Queen’s Gambit was sabotaged. Someone placed a bomb aboard the vessel before it set sail.”

“It wasn’t an accident.”

“No, it seems that it was not.” Nyssa said. “Your family has been informed, as has Oliver Queen’s. The task force will be making an announcement to that effect on Saturday when they announce that all of the deaths deemed accidents are now being investigated as murders and the “accident” is being reclassified as an act of terrorism.”

“I- I need to go.” Sara said. “I have to- thank you for telling me but-.”

“No need to explain. This news is…. please call me when you feel up to it.” Nyssa said before ending the call.

After the Heir to the Demon calmed herself down enough, she put on her armor and headed out onto the streets of Starling. The Arrow wouldn’t be making an appearance tonight, but that didn't mean there wouldn't be someone protecting its citizens. Even without having to relive his ordeal in
Russia, the revelations about the Queen’s Gambit or Malcolm Merlyn’s alter ego were enough for him to need another night off. Part of her was pleased that Oliver was already aware, or at least suspected, the truth about Malcolm, as she wouldn't need to spend time trying to convince him of the truth.

Walter and Roy were both silent the entire time Felicity explained what the task force had revealed about the Queen’s Gambit and their suspicions about Malcolm. A year ago, the idea of Malcolm being the Dark Archer, or even connected to Tempest, seemed impossible, but now, the suspicion couldn't be so easily overlooked. Walter looked incredibly relieved when Tommy told him that he'd already moved out of Merlyn Mansion after a fight with his father. Walter mentioned that he wanted to warn Correll of the announcement that would be happening on Saturday, but said he wouldn't give more detail other than the fact that the press conference would be about the Gambit, at least not if he wasn't able to talk with the task force beforehand and hear their opinions on whether it was a good idea to share that information.

“I'll admit, I was hoping that the investigation would reveal that there was no foul play involved in what happened.” Walter said.

“Me too.” Roy chimed in.

“We all were hoping that.” Felicity said. “There is something else that you should know.” She took a deep breath. “And this will also be news to Thea.” Everyone looked at her in confusion. She grabbed Oliver’s hand and signed ‘Trust me’ before she continued. “There was a brief period between 2009 and 2010 when Oliver wasn't on the island. He was in Russia.”

“How did you get from-?” Roy began to ask at the same time Walter asked a question of his own.

“Why were you found on Lian Yu if-?”

“Someone found him on Lian Yu and brought him to Russia. The person requested his help with something, and promised that when they were done, they'd help him get home. When their business was done, that person double-crossed him and he ended up back in Lian Yu.” She said. “In Russia was where Lyla first met Oliver.”

“You knew Ollie was alive and you didn't tell anyone?!” Thea yelled at the former ARGUS agent. She knew this wasn’t her fault, but she couldn’t bring herself to yell at Oliver.

“I was the only person other than the one who betrayed him who knew. I didn't have any proof; it was just my word. I- I was worried that no one would believe me.” Lyla said. “I spent the next few years trying to get to Lian Yu and bring him home, but- I couldn’t. I’m sorry.”

“Why do I get the feeling that there's a lot more to this story?” Roy asked.

‘There is, but I'm not ready to tell it.’ Oliver responded. ‘I just didn't want to- I didn't want to lie anymore. Not to everyone I care about.’ He was still keeping a number of things from them, mainly his “green secret” as Felicity called it, but he was trying to figure out the best way to tell them and when the best time would be.

“We understand, Oliver.” Walter said. “And when you're ready, we will be here to listen.”

The group fell quiet for a little while, until Thea mentioned something that had been on her mind for the last few days.
“I think I should start moving out.” Thea said. “Mom- after everything, I don't wanna be there any longer than I have to. But I also don't wanna have a moving truck show up on my 18th birthday and cause a scene.”

“You could always do it in stages. Or under the radar.” Felicity said. “If your mother enters your room and all your stuff is gone, that's suspicious, but if you slowly start removing things, clothes, keepsakes, toiletries, bit-by-bit over the next six days, it won't be as obvious. You might be able to play it off as you donating those items or decluttering.” Everyone looked at her, wondering if she knew this from experience.

“Years ago, I had a friend who needed to get out of a bad situation.” Donna said. “Felicity and I did what we could to help her.”

“You can stash your stuff at my penthouse that's just sitting empty.’ Oliver told his sister.

‘Whatever you wanna do, we’ll support you.’

“Thanks, Ollie.”

After the heavy topics had been discussed, the group splintered off. Thea asked Felicity for help on an assignment she’d just gotten. Roy started talking to Oliver and Tommy about gift ideas for Thea. He had a few bouncing around but wanted to see what they thought of his suggestions. Donna and Walter started to discuss books while Digg turned to Lyla.

“Feel better? Or not better, but less burdened?”

“Definitely. I didn't realize how much it- secrets can be heavy.”

“And that one was one of heaviest ones I think anyone's had to carry in a long, long time.”

Eventually, people began to depart. Roy and Walter had work the next day, Thea had school, Digg and Lyla wanted to head home. Tommy joked that the bed in his hotel room was feeling neglected. Everyone said their good nights and left and Donna decided to turn in early. As he was leaving, Digg mentioned that he was going to work tomorrow during the day but wouldn't be available tomorrow night, as he always spent Andy's birthday with Carly and AJ. Oliver told him not to worry about it, as he wasn't planning to leave the house Friday night anyway.

The next morning, the task force came into work to two big surprises. One was that one of the techs finished analyzing the phones and personal effects of the arrested Triad members. The contact list alone was a gold mine for the FBI’s organized crime unit, but McKenna found one number on the list particularly interesting.

“You gotta be kidding me.” She said.

“What?” Anderson asked. “What are you seeing that we aren't?”

She pointed to a name on the list. “This one, Brian Nudocerdo, the police commissioner.”

“It's possible that the contact info was intentionally entered under a fake name. Just to play Devil's Advocate for a moment.”

“Except, that's actually his number.” McKenna said, pulling out her own phone and showing his name in her contacts. It was the same number. “When the Anti-Arrow task force was started, he gave all of the detectives his personal phone number so that, in his words, he'd know the second
the Arrow was off the streets. Pretty sure he just wanted to claim the arrest for himself, but- anyway, that's not a fake contact.”

“Run the phone records immediately.” Doyle ordered the technician. “We need to know who else is in the Triad’s pocket.”

“Did Keller talk with you already?” The tech asked Agent Rathbone. “About the tires?”

“No, why would tires-.” As he said that, one of the CSIs walked into the room.

“You will not believe what happened to that SUV involved in the car chase.” She said.

“Let me guess, Keller?” Rathbone said. “I thought they were shot out.”

“They were, just not by John Diggle and anyone with a gun.” She said. “Unless he also carries a longbow.”

“The Arrow was involved in the fight?”

“Either it was him, or there’s a third archer in town.”

“How is there any doubt? His green arrows are pretty distinctive.” Doyle asked.

“Well, the arrows aren't there. The damage to the tires is consistent with being pierced by an arrowhead. Bullets couldn't have done the type of damage we saw. One of my colleagues is still running the numbers, but whoever shot those arrows had to be at least on the third floor, possibly the fourth.” Keller said. “But since someone took the arrows before the SCPD had control of the scene, all we know is that it was an archer, not necessarily the Arrow. I need to get back to the lab now.” Keller left and once she was gone, the agents began talking about her revelation.

“I don’t think it was the Dark Archer, just based on his injuries, so I think we can assume it was the Arrow.” Dinan said. “Still not sure why he'd be there though.”

“He’s been changing up his methods lately, Judge and Melissi are proof of that.” Reeves said. “Or maybe he just happened to stumble upon the situation and felt the need to intervene. Not sure why he’d retrieve his arrows though.”

“Maybe he didn’t. An arrow fired by the Arrow? That could fetch a lot of money on eBay. Or a shadier site.” Anderson said.

“They're evidence.”

“Plenty of people on the Internet wouldn't care.”

Moira was sitting in her living room, reading Page Six when her phone rang. She nearly ignored it, but saw that Malcolm was calling her. She feared what he might do if she ignored his call.

“Hello, Malcolm.”

“I understand you received a visit from an FBI agent yesterday. Would you care to explain why you didn't inform me?”

“It didn't seem important.”
“Our work, which would be closer to completing if you hadn't bungled the last board meeting, is being threatened by the FBI's investigation and you don't think a visit from them is important?” He asked. “What did they ask? What did you discuss?”

“They asked about the week before Robert set sail.” She lied. “Did he seem worried about something? Was anything abnormal? I told them exactly what we agreed I would, if anyone ever asked about that time. He was clearly asking simply as a formality.”

“Good.”

“The world believes Robert was killed in a tragic accident, why would I want the FBI of all people to suspect the truth?” She asked. “My bed is made, Malcolm, I'm lying in it.”

Unbeknownst to Moira, someone had overheard the end of her conversation with Malcolm.

Felicity rolled over in bed and found herself only a few inches away from Oliver's face. He could somehow sense that she was facing him, because his eyes opened a few moments later.

‘Morning.’

“Good morning.” She said before letting out a yawn. “How did you sleep?”

‘Not well.’ He admitted. ‘Lyla talking about Russia...brought a few unpleasant memories up.’

“I’m not surprised.” She said. “I mean, I hoped that that wouldn't happen, but I’m not surprised that it did. I’m sorry you had bad dreams.”

‘They weren’t all bad.’ He said. ‘When I first fell asleep, I dreamed about you.’ He had had a pleasant dream about Felicity, but then the dream ended and he woke up. It was after he fell back asleep that the bad dreams and memories came.

“You did? What happened in the dream?” She asked. Oliver got a guilty smile on his face. “Oh, it was that kinda dream.”

His face turned red. ‘Sorry, I-.’

“Oliver, honey, sweetie, my love. You can have as many sexy dreams about me as you want.” She told him with a laugh. “In fact,” she moved so that she was straddling him. “Is this okay?” She wanted to make sure that their position didn’t make Oliver uncomfortable. He nodded. “Great.” She pulled her top off and pulled one of his hands up so that he could touch her breast. “I think that you should tell me a little more about your dream, and maybe, we can make it a reality?”

‘We’re not ready for part of it.’ He said. ‘But I like where this is going.’ He pulled her down closer to him and started to massage her breast. While his left hand was massaging one of her breasts, he started kissing the other one. Felicity let out a quiet moan and buried her face in his neck. He continued his ministrations, switching sides at one point so that each of her breasts felt equally loved. She started nuzzling his neck and kissing along his jawline, all the while trying not to be too loud. She inadvertently started rubbing her pelvis against his and could feel his erection growing just behind where she was situated.

“Oliver, I’m gonna-.” She started to say. He began to pull away and was about to ask if he should stop. Before he could, she let out a very loud moan and he could feel her legs shaking around his torso. He watched as she caught her breath and her body came down from its high. “Wow, that
was-. That’s the first time I’ve ever…. had that lead to *that.*” She started to blush. “Sorry, I probably should’ve-."

‘Don’t apologize for anything, especially what just happened.’ He told her.

She moved off of him and laid down with her head on his chest. He started running his fingers through her hair. “I feel kinda bad though, because you’ve…. been paying very good attention to my needs, but yours-.” She gestured to his erection.

‘You don’t need to do that.’ He said. ‘I wanted to make you feel good. You don’t have to reciprocate. Besides, I- all I need is you, here, in my arms.’ He wasn’t sure what kind of reaction he might have if Felicity tried to touch him in that area, and he didn’t want to find out at the moment. Instead, he wanted to enjoy cuddling with his girlfriend.

“Well, that was one hell of a way to start my Friday.” She said with a smile. She leaned up and kissed Oliver on the lips before pulling away. Then, she heard something fall in the kitchen. “Oh frak, my mom definitely heard me. That’s embarrassing.”

‘Maybe she didn’t.’ He said, trying to reassure her.

They stayed lying in bed for almost another hour before heading into the kitchen. Donna was sitting in the living room, watching some TV and asked them both how they slept with a knowing look on her face.

“I think I’m gonna take you up on your offer to stay in your penthouse, Oliver.” She said. “I’ve intruded enough on Felicity’s hospitality and should really start looking for my own place.”

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 71

Chapter Summary

Oliver has a relaxing day for once, Roy makes a decision, Donna meets someone new and the task force learns something new.

Chapter Notes

Sorry this chapter is a little late. My schedule's been weird lately.

Felicity and Oliver stayed lying in bed for almost another hour before leaving the bedroom. Donna was sitting in the living room, watching some TV and asked them both how they slept with a knowing look on her face.

“I think I’m gonna take you up on your offer to stay in your penthouse, Oliver.” She said. “I’ve intruded enough on your hospitality.”

Felicity groaned and started looking through the cabinets in order to hide her embarrassment. It was one thing for her to think her mother had heard her and Oliver’s sexual activities, it was another thing for her mother to comment on it.

“Felicity, why are you embarrassed? We had this talk before you went off to college.” Her mother said. “It’s completely natural for-.”

“Mom, I don’t need the sex talk again.” She said. “I just- it’s weird for me when you talk so casually about my sex life. So, if we could just pretend that you didn’t hear what you heard this morning, so that I don’t want to die of embarrassment-.”

“Okay, fine. As I keep telling you, I just want you to be happy, and you seem to be.” Donna said. “And I’m serious about moving out soon. It’s time I get out of your hair.” She sighed. “Though, I guess I should figure out what I’m gonna do about all my stuff in Vegas while I’m thinking about moving.”

“Your lease isn’t up until April, right?” Felicity asked. “We’ve got plenty of time to deal with that.” She was going to say something else, but her stomach began to rumble. “And that’s my cue to eat some breakfast.”

She went into the kitchen where Oliver was making scrambled eggs. She watched him cook as she poured herself some coffee. He finished making the eggs and handed her a plate with a soft smile.

‘I didn’t know if you were getting sick of omelets. So, I made something different.’

“I could never get sick of anything you cook.” She told him before putting a forkful of food into her mouth. She told him that the food was good and they ate in silence. When they were both
finished, she started cleaning up. “Oh, and there’s something I forgot to tell you earlier because… you know, we got distracted.”

“What is it? Is something wrong?” He asked her.

“Nope.” She moved closer to him so that she wouldn’t be overheard. “The kind of dream you had about me? I’ve had those kinds of dreams about you too.”

‘Really?’ He still found it hard to believe that someone would find him attractive with how scarred he was.

“Yup. I’ve been having them for a while, actually.” She said, blushing a little bit. “It’s natural and I like that you’ve been dreaming about me.”

‘Good, because I like dreaming about you.’ He said as he gave her kiss. ‘But not just those dreams. Because, sometimes, I just have dreams of us doing boring, happy couple stuff.’

‘Really?’

‘Why wouldn’t I dream about my favorite person?’ He asked rhetorically. ‘Do we have any plans for today?’

“None that I know of. My plan is to have a quiet, relaxing day after Wednesday's surprise and the conversations that happened yesterday.” She answered. “I’m thinking a Netflix marathon, maybe?”

‘Sounds perfect to me.’

He took her hand and they walked back out into the living room. Donna was no longer sitting on the couch, but the door to the guest room was closed. Felicity and Oliver sat down on the couch and she started looking through the options on Netflix, trying to decide what to watch.

“What are you two up to today?” Donna asked, stepping into the hallway wearing a pair of yoga pants and long-sleeve shirt.

‘Just having a relaxing, lazy day in.’ He told her. ‘Are you going somewhere?’

“I’m getting a little bit of cabin fever, to be honest.” She said. “I’m gonna go downtown. Do some shopping. See if there’s any exciting events coming up.”

“Don’t go too crazy buying shoes.” Felicity joked. “Remember, you only have two feet.” It had been a running joke in the Smoak family for years that Donna had too many shoes. Felicity’s thing was technology and Donna’s was fashion.

“I make no promises.” She said before saying goodbye and leaving the house.

‘I don’t understand the shoe thing.’ Oliver admitted.

“It’s kinda a running joke. When I was like five, my aunt and Emily were over and my mom was showing my aunt something in her closet and I loudly asked her why she had so many shoes, when she only had two feet. And since then, it’s just been a thing with us.” Felicity said with a smile. “Now, do any of these shows look interesting to you?”

‘What’s Parks and Recreation?’

“It’s a sitcom by the same guy who created The Office. I think Parks and Rec is just what we need.” She said, pressing the button to start watching.
Lyla and Digg arrived after the first episode was over. Oliver made sure that Lyla was okay after the emotional rollercoaster the day before, and she said she was doing as well as she could be, all things considered.

‘I think I wanna tell everyone the truth soon.’ Oliver admitted. ‘About me being the Arrow.’

“Are you sure you wanna do that?” Digg asked.

‘You don’t think I should?’

“No, it’s not that. It came out wrong. What I meant to ask was if you’re sure you’re ready to do that?” He said. “It’s a big step.”

“And the last few weeks have been….a lot.” Felicity said. “I’m not saying you should and I’m not saying you shouldn’t. I’m just saying that it’s been a crazy month.”

‘I wasn’t thinking about telling them this week. And I don’t think I should next week, because I don’t wanna steal Thea’s thunder for her birthday, but maybe the week after? I think that gives me enough time to figure out how to tell them.’

“I think that’s a great plan.” Felicity said. Lyla and Digg nodded in encouragement.

With the plan somewhat decided, the group turned back to the TV and continued to watch Netflix.

Walter arrived at Queen Consolidated and was told that there was someone in his office waiting to speak with him. He took the elevator to the top floor and walked towards his office, intrigued and slightly concerned about who might be waiting for him. He entered to find Dinan and Reeves talking to his executive assistant.

“Good morning, Agent Dinan, Agent Reeves.” He said politely.

“Good morning, Mr. Steele.” Dinan said. “I was wondering if we could have a few moments of your time?”

“Certainly.” He said, gesturing to his office. He asked his EA to make sure they weren’t disturbed before following behind the investigators and taking a seat at his desk. “Before we begin, I think I should inform you that yesterday, Oliver and Felicity shared some of the information you told them with the rest of Team Oliver. They didn’t go into much detail, but they did tell us that you’ve determined the Queen’s Gambit was sabotaged and your suspicion of Tempest’s involvement, and the Dark Archer’s. I know you can’t comment on an open investigation, but they also shared with me their theories on who the Dark Archer is. Although, I won’t be sharing any of that information or those theories outside of those already “in the know” as it were.”

“May I ask who is on “Team Oliver”??” Dinan asked him. She was pretty sure that she knew the core group, but wanted to be sure how many people were aware of what was going on.

“Of course. Felicity gave us that nickname, and it seems to have caught on. The group consists of Oliver, naturally, Felicity and her mother Donna, Thea, Lyla Michaels, John Diggle, Thea’s boyfriend Roy Harper, Tommy Merlyn, and myself.”

Dinan turned to Reeves. “Roy Harper, have we met him?”

“I don’t believe so.”
“I supposed that’s possible.” Walter said. “He was at work both times you visited Felicity’s home to speak with her and Oliver. Oliver intends to offer Roy a job as one of his interpreters, so you’ll probably meet him soon. Roy is a good friend of Oliver’s, we’ve all grown close to him, and he trusts him completely. Which is why Oliver’s decided to offer him a job.”

“Is Mr. Harper a professional interpreter?” Dinan asked.

“Not at the moment, but he’s been taking ASL classes for over three years, which is incidentally how he and Thea met.” He said. “I apologize, I’ve somewhat gotten this conversation off-track, as I’m sure Roy’s friendship with Oliver is not why you asked to speak with me.”

“We thought now would be a good time to ask if anything was discovered when looking into Applied Sciences.” Reeves said.

“The security team has made great progress in overhauling and updating our security measures, but they aren’t quite complete. The stop-work order on the projects Miller worked on are still in effect. I like to believe we’re doing everything we can to combat the influence of Tempest. Though, if you feel differently or that we may have missed something, I’m interested to hear your thoughts.”

“I can’t think of something you may have missed, but we may be able to give you some peace of mind.” Dinan said. “The Arrow contacted us regarding Tempest following Alex Melissi and David Judge’s arrests. He believes that he has successfully removed all of Tempest’s assets within the company.”

“The five employees who surrendered themselves to the authorities, they all were affiliated with Tempest?”

“They confessed to their association, yes.” She said. “Needless to say, this information needs to be kept confidential.”

“Of course. May I share this news with Team Oliver, or at the very least Oliver and Felicity?” He asked. “I know it would bring them both peace of mind, as he’s been concerned that she might be in danger while at work still.”

“I think that’s perfectly fine.” Dinan said. The two agents stood up to leave.

“There is something I feel I should share with you, regarding a conversation I overheard this morning.” He said. “Between my wife and Malcolm Merlyn. He was asking her about a conversation she had with one of your colleagues yesterday.”

“Yes, Agent Anderson went to see her to inform her of the news about the Queen’s Gambit.”

“That makes sense. What doesn’t have a simple explanation, however, is what she said to him next. I’m paraphrasing somewhat, but she mentioned that, as far as anyone knew, Robert died in an accident and said she didn’t want anyone, especially federal investigators, to think otherwise. She ended the conversation saying she’d “made her bed” and was lying in it.”

Neither of the agents were sure how to respond to that information. It certainly gave credibility to Malcolm and Moira both being involved with what happened to the Gambit, but they couldn’t figure out why Moira would lie to her fellow conspirator.

“I’m not sure why she might say that, but thank you for letting us know.” Dinan said. “Thank you very much for your time, Mr. Steele.” She and Reeves left.

Once the two agents were gone, Walter asked his assistant to call Correll and asked him to come to
his office. Correll arrived and Walter told him to expect a flood of calls over the next few days.

“May I ask why?”

“There is going to be an announcement tomorrow regarding the Queen’s Gambit. The task force has reached a point in their investigation where they can release some of their findings.” He answered. “And, because I know what your next question will be, I’m not sure what those findings are.”

Donna was sifting through dresses on a sales rack when she saw something move out of the corner of her eye. She looked up to see a woman stepping out of a fitting room to look in the mirror. The woman spun around a few times, looking at her outfit before frowning and turning to go back into the fitting room.

“That looks great on you.” Donna said, loud enough for the woman to hear. “Sorry, I know you don't know me and probably don't care what I think but, I think that color looks really good on you.”

“Thanks.” The woman said with a smile before going back into the fitting room.

Donna went back to her shopping and forgot about the woman, other than feeling happy that she'd made someone feel better. She ended up buying a few things. On her way out of the store, she passed by the woman again.

A mother and her five-year-old daughter walked past the woman and she immediately burst into tears. A few people turned to look at the woman, but no one approached her. Donna turned around and approached the crying woman.

“Do you need anything? Water? Tissues?” She asked.

“No, I just-.” The woman said in between her sobs.

“Why don't we get out of here? You want some coffee? My treat.” She suggested.

The woman wiped her eyes. “That would be nice.” The two women left the store and walked to a coffee shop down the street. Donna ordered while the woman sat at the table and tried to calm down. “You probably think I'm a crazy person.”

“No, I think something really upset you. And I try not to judge.” She said. “I'm Donna.”

“Nice to meet you, I'm Dinah.” Dinah said. “The little girl, she reminded me so much of-.”

“Of who? If you don't mind me asking.”

“My daughter Sara. I recently found out that… I found out some bad news.”

“Your last name wouldn't happen to be Lance, would it?” Donna asked. “Because I think I know why you're upset.”

“How did you know?” Dinah asked.

“Oliver Queen is my daughter’s boyfriend. And he got the same news yesterday that you did.” She answered. “I'm sorry for your loss.”
“You know Oliver? Is he- I know this sounds like a stupid question, but how is he doing?”

“About as well as you’d expect. He found out that the traumatic accident that changed his life wasn’t exactly an accident. Thea gave him your letter, by the way, but I don’t know if he’s read it yet.”

“I’d be surprised if he had, based on everything else that’s going on.” Dinah admitted. “Can you- I don’t wanna make you be a messenger, but can you please tell him something for me?”

“Sure.” Donna would tell Oliver what Dinah said if and only if her message wasn’t harmful. “What is it?”

“It’s not his fault. Please tell him that it’s not- what happened, he’s not to blame. I know Quentin and Laurel keep- I want him to know that I don’t blame him. Not that what I think matters, but I just- I know he probably thinks it’s his fault.”

“I’ll tell him.” She promised.

They moved onto lighter topics for a little while before Dinah said she had to go. Donna told her it was nice meeting her and gave her her contact information in case she ever needed to talk. Donna returned to her shopping spree and Dinah got into her car and drove to the SCPD station where the federal task force was working.

Roy wasn’t sure how things had gotten to this point. He’d come into work today, just like any other day. There wasn’t a big event in the store that would make him think he was going to have a bad day. Yet, it wasn’t even noon and he already had a middle-aged woman, with the typical “can I speak to your manager” haircut, screaming at him because an item that had been on sale over a month ago was no longer on sale. Roy had tried to explain things to her, or at the very least, get her to stop screaming, but she wasn’t interested in being rational. Part of the reason he was so annoyed was because he knew Oliver would hire him as an interpreter. He knew that he didn’t need to put up with stuff like this.

“Terrible, terrible customer service!” She yelled. “I want to speak with your manager-.”

“Is there a problem, ma’am?” Roy’s manager asked, coming over to where he was. Another employee had told her over the walkie-talkies what was going on.

“Are you the manager?” The customer asked. “Thank god! This mixer is supposed to be $169.99, but it’s marked as $199.99. It’s supposed to be 15% off. Last time I was in here, it was 15% off and your stock boy here is refusing to sell it to me at the price it was advertised for.”

“You know what?” Roy said before the manager could respond. “I quit. I’m tired of dealing with entitled people like this.”

“Entitled? How dare-?”

“You’re the one screaming at a guy who makes minimum wage over a $30.00 difference. Because of a sale that ended in December. Do you really have nothing better to do with your time?” He then turned to the manager. “I’ll wait in the back for you to finish up here, and then I’ll fill out whatever paperwork you need from me.”

He walked towards the back of the store while the manager dealt with the unhappy customer. After about twenty minutes, the manager came back to her office and asked Roy if he was serious about
quitting. He admitted that he’d gotten an offer for a better job, a slight fabrication, and today made him realize that he couldn’t take retail anymore. He filled out the termination paperwork, turned in his keys and uniform and cleaned out his locker. Because it was protocol, the manager had to walk him out of the store.

“You gave her what she wanted, didn’t you?” He asked out of curiosity.

“The customer’s always right.” She answered sarcastically. “Although, you got her pretty good. Good luck.”

“Thanks.” He said before exiting the store.

He walked to the nearest bus stop and boarded a bus that would take him close to Felicity’s house.

“Okay.” Agent Anderson said, looking at the files in front of him. “We have the yacht, we have the warehouse. We also have a list of names, some are Queen Consolidated employees, connected to Tempest, which is somehow connected to the warehouse and the yacht. Why would they need someone from HR to cover up the “accident”, though?” Having a source in QC’s Legal department and Applied Science made sense but some of the other employees? They didn’t have skills that would help with sabotaging the Gambit or covering it up after the fact.

“Maybe they didn’t.” Doyle said. “We’ve been assuming that their goal was sabotaging the Gambit. What if that’s only part of it?”

“You think that was part of some bigger plan?”

“I don’t think the Dark Archer would’ve tried to kill the Arrow if there wasn’t something bigger at stake. We’ve been assuming the Undertaking was, you know, everything with the Gambit, but what if it hasn’t happened yet?”

“So, Queen found out about it and they killed him?” Anderson asked.

“Maybe, I don’t know. I just think it’s worth exploring.”

“I can’t say that I- can we help you?” He asked, looking at the doorway where Dinah Lance was standing.

“I’m looking for Agent Mars.”

“She’s not here, Ms…?”

“Lance. Sorry, my name’s Dinah Lance.” She said. “I had some- there are a few things I wanted to ask her, and something I wanted to tell her, about my- about Sara.”

“Well, I’m not Mars, but I’ll give her a call.” Doyle said. He led her over to a corner of the room where they could have some privacy. He sat with Dinah until Agent Mars arrived and took over.

“Dr. Lance, what are you doing here?”

“You asked if I remembered anything from before they set sail. I was too upset at the time to tell you that- I need to- this is all my fault.”

“I promise you, it’s not.” Mars said.
“It is though, because I- I knew she was going on that trip, with Oliver, I let her go. I told her not to... I told her not to do it, not to Laurel. But she said she was in love and she had to follow her heart, even if nobody else thought it was right. Just like... I told her... when she was a little girl... Just like I told her I once did. So I let her go, and she- I killed her, I killed my baby.” She stared sobbing.

Mars gave Dinah a hug and tried to comfort her, telling her that she couldn’t have known what was going to happen and that it wasn’t her fault. While the information wouldn’t help the investigation, none of the agents could bring themselves to admit that to her.

“Wait, I- Sara’s body, did you-?” Five years ago, Dinah had buried an empty coffin. She was hoping that somehow, her body had been found and she could be put to rest.

“I’m afraid we didn’t find her body on board.” Mars said sadly.

Dinah started crying again, devastated that she had no idea what had happened to her daughter and couldn’t put her to rest. In her hideout, Nyssa felt a pang of guilt at Sara’s mother’s distress.

Moira sat in her living room after the conversation with Malcolm ended and thought about her options. The walls seemed to be closing in around Tempest. She doubted the federal agents were aware of the Undertaking, no one who’d been arrested or turned themselves in already had any knowledge of what their goals really were, but sooner or later, they were going to uncover something damaging.

The way she saw it, she had two options, possibly three. She could do nothing and hope they never found out about her connections to Tempest. She could go to the task force immediately and admit to everything, in exchange for immunity. Or, she could wait a little while longer, let the agents get a little further in their investigation, and then go to them and confess everything, in exchange for immunity.

She decided to wait, for now. She had no guarantee of her safety, Thea’s or Walter’s at the moment, but if she waited, and picked a better time, maybe when the investigation hit a roadblock of some kind, the FBI might be able to put the family in protective custody or something.

“Oh, Robert, why did you get us into this mess?” She asked aloud.

Tommy spent a few hours in his hotel room, trying to make sense of the documents he’d gotten from his mother and grandparents’ lawyers. While he knew he could’ve waited for his appointment with his own lawyers next week, he didn’t want to walk into that meeting completely unprepared. The problem was that he didn’t know how to read legal documents and the only lawyers he was speaking terms with were Jean Loring, and his own, and they were both probably very busy.

Unsure of what else to do, Tommy pulled out his phone. “Hey, I’m sorry to bug you, but you’re kinda the smartest person I know.”

“Kind of?” Felicity asked. “I think I’m offended.”

“Okay, you are. You’re the smartest person I know. Do you know anything about wills and estates and legal stuff like that?”

“I don’t know a ton about that. I’m more familiar with contracts, but between you, me and Google,
“Ok, cool. Do you mind if I drop by? I know today’s your day off and-.”

“You don’t need to ask, Tommy.” She said. “Me and Oliver are here, just watching some Netflix with John and Lyla.”

Tommy arrived at Felicity’s house right as Roy was getting off of the bus. Unlike when the younger man usually visited, he had a backpack thrown over his shoulder. They greeted one another and Tommy asked about the bag.

“What’s with the backpack?”

“I kinda- I had to deal with one “Karen” too many and I quit Sink, Shower and Stuff. And I’m hoping that wasn’t a mistake.”

“It wasn’t. You’re a smart guy. You wouldn’t have quit just to quit.” He said. “Besides, we both know Oliver’s gonna offer you a job. He’s already offered Donna one and I think he’s trying to figure out how to offer you a job without making it weird.”

Roy just shrugged and followed Tommy up the front steps and waited as he knocked on the door. Oliver opened the door and looked a little surprised when he saw Tommy and Roy standing there. He let them inside and greetings were exchanged.

Felicity and Tommy moved into a corner of the room, so that she could take a look at the paperwork he’d brought with him. Roy took a seat on the couch and tried to figure out what they were watching.

“Oh, sweet. I love Parks and Rec.”

‘Felicity just introduced me to it.’ Oliver said. ‘I like it so far.’ He didn’t ask Roy why he was here, when he’d usually be at work. Roy didn’t seem to be injured or upset, so he figured he’d tell him when he was ready. He turned back to the television.

Felicity and Tommy went through the documents he’d brought with him. They had to consult Google more than once to figure out what certain things in the wills meant, but he soon had a pretty good idea of what he’d been left and he started making a list of questions to ask his lawyers when he saw them.

“Why is this legal stuff so confusing?” He asked.

“They do it on purpose. Partially to cover their butts and the rest, I don’t know, because they wanna seem cool.”

“Well, it's mostly mumbo-jumbo to me.” He said. “Where’s Donna?”

“She decided to treat herself to a shopping spree. Said she needed to get out of the house after the last few days.”

“Yeah, I can’t say I blame her.”

They joined the others in front of the TV. The episode Oliver had been watching ended and he
pressed pause so that the next one wouldn’t start. He turned to Roy.

‘I’ve been trying to figure out how to say this, but- I need an interpreter who I can trust, and you and Donna worked together really well at the meeting. So, I was wondering if- I want to offer you a job as one of my interpreters.’ He said. ‘I understand if it would be too weird or if you don’t want to quit the job you already have, so don’t think you have to say yes, but-.’

“Well, I’ve had enough of retail.” Roy said. “In fact, I just quit, because I couldn’t take it anymore, so yes. I’d like to work as your interpreter.”

‘Okay, well, I need to talk to you and Donna later, alone, about official stuff like salary, but thank you so much. She said yes to the offer when I asked her yesterday.’ He said. He’d asked Donna yesterday when they were both in Felicity’s bedroom, to avoid listening to parts of Lyla’s story about Moscow.

The group continued to watch TV and laze around until Donna came back from her shopping trip. She said it was mostly uneventful, but noted that she’d made an acquaintance. She didn’t immediately tell them she’d met Sara’s mother, as now didn’t feel like a good time. Everyone just hung out and talked some more until it was time to pick Thea up from school. Oliver picked her up and brought her back to the house.

Around 4:30, Digg stood up to leave. He was going to spend the evening with Carly and AJ. Everyone wished him a goodnight and told him to tell them hello.

AJ, Carly and Digg had a quiet night in at Carly’s apartment. Today was always a weird day for them, being Andy’s birthday, but they managed to make it through. AJ spent most of dinner telling his uncle about his new hero, the Arrow. Digg listened with rapt attention and tried to ignore how weird it was to hear his nephew talk about Oliver so reverently. Eventually, AJ’s bedtime came and he went to bed, with some whining about how he wasn’t tired and it was Friday. After he went to bed, Carly and Digg had a chance to talk.

“I know you’re not gonna listen to me, but please be careful. Your job is dangerous.” She said. “I lost Andy already. I don’t wanna lose you too.”

“You’re not going to.”

“Two days ago, you were in a car chase that ended in a shoot-out. You could’ve been killed because someone wanted to kill your client.”

“Oliver wasn’t the target.”

“What?”

“They weren’t after Oliver, or Felicity.” He repeated. “They were after Lyla.”

“Lyla? Why would they-? First of all, when did Lyla come back into your life? Second, why would they be after-?”

“After Lyla left the Army, she got headhunted by a government agency. She made a lot of enemies of some serious bad guys while working there. Her boss was an asshole, kept risking her life needlessly, and that’s only the start of the problem... Last week, things got so bad that Lyla quit. Oliver immediately asked if he could hire her as Felicity's bodyguard, and Lyla accepted just as quick - she’s friends with Oliver and Felicity, she knows they're good people, and...” He sighed.
"The problem is, one of her old enemies tracked Lyla down, looking to do god-knows-what to her, and we all helped Lyla to fight the bastards off."

"'We'? Who's 'we', John?"

"Me, Oliver and Felicity. Oliver's damn good in a fight - not in the Arrow's league, but he's at least as good as I am." He got a smile on his face. "And Felicity? She kinda killed one of the bad guys' cars... using just her phone."

"Impressive. So... Lyla's back, huh? Are you guys trying again?"

"Yeah, we are."

"Good."

"Yeah?"

"John, Lyla is the love of your life, and you're hers, just like Andy and I were each other's. You two belong together - anyone who's seen you in the same room for a couple minutes can see that. I'm glad you're figuring things out together. Just do me a favor? Be careful out there... both of you. AJ needs his uncle, and I hope he'll get to know his Aunt Lyla."

“She wants to meet him too. She didn’t come with me tonight because, well, neither of us thought it would be appropriate.”

The rest of Team Oliver watched movies until very late into the night before people started to depart. Tommy went back to his hotel. Lyla gave Roy a lift home before going to Digg’s apartment. Donna went to bed and Thea slept on Felicity’s couch again.

Felicity and Oliver went to bed and cuddled for a while. “Today was a nice day.” She said.

‘Yes. It was nice to have a chance to relax, to get a break from things.’

“I know exactly what you mean.” She said with a smile. She leaned up and kissed him. “Goodnight. Sleep tight. Don’t let the bedbugs bite.”

‘What?’ He asked in confusion.

“My mom used to say that when tucking me into bed. You’ve never heard it before?”

‘Nope, but same to you. Sleep well.’ He said before pulling her in closer and turning off the light on the nightstand.

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 72

Chapter Summary

Oliver gets back to his mission, the task force makes an announcement and someone starts to have second thoughts.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Oliver and Felicity woke up the next morning, they walked out into the living room and were somewhat surprised that there weren't a bunch of people already there. Felicity knew Thea, Roy and Tommy had probably left for their ASL classes, but Donna, John and Lyla were also absent. She was about to ask Oliver if he'd heard from anyone when her phone started going off. She had texts from her mom and Lyla.

The text from Lyla said that she and John would stop by a little later and she wanted to discuss the next move they were going to make against Moira. Donna’s text was a little more interesting.

>>From: Mom: Hi baby. I figured you and Oliver might want some time to yourselves. I know you love us, but I'm pretty sure having us always be at your house is a little annoying. I convinced the others to let you two have some “alone time” today (make of it what you will). And we’ll see you tomorrow or Monday.

“It looks like it's just us for the moment.” Felicity said. “Mom seemed to realize that having everyone here, all the time, was starting to be a bit much.”

‘I hope they don't feel bad.’ He said. ‘Having people over is nice, just-.’

“All day, every day is a bit too often. And you don't wanna kick Tommy or Thea out, or tell them you want to see them less often, but it doesn't mean you don't need some time to yourself. Or that we don’t need time where it's just us.” She finished.

‘Exactly.’ He said. ‘Plus, with everyone here all the time, I haven't been able to go out as the Arrow. What if something happens because I'm not around to stop it because I can't get away?’

“Well, I think that's only a problem for the next couple weeks until you tell everyone, or at least some of the group your secret.” She said. “In the meantime, maybe we’re going on a date. Every night. A date with crime.”

‘I can't ask you to lie for me.’

“It wouldn't be a lie. We'd be together, doing an activity as a couple. One of us would be getting dressed up for it.” She said. “In all seriousness, I know how important this is to you. You took the last few days off, because of everything, but when you're ready to go back, we’ll figure it out.”

‘I think I should patrol tonight. I have no idea what might've happened over the last week.’ He said. ‘And Tempest might've been cleared out of QC, but that doesn't mean they're gone.’

“Okay, then.” She said, walking over to one of her book shelves and pulling out a tablet. “Why
don't we figure out who you should visit next?” She handed Oliver the tablet. “Don't worry. It's untraceable. A little old, but it'll work just fine.”

‘I don't even know where to start.’ He admitted. ‘With QC, it was easy. I knew the employees' names, but for the rest of Tempest, I feel like there are just too many options.’

“The way I see it, there are two choices here. Start with Malcolm Merlyn and work your way out from there. Or, pick a name on the List and figure out how they connect to other names on the List or other events that have happened. Not to mention, you could continue with what you started with Frank Chen, which will also lead you somewhere.”

‘I think I'm gonna start with my mom.’

“Not to be bossy, but don't do that. It's a bad idea, especially at this stage. Leave your mom to me and Lyla.” She said. “With Chen or Merlyn, there's a degree of separation. They're not your family. It's a little easier to stomach what you might find.”

‘You're probably right.’ He said. ‘I think I'll start with Malcolm. Can I hack into his phone records with this?’

“If I didn't know you better, I'd be insulted by that question.” She responded. “I'll tackle Frank Chen.”

‘Not my mom?’

“My voice of reason, aka Lyla, isn't here, so no. She's the one who pulls me back from going too far too soon.” Felicity said with a smile. “But there is something I meant to text her about.” She pulled out her phone, sent a short text, and turned to her own tablet. She started searching for recent news stories, only to come across a surprising article. “Oh, wow.”

‘What?’

“Even though you haven’t been running around at night, there have been a few sightings of the Arrow over the last few days. Your friend in black. Libby as I’ve decided to call her. I’m guessing.”

‘Maybe.’ He said with a shrug. ‘Although when I first met her, it sounded like she was focused solely on the Dark Archer.’

“Or maybe, that was all she felt comfortable telling you.” Felicity suggested. “You don't know her very well, meaning she also doesn't know you very well. The trust isn’t quite there yet.”

Digg was telling Lyla about his Friday night with Carly and AJ when Lyla’s phone dinged, indicating she had a text message.

“Sorry, it’s Felicity.” She said, opening the message and reading it.

“Everything okay?” Digg asked.

“Yeah, just- Felicity reminded me of something I meant to ask the task force about.” She said. “It’s not a pressing matter. It can wait until Monday, or even next Friday.” She closed the message and shrugged it off.
"So, AJ’s a big fan of the Arrow, huh?” She asked with a smile.

“Wants to be him when he grows up. Carly didn’t seem too thrilled at the thought of him and sharp objects together.”

Linda Park looked over at her cameraman and asked him if he had any idea what this press conference was about. He said that he was told the same thing she was, late last night, which was that there was going to be an announcement from the federal task force that was investigating the Queen’s Gambit.

“They’re probably just gonna tell us that they don’t have anything to tell us yet.” He said.

“I’ve got a feeling that’s not it.” She argued. “My gut is saying otherwise.”

“Really? Your gut’s saying that? We mostly cover sports.” Her cameraman pointed out. “We’re only here because the boss didn’t see the point in sending someone else out here when we were already in town for the Rockets-Diamond game.”

Linda looked around the room. It was a little surreal for her to be in the same room as reporters like Anderson Cooper and Rachel Maddow. “If the announcement was that there was no announcement, I don’t think CNN and the AP would be here.”

Before he could respond, a handful of agents entered the room and approached the podium. “Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Agent Andrea Dinan, I work for the Coast Guard Investigative Service. I will be updating you on the most recent findings in our investigation into the sinking of the Queen’s Gambit and then Agent Anderson, of the FBI, will take a few questions.” Dinan turned to a new page. “Upon investigation of the wreckage of the Queen’s Gambit, discovered on December 12th, we have come to the conclusion that the yacht was not sunk as a result of a storm, as previously believed. We believe the Queen’s Gambit was sabotaged by persons currently unknown. The event is now being investigated as an act of terrorism and the deaths of those aboard are being classified as acts of murder moving forward.” The press all seemed to get over their shock at the same time and began signaling that they had questions. “Agent Anderson will now field questions.”

She stepped away from the podium as Anderson moved to her spot.

Frank Chen saw the news and nearly fainted. He was now considered a terrorist. When the government learned of his involvement, which seemed likelier now than a month ago, they would throw the book at him. Even for the slight part he played in sabotaging the Gambit, he was going to be facing years, if not life, in prison. And that was solely for what happened to Robert’s yacht. If they learned about the Undertaking as well, even if it was stopped, his life would be over.

He wasn’t sure what to do. If not for the threats against his family, he could turn himself in. He might be able to trade his testimony for immunity or being put into Witness Protection. He wasn’t sure if the government, for all their resources, could keep his family safe from Malcolm though, and his determination to destroy, and then remake, the Glades at any cost.

As he paced his office, he wondered how Malcolm, Moira and the other, more prominent members
of Tempest were reacting to this news.

“Sir, have you been watching the news?” Michael Adams asked, walking into Malcolm’s study.

“Why would I? Nothing they say is news is actually newsworthy anymore.” He responded. “I mean, think about it. Last week, a major story was that the bastion of charity, Moira Queen, is only philanthropic because it makes her look good.”

Without saying a word, Adams turned on the television. Every channel was airing the press conference about the Queen’s Gambit. A crawl at the bottom of the screen was paraphrasing Dinan’s announcement that the Gambit was sabotaged. Reporters were asking about suspects and if the task force had an indication of what the motive might be, but Malcolm didn’t hear the response. All he could focus on was the fact that the task force had figured out the truth about Robert’s death. He was starting to think that maybe, he should’ve been less focused on the Arrow and more focused on learning what the task force was doing.

“Sir, a number of your associates have already tried to reach you.”

“Tell them to wait. And lie low. I’ll deal with this.” He said. After he had another long conversation with Moira. He thought she’d told him everything yesterday, but now, he wasn’t so sure.

While the press conference was going on, Thea, Tommy and Roy had been enjoying a nice, post-ASL class cup of coffee. When the customers around them started looking at their phones, looking at Thea and whispering among themselves, they figured out that the news had finally been released.

“We should get out of here.” Roy said.

“And go where? If we leave, someone might follow us to Felicity and Ollie.” She pointed out. “He doesn’t need-.”

“What do you say we head back to the Ritz and gorge ourselves on junk food and watch Netflix?” Tommy suggested. “Because you’re right, the last thing he needs right now is a bunch of reporters following us and bothering him.”

Moira yanked the curtains closed and ordered the maids to make sure all of the curtains were closed completely. Already, there were reporters camped outside of the mansion’s gates, hoping for a glimpse of a member of the Queen family after the revelations only a few moments ago.

She’d been in the middle of trying to repair her latest PR disaster when the news broke and she found herself receiving dozens of calls all at the same time. She told the staff not to answer the phone for any reason. She looked down at her cell phone and saw that Malcolm was calling her again. She hit “ignore”, not ready to speak with him just yet.

For once, Moira was happy that Thea was a sullen teenager who refused to leave her room. She hadn’t seen Thea all day and doubted her daughter was even aware of the bombshell that had just been dropped.
Agent Doyle dropped his file folder onto the table in one of the interrogation rooms and looked at the man sitting opposite him. When David Judge had turned himself in on Monday, and sang like a canary about Tempest, the agent had thought they’d learned everything that they needed to.

“Why is my client here?” Judge’s lawyer asked. “You questioned him plenty on Monday and, in case you’ve forgotten, he already entered a guilty plea.”

“We wanted to follow up on some things,” Doyle answered before turning to Judge. “Now, when you turned yourself in on Monday, you admitted to being a member of the group known as Tempest. You confessed that your role within Queen Consolidated’s accounting department made you valuable to them. That one of the tasks they gave you was to make sure no one else within the department noticed accounting discrepancies related to something you called “the Undertaking”. And that you were to notify the appropriate members if someone became curious.”

“And?” Judge asked.

“How big of a discrepancy are we talking about?”

“It depended. Sometimes it was only a few thousand, others it was a couple million.” He said. “Most of it, I covered up by there being an accounting error, someone entering numbers wrong. Bigger “discrepancies” were written off as losses by subsidiaries.”

“But this money was embezzled to fund the Undertaking. What was it used for?”

“I don’t know. I wasn’t high enough in the group to know.”

“Do you know what the Undertaking is?” Doyle asked.

“I don’t know any specifics. Like I said, I wasn’t important enough to know. Based on the last conversation I had with Doug Miller, a day or two before his arrest, Tempest is really interested in Applied Sciences. Pretty sure one of the projects is vital to it.”

“So, the Undertaking is an event that hasn’t happened yet.”

“Not as far as I know. They recruited me at the end of 2007. Told me it would be about five years before my debt was paid.”

“Your debt?”

“I had a gambling problem. Owed a lot of money to some bad people. I worked for them and they paid the debt off.” Judge said with a shrug.

“Is everything okay Oliver?” Felicity asked her boyfriend. “It’s just that you’ve been staring at the tablet, without blinking, for about twenty minutes.” Several hours had passed since they started their respective research projects. Felicity now had a pretty good idea of why Chen was loyal to Tempest despite his disgust with their actions. He was being threatened by Malcolm Merlyn. Oliver, however, had started looking at Malcolm’s recent phone records and seemed fixated on something he found.

“The night the Dark Archer attacked Applied Sciences, around what time did the SWAT team come in?” He asked.
“It would’ve been a little after six, I think.” She said. “Why?”

‘Merlyn made a call at 6:07 to this number.’ He showed her on the tablet. ‘Belonging to Michael Adams, who is officially a “leadership consultant” with Merlyn Global Group.’

“Translation: Malcolm’s lackey.” She cut in. “Sorry, you were saying?”

‘He called Adams. Twenty minutes later, he made another call to a Dr. Bactes.’ Oliver explained. ‘Without speeding too much, which would draw attention, it would take Malcolm 20 minutes to get from the Applied Sciences building to Merlyn Mansion, at that time of night.’

“So, you think he called Adams to pick him up, post-fight, and Dr. Bactes to take a look at him after he was home.”

‘I mean, it fits with the timeline.’ He said. ‘Do you think this could be it? Or am I just grasping at straws?’

“You’re not.” She said. “Is this a smoking gun? No. But I’d say it’s worth paying a visit to Adams, or Bactes at least.”

‘I was thinking the exact same thing.’ He said with a smile. ‘Can you give Digg and Lyla a call? I might need the Arrow’s “voice” for this.”

Felicity texted John and Lyla and told them the basics. Oliver was ready to return to patrol. He figured out who he was going to pay a visit to tonight and he was hoping John could help him get his point across. Digg, of course, agreed and they made plans to meet at the foundry later that night.

Due to Felicity’s house being unlisted, and very few people knowing her address, she and Oliver were able to travel to the foundry later that afternoon without being harassed by the media or being spotted by anyone. Oliver was even able to get a short work-out in while they waited for Digg and Lyla.

“So, who are we paying a visit to tonight?” Digg asked when they arrived.

‘Malcolm’s lackey and the doctor he called the same night Applied Sciences was attacked.’ Oliver answered.

“I thought you were looking into Frank Chen?” Lyla asked Felicity. “And also, Moira?”

“I did. Oliver might not be an MIT grad like me, but he knows his stuff.” She said proudly. “He’s the one who found Michael Adams and Dr. Bactes.”

“So, we’re taking it slow tonight and only dealing with those two.” Digg said. “Smart move, since it’s been a few days since the Arrow was last spotted.”

‘Those two, plus any random street crime we encounter, and I need to have another word with Libby. I’ve left her waiting for long enough.’ Oliver clarified. ‘We’re kinda playing catch up here.’

After the sun had fully set, Oliver donned his green hood and headed out with Digg. They made their way to Michael Adams’ home. “You know, we might wanna look into finding a way for me to do this from the foundry.” John said. “Because eventually, word of the Arrow’s very handsome partner is gonna get out.”
“Very handsome partner, Johnny?” Lyla responded.

“I am not calling myself his sidekick.” He responded.

“I’m working on that. The “Digg does the Arrow voice from the foundry” thing, not the sidekick slash partner thing. There’s already a camera in his suit, I added it earlier today, and that’s the next step.” Felicity said. “Although, if we wanna get technical, Lyla was his original partner. The Arrow and... Lyla. That doesn’t have a great ring to it though.”

“My callsign used to be Harbinger.” Lyla said. “If I ever end up in the field, that’ll be the best codename for me.”

“We’re outside Adams’s condo.” Digg reported. “Not going to be chatty for a little bit.”

Oliver let himself into the condo through the fire escape and Digg hid just out of sight. The archer waited for Adams to unlock the front door, and as soon as he entered the condo, he fired an arrow past his head. Adams jumped about five feet in the air when he saw the arrow fly past his face.

“Michael Adams, you have failed this city!” The Arrow growled at him.

“What are you talking about? I don’t-.”

“Don’t lie to me. I know what you did the night of the Dark Archer’s attack.” The Arrow continued.

“He made me, he said he’d-.”

“Turn yourself in to the authorities, or I’ll be paying you another visit. Tell them everything you know about Tempest and the Undertaking.” Oliver then shot an arrow into the floor. A few seconds later, smoke started coming out of the tip and filled the room. When the smoke cleared, he was gone.

After confronting Adams, Oliver visited Dr. Bactes. It took even less time for him to scare the doctor and warn him to turn himself in before he was forced to return. He didn’t even need to use smoke to cover his exit, as the doctor ran out of his house and jumped into his car before Oliver could fully finish his threat.

“Well, that’s two players off the board. How many are left?” Digg asked.

‘Too many.’ Oliver responded.

“Adams just walked into the SCPD.” Felicity reported. “No word on Bactes, but I’ve got a feeling he’ll be joining his acquaintance soon.”

Oliver said he wanted to patrol for a little longer and told Digg that if he wanted to head back to the foundry, he could. He admitted that he might not be able to approach the woman in black unless he was alone and he really wanted to speak with her. Digg nodded, told him to stay safe and let them know if he needed an assist later, before turning in the direction of the foundry.

Nyssa was not soft on crime. As a child, her father had always justified the League’s tactics by saying that the people they killed were all criminals and crime could not be tolerated under any
circumstances. Hearing that mantra for years had instilled in her a very black and white view of crime and how criminals should be approached. Nyssa hated criminals, but felt a stronger dislike for men who attacked women than a murderer or thief. It was rather in-character, then, when Nyssa finished incapacitating a man who’d tried to drag a woman into an alleyway and looked to a nearby rooftop and saw a figure in green watching her.

The Arrow raised one arm, gave her a small wave and took a few steps away from the edge. Nyssa gave the attacker one last disdainful look and made sure his intended victim had gotten to safety before making her way up to the rooftop.

‘Hello, my friend. It has been some time.’ She signed.

‘Yes, longer than I intended for it to be.’ He agreed. ‘I hope you’ve had a chance to test out the gift I made for you. Even if only to train.’

‘I did. They perform beautifully.’ She said. ‘Do you make all your weapons?’

‘Except for my bow. I enjoy making things far more than destroying them.’ He admitted, holding his bow out so that she could get a closer look at it.

While she didn’t take the bow from him, she looked at it very closely and noticed similarities to the bows her half-sister’s students tended to favor. Was it possible Oliver had been trained by Talia? She doubted it was likely, based on what she’d heard the taskforce say about his time away, but she couldn’t completely rule out the possibility.

‘My bow was a gift from my mentor upon completion of my training. Did your mentor gift your bow to you under similar circumstances?’

Oliver frowned and shook his head. ‘No. I... inherited it, I suppose. I was in love with a woman. She was kind and gentle, yet also a fierce fighter and an exceptional archer. It belonged to her. She died, and a friend of ours told me she would have wanted me to have her bow, and this hood. Her father had them before she did, and she inherited them when he died. I don't know where or how he came by them. Perhaps he had a mentor who gifted them to him as yours did, or maybe he just bought them in stores? I doubt anyone is left alive who could tell me. No, my mentor had no training in archery when we first met. She was skeptical about its utility at first: but after she saw me using my bow in the field, she told me she was woman enough to admit she had been wrong, and asked me to train her. I taught her what little I knew, then we practiced together and so improved our skills. She became as good as I am in the end.’

Nyssa let out a slight chuckle. This woman, Lyla Michaels most likely, sounded like someone she wanted to meet. ‘While I appreciate the anecdote, I doubt you sought me out to discuss your bow.’

‘You’re right.’ He signed. ‘When we first met, you said you wished to discuss the Dark Archer.’

‘I am hoping we can compare and trade information. But first, I think we should go somewhere we can converse unobserved.’ She said. ‘I am willing to go anywhere you wish, and I have no objection if you want friends or allies of yours to join us.’

‘Very well.’

‘But I will not be disarmed. That is not negotiable.’

‘I have no objection to you being armed. Please follow me.’ Together, they made their way to a clock tower in the Glades. Before he settled on using the foundry, Oliver considered using the tower as a base of operations. ‘As you can see, we have clear fields of vision and fire covering all
main approach roads and the back alleyways, multiple routes through which to escape, and plenty of cover. We can remain unobserved, and if we are interrupted, this place is easily defensible. If confronted by overwhelming numbers, it will be a simple matter to conduct a fighting withdrawal.'

'Good.'

'Also--' He struggled with how to say the next part, before shrugging and saying exactly what he thought. 'Also, the view is beautiful at night. You can see half the city lit up from here, the lights shining brightly resisting the darkness...'

'I, too, can see and appreciate the beauty you describe. Thank you for sharing it with me.' She paused for a moment. Oliver had shared quite a few personal things with her tonight, so it was only fair that she did the same. 'I wish my Beloved were here with us: she would enjoy this view's beauty.'

'I know how you feel. However, my own Beloved is not very comfortable with heights, and I never want to make her feel uncomfortable.' He said. 'I will admit, I didn’t expect anyone else to be interested in the Dark Archer or what he’s done.'

'I feel somewhat of a sense of responsibility for his recent actions, although I am not comfortable disclosing why at this time.' She responded.

'Fair enough. It would be unreasonable for me to expect you to reveal all your secrets, given that this is only our third time meeting one another.' He said. 'I know members of the task force investigating the Queen’s Gambit are aware of him, and looking into him, but no one else, aside from you.'

'Let’s discuss him then.'

'I know he’s currently injured. I know he’s a member of a group known as Tempest and they have a plan, known as the Undertaking, although I don’t know precisely what that entails.'

'I would be surprised if you did, as he’s been operating in the shadows for years.' Nyssa said. She then told Oliver that the Dark Archer was a formidable fighter. She admitted that she watched the footage of him and Oliver fighting in Applied Sciences and shared her opinion on how Oliver could improve in preparation for another confrontation. Then, she broached a subject she had been reluctant to address until now.

'I do not know if you are in communication with any members of the federal task force.'

'I speak with a few of the agents. Sporadically.' He admitted.

'Good. I have my ways of knowing some of what they know.' She told him. She didn’t want to put Oliver on the defensive, so she didn’t admit to bugging their office. Only that she had a general idea of what they knew and what theories they had. ‘They have a theory regarding who the Dark Archer is.’

'I know.'

'What if I told you that I know who is under that mask?’ She asked, and waited for Oliver’s reaction.
Comments? Thoughts? Theories?
Chapter 73

Chapter Summary

Oliver and Nyssa have a chat, the task force gets a number of surprises and Donna makes a slight confession.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

‘I do not know if you are in communication with any members of the federal task force.’ Nyssa said.

‘I speak with a few of the agents. Sporadically.’ Oliver admitted.

‘Good. I have my ways of knowing some of what they know.’ She told him. She didn’t want to put Oliver on the defensive, so she didn’t admit to bugging their office. Only that she had a general idea of what they knew and what theories they had. ‘They have a theory regarding who the Dark Archer is.’

‘I know.’

‘What if I told you that I know who is under the mask?’ She said, and waited for Oliver’s reaction.

Oliver stopped for a moment. If he asked Nyssa for the truth, the name of the Dark Archer, it would most likely confirm his worst fears. At the same time, knowing wasn’t overly useful at the moment. He couldn’t stop Malcolm on his own, or with Nyssa, and her word wouldn’t be enough to convince the authorities. Additionally, removing the Archer from the equation could completely derail the Undertaking, or it could have nearly no impact. There were too many unknowns still. Additionally, since he couldn’t see Nyssa’s face, except for her eyes, he couldn’t read her facial expressions or detect deception.

‘Well, if you were to tell me, I’d ask how you know that, and I have the feeling that you’re not ready to reveal that much of yourself to me. This is the longest conversation we’ve ever had.’ He said. ‘Besides, even if I know his identity, and I’ve got a very strong suspicion about who the Dark Archer is, there’s no way that we can act on that information at the moment.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘There are so many other, less important people, who are less public figures, who’ve helped him along the way, who’ve fed into making him so difficult to stop, making Tempest so difficult to stop. We have a list of his contacts. Those people are both easier to remove from the equation and more vital. Tempest might be able to replace the Dark Archer, if needed, but if Tempest is gone, he couldn’t replace them.’ He said. ‘I can’t go to the federal agents with a name based solely on you confirming my suspicions. But the confessions the task force will be hearing tonight can convince them to investigate.’

‘Confessions?’ Nyssa signed.

‘I visited two men tonight who I think helped the Dark Archer after he was wounded in our battle.'
‘One’s a doctor, the other is…a lackey of someone high-ranking in Tempest.’ He said. ‘If they’re smart, they’ll already be at the police station, turning themselves in and making their confessions.’

‘And if they are not smart?’

‘Then, I’ll pay them another visit. I don’t want to, there are dozens of more names connected to the Dark Archer that I need to investigate, but those people can wait a day if the need arises.’

Nyssa nodded once. ‘You said the Dark Archer was wounded. Do you know what his injuries are?’

‘I shot him in the hand with an arrow. He has several broken or in the very least cracked ribs. His knee alone will keep him out of commission for several more weeks.’ He said. ‘Long enough for the task force to fully investigate the confessions being made tonight and determine that Malcolm Merlyn is the Dark Archer.’ He looked intently at Nyssa, waiting to see how she’d respond to his statement.

‘You said you did not want me to confirm his identity.’

‘I also said that knowing his identity at the moment probably wouldn’t make as big of an impact as we think.’ He answered

‘Very well. I will tell you if you are correct in your conclusion or not when you approach me and ask.’ She said. Oliver not wanting confirmation now didn’t make sense to Nyssa, but since he was already on the right track, she didn’t see the harm in letting him continue based on assumption. ‘Speaking of your encounter with the Dark Archer, I will admit, your fight against him was impressive. Not many have been able to match him in combat or wound him.’

‘Thank you. Although I’m not hoping for a rematch, I’ve been watching footage of that night in preparation.’ He said before letting out a sigh. ‘I think I’ve told you everything that I know in regards to the Dark Archer, at least, everything I’ve been able to confirm. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me?’

‘No confirmed information, but I will share a strong suspicion that I have. While I don’t know what the Dark Archer’s plans are, or the plans of the organization he works with, it likely comes with a high body count and a personal motivation.’

‘What makes you say that?’

‘If the reason wasn’t personal, I doubt he would have televised his attempt to defeat you. And if his plan only affected one person, perhaps a handful, there wouldn’t need to be a conspiracy to achieve it. And I would not rely too heavily on the list you have, if I were you.’

‘I don’t. After all, the leadership of Tempest seems smart. Putting their own names on a list like that wouldn’t be very intelligent. I wasn’t sure how long we’d get to talk, so I didn’t bring a copy of that list with me, but next time we meet, I will.’ He and Felicity had been looking into Malcolm’s phone records. They were also trying to dig through Chen’s as well. Knowing who Malcolm contacted the night he attacked Applied Sciences would be nice. Knowing who he called after the Gambit was found would be better, as it would give a more complete picture of who Tempest’s leadership was.

‘That would be appreciated.’ She answered. ‘Until next time, Arrow.’

‘Until next time.’ He responded.

He walked towards the stairwell while she fired an arrow out of the clock tower and rapelled down
onto a lower roof nearby.

Nyssa left the meeting with two conclusions. One was that there was no way her father had any hope of recruiting Oliver to join the League of Assassins. The second was that working with him in order to stop Malcolm and the Undertaking was going to be a very interesting experience.

While Oliver was meeting with Nyssa, Felicity, Digg and Lyla sat in the foundry. Felicity was a little nervous about Oliver being in the field on his own. It wasn’t that she didn’t trust his skills, or thought that he was making a bad choice meeting with Nyssa, but it was a little nerve-wracking to think about Oliver out in the field, alone, with everything that was going on. She was hoping that her nerves weren’t obvious to Digg or Lyla.

“He’s gonna be fine, Felicity.” Lyla said.

“It’s that obvious that I’m nervous?” She asked.

“Well, no, but you did just say that you hope your nerves aren’t obvious to us.” The other woman answered.

“Frak. Why can’t my thoughts just stay in my head?” She responded. “It’s not that I think he’s gonna make a mistake or anything, it’s just-.”

“You’re worried that something’s gonna happen to him, and he doesn’t have back-up right now. It’s not- there’s nothing wrong or abnormal in the way you’re feeling right now.” Digg said. “I felt it all the time when I had a mission, or if I knew Lyla was gonna be on one. You just gotta remind yourself that Oliver knows what he’s doing and he makes smart decisions. That’s all you can do.”

“I hope you don’t get this nervous when I start going into the field.” Lyla said. “Because I don’t think that much stress is good for you.”

“You’re gonna start going into the field?” He asked.

“I’ve been thinking about it, yes. I haven’t- I haven’t made a final decision about it, but- I joined the Army because I wanted to make the world safer, I joined ARGUS for the same reason. Both of those turned out to be a little more complicated than I thought they’d be. What Oliver’s doing is….I think I wanna do it.”

“Would you want your codename to be Harbinger like before or-? Are you gonna use a gun or a bow and arrow? What were you thinking in terms of armor or costume design?” Felicity asked.

“Oh, there are so many things we need to figure out for this!”

“Felicity, breathe. I haven’t decided yet. Let’s not get too ahead of ourselves.” She said. “And until I do, can you two promise not to mention it to Oliver? I just- I need to figure out HOW I’m going to approach him about this.”

Digg and Felicity both nodded. The blonde then noticed the time. “Oliver’s been gone for a while. Do you think-?” As she said that, the door at the top of the stairs opened. Oliver came downstairs, looking pleased with himself. “Things went well, I take it?”

‘I got to talk with “Libby” for quite a while. And not just about the Dark Archer. She has a girlfriend who she seems to be very in love with.’

Meanwhile, Lyla and Digg gave him confused looks. They weren’t sure why he’d chosen that detail to share first, instead of something related to the Dark Archer, Tempest or the Undertaking.

Oliver then started telling them about what he and Nyssa discussed in regards to the Dark Archer and Tempest as a whole. No one seemed to understand why he didn’t want to know the Archer’s identity, but when he explained his reasoning fully, they could see his point. There was a lot they needed to do before they should focus on turning him in.

Due to how high-profile the task force’s assignment was, there were agents working on it around the clock. Dinan, Doyle, Anderson and Reeves all worked normal hours, unless something called for them to stay at the station late, but at any time of day, there were at least a few agents at the SCPD.

Agent Rathbone was sitting with another agent, trying to find enough evidence to oust the police commissioner, when a patrol officer knocked on the open door of the office they were using.

“You’re with the Gambit task force, right?” He asked.

“Yes, Officer-?”

“Anastas.” The cop said. “I’ve got two men downstairs saying they wanna speak to someone on your team. I tried to ask them what it was about, but they say they’ll only talk to a fed.”

“Did they give you their names?”

“Yeah. One’s a Michael Adams and the other only introduced himself as Dr. Bactes.”

The doctor’s name didn’t ring a bell, but a few Tempest members mentioned dealing with someone named Adams. Rathbone knew “Adams” wasn’t a rare last name, but it was worth talking to the man.

“Has anyone else spoken with them? Anyone in the SCPD?”

“Just me and the desk sergeant.” Anastas said.

“I know you’re not on this task force, but I need you to do me a favor.” Rathbone said. “Can you make sure no one else approaches them until I come downstairs? I need to make a quick call.”

“Sure. It’s a quiet night.” Anastas said before heading downstairs.

Rathbone turned to the other agent. “Keep working on this. I’m gonna call Dinan. See what she wants to do.”

He walked over to the corner and dialed Dinan’s cell number, the one she never turned off. She answered right away and he told her the situation. She told him to have someone take Adams and Bactes to interrogation rooms. She then said she was on her way and told him to call Reeves as well.

Reeves didn’t look happy about being awake at 1am when he arrived at the station, but Rathbone was pretty sure that would work out in the task force’s favor. Since both Michael Adams and Dr. Bactes had turned themselves in, there was no rush to question them. After a short argument, Dinan and Reeves agreed to question the doctor first, as he was an unknown figure in their investigation so far.
“Dr. William Bactes, you are a primary care physician?” Dinan said after she took a seat in front of the man. Another agent managed to find enough information about Bactes and Adams while Dinan and Reeves were on the way over.

“Yes, I’m a general practitioner. I treat a select number of patients. People who don’t want the publicity of being seen in the ER and the speculation that follows.” He answered. He’d made a living keeping powerful people’s drug problems, love children and foolish injuries under wraps. He’d also made a fair amount of money under the table by patching up members of Starling’s criminal element. “And I need to speak with you in regards to one of my patients.”

“You are aware that doctors are not allowed to discuss patients without their permission, right?” Reeves asked.

“I know, but I took an oath to do no harm and that doesn’t only apply to my patients.” Bactes said. “I may lose my license for this, but the alternative would be being an accessory to something much worse.”

“Well, we’re listening.”

“The night of the attack at Queen Consolidated’s Applied Sciences, I received a phone call on behalf of one of my patients. I was asked to come to his home, which isn’t unusual for me as many of my patients are private, to treat him for an array of injuries. Some broken and cracked ribs, a projectile injury in the hand, a dislocated knee.”

“And this patient would be?”

“Malcolm Merlyn.” The doctor said. “And I know, he’s told people of his car accident to explain his injuries, but-.”

“But what?” Dinan asked.

“When I arrived, he was dressed in the same clothing that the Dark Archer wore when he attacked the Queen Consolidated division.”

“What made you decide to come forward now?”

“I was visited by the Arrow and he made it clear that I should tell you everything or else our next conversation wouldn’t be so friendly.” Bactes said.

“Dr. Bactes, you’re under arrest for being an accessory after the fact to the attack on Applied Sciences. You have the right to remain silent.” Reeves said, starting to recite the Miranda rights to the doctor. “Anything you say can and will be used against you in a court of law. You have a right to an attorney. If you cannot afford one, one will be provided to you. Have you heard and do you understand these rights?”

“Why are you asking me that? I just confessed.”

“You weren’t under arrest, so we have to read you your rights. Have you heard and do you understand your rights?”

“Yes.” He said.

“Okay, do you want a lawyer?” Bactes shook his head. “All right. Let’s start at the beginning. What time were you called to Merlyn Mansion?”
“It was shortly after 7pm.”

They went through every detail of that night and both recorded Bactes’ confession and took notes of what he said. Dinan wasn’t sure what, if anything, would hold up in court, but they wanted to have everything in writing and on tape just in case. The doctor seemed to come to his sense soon after, and asked for his lawyer, saying he’d be willing to divulge information about other patients in exchange for a deal.

Once Dinan and Reeves finished with Bactes, they went to see Michael Adams.

“Before I say anything, I’d like to call my lawyer.” He said. “I am willing to negotiate a deal, but I will not be questioned without an attorney present.”

“Do you have a specific one in mind or should we call a public defender?” Dinan asked.

Adams looked insulted by the question and said he had a lawyer already. Reeves took him to a phone to make the call before escorting him back to the interrogation room. His lawyer arrived twenty minutes later, which was surprising since it was past 2 in the morning, and spoke with Adams alone for about ten minutes.

“My client is willing to speak with you, in exchange for a deal.” The lawyer said.

“What kind of deal are we talking about here? Reduced sentence? Dropping some of the more serious charges? Witness protection?” Reeves asked. “I need to know, so I can run it up the food chain, if you catch my drift.”

“Witness protection would be ideal.”

“And what is your client offering in exchange for being placed in witness protection?” Dinan asked.

“Information about the sabotage of the Queen’s Gambit. The names of the leaders of Tempest. What they’re planning and why,” Adams said.

“Before I wake the US Attorney up at….2:47 in the morning, just answer one question for me: did you turn yourself in willingly or did someone convince you to do it?”

“I had a brief encounter with the Arrow.” Adams admitted. “To show that I’m not trying to deceive you, I’ll give you one piece of information for free.” He gave them the identity of the person who killed Jason Fontenot, the man who hired the Red Mask Gang.

“And how do you know he was killed by this Karl Iscove?” Reeves asked.

“Because I was told to wire him $100,000 dollars when Detective Marks reported that the body had been found.” He answered.

“Sit tight.” Reeves said. “We’ll be right back.” Dinan and Reeves left the interrogation room to call the U.S. Attorney’s office.

As expected, the U.S. Attorney who’d been assigned the cases related to the Gambit wasn’t happy about being woken up so early. Her ire was lessened when the agents explained that they had someone in custody, with a high-degree of access to Tempest, willing to talk.

“How willing does he seem to be?” She asked.
“Very.”

“Then he can wait until it’s a decent hour. I’ll be there at 10am tomorrow.” She said before hanging up.

The rest of the night was quiet. Oliver and Felicity went home after he finished explaining what happened during his meeting with Nyssa. Digg and Lyla went home a little before them. When Felicity got back to her house, Donna was already home and probably asleep. She held a finger up to her mouth to tell Oliver to be quiet.

‘I feel like I’m 16 again and trying not to get caught sneaking out.’ He signed to her.

‘I never had that particular experience.’ She replied. ‘Then again, I spent so much time in my room studying at that age that it was rare for me not to be at home.’

‘Nerd.’ He teased.

‘Don’t be mean.’

The next morning, when she was getting a cup of coffee, Felicity asked her mother what she’d been doing the day before. Donna revealed that she’d made a friend earlier in the week and they’d spent the day together. “Still, it seemed like you were out all day.”

“Well, she’s been having a hard time, recently, and she needed someone to talk to and just let her cry, last night.” Donna said. She looked in Felicity’s direction, but wouldn’t meet her eye.

“Okay, what aren’t you telling me?”

“I didn’t know who she was, and she didn’t know who I was.” Donna blurted out. “When we first met, we were just two women who met one another and happened to hit it off.”

“That answer makes me more worried than I was before.”

“It’s Dinah Lance, Sara’s mother.” Donna admitted. Felicity found it interesting that she said Sara’s mother as opposed to Laurel’s or Laurel and Sara’s. Clearly, the inflection was meant to convey something. “She’s- she’s not like Laurel or her ex-husband, from what I’ve seen. She’s- when I told her I knew Oliver, the first thing she asked was how he was doing. And she wanted me to tell him that what happened wasn’t his fault.”

“Good, because it’s not.” Felicity said. “But I don’t think today is a good day to bring that up. I mean, yesterday was the day that….you know what happened yesterday.”

“I know. I just kinda hope, when he’s ready, if he’s ready, he’ll reach out to her.” She said. “I think I’m gonna start packing today, get ready for my move. My suitcase is gonna be a little bit easier to deal with than an entire apartment, but- I should get started on that.” Donna turned and walked into the guestroom.

Felicity took her coffee back into her bedroom. Oliver was still in bed, but sitting up and looking intently at the ghost tablet she’d given him. “Find anything interesting?”

‘I found Malcolm’s phone records from the day the Gambit was found.’ He said. ‘When the story broke, he called six people. Two people I haven’t heard of and I don’t think I’ve met, Michael Adams, Carl Ballard, who my father used to play golf with and Frank Chen.’
'That’s only five. You said he called six people.” Felicity said softly.

’My mother was number six.’ He said. ‘I think you knew that.’

“I had a feeling, but the phone records prove it.” She said. “I’m so sorry.”

‘Is it bad that I’m hoping, eventually, learning these kinds of things about my mother won’t hurt anymore?’

“No, but there’s also a part of you that holds onto this belief that maybe this person, who’s your parent, isn’t as bad as they seem to be, that there’s a benign explanation for what they’ve done. And you’re worried that if you stop believing in that, you’ll lose faith in everything.” She told him.

“My dad wasn’t exactly a good person.”

At exactly 10am, U.S. Attorney Alexa Van Owen walked into the SCPD precinct, ready to meet with Michael Adams and his attorney to discuss a deal. She had a feeling that this case was only going to get more complicated, and the court case exponentially so, and wasn’t going to turn down the chance to turn a member of Tempest into an informant.

“All right, where’s the witness who’s so important that you woke me up at 2 in the morning to ask me to come down here?” She asked Anderson.

“I’ll take you to him.” He said, standing up from his chair. “I don’t know who call-.”

“You’re Agent Anderson, correct?” A voice said from behind the lawyer.

“May I ask what you’re doing here, Mr. Chen?” McKenna asked Frank Chen. She supposed he might be here hoping to get answers about the Queen’s Gambit investigation, but he looked nervous. Incredibly nervous standing in the doorway. “Agent Anderson, this is Frank Chen. He’s a prominent local businessman.”

“For more than five years, I have been working alongside other members of Tempest under duress. In exchange for myself and my family being put into witness protection, I will testify against any members of Tempest you arrest. I can also give you information about something they are planning called the Undertaking.” Chen said. “And the Hong Kong Triad.”

Anderson and Doyle, who happened to be sitting there, both barely avoided dropping their jaws. Adams turning himself in felt like a gift. Chen arriving and offering information on Tempest, the Undertaking and the Triad felt like Christmas, their birthdays and Hanukkah all rolled into one.

“Would you like an attorney to be here while you make your statement?” Doyle finally asked.

“I have a legal degree, even though I haven’t practiced law in years.” Frank said.

“Anderson, can you sit with Mr. Chen while I grab Dinan? I think she’s gonna wanna hear this.” He said before leaving to find his partner. Van Owens negotiated a deal with Adams’s lawyer while Dinan and Doyle listened to everything Chen had to say.

Frank Chen told them everything from the names of Tempest’s highest members to things they manipulated from behind the scenes, like elections, to who ordered the Queen’s Gambit to be sabotaged. In contrast, Adams gave names and some details, but not as much as Chen.

“There’s still something I don’t understand.” Doyle said. “If Robert Queen was part of Tempest,
why did Malcolm Merlyn have him killed?"

“Because his idea of “saving the Glades” and Malcolm’s were polar opposites. See, Robert wanted to improve the area with social programs and charitable donations. Open up some businesses, help lower the unemployment rate. Malcolm’s idea was to destroy the neighborhood so that they could be rebuilt later, “better”. Or so he claimed.”

“So, they clashed over how to achieve the Undertaking.”

“Not exactly. It’s one thing to leverage knowledge of Adam Hunt’s dodgy business dealing to make him donate to the city food bank. It’s another to casually plan the deaths of thousands of people. Robert found out what Malcolm was planning. I was supposed to meet him in China where we were going to plan a way to foil Malcolm’s plot. Instead, I betrayed him to Malcolm. I’m the reason Robert is dead and the Queen’s Gambit was lost at sea. It wasn’t until Robert was declared dead, and everyone stopped looking for answers that I found out what Malcolm was planning.”

“Which would be what?” Dinan asked.

“You’ve arrested Doug Miller.” Chen said. “Did he say anything about Unidac Industries?”

Needless to say, Dinan, Doyle and the rest of the taskforce had no idea which lead to chase down first after the initial interview with Chen was over. They needed to find evidence that supported what Chen said. They needed to reach out to the relevant organizations about some of the other details he divulged. Mostly, they needed to know what was happening with Unidac Industries.

As everyone split off to do different things, chase down different leads, Dinan realized that the best people to talk to about Queen Consolidated’s Applied Sciences division were the people who worked there. She called Walter and after she apologized for interrupting his Sunday, asked if he could meet her at the Robert Queen Memorial Applied Sciences Building tomorrow morning.

Walter ended his call with Agent Dinan and something about the conversation made him uneasy. Perhaps it was the fear of the unknown revolving around Tempest and Queen Consolidated. He called Thea to check on her.

“Hi Walter!” She said happily as she answered the phone.

"Thea... could you please confirm - for the sake of my peace of mind - that you are not within the mansion at present?"

"No problem at all - I’m with Roy and Tommy at Tommy’s hotel room, he let us crash here last night."

"I'm glad to hear that. Could you please do me a small favor?"

"Okay?"

"I've been thinking about your mother’s behavior recently and calling it concerning may be an understatement.” He said. He didn’t mention his conversation with Dinan because he didn’t want to worry Thea and he wasn’t entirely sure what it was about. “Could you refrain from returning to the mansion for the time being?"

"Trust me, Walter, that is absolutely noooo problem at all. I already did all my homework as of Friday night, I've got my boyfriend and one of my big brothers, a comfy couch, a big TV, a Netflix
account, and room service here delivers some kickass pizza that has to be eaten to be believed. I'm all set to keep my head down again for today, so I don't have to dodge the paps or worry about accidentally leading them over to Ollie and Felicity's place."

"Well, I hope you enjoy your Sunday."

"Thanks, Walter! I hope everything goes okay for you, too."

"You do the same." Walter said. He ended the call with Thea and made one more call. "Hello Felicity. I received a call from Agent Dinan, asking me to meet her at the Applied Sciences building tomorrow morning. I believe it would be best, for all involved, if you were there as well."

Felicity got off the phone with Walter and turned to Oliver. She was going to relay what he told her to Oliver, but the look on his face stopped her. "Everything okay?"

'Frank Chen turned himself in to the task force.' Oliver said.

"What?"

Oliver explained that he found a way into the SCPD’s system and he’d used his access to look at their surveillance cameras. They saw Chen enter the building over an hour ago, but he hadn’t left the building yet. Additional hacking revealed that he was in an interrogation room with Agent Doyle, making a statement.

"You’re not going to believe this." Agent Mars said, entering the bullpen.

"After today, I don’t think anything would really shock me." Dinan said. "But go ahead and try."

"Follow me. We need to do this in private." Mars led Dinan to a secure room where she had an encrypted laptop set up. There was an older gentleman visible on screen. "You wanted me to find the next of kin of everyone Mr. Queen mentioned in his statement. I figured the Australian government might be the easiest place to start. I reached out to ASIS and-." She pressed a button so that she wasn’t on mute any longer. "Agent Dinan, this is Wade DeForge. He’s an ASIS section chief. I contacted him to tell him about the deaths of Slade Wilson and Billy Wintergreen."

“And as I was telling your associate, I think someone’s given you incorrect information.” DeForge said.

“I’m sorry?” Dinan asked.

"Yeah, we've known that Billy's dead for a few years, now, the sick bastard. As for... look, can you hang on for a couple of minutes? It'll be easier to just show you... I'll stay on the line with you, I'm not trying to fob you off or anything, I just need to get someone to join us."

"Okay."

"Beauty." DeForge removed his headset and spoke to someone off-screen. "Then bloody well get his arse out of the shower, then! Hand him a towel and get him in here!" He looked back at the camera and put his headset back on. "Sorry about that, he's on his way, now. It's damn lucky you called today, it's the last day of his contract and the brass won't renew it."
"Okay...?"

"Ah, here he is." DeForge looked up. "Yeah, I know. You were in the shower. Stop whining in front of the Americans." Dinan and Mars heard someone grumbling and then someone took a seat next to Wade. "As you can see, Agent Dinan, Slade Wilson is alive, and a pain in my ass."

"...I'm sorry, but Oliver Queen said you drowned when the Amazo sank." Dinan told Slade.

"Well, that's easily done - I spent a couple of years thinking that was what had happened to Oliver." Slade said. "I know it’s a dumb question, but how is the kid doing?"

Nyssa sat in her hideout and listened to what her bug was picking up from the SCPD. Not only had the two men Oliver mentioned last night turned themselves in, but a strong ally of Malcolm's had also decided to do the right thing. Unless she was mistaken, his plans would soon fall apart around him.

"Should we tell the Demon Head Al Saher's plot has been foiled, Warith?" Asim asked Nyssa.

"No, seeing as it has not yet been foiled. He may have a contingency plan in place in case this plan was disrupted." She answered. "Al Saher has always been frustratingly adaptable."

"And what shall I tell the Demon Head in regards to your progress with the Arrow?"

"It is too early for me to make a determination on that front, as he no doubt expected."

Chapter End Notes

Comments? Thoughts? Theories?

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