Find him Help him Save him

by NerdyAddict

Summary

Oliver Queen "disappeared" 3 years ago after a traumatic event, now he has returned a changed 24 year old man to save his city. But will the people he love, care about and need in his life, be able to accept the new man he is? Will he be able to save them all? and can he be both Oliver Queen and vigilante plus have a "normal" life? Only time will tell. AU Arrow, slow burn Olicity, Team Arrow

Notes

Hello! This is my first ever fanfiction, it is published on ff.net and so I am going to post it here too, so you will get to Chapter 28 by the end of this evening so I can then update both sites together from now on and you will all be at the same point (I hope that makes sense)... This originally started as something fun for me after the Arrow Season 2 finale but it's now grown and grown, thus I can't stop myself so after some encouragement I'm posting this (fair warning this is a very long multi-chapter). I am extremely nervous, so I hope you all like this :, I don't mind any comments or reviews, as long as it's not hate (you will make me cry :P) but I don't mind constructive criticism.

Anyway this is my lovely tale, it's basically a twist of seasons 1 and 2 with a very very slow burn Olicity. However not all bad guys or story lines are involved. However there will be scenes/quotes (mainly my favourites :P) in here, so if you haven't seen them there will be
spoilers. This is AU though, hopefully it will become more apparent as you read what has changed. Also currently rated T, but may change later (I'm not sure someone might have to tell me if they think it needs changing)

I do not own Arrow or any of it's characters so if you recognise anything I don't own it...
Finally I have no beta so all mistakes are my own so sorry in advance if there are any mistakes at all... Sorry I'm babbling now, so anyway I hope you enjoy this as much as I have writing it so thanks for taking the time to read etc :) much love NA x
Chapter 1

Breaking news Oliver Queen has been found alive! Missing for 3 years, all hope had been lost but today he has been found alive, the family have yet to comment.

"Really? I'm back in town for like an hour and it's already all over the news"

Oliver said to nobody turning the TV off in the hospital room in frustration. He looked at his reflection in the mirror, his beard and long hair taking over his appearance. He didn't recognise the man looking back at him anymore. He stood there trying to remember the boy he used to be, the one he needed to be again. Moira, Robert and Thea practical ran to the hospital after hearing about Oliver being found alive, as they entered the press were going crazy and a doctor took them to a side room

"Mr and Mrs Queen, before you go in I need to talk to you"

"Of course Moira" said giving Thea a look who left the room for the hallway

"Your son, he's..."

"He's okay isn't he?" She asked concern all over her face

"He seems… well he has multiple scars on his body, I cannot even imagine what he has been through but he won't talk about what happened, he says he doesn't remember half of it just being imprisoned... But other than that he is physically fit. Mentally, emotionally well only time will tell"

"What do you mean scars?" Robert asked

"There are various from..."

"Torture?" He said as Moiras hands flew to her mouth

"I'd say so a lot are older I mean they're from various points but there's one thing I would advice…"

"Yes?" Moira said

"I wouldn't push him for answers I think maybe some of things that have happened he'll never be able to share... And you may have your son back but he might not be the same as the one who disappeared, he may need help"

They nodded in unison. They were shown to Oliver's room and when the door flung open the boy they once knew had now been replaced by a grown man mature for his years looking scruffy, none of them even thought about it. Thea ran into Olivers arms crying, his mother went for a hug too and his father placed a hand on his shoulder. They stayed this way for awhile before Oliver spoke

"Can we go home please?"

"Yes" Moira said looking into her sons face "where you belong!"

They snuck out the back of the hospital and made their way to their large home just outside of Starling. The weather was dull typical British weather Oliver thought to himself, it surprised him that he actually missed this weather, Britain, this city just outside of London and how he actually did miss
this entire place he once called home. When they entered the house Moira fussed around Oliver, Thea never left his side and Robert did what he did best he left the family to it and went to work. After a few hours of catching up on family stuff especially Thea's life, a hair dresser visited to tend to Oliver's wild hair and beard. He had his blonde locks cut short and his beard shaven to leave a stubbled one instead. He could see from his mother and sisters faces that he had become more like the boy they used to know, but he knew he would never be that again. He smiled, not properly he had learnt to hide his true emotions very well, and they all smiled back.

"I think I'm going to have a shower and you know relax in my room" he said heading off upstairs

"Oliver looks different mum" Thea said softly

"Well he was away for 3 years Thea he's going to have changed a bit"

"I know mum, but he's always going to be my Ollie that won't change" she smiled hugging her mother. Moira smiled she loved her 14 year old daughter very much but she also knew that things for Oliver were not going to be easy.

Oliver showered in his en suite allowing the warm water to run down his aching body, he stayed this way for awhile before stepping into his bedroom, towel around his waist to find Laurel standing there

"I..." She looked at him his body so muscular, yet covered in scars, tears came to her eyes and she lost her train of thought. Oliver stood there looking at Laurel the beautiful woman she had turned into, she looked pretty much the same just more mature, if that was even possible

"It's okay, I mean your boyfriend disappears then suddenly reappears again after 3 years"

"Oh Ollie, look at you... I mean the scars" she walked over running a hand over one of them, Oliver couldn't remember the last time he had been touched by a woman so gently. He didn't wince or say anything he couldn't and wouldn't let Laurel back in, he took a step back

"I'm fine Laurel, feels good to be back" he did yet another smile it was becoming too easy to hide his pain

"What happened Ollie? I mean where have you been?" She was clearly concerned but also looked pained at him pushing her away

"I needed to get away after all that stuff with my dad and I ended up somewhere in China then things got complicated... I just remember a cell I am told I was freed after someone attacked my captors' base" he said it slowly without any emotion; he had to lie, for her sake as well as his

"Ollie you know you can talk to me..."

"I don't need to talk..." He could see the harshness of his tone on her face, knowing he needed to control it better "but thanks for the offer" he half smiled trying to reassure her

"I'm sorry Oliver I shouldn't have come"

"No Laurel it's fine, I get it you needed to make sure it... I was real" all she could do was nod "It has been a long day, I just need some time to adjust back"

"Of course" she half smiled "well I am here if you need anything and I mean anything Ollie" she walked up and pulled him into a hug he instinctively hugged back, she could feel how tense he was and he couldn't help remember all those feelings he had for her, and all the terrible things he did
when they were a couple

"I'm sorry for everything Laurel" she let go pulling away and looking at him

"Ollie that doesn't matter"

"It does to me"

"Well right now you need to settle back in so we'll talk about it another time"

"Okay I won't forget"

"Neither will I, it's nice to have you back see you soon" and with that she left closing the door behind her. Oliver locked the door he didn't want any more surprises. He spent the rest of the day in his room on his computer looking at everything that had happened in the last 3 years whilst he was away, he looked at his family, friends, work stuff, the city crime rates, and events. He sat there until his eyes grew heavy and then sleep consumed him.

_He was running through the dense over growth of a forest, athletic, fast like never before, shooting arrows at random targets. He just kept running and running never knowing what was happening then he felt pain in his body lacerations, wounds appeared, he could hear shouting and screaming_

Oliver jumped up from his sleeping state, he stood in a defensive position having over turned his desk. He looked around him calming himself down. He wasn't on the run anymore; he was home. He opened his curtains to see a storm, he sat in his window frame opening the window, allowing the rain and wind to touch him, he couldn't relax not properly he had a lot of work to do, but he also had a lot of people to catch up with. He knew for now he would not be able to sleep, the memories would torment him so instead he sat watching the lightening, planning out what he needed to do next.

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It had been a week since Oliver's return, and in that week he caught up with his best friend Tommy Merlyn who like Oliver was the son of a billionaire. He had grown up in the time Oliver had gone, he had done a degree in business and worked with his father. However he was still as irresponsible as ever getting drunk, making out with girls, and partying till all hours often being late for work. It took Tommy only a day to convince Oliver to go back to their old ways but that was all part of Olivers plan. He caught up with the family especially Thea's school life, her friends, and her hobbies, he even met his bodyguard who his mother had hired ex special forces John Diggle, much to Oliver's protest. He was a proud man great at his job but also annoyed at how easy Oliver would often give him the slip disappearing for hours on end with some other girl everyone presumed.

What nobody knew was that Oliver wasn't off with some girl he had transformed the basement of an old factory of his fathers into a lair; a safe haven for his plans to come alive, his plan to help the city around him like he had promised someone dear to him long ago. In the 3 years Oliver had been gone he’d been transformed into a soldier of sorts, he was more physically fit and ready for combat. His preferred method was a bow and arrow, a gift he received from the woman that had taught him. He knew he was different now he knew he had let darkness into his life and that there was no turning back he knew now he had to save his city, protect the people and place he called home again, just like the woman who taught him had hers.

It was Friday night, Tommy had picked Oliver up taking him to the latest clubs, surrounded by women who practically threw themselves at the guys
"See not everything changes" Tommy grinned smiling at the ladies, Oliver laughed

"Nope definitely not" they danced and drank, Tommy kissing random girls. Oliver knew his old self would do that but he didn't want any of these women, so instead he brought them all drinks. Tommy was so drunk by the end of the evening Oliver got him to his flat and sorted him

"I missed you man" Tommy grinned, Oliver also pretended to be as drunk as him

"I missed you too dude, but I'm back now"

"I'm glad you are but..."

"But what?"

"I'll tell you in the morning when I'm less drunk, you can totally crash in the spare room"

"Okay thanks" Oliver put him in bed, went to the spare room and took off his jacket it was still early and he now had the perfect alibi. Oliver made his way back to his lair, making sure not to be seen on any CCTV, he changed into his outfit, a dark green hood obscuring his face as well as dark green face paint around the eyes, he wore a dark green leather jacket with the hood attached and leather trousers making his movements easier he threw his bow and arrows on his back, looking at the computer screen of his first target Adam Hunt.

It was midnight and Oliver was perched in the corner of the office of Mr Hunts multimillion pound business, the door opened slowly

"Well I don't care about their stupid lives, I want my money!" he shouted down the phone, he was a tall chubby man he sat down at his oversized desk looking full of himself in a matter of seconds Oliver sprung forward arrow aimed at his head

"Adam Hunt" his voice machine making his voice deeper obscuring his identity further "you have failed this city" he burst out in laughter reaching for his phone swish he looked around to see an arrow pinned to the desk close to his hand

"You have to be kidding me! What the hell do you want?"

"You have one chance to make amends for your crimes"

"What crimes might they be?"

"You stole from the widows of soldiers, the vulnerable, the dying, and the sick crippling them with repayments they can never make..."

"Well they knowingly entered those contracts mate"

"You have 1 chance, pay them back now or I'll take it by force"

"Haha modern day robin hood, don't make me laugh... SECURITY" he shouted. 4 muscular gun wielding men came rushing in, they took aim. Oliver dodged the bullets; perfectly aiming four arrows and killing the security without hesitation, he fired 3 more arrows in Adams direction. 2 pinning his arms and a third hitting the wall beside his head

"You missed" he laughed looking up to see the room empty. Oliver got back to the lair and then
Tommys within an hour finding him exactly how he had left him. So he went to the spare room undressed and crawled into the bed, he wouldn't sleep but he needed Tommy to believe he had. Oliver pressed a button on his phone and could hear a conversation the other side of town

"Mr Hunt so what you're saying is a man, wearing a green hooded outfit and firing arrows threatened you and killed your men?" A deep male voice said, Oliver recognised it straight away Mr Lance, Detective Lance, Laurels father

"Yes! I know it's unbelievable but I swear to you! Look at the arrows!"

"But he didn't take anything?"

"No but he wanted me to give away my money..."

"Well he clearly didn't do that Mr Hunt, I mean we'll find this... this man who killed these people but he hasn't taken anything..."

Oliver grinned to himself then pressed another button. The arrow that missed Adams head started flashing after 10s of reading all of Mr Hunts bank accounts he transferred all of his money back to the people he had hurt, their families and various charities throughout the city. Then he pressed another button causing the arrow to catch fire destroying the evidence with it, Oliver smiled and found he did actually fall asleep.
Next morning Oliver woke up forgetting where he was and practically fell out of bed with the duvet wrapped around him, Tommy stood in the door way wearing his dressing gown laughing

"Dude, we got so drunk but where are the ladies?"

"I don't think your lady appreciated vomit on her shoes"

"Oh" he said "well that's awkward shall we check out the morning news make sure we didn't do some random crap again"

"Yeh go on, make me some coffee seeing as I got you to bed safely"

"Anything for you baby" he said winking walking back into the kitchen Oliver couldn't help smiling and an actual smile at that, he pulled his trousers and shirt on, he had to hide his scars from some people Tommy included. As he entered he found him stood in front of the TV and a mug of coffee on the side, he grabbed it joining him

"Thanks Darling" Oliver said mockingly, Tommy looked at him chuckling

"Seems we weren't important last night look at this" Oliver looked at the TV

*Killer on the loose, a hooded figure killed 4 security men last night after threatening Mr Hunt, who this morning in a shocking twist has given all his money to the people of this city... We do have to point out the police are not releasing many details about the attacks last night but if anyone knows anything to call their help line on screen now*

"Well looks like someone had more trouble than us" Tommy said "it's terrible how bad this cities got with crime I mean"

"I can imagine, but hey least that guy gave back to making it a better place" Oliver grinned

"If you say so, wanna get some breakfast?"

"Yes why not, and then you can tell me that thing"

"What thing?"

"You were gonna tell me last night but you said it would be better from you when you're sober" Tommy looked a little uncomfortable

"Oh I don't know, maybe I'll remember later" Oliver could tell he was lying but he wasn't sure why

"Yeh maybe"

"Well let's get ready!" Both guys had a shower, and Oliver wore some of Tommys clothes they didn't want to be seen in last night's clothes. So by the time they were actually ready to leave it was nearly lunch time

"Well looks more like lunch than breakfast" Tommy joked

"Doesn't matter to me as long as we get food" Tommy laughed
"Well seeing as you've been away for so long how about something greasy the other side of town"
"Sounds good to me!"

The other side of town was classed as the bad end, where the most crime was and the poorest in the community lived. It was however also where the most big businesses were apart from Oliver's dads company, which was at the centre of town. They pulled up down a side street in Tommy's black Ferrari

"You sure this isn't going to get stolen leaving it here?" Oliver enquired

"No I park here all the time when I visit Laurel her office is that building" he pointed to the left "and the diner the other" he pointed right

"Oh so you visit Laurel?" Tommy blushed clearly this conversation got awkward

"Errm yeh from time to time I mean when you went I checked in on her"
"Good, and thanks" they got out of the car then bang everything went black.

Oliver woke up tied to a chair with an unconscious Tommy at the side of him he looked around to see 3 masked men and then he saw her, his heart pounding
"Hello again Oliver" she said walking closer she had white hair and wore a black leather suit "seems like last time didn't have the desired affect"

"Well you should have made a better job of it" he spat back she slapped him hard cutting his lip "still as feisty as ever"

"Still as pathetic as ever" she grinned "that's why it was so easy to manipulate you... to kidnap you... To torture you... All those years ago" Oliver ground his teeth he could feel the anger from all those years bubbling inside him "we presumed after your disappearance you hadn't coped well with my methods, and offed yourself. Which only seemed to make things worse for your father which seemed to make my client happier"

As she turned her back Oliver snapped the ropes holding him, crushing the chair. He threw the broken chair chards taking out two of the masked men the other started shooting he missed by millimetres, using his skills he disarmed the man in seconds breaking his neck in the process. The woman stood there surprised, knife to Tommy's neck

"The day you tortured me was the day you created a monster and I didn't die, I left, I trained so I could come back home stronger than before and destroy people like you and your client..."

"Well take another step closer and I'll kill this pretty boyfriend of yours" Without hesitation Oliver shot her straight in the arm causing her to fall back, he was next to her in seconds standing on her wounded shoulder

"Who sent you here? Who do you work for?" She laughed

"All I can say is she'll not give up now" in one swift move she took a pill, her body jerking and foam coming out her mouth

"Damn it!" Oliver cursed, he looked at the place around him, and checked Tommy he was still
unconscious but alive. Oliver grabbed the ropes from the now broken chair and tied them around himself making it look like he had fumbled an escape then he reached for his phone dialling 999.

"So what you're saying Mr Queen is you have no idea who these people are, or why they'd kidnap you and Mr Merlyn?" Detective Lance said raising an eyebrow

"Yes Detective Lance, I've never seen these people before in all my life apart from her, she was the one who took me the first time..."

"Right" he said sounding even more sceptical "Well what were you doing this side of town?"

"That would be my fault" Tommy said walking towards them having had the all clear from the paramedics. He made his way over through the various policemen and forensic offices

"And why might that be Mr Merlyn?"

"We got drunk last night, wanted a greasy breakfast and we all know the best places for that are this side of town just ask your daughter" Detective Lance raised an eyebrow clearly disapproving the guys life style choices and the fact his daughter was even mentioned by them

"So this woman she took you last time?"

"Yes"

"Why?"

"I don't know I thought that was your job..."

"Well we never found out the kidnappers identities especially as your father kept it hush hush and paid the ransom"

"Well now you have her face, might help"

"Hopefully, but you say a man in a green hood was the one who did all this?"

"Yes he saved us"

"Well he killed 4 people, not sure that classes as a good thing Mr Queen"

"The police use force when necessary, he doesn't even know us and he saved us from whatever she had planned"

"Yes okay Mr Queen but why not stick around, call the police himself"

"I don't know Detective Lance, maybe if you find him you could ask him" he raised an eyebrow at Olivers attitude and even Tommy had a little smirk at seeing him this way

"Can you remember what he looked like?"

"I suppose" he turned to an officer

"We need Mr Queen to come down to the station, get a sketch artist in so we can at least show people... That okay with you Mr Queen?"
"Yes of course, you might as well get breakfast Tommy I see this taking awhile"

"No buddy it's okay..."

"Seriously it's fine"

A few hours later Oliver was finally back home, making himself food in the kitchen having already missed breakfast and lunch, with the TV on

A sketch has now been released of the vigilante who according to our sources saved Oliver Queen and Tommy Merlyn from harm's way. We are told however if you have any information call the number on screen, he is believed to be armed and dangerous and referred to as The Hood

"The Hood" Oliver muttered to himself just then his mother walked in

"OLIVER QUEEN!" He spun around mouthful of blueberries "I hired a body guard exactly for the reason of what happened today! Not so you could give him the slip every 5 seconds" he swallowed his food

"Mum I don't need protecting"

"Oliver I've already lost you twice and I nearly lost you again" the tears rising in her eyes "I know it's a pain but Mr Diggle is paid to be there... Please for me Oliver" he put his head down took a breath looking up

"I promise I'm not going anywhere... But I'll do it for you mum"

A week later Oliver had appeared several times as the Hood, stealing from the richest and corrupt of Starling to give back to the city. However when he stumbled upon a man attacking a young woman, he started to realise that maybe this city needed more help than he thought, he saved the lady not even hesitating in firing Arrows into the man's knees to prevent him from moving and he left the rest to the police. What he didn't count on was that the police would hunt him; a vigilante who killed people no matter how corrupt they were.

So he knew he needed more alibis for his night antics especially now Mr Diggle was following his every move. He had been told by his family that he should consider working with his father; Oliver didn't much like this prospect but showed up one day as requested. When he arrived in his suit he felt completely out of place, something he had become accustom to feeling in the last few years. He made his way up to his father's office whilst Mr. Diggle waited downstairs in reception. When he entered he found his father and his second in command Walter Steele deep in discussion

"Oh Oliver, it's good to see you again" Walter stood up to shake his hand and Oliver returned the favour

"Same to you Walter"

"Take a seat Oliver" his father said and he sat down in the seat next to the one Walter had been sat in, he also returned to his seat "Seeing as you are a Queen and you don't know what you want to do with your life the board has decided it would be better if you worked at this company rather than
"carrying on with your antics" his father was straight to the point as always

"Right... But I have no qualifications to work here and no offence this isn't exactly my forte" Oliver said twirling his hand around

"That doesn't matter Oliver" Walter cut in "you can shadow your father or someone else in the company, have an office of your own, get to grips with the basics till you figure it all out, what you want I mean.. You could even go back to university" he smiled kindly Oliver half smiled back; Walter was a great man had a vast business mind but also knew when to show kindness. Oliver looked at his father his expression unchanged he knew his father didn't want him there really but he needed to make the world think everything was fine. Keep up the image. Oliver also knew his dad was a great business man too but only since Walter was added after the day his father pretty much destroyed the poorest within the city by closing a factory, sending trade abroad, making life worse for them, did the company finally give back to the city but Oliver had a feeling that was more Walter than his father wanting to help

"Just think about it Oliver" his father said looking at him

"No rush, take your time" Walter added smiling "and feel free to take a look around the building"

"Okay thank you" Oliver got up straightening his jacket before leaving, he had no idea what he was going to do but he thought he might as well reacquaint himself with the building.

By the time Oliver had got to the IT department he had had enough, everyone staring at him, various girls he recognised from his past but as soon as he stepped in to the large place one woman caught his eyes one that he recognised as an obsessive girl he once slept with who never stopped pursuing him. He put his head down making his way across the department and when he could hear footsteps coming closer he turned into the first open door. Sliding it shut behind him placing his head on it letting out a deep sigh

"Errmmm" he heard from behind him he spun round to see a pretty blonde haired woman with her hair pulled back, red lipstick on and glasses placed on her nose sat behind a desk staring at him one eye brow raised

"Oliver Queen"

"Mr Queen I know who you are"

"Mr Queens my father…"

"Well Master Queen just doesn't sound right I mean master leads to all sorts of things in the imagination, not that that's what I picture I mean you doing that.. oh god this is going to stop in 3...2...1" Oliver found himself smiling at this woman rambling in front of him, she seemed to be unable to filter things properly and he couldn't resist a little smirk

"Please call me Oliver and you are?"

"Felicity, Felicity Smoak"

"Have we met before you seem really familiar Felicity?" She smiled at the way he said her name and she could see a sparkle in his eyes even just for a second in his otherwise pained expression

"Well errmm I mean you are Oliver Queen I've seen you plastered everywhere, I mean the missing signs... No. The fact you're my bosses son and…"
“Felicity” he said smirking again his voice seemed to pull her back she put her head down

“Errrm... Why are you in my office?”

“Oh well” he rubbed the back of his neck looking away from her blue eyes, piercing blue eyes "to be honest Felicity I'm avoiding people"

“People or women?” She was blunt which caught him a little off guard

"Both, but mainly women I forgot about how many I slept with back then..." He looked like he was ashamed of his past like that wasn't the man he was anymore

“Well maybe Oliver you should actually face your past rather than hiding in my office, no offence I mean you are the bosses son after all so I can't actually kick you out in case I get fired but I do have actual work to do, you know what I am paid to do rather than hiding you away from something you are going to have to deal with if you want to be a better man” Oliver listened to her ramble laughing at her side track in the middle but her point was clear she somehow knew he wanted to be a better person than what people thought he was

“Thank you Miss Smoak” she frowned

“I didn't really do much Mr Queen” he smiled opening the door and leaving. He didn't hide away for the rest of the time he even spoke to people and apologised to some. As he was leaving with Mr Diggle Oliver couldn't help thinking about Felicity Smoak and what an impression she had made

“You seem to be happy Sir”

“Honestly Mr Diggle call me Oliver”

“Then please call me Diggle or Dig”

“Well I just got offered a job Diggle”

“Oh very nice si... Oliver” he half smiled before getting into the car.
Chapter 3

It was a pure accident that John found out about Oliver's night time activities. He was at the diner his sister-in-law was working at late one night, when he heard a commotion outside. He said goodbye so he could go check it out. The vigilante was tackling a bank robbery, he had disarmed 2 of the gunmen and was talking down the third, arrow aimed at his chest

"I can help you" the Hood said voice deep and raspy

"No you can't! You have no idea"

"I can bring you back... I can help"

"It's too late for me I lost it all here, no job, no money, no family, no life"

"NO" the vigilante shouted, John found himself walking closer intrigued "these circumstances don't make you, you have a choice I can help you"

"How? By getting me arrested?"

"Yes, by showing your son the right thing to do... Showing him what it really means to be a family man to do the right thing against all the odds" John was impressed with the Hoods speech but he was still a cold blooded killer. That's when things changed one of the thugs got up and shot straight at the vigilante without hesitation John did what came naturally he jumped in the way.

The next thing he remembered was waking up on a cold metal table in a place he didn't recognise, he sat up noticing the large bandage on his arm

"What the..." He whispered

"I patched you up, didn't think you'd want to get mixed up with the police" He looked to see the Hood stood in front of a computer everything suddenly came rushing back

"What happened? After I jumped in front of a bullet for you" his voice sceptical at the end

"You banged your head knocked yourself out"

"I meant the robbers"

"Oh I disarmed the shooter, police came and arrested them all and I brought you here"

"So you didn't kill them then?"

"No" John tilted his head with a sceptical look "they didn't need to die they had bad circumstances which lead to petty theft"

"Right 'cause robbing banks is petty, anyway I should be going" he sat up pulling his shirt on

"I can't let you leave Diggle"

"How the hell do you know my name? And why can't I leave?"

"Because you know who I am and I want to offer you a job" he walked over pulling his hood down

"Oliver?" He looked a little stunned then suddenly it all made sense, the strange disappearing acts,
the sneaky behaviour

"Yes Diggle and I want to see if you would join me? Help me save this city from the corrupt" John stood there unsure what to say or do so instead he just left.

Oliver wasn't surprised when the next day his mother informed him Mr Diggle was ill and he would be having another bodyguard for the day, Bob. He didn't know if he could trust Diggle but giving him some time was probably best right now plus he needed to keep up his appearance at Queen Consolidated that and the fact he realised the robbers were a part of something bigger and needed someone to help him.

Oliver spent all morning shadowing his father and Walter, he'd never been so bored in all his life but he sat there listening trying to take it all in. When it got to lunch time Oliver easily gave Bob the slip and made his way back to the IT department walking straight into Miss Smoaks office and closing the door

"Mr Queen you have to stop making a habit of coming down here to hide I really do not have time for this"

"Oliver I told you" he found himself smiling for no reason, Felicity just rolled her eyes at him "and I'm not hiding I need to ask you a favour"

"Oh" she sound genuinely surprised "well I ermm I'm sorry I shouldn't just accuse you of stuff and favour me? Why would you want a favour from me I'm just an IT girl..."

"Felicity" he cut her off unable to control his smile "they say you're the best in this building if not in the city" he was praying she didn't ask who, as he had researched her to check if she was someone he could trust

"Oh well... Yes I've been building computers since I was a little kid, I mean it's why I got offers all over the country before I... I'm going to stop now, you don't need to hear all this, what do you need Mr... Oliver?"

"One of my friends decided it would be funny to encrypt all my data from my dad's work files... Could you decrypt it for me? And keep it between us? I'm pretty sure my dad's ready to kill me enough" he held out the USB stick and pulled his most charming face. Felicity of course couldn't resist the charm of Oliver Queen but something told her that wasn't the real him, like this was a cover. She also didn't understand why he came to her for this, she frowned reaching her hand out and taking the device

"I'll see what I can do" he reached for a piece of paper sprawled his number on it and handed it over

"Call me as soon as you decrypt it" he smiled just about to leave

"What's in it for me?" It came out before she even thought about it and the look of shock on her face said as much, he laughed

"That your bosses son with be forever in your gratitude"

"I… I didn't mean that I don't need anything..."

"Wine?"
"What? Do I like wine? Or do I drink wine? Or do I wanna drink wine with you? Not like I think we should date or anything I... 3...2...1"

"What wine is your favourite?" He said chuckling

"Red"

"Then that's what's in it for you... The finest bottle of red wine I can find" without another word he left making his way back upstairs when he got to his father's office and walked in he found his father, Walter and a woman deep in a heated conversation. She looked oddly familiar like a model in looks and build, with flowing brown hair but she looked angry

"Oliver get out" his father snapped "you should have knocked just because you're my son doesn't give you liberties"

"I'm only here because you told me I had to be"

"No the board did, I don't need this Oliver, just go" Oliver could feel the anger rising and so he turned around and left. He gave his new bodyguard the slip again and made his way to the lair; he pulled off his suit pulling on jogging bottoms. Then he threw himself into exercising, punching, hitting shooting arrows then he finally worked his way up his makeshift salmon ladder before finally dropping down feeling calmer. He got changed, he knew where Diggle would be and so he made his way to the diner in the rough part of town.

He walked in to find Diggle sitting in a booth and he joined him without hesitation

"How'd you find me?"

"You really think I wouldn't do a background search?"

"To be honest with Oliver Queen no but after last night yes" Oliver smiled

"I know your brother got killed in an accident and you take care of his wife and son... Sorry I intruded in your personal life..." Diggle laughed

"Of all the things that's not the one that bothers me, clearly you're good at what you do Oliver but..."

"You can't be a part of it"

"No I can't because you're a killer"

"Yes I am but once you've looked darkness in the face there is no turning back"

"You sound like a soldier Oliver, what happened to you when you left?"

"All you need to know is that I survived I did everything to stay alive"

"Again you sound like a soldier"

"You know best Dig I mean being ex special forces" Diggle frowned he'd seen that face a thousand times on his fellow soldiers of a man desperately trying to hold on to a life that was spiralling out of control. Falling deeper into despair, believing they were alone and after he saw his own brother do the same thing he promised himself he'd never walk away from someone who needed help
"I'll do it Oliver"

"What?" Oliver wasn't sure what had changed his mind

"I'll work with you, help you..."

"Good but why change your mind?"

"Because even though we don't admit it we all need a little help sometimes especially people like you and me" Oliver understood what he meant: killers, both of them had killed to survive in very different circumstances but they had, he nodded in response

"I don't need saving Diggle but thank you"

"Don't mention it you did save my life after all" just then Bob walked in

"Mr Queen there you are, Diggle I thought you were ill?"

"I am just came to see my sister-in-law, take a seat Bob" He sat next to Diggle opposite Oliver

"I was just telling Oliver here I'll be back at work tomorrow morning fresh as a daisy" he smiled just then Olivers phone rang he pulled it out not recognising the number

"Hello"

"Hi Oliver its Felicity, you told me to call as soon as I decrypted the device well that's what I'm doing it's done but these aren't work files..."

"Felicity I'll be there asap" he hung up the phone looking at the gentlemen "I'm just going to the rest room" Oliver got up and left using the back exit. He noticed Tommys black Ferrari parked in the alley clearly visiting Laurel I'll have to ask about that another time

"Dude you do realise he just gave you the slip right?" Diggle said looking at Bob

"God damn it!" He got up rushing out the building whilst Diggle smiled to himself.

As soon as Oliver was back in Felicities office she noticed the change now he was no longer wearing a suit, he was in jeans and a jumper he looked more at ease, more relaxed

"Firstly that encryption was not a standard prank that was full scale federal locked I'm talking your high stakes government and I'm pretty sure I broke laws breaking that... And second" she spun the screen round to show him "these are not your father's files" she folded her arms across her chest raising an eyebrow, he laughed at how she tried to be threatening but it wasn't working

"Well firstly the idle rich can do anything if they have enough money so my friend could have easily paid for it and second" he took a step closer it was blue prints of a major bank heist in town happening tonight to steal the money from all the companies big and small basically bankrupting the city he saw a name Isabel Rochev he needed to remember that

"Earth to Oliver"

"This is clearly not my device so I must have got it mixed up"
"We have to take this to the police it's about a bank heist tonight!"

"No" he said firmly Felicity was clearly taken back by his tone "I mean I'll take it to the police station myself, I'll deal with it I know some people..." His stance, his attitude everything changed Felicity could tell this whoever it was, was the real him

"Okay" she said looking him in the eyes, he looked at her confused

"Okay?" He frowned

"Well I know it sounds stupid, I mean I don't even know you but I trust you" Oliver stood there a little shocked she didn't even know him yet she put all her faith in him, he looked at this woman fascinated by her

"Thank you... Can I have the..." She pulled it out the computer and handed it over Oliver turned and left without another word

"Guessing no wine then?" She sighed softly as he left "what have you got yourself involved in" she shook her head returning back to her work.

Oliver was just leaving when his phone rang

"Hello?"

"Mr Oliver Queen?"

"Yes"

"This is Mrs Redfern, Thea's head teacher, I wondered if you could come in for a chat?"

"Oh okay" he frowned; he got a taxi and was there within 15 minutes

"Mr Queen" the tall Lady said extending a hand which he took, she sat behind her desk "I called you because Thea insisted it was you and not her parents"

"Right, okay what's up?"

"Thea has been found with alcohol in her possession and she slapped another girl..."

"Oh god!" He said rubbing his hand over the back of his neck

"We don't tolerate any of that behaviour Mr Queen"

"Of course, did she say why?"

"She said the alcohol was a mistake but slapping another girl no explanation at all"

"Right well what do I need to do?"

"Thea has to go home and seeing as it is Friday I suggest talking to her over the weekend then we see how she goes Monday"

"Okay thank you" he said standing up
"She's right outside" he walked out not even looking at her. She followed and they travelled home in silence. When she got back she ran off upstairs and Oliver followed closely behind. He easily managed to get in her room as she shouted

"Get out"

"Speedy I'm not going anywhere, talk to me what happened?"

"You already know so GO"

"Nope" he said sitting on his sisters bed, he looked around it was no longer pink with all the toys it was blue plastered in posters of various boy bands and singers, she was more grown up than he thought. She silently shut the door then burst out crying Oliver was up and caught her in seconds

"Oh Speedy" he said hugging her tighter and making their way back to perching on the bed

"The alcohol was for a party this weekend..."

"You shouldn't be drinking you're way too young for that!"

"I'm not a little kid anymore Ollie"

"I know but drinking that will make you vulnerable and I'm sorry I was a 14 year old boy once I know what they think, so promise me you won't drink you won't do anything stupid" he rubbed the mascara marks from under her eyes "and the girl you slapped?"

"She... She said that you should never have come back that you're the same stupid idiot just trying to get your leg over and I saw red and I hit her. The day you disappeared Ollie our family fell apart I mean mum kept herself busy away from home and dad did what he does best, get on with work and I... I was left alone to deal with losing my brother"

"Oh I see, right firstly you should have walked away people are always going to comment on our lives but you know me Thea, I'm not the same am I? I mean have you even seen me with a woman or bring one back here?"

"No"

"Well doesn't that show you and only you I have changed, it doesn't matter what other people think as long as you know the truth okay?" She nodded "and I am sorry that you got left alone Thea if I could have come back sooner I would have, look at me" she pulled back from his embrace looking at his face "I promise I'm not going to leave you again, so if you need me I'm here you aren't alone anymore..."

"But now your back you seem to be keeping us all at arm's length, I get it you spent 3 years mostly alone doing god knows what but you have to let people in Ollie, we care about you"

"I know I promise I'll keep trying is that okay?"

"Yes as long as you know, you talk to someone even if it isn't me..." He smiled at her

"When did you get to be so smart Speedy?"

"School... Unlike you I actually went and stayed" she teased he saw her smile again

"Haha fair point" he smiled back
"Anyway I need to sort out my face and that is not a sight I wish my brother to see" Oliver chuckled.

"Okay I'll talk to you soon kiddo" he got up closing the door behind him "crap" he whispered, he'd been so busy with his stuff he was neglecting the people around him and it suddenly dawned on him this was going to be harder than he thought.
Chapter 4

With Diggles help Oliver managed to stop the bank heist with relative ease. He killed 2 of the thugs with the other 2 being arrested much to Olivers complaints, he also found whoever was behind it all was targeting Queen Consolidated. Back at the lair and back in normal clothes a heated conversation began

"Oliver you can't just keep killing guys you don't know who they are"

"I know there dangerous Diggle and they have to be stopped"

"Yes but being arrested stops them"

"Till they come back out again" Diggle knew this was a lost cause but he still had to say his piece

"Oliver it's not that simple"

"I know!" he raised his voice slightly

"Who do you think they work for?"

"I dunno they just said he was after revenge"

"So someone's clearly got it in for your father"

"Well that's not hard to imagine really is it?"

"What do you mean?"

"How can you not know?"

"I haven't always lived here Oliver and I have been a soldier so not much time to gossip"

"My father destroyed lives... 5 years ago he closed this factory above us sending production abroad because it was cheaper"

"Right..."

"Well he also managed to find a way to not pay the workers off, leaving most broke, alone, homeless and hurt. From that day, crime and poverty rates grew. He had managed to make this city worse"

"Oh dude I'm sorry that sounds rough"

"We were rich remember so it didn't matter but my father single-handedly made a lot of enemies that day and destroyed a lot of lives"

"Is that why you do this?" He gestured his hand to the lair around them

"One of the reasons..."

"Makes sense but Oliver this is getting a little too close to home I mean would the Hood not target your father?"

"Yes but I'm not ready for that just yet, I need to figure out who wants to destroy the city, my fathers company and of course keep saving it"
"You do realise it may be better to not just go for the corrupt Oliver"

"Diggle I'm one man I can't tackle all the petty criminals in this city"

"No but you don't just have to go for the rich either I saw you with those bank robbers the other night" Oliver stared at the man both knowing they wouldn't back down instead he nodded recognition at him and they left saying no more.

A while later and all of Oliver enquires had come to a dead end, and he still hadn't returned to his fathers office or even seen him at home. He had in fact spent most of his spare time with Thea trying to show her he hadn't left her. After a few weeks Thea finally snapped

"Ollie I love you but you're kinda smothering me don't you have a life of your own to deal with" Oliver smiled

"Cheeky much and hey! I just wanted to show you, you know you aren't alone"

"Ollie seriously I know that! you don't need to spend all your spare time with me, I think you need to find something to do"

"Seriously when did you get so wise" he laughed

"You have to stop sounding surprised, I'm starting to get offended. Isn't there someone you could see?"

"Well Tommy's been working a lot lately, he actually seems more serious than I thought. Laurel well we both know I'm not ready for that conversation yet and I don't really know any other people though I do owe Felicity a bottle of red wine"

"Felicity?" she said raising an eyebrow

"It's not like that Speedy she helped me with stuff when I was working for dad"

"Well it's like 5, I'm sure if you take her a bottle of wine you could always get something to eat" she winked

"Thea... Honestly she's just a… acquaintance. I think my love life is messed up enough with Laurel and her sister Sara"

"Yes that's true at least Sara's not around at the moment you know with work, but who said it had to be a date, just you know be honest about who you are..."

"Fine" he said "but this is all your fault if she throws the bottle at me" she laughed as he made his way to the wine cellar choosing a red wine he knew would go down well.

Then he got on his motorbike making his way to Queens Consolidated. He walked into Felicities office half expecting to find her already gone but instead she was still working

"Do you ever knock?" She said looking up

"It's not like this is the ladies room is it Felicity" she blushed lightly and he found himself smiling

"I see your friend handled the bank heist even if 2 guys got killed guess it's all collateral damage to
someone like him. Not thinking of the people he's hurting, I mean he has a bow and arrow, who uses that now days just seems stupid to me" he chuckled to himself her rants always made him smile

"I seem to remember owing you this" he placed the bottle on the desk

"Thank you, but you shouldn't have" she smiled

"Shouldn't you be finishing work by now?"

"Oh I always finish late, Walt... Mr Steele asked me to finish this work off which I have just done" she smiled

"Do you want to get something to eat?"

"What? Like a date, no offence Oliver but I don't really know you and your reputation, well I'm not like that. I mean I've had my fair share of men, don't get me wrong but I don't just do sex I mean obviously I do but not no strings attached, not that I want you like that I...

"Felicity" he was stood by her side his hand on her shoulder "no not a date just... He thought of the right words "be nice to have a friend" he smiled squeezing her shoulder gently. She saw the pain flash in his eyes he truly meant he needed a friend. She looked at his hand and he pulled it back to his side

"Okay but take away at mine? And that's not an invitation for you know any funny business"

"I promise no funny business but...

"But what?"

"I did come here on my bike"

"Well I live like 15 minutes walk away so you can leave the bike here and we walk together"

"Okay" he smiled picking the bottle up again "we can open this, 1 glass won't hurt me" he smiled

"Okay" as she stood up, Oliver noticed her entire outfit a bright pink blouse and grey skirt with pink heels, she looked cute he thought before stopping himself.

They left and managed to get to hers in 10 minutes her entire apartment was smaller than his bedroom, they walked in silence but it wasn't awkward which took both by surprise

"Chinese okay?" She smiled at him

"Of course"

"Well here's the menu make yourself at home. I'm going to make myself comfortable not like that comfortable. I mean sweatpants comfortable, you did say you needed a friend and friends can be in sweats in front of each other" he laughed

"Okay"

An hour later Felicity was sat eating Chinese with her hair down, in sweatpants and a t shirt laughing at random TV shows with her bosses son. He looked relaxed now not on edge, she opened the bottle
of wine giving Oliver a glass and pouring one for herself

"Oh my god that's fantastic! Just wow!" He smiled "so Oliver why do you need a friend?" His whole body language changed in an instant automatically seeming more guarded and wary

"Well my friend Tommy he's been pretty busy, then there's Laurel and Sara but that's complicated and then I..."

"You don't have many real friends and after being gone for 3 years, you and everyone have changed and the press are trying to make out you're the same person but you clearly aren't"

"Pretty much yes" how could she know that, he kept himself guarded even his own family couldn't see the truth in this face how could she

"Well maybe you should stop trying to be who everyone thinks you are and be who you want to be" she smiled

"You're right" he smiled softly "thanks Felicity"

"Well you know it's what friends are for but can I ask you a question?"

"Yes of course"

"Were you as bad as the press made out? Back then I mean"

"Worse. I cheated on my girlfriend multiple times and even with her sister, I got kicked out of university 4 times, spent most nights drunk and was an all round insensitive idiot"

"Don't hold back" she laughed instantly relaxing him "clearly you aren't like that anymore I mean no offence I'm pretty sure if you were still like that you wouldn't be here with me"

"You'd be surprised what I did to get into a girls pants back then" he said with a look of disgust, and clear regret

"Why'd you do it? I mean you were a trouble maker as a kid" he raised an eyebrow "if it's on the internet I can find it" she smiled softly "anyway yeh, then at 18 you seemed to just I dunno go off the rails..." He looked at Felicity sat there so innocent and debating whether to tell her the truth as if reading his mind she said "you don't have to answer you know I mean we have only just met"

"I haven't spoke about it not properly anyway"

"Well that's fine you don't need to tell me"

"My dad was hardly there when I was growing up, he was too busy at work so when I was a kid I did anything to get his attention, regardless if it was good or bad anything to get his approval. Then when I was 18 he closed the factory" Felicity nodded clearly knowing this story "we got death threats you know the usual, what the press and people don't know is that someone kidnapped me and tortured me..." Her hands went to her mouth in shock "my dad paid the ransom and I was returned I thought things would change but it didn't, so to cope I cheated, drunk, slept around, and misbehaved. It took a random girl on a bridge to make me see sense and that's when things started to change" he smiled softly, he hadn't intended on telling Felicity any of this but as he told her he felt he couldn't stop

"Oh Oliver... I am sorry" she shuffled closer to his side of the sofa gently placing her hand in his and squeezing he smiled at her response
"It's okay it was a long time ago"

"Well I should tell you that the..." Just then his phone rang, he gently pulled his hand from hers and answered the phone

"Hello"

"Oliver I need to talk to you about our nightly activities, where are you man?"

"Ermnm I'm out meet you at the... The Foundry in 10 mins"

"The Foundry well if that's what we're calling it now I'll see you there" With that Oliver hung up

"Sorry but I have to go"

"Oh" Oliver was actually surprised to hear the disappointment

"You were saying?" He said getting up placing his Chinese down on the coffee table

"Oh it doesn't matter, this was... nice Oliver and thanks for the wine"

"It was and thank you for the Chinese, next time I'll pay good night Felicity" he smiled

"Good night Oliver" she replied returning the smile, the way she light up with sincerity caught him a little off guard. He left; leaving Felicity even more intrigued to this man there was a lot more to him than everyone thought.

Oliver arrived in quick time to see Diggle stood in the middle of the Foundry

"What's up? It sound urgent"

"We need to talk about starlings drug problem"

"Which drug there's a lot out there?"

"The new one, the one that's causing these random deaths and dead bodies..."

"Okay but there's only been like 3, how do you know it's a drug problem?"

"Oliver we both know I have certain connections, I've been told the creator of the drug is in this city they need to be stopped because this drug is going to be something real bad"

"What's the drug? And who's the creator?"

"It's called Vertigo and I dunno that's what we have to find out..."

"Right I'll think about it"

"Why only thinking about it?"

"Because Diggle I don't take orders from the government" Diggle laughed

"Fair point" he smiled "But Oliver this might start to become a bigger problem than you think"
"We'll see…"
Chapter 5

Be who you want to be

Oliver could still hear Felicities words and he realised they struck him more than he thought. He had a plan, a plan that had been in his mind for awhile but finally after her words and Theas reminders of him needing to do something he decided to make it a reality.

A week later Oliver turned up at Tommys flat
"Hey" Tommy said opening the door, wrapped in a dressing gown looking hung over "what's up?"

"Hi, firstly I have been calling and secondly I saw your latest stun on the news"

"Been ignoring calls the press, you know what it's like" Oliver patted his hand on Tommys shoulder

"Come on a problem shared and all that..." Tommy raised an eye brow sceptically "plus I bring replenishments" he held up a bag of beer and take out, Tommy laughed

"That's more like it" they walked into Tommys flat dropping on the sofa and chair, both drinking beer and eating burgers. After they finished eating Oliver decided it was time to be a better friend

"Come on Tommy we both know there's always more than the press makes out, so would you like to elaborate?"

"Yes I crashed my car, yes there were drugs in my system but no I didn't take any drugs" Oliver was very good at reading people and he knew his friend was telling the truth

"Right, well what exactly happened?"

"It had been a long day at work, you know what my dad's like" Oliver nodded, he was exactly like his own father very business focused but not exactly the family man "well I went to get something to eat and bumped in to Laurel so we decided to eat together, when we left she went home and I got into the car I felt weird so decided to pull over and I couldn't I just crashed straight into a ditch, cars totalled, press think I'm a drug addict, dad does too, he fired me and he's taking away the trust fund... I have nothing"

"Wow, so you were spiked? and you don't have nothing, you have me for one and I'm guessing Laurel as well"

"I presume so, and thanks" he half smiled "yes she's been so good, she's the one who sent me for a blood test to determine the drug and how long it lasts in the system, she's even defending me"

"See she'll sort this out" Oliver knew she would being a top lawyer she wouldn't let anything happen to Tommy "where did you eat?"

"Just the diner next to her work" Next thing Tommys doorbell rang, he checked the monitor before allowing the person up and even stepped outside to greet them. It was Laurel who entered briefcase in hand

"Hey Ollie, you sure you want him to stay for this Tommy?" She said as she sat on the sofa and Tommy joined her

"Of course, he's my best friend I trust him completely" he smiled in Olivers direction
"Well the drug in your system was Vertigo?"

"What?" Both men said in unison

"Yeh it's a new drug but it's... well it's a bad one. A few casualties already and the police are trying to crack down on it, however the time it takes to kick in the system is an hour and the drug lingers in the blood for 6 hours after"

"Right what does this mean Laurel?"

"It means you were drugged while we ate, but there is no proof unless whoever did it is caught in the act again or confesses"

"Crap" Tommy sighed falling back into the sofa, desperation all over his face. Oliver sat there he knew now he had to sort out this Vertigo mess, he should have done it when Diggle brought it up a week ago

"What are we talking about Laurel if it can't be proved?" Oliver enquired

"Best case they consider this info and Tommy gets a warning, worst case they make an example of him and he serves time which would be suspended but he'd have to do community service and have a criminal record" Tommy closed his eyes the pain was clearly visible

"We'll help fix this Tommy, both of us will" Laurel nodded in agreement

"I will try my damn best to sort this Tommy, but I have to get back to work. I'll keep you informed with everything and you know I'm here for you" she smiled placing a hand on his knee and he returned the smile

"Thanks" she got up to leave and Oliver followed

"Laurel... It was nice seeing you"

"It was nice to see you too"

"We still need to catch up"

"I know but I think this needs sorting first"

"Yes and then we'll talk, okay?" She nodded looking into his eyes trying to figure out what it was that kept pulling her back to him "goodbye Laurel"

"Goodbye Ollie" Oliver closed the door and went back to Tommy

"I have a proposition for you, and no, none of this stuff puts me off asking you"

"Right... Well what is it? If it involves getting drunk I'm in"

"Well kind of... I'm opening a club and I was going to see if you wanted to help me, obviously money wise now you can't but with your business degree and mind you can be manager and help me set up" Tommy sat there with a stunned expression

"I could get done for drug related crimes, I'm pretty sure I won't be legally allowed to work for you"

"Tommy I don't for a second believe that you will get in trouble with this I trust you! We've been friends since nursery and I want you to be a part of this venture with me. Something I... we can be
truly proud of and show people we're actually grown up" Tommy laughed

"By running a club, the places where we mess up the most?"

"Who knows clubs the best than 2 people who spent a lot of time in them?" He winked, Tommy laughed "but seriously Tommy, I do mean it I want you on board I've had all the planning permission sent off, and blue prints set up and if you don't want to officially be involved until this mess is cleared up that's fine but I honestly don't mind"

"I'll do it, I'll help from the side lines and if this gets cleared up I'll start to get involved more after"

"Great" Oliver smiled pulling out his phone to show him all the plans he had. After spending sometime enthusiastically talking with Tommy about the prospect of the club, telling him even with his influences the planning permission would still take awhile. Olivers phone rang

"Hello Mr Queen"

"Yes"

"This is Mary..." Oliver frowned he didn't know any Mary "Mr Queen would like to talk with you"

"You mean my father?"

"Yes Robert Queen would like you to come in to talk"

"Fine" he hung up

"Well that conversation seemed a bit awkward" Tommy said

"My dad just got his secretary to call me to say he wants to talk"

"Right I thought you were working for him?"

"Oh yeh I forgot to mention he told me he didn't want me there and to get out so I have and I haven't spoken or seen him since so I'm guessing someone on the council has let slip about the club"

"Oh crap dude, I would offer to come with but I don't think your father would appreciate seeing me"

"No offence but I need to deal with this matter myself" Tommy smiled

"Of course, go, and remember he can take away the money..."

"Believe me Tommy he wouldn't dare" Oliver stood up making his way to the door "Keep me informed about everything okay?"

"Of course, bye"

"Bye"

Oliver got to Queen Consolidated within 15 minutes thanks to his motorbike skills, he was not looking forward to the conversation about to unfold but he also knew this conversation was long overdue. He made his way up to the top floor and walked into his father's office without even asking if he was free
"Nice to know I'm worth a personal call dad" Oliver said barging in, to find Robert with Walter. Walter looked at the two men and promptly stood up.

"We'll leave this for another time Robert" Walter made to leave nodding at Oliver smiling, closing the door behind him.

"Don't start Oliver; I knew you wouldn't answer my call" Oliver stood there "take a seat"

"No thanks what do you want?" Robert sat down in his chair sighing

"Oliver…"

"Spit it out dad we both know we don't do the fatherly son thing very well"

"What is your interest in Miss Smoak?" Oliver coughed

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me Oliver"

"Yes I did but I'm not sure I quite like what you're insinuating"

"Fine let me put it bluntly" Robert stared Oliver in the eyes "Me and Walter personally pursued Miss Smoak for this company; she graduated early the top of her class with impressive computer and analytical skills. She had offers from Merlyn, Wayne enterprises, head offices in London she was even offered places in American companies yet she chose here even with less pay. I don't want anything or anyone to compromise her position in this company; she is talented and could be the head of her department within 5 years. She is driven, sweet, amazing at her job but too trusting and naïve especially to someone like you" The final words hit Oliver like a bullet, it was clear his father still saw him as the stupid child he had been before he left.

"You have nothing to worry about Fel… Miss Smoak and I are only associated through the company she was helping me whilst I was here"

"Then why did you go out with her Oliver? Why were you at her home?"

"Have you got people spying on me?" he said that angrier than intended

"No but this company, its workers talk" Oliver shook his head in disbelief

"There is nothing going on between Miss Smoak and I, I asked her to do me a favour a work favour, in return I got her a bottle of wine and she invited me to join her at home for dinner. Nothing has or will happen"

"Make sure of it Oliver! Stay away from Miss Smoak for the sake of the both of you" Oliver knew his father was right but not for the reasons he was insinuating. He would stay away from Felicity Smoak so she didn't have to deal with his family drama or the hoods

"Fine but I'm not doing it because you said so" he turned to leave the office

"Oh and a club? Really? Way to show you've changed Oliver"

"Thanks for the support Dad"

"I should have stopped your trust fund just like Malcolm did to Tommy"
"Be my guest but you don't want people to know what really happened all those years ago and the real reason I disappeared for 3 years" Roberts jaw twitched, Oliver knew he'd hit a nerve but he wasn't bothered he was done trying to get his father's approval. He turned and left the office slamming the door behind him. Robert sat there he couldn't believe his son was using that against him, he clearly didn't know the torment Robert put himself through every day thinking he'd lost his son over and over again.

Oliver had spent a week taking down vertigo distributors, making sure the drug didn't spread rapidly as well as trying to find out who spiked Tommy and why. He knew Diggle wanted to say I told you so but he didn't he just stood there arms crossed every time Oliver came back empty handed. That was until he got a name

"The Count"

"The Count that's worse than the Hood!" He smiled "So we have a name but no location"

"Nope but I'm getting closer, I just need to find out about the drugs at the diner... No-one in there is linked to any drugs so how'd Tommy end up with it in his system?"

"I dunno Oliver we've been going over and over this for a week now..."

"I know what you're thinking Dig he took it himself but I know him he wouldn't be so stupid, not anymore. I just wish there was some CCTV but I know there isn't any in the diner"

"Well maybe there's other footage, around the building"

"But what use is that Dig we don't know who we're looking for!"

"We need to think about it logically... Is there anyone who can help us?"

"There's one, maybe... But..."

"But what?"

"My father warned me to stay away from her" Diggle scoffed

"Seriously?"

"Well my dad doesn't think I've changed and thinks I want to know you know, jump in bed with her" Diggle laughed, shaking his head

"You aren't are you?"

"NO! She has been helping me with the hood stuff"

"Ohhh I see, does she know it's hood stuff? But surely you're allowed to talk to women"

"No I've been telling her some excuses, and yes I can, just not the ones that could compromise his company"

"Well surely if I'm there then he can't say anything"

"Good point we'll go first thing tomorrow morning"
"Yes Mr Queen" he smiled, Oliver rolled his eyes.
Chapter 6

As planned Diggle drove Oliver to Queen Consolidated to make it look more official and less like he was messing around, he even wore a suit. They arrived at Felicity's office and for the first time he knocked

"Come in" she shouted. As the men walked in they found Felicity on all fours messing around with her computer tower

"Well nice to see you too" Oliver teased, she spun her head around to find the 2 men stood there grinning. She jumped up banging her head on the desk in the process

"Damn it!" She stumbled and Oliver caught her elbow gently helping her to her seat. John smiled he hadn't seen this caring side to Oliver but he closed the door behind him knowing they would need their privacy

"Are you sure you're okay?" Oliver asked for about the 10th time

"Yes Oliver stop fussing, anyway what are you doing here? I thought you weren't working for your dad anymore, I mean not that I don't think you should work here 'cause you totally could I just meant you need a little help and well..."

"Felicity" Oliver smiled, even John chuckled at the young woman's rambling "I want you to meet my acquaintance, driver and bodyguard John Diggle and Diggle this is Felicity Smoak" the two shook hands

"Nice to meet you ma'am"

"Please call me Felicity" he nodded "and you still didn't answer my question"

"Well truthfully I'm here for your help... And I'm in a suit because I was informed of the gossip going around this place"

"Okay and oh, so you heard all the rumours then? I know they aren't true and there quite flattering really, but I mean you and me please. You could have your pick of any woman in this city probably this country to be honest..."

"Felicity" he smiled softly even John noticed the subtly change Oliver had around her, he seemed to relax and be more of himself "I just don't want to compromise your position at my dad's company" she let out a laugh surprising both men

"Oliver that's not going to happen I chose to work here I like it here... Nothing could change that" she smiled "so what help do you need now?" He looked at Diggle there was no way to lie about this one

"My best friend Tommy Merlyn got his drink spiked I need to find out who did it otherwise he could get a criminal record, he's already lost enough" he actually meant what he said and Felicity could tell

"Yeh I saw that on the news but how can I help with that?"

"I just, I wandered if you could get CCTV footage to see who could have spiked him. There is none inside the diner so we're all at a bit of a loss" she could see the genuine pain in his eyes at not being able to help his friend
"Okay, give me exact times and location, plus any other information..." He told her all he knew after 10 minutes Felicity had various CCTV footage from the surrounding areas and a satellite that she probably shouldn't be messing with, Oliver pulled his chair closer

"Right so here's your friend Tommy with a woman"

"That's Laurel"

"Okay" he watched as the pair hugged and he pecked her on the cheek, feeling a little hurt at how close they seemed, then they entered the diner

"Now here's the fun part, they're in there for 2 hours max so they said the drug takes an hour to kick in so we skip to an hour and wait to see who leaves" they watched as 4 people left at various intervals 15 minutes after the spiking

"So we have 4 suspects?" Dig enquired

"Nope" Oliver frowned "We have one"

"How the hell do we have one?" Oliver exclaimed

"Well these 2 are clearly a couple they were there before Tommy and had a meal together before leaving, I mean you can see them sitting near the window. This guy ordered takeout and left, as you can see him carrying the bag. And him he was in there for 15 minutes who goes into a diner for 15 minutes there's no way he ordered food 'cause he's not carrying anything and look at his behaviour, he's constantly looking around like he's up to something..."

"Okay who is this guy?"

"Give me a second" after a few minutes of typing and scanning Felicity pulled up a name and photo "Not a guy, a kid" she turned the screen for him to see Roy Harper. Oliver closed his eyes 16 years old and dragged into this mess, Diggle could tell this was not a good situation and Felicity could feel the atmosphere change

"Thank you Felicity" he said getting up

"Errrm Oliver can we not mention this to anyone I mean what I did was kind of illegal and on work computers too" he couldn't help smirk to himself even Diggle had a smile

"You are remarkable Felicity"

"Thanks for remarking on that"

"I won't mention names or anything I'll just point people in the right direction" she nodded

"But Oliver"

"Yes"

"He is only a kid so be careful who you tell" He nodded and with that he left

"Nice to meet you Felicity"

"You too John" and he left too. After they left the building and got in the car, Diggle thought it was safe to speak
"She was kind of cute"

"Diggle don't"

"I just I see why your father warned you off is all I'm saying"

"Well no offence she's not exactly the type Oliver Queen goes for"

"Yeh the old one maybe not but now"

"She's a friend Dig and my life and love life are a bit all over the place so I'd rather keep her out of it all..."

"Fair point" he smiled to himself though "where to?"

"We're going to have to go to the Foundry and then I'll pay Laurel a little visit"

"As you wish"

Oliver was at Laurels office within 30 minutes he managed to pull a fire alarm and leave her a note to meet him at her apartment hinting about having vital information. She did exactly what he thought she would and went without a second thought. He waited till she was home a good 10 minutes before he turned off all the electricals

"Hello Laurel" he said with his husky artificial voice

"How do you know my name?"

"I know a lot of people's names" she frowned at him clearly trying to figure out who he was under the hood "I have information for you to help with a case..."

"Go on"

"Roy Harper drugged Tommy Merlyn, he's a 16 year old kid with a bad history but I haven't dug deep enough yet to discover why he turned to drugs"

"Then why are you telling me this?"

"So you know and you can prepare Mr Merlyn and I also have the name of the dealer The Count and I will find him"

"And kill him?"

"Maybe, it depends"

"and you'll kill this kid too"

"No he's innocent in all this, a child of circumstance"

"So you aren't a killer?"

"I never said that I wasn't"

"No but this implies you aren't a criminal"
"I'm not a criminal"

"If you aren't a criminal why do you wear a hood?"

"To protect the people I care about, to protect those who could get hurt if they knew the truth or the wrong people knew who I was..." Laurel tilted her head slightly confused

"Thanks for the information"

"Don't mention it" and as fast as he had appeared he disappeared, the electricals all working again. Laurel found herself slightly fascinated at this strange man, a killer who cares.

"How'd that go?" Diggle enquired as he walked into the Foundry

"Fine"

"Now what's the plan?"

"I need to get info on this Roy, see what would make him do something like this then maybe pay him a visit..."

"You do realise you might scare him off"

"Depends on what I find out Diggle"

"I'm guessing you are pretty good with computers yourself then?"

"A little I hacked the police records ages ago, but took me days not minutes like Felicity"

"She's a good asset you know but you should be careful"

"I know I don't want her to get hurt and she won't"

"Good so let's do this" After a couple of hours of searching and Diggle going to get food the two men sat there feeling exhausted

"So how much did you find out?" Diggle enquired

"Too much..." Diggle raised an eyebrow "His dad used to work in the factory my dad closed down, he got ill and not long after he died. Leaving his son and wife to fend for themselves they were okay for a year. But the savings dwindled and his mother suffered depression, then they had to move into one of those tin homes in the roughest of the rough areas. Then she moved from one man to the next, started doing drugs, prostitution and eventually married a man who clearly beats on Roy. So he did what he had to survive. He stole food, money anything to try to help and his grades suffered and he works doing whatever he can, but seems that the stepdad is a dealer and I'm betting his latest craze is vertigo"

"Crap man that's harsh for a 16 year old..."

"He was 10 when his dad got fired, 11 when he died and 12 when his mum went off the rails. He's had a pretty rough life"

"What you going to do man?"
"The Hoods going to have a word, but not a threatening one I need this kid onside"

"Okay but you do realise it's Tommys hearing tomorrow so what you need to get done needs to be done now"

"I'll do it tonight as soon as it's dark"

When darkness took the city Oliver made his way to the rough part of town, he found Roy working at a laundrette stood behind the counter with a black eye. As he made his way out back Oliver followed

"Roy Harper?" The kid froze where he was spinning around to see the hooded figure, there wasn't a look of fear on his face nor a look of anything

"Just do it" Oliver frowned

"He wants you to kill him Oliver" Diggle said in his ear piece able to hear the conversation "all he wants you to do is end his miserable life, his suffering"

"I want to talk... I want to help you"

"Help me! Don't make me laugh no one can help me least of all you, a hero in a mask"

"I'm no hero kid but I need your help bringing your stepfather down..."

"What?"

"He's plagued this city, you, and your mother for too long"

"Don't pretend to know me... You don't want to help me really, unless there is something in it for you right?"

"I don't need to know you Roy, you suffered at the hands of a greedy man who is trying to make it right but then you suffered at the hands of your stepfather. It's obvious where the black eye came from it's written all over your face. And my plan is to get rid of your stepdad which I thought you'd also want" Roy stood there arms crossed who the hell was this man. Oliver knew this kid had trust issues, everyone screwed him over, but he needed to try now not because of Tommy but because he was a kid who suffered at the hands of his father "I understand you don't trust me, but let me put it another way... There are innocent people dying because of your stepfather... The drugs he sells they're dangerous and I don't know how he managed to convince you to do it but spiking that mans drink could have put you in a lot of trouble"

"How do you know about that?"

"Because I have contacts I just need to know why?"

"Why I did it?" He nodded "because there isn't a day that man doesn't hit me, or threaten to do my mum in. If I don't do what he says I'll have to leave her behind and I can't... I know I should but I just I can't... she's still my mum"

"Then do the right thing"

"I don't even know what that is anymore"
"Yes you do Roy, do it tonight... And I'll take care of the rest” he nodded

"I don't know you but this is way bigger than what you think"

"It doesn't matter, go to the police tell them what happened I'll deliver your stepdad and I'll help you and your mother"

"But my mum will go to jail too"

"Maybe but I think she will be offered rehab and I think she needs that..."

"But what about me?"

"You can start again do whatever you want, be whoever you want” without a word Oliver disappeared hoping he would do the right thing

"I think that might have just worked Oliver" Diggle said into his ear

"Lets hope so now I've gotta get his stepdad"

It didn't take Oliver long to find him. He stood there with his hair greased back smoking a cigarette just outside his home. As soon as he stepped inside Oliver took advantage of the situation

"Michael Chase, you have failed this city” He pulled a gun, Oliver grabbed his wrist twisting it caused the gun to fall from his grip and snap his wrist broke

"F**k, you arsehole! You broke my wrist! What the hell do you want? My moneys all in the sock draw just don't hurt me"

"How many times did Roy plead for you to stop?"

"Oh so that brat sent you did he, wanted to intimidate me piece of shit” Oliver pulled out his bow and arrow "Oh whatever” he shot an arrow through his leg he screamed in agony dropping to one knee "stop stop! Fine I hit him okay? He's a little brat who should be thankful I saved his family! So what I hit him, from time to time“ Oliver could feel his anger rising but knew to control it

"You sell vertigo"

"That's nothing to do..." Whoosh another arrow hit the other leg he dropped to the floor in a pile "YES! YES I sell whatever drugs everyone wants and today its vertigo” he aimed another arrow at his head

"Who do you get it from?"

"Some man I don't know who he is but they say the main man is the Count"

"Why did you spike Tommy Merlyn?"

"I didn't!” He pulled back on the arrow a little "FINE! Yes I did I got that punk ass kid to do it because at least if he got caught I wouldn't be involved directly"

"Why?” He said deeply, with anger he could see him squirming

"Because that's what the Count wants and what he wants he gets"

"Why? Why Tommy Merlyn?"
"I don't know all I got was a name and photo and told to spike him, make it look like he took the drug that's all... But the Count doesn't mess around it must be for some reason. Now leave me the hell alone"

"Sorry but I can't" he stepped forward and punched him hard in the face knocking him flat to the ground. He pulled the arrows out of his legs then made his way, carrying him, to the police station.

Roy was just leaving with Detective Lance when they found his stepdad unconscious on the steps a recording arrow landed at their feet. Detective Lance picked it up pressing play they listen to the confession of this mad man

"Looks like you just got off the hook kid" he patted him on the shoulder "I'll get a squad car to take you home, while we process this piece of work and we'll sort your mother, I promise" Roy nodded. When he got home and his mother was settled in the rehabilitation centre, which she voluntarily agreed to go to, Roy sat in silence. Just then there was a knocking at the door he got up to find a duffle bag pinned to the walk with an arrow and typed note

*Kid, here's a couple hundred to keep you going for awhile. Keep it hidden and be something better than this city... The Hood*

He opened the bag to find nearly a thousand pounds he couldn't believe his luck, but one thing he knew he would never be able to thank the man under the hood enough.
Next day Oliver woke up from a peaceful sleep, only one of a handful since his return and he knew it was because he had helped his friend as well as a kid. He got ready into his suit preparing for court and got Diggle to drive him to Tommys, agreeing he would stay outside with the car. When he answered the door he was dressed smartly and grinning from ear to ear

"What's happening?" Oliver said walking in to find Laurel there. He knew what was happening, but he had to hide it

"I've been let off. The kid that spiked me came forward and his stepfather was arrested, said he was told to spike my drink from someone higher up"

"Congratulations man" he replied patting Tommy on the shoulder

"Yes but like I was saying before Oliver came, you need to be careful because we don't know who it was who wanted to drug you" Laurel said clearly concerned

"Laurel it's fine. I've grown up with threats, I'm sure I can cope but thank you for everything" he walked over hugging her tightly. She squeezed back, as both seemed to remember Oliver being stood there they let go looking a little awkward

"Right well I should probably get back to work..."

"Drinks to celebrate later, all of us?" Tommy added grinning

"Maybe I'll see how much work I get done"

"I'll take that as a yes" she rolled her eyes getting ready to leave, Tommy excused himself as the phone rang and Oliver saw Laurel out

"Laurel"

"Yes Ollie"

"Can we talk at some point today?" She smiled. She had promised she would talk to him after stuff with Tommy died down, but she wasn't sure about it this quickly

"Well if we're having drinks tonight..."

"We both know that is not exactly the best time to speak"

"Valid point. How about my flat? At lunch time? I can probably get an hour or so off"

"Yeh that's fine"

"Okay well I'll text you when I'm free. What's your number?" He typed it into her phone then called himself to store hers "thanks"

"See you Laurel"

"See you later Ollie" Oliver stepped back into the apartment, closing the door

"Everything okay?" Oliver asked at seeing Tommy sitting there
"My dad wants me to do some damage control but he's still not giving me the trust fund back. Though I can work for his company again now"

"Wow what did you tell him?"

"I told him to stuff it. That I had my own job now and I don't have to live by his rules anymore" Oliver smiled

"So you're working for me then?"

"Yes if you want me?"

"Of course I do dude!" The two embraced in a manly hug

"When does the official work begin then?"

"Builders have started actually"

"Well then as your business partner and the fact that I actually looked at all the blue prints, I say we head down there. So I can make sure these work men are on form" he grinned cheekily

"What you think these builders are going to walk all over me?" Oliver joked

"Oh Queen you have no idea what people say to the rich sometimes" he winked

"Right then let's get going" The guys got into the car with Diggle, whilst an onslaught of journalists shouted at Tommy for his exclusive of being a free man. He merely smiled at them and got into the car, where Oliver directed Dig to go to the old steel factory.

When they arrived Tommy was like a different person taking command, asking questions, making small alterations and Oliver realised that he was more grown up than he gave him credit for. He was most definitely thankful he had managed to get him on board. After a few hours Oliver received a text from Laurel stating she had some free time, he felt nervous which was odd for him. He replied telling her he'd be there in ten and gave his excuses, telling Tommy he'd see him later for drinks.

Diggle dropped Oliver off and went to get himself some lunch. Oliver made his way to Laurels flat. Stopping outside the door trying to think exactly what he wanted to say. He knew it wouldn't be easy and he knew from Thea, he had been pushing people away. But he also knew he couldn't let her back in. She was too important to him to allow her to be caught up in the Hoods business. He was just about to knock when the door flew open

"Ollie I was literally watching you through the peep hole, I'm not going to bite you know" she smiled sincerely. The same smile from all that time ago. From when he was an actual caring boyfriend and even when he was the cheating idiot too

"I know but we have a lot to..."

"Catch up on?" He nodded rubbing his neck again "come on" she opened the door wide allowing him in. The flat was nice modern yet quaint, exactly Laurels tastes. He smiled to himself making his way into the living room and sitting on one end of the sofa. She joined him on the other and started eating her Chinese

"Do you want some? There's plenty I picked it up on the way here"
"Errrm if you're sure?"

"Of course" she handed him a box and chopsticks. He helped himself to the food.

After 15 minutes of eating in silence, they both sat back feeling awkward.

"Ollie, just tell me what's bothering you because this is kind of awkward" he frowned.

"I was an idiot all those years ago..."

"Yes but with good reason"

"No Laurel please..." She looked a little shocked, nodding him to continue "I've loved you for most of my life and when you finally went out with me you were my first love, my first everything... And I treated you like crap. Yes for the first year it was good, then I kind of started drinking with Tommy and you know it's true. I lied to you about nights out. I made out with loads of girls, your sister included" her expression didn't change she just sat there staring at him "then I got kidnapped, and I changed for the worse. I argued with you. We were off more than we were on. I drank most of the time. I slept around and I cheated on you with your own sister for Christ sake" she still looked at him unchanged "I hurt you all of the time and I never even thought about it until I was gone. Then all I thought about was how I hurt everyone around me especially you... And I am truly sorry for all of it Laurel" he leant forward unsure how she'd react.

"Seems that the island changed Oliver Queen more than we all thought" he raised an eyebrow "telling the truth; that was never your forte but that was sincere and you"

"That's because I did mean it Laurel"

"I forgive you Ollie, I am mad well I was mad..."

"Until you saw me the first day back" she nodded.

"Yes and not because I felt sorry for you. But because whatever you went through out there was far worse than anything I could ever do. I can't believe you cheated on me with Sara! My own sister Ollie... We shared our grief when you were presumed dead, and I finally understood why when she told me the truth... Yes kissing her I could have forgave but you had a full blown affair with her" her voice raised with every word, and he cringed knowing full well he deserved all of this "and what was worse the day you disappeared you broke both the Lance sisters hearts" Oliver closed his eyes "I get why you want forgiveness Oliver and I do forgive you but that doesn't mean I can forget so easily or that I'm still not hurt"

"I understand" and for the first time he did "I just want you to know I am truly sorry"

"I know, I can tell... But Oliver you have changed"

"Yes that's why I was keeping people away from me, away from getting hurt"

"But we won't get hurt..."

"I have seen and done some terrible things. I have changed more than you could possibly imagine... I can barely sleep and eat these days, and you've seen the scars. I don't want people to get involved with this" he gestured at himself "so I've been hiding away"

"Oh Ollie" she edged closer to him on the sofa and put her hand on his knee "you might have changed but it's not all bad... I mean at least this one is honest and nobody will get hurt if you're
"That's what Thea said" he smiled softly "I don't want to be trapped again"

"You aren't Ollie" Without warning the two found themselves in each other's arms in a tight embrace. Lips pressed together. Oliver wanted to pull away but the smell, the touch, and the feel of the past kept him locked with her. After a brief moment she pulled away standing up smiling.

"I have to get back to work"

"Of course" he said standing up about to leave

"But I think we should... talk more" he nodded a little shocked at the kiss and what it could have meant.

Later that night Tommy managed to convince Laurel to join them for a few drinks, in a private booth at a club. It wasn't awkward. It was like the old times. A nice settled routine that was until the club got closed, after yet another club goer had died from Vertigo over does. Oliver used the opportunity to get a sample of the drug by taking the needle the young woman had used. He messaged Diggle to tell him to meet him outside the club. He made his excuses to go, leaving Tommy and Laurel to enjoy the rest of the evening together.

"I see your night didn't end too well" Diggle said as he climbed into the car.

"Nope Dig, but those two can carry on, will you keep this sample hidden?"

"Yes of course, what you doing with it?"

"I'm going to ask Felicity to look at it she might be able to analyse certain components. Figure out where this drugs from, give us a location"

"Good plan but I thought you were taking a step back from her?"

"I know but she's useful... We can keep her safe Dig"

"If you say so Oliver" he replied pocketing the syringe and driving Oliver home.

The next morning Oliver woke up, again putting on a suit to make his visits to Queen Consolidated look more official. He found Diggle waiting by the car and gave Thea a hug goodbye.

"Where's mum these days?" He asked her without much thought, he felt her stiffen beneath him.

"I dunno Ollie; she's always at some function or another. She threw herself into a lot of stuff when you were gone" he could tell that was true, but he also knew that was a lie. She knew exactly where their mother was, but for some reason she wouldn't say.

"Fair enough, I feel I've hardly seen her recently"

"That's because we haven't, where are you going all suited up?" She smiled
"Going to see a friend. Then work on my new project, you so gladly pushed me to do" he smiled

"Good" she squeezed him hard "I'll see you later bye!"

"Bye speedy" he said stepping into the car.

They got into Queen consolidated and made their way to Felicity's office, the door was open so they walked in but she was nowhere to be seen

"Oh well this is a first" Oliver stated out loud "she must be busy somewhere. I'll go check she's in" They walked over to a reception desk in the middle of the IT department to see a red headed woman typing away

"Excuse me" Oliver said softly. The girl practically fell off her chair. When she saw who it was, her eyes glazed over and Diggle chuckled to himself. He found it funny how girls, kind of melted whenever Oliver was around. Like he was some kind of god, which he knew he wasn't and he also believed Oliver had changed from that man these girls all seemed to want. When the girl didn't say anything but stare at him he spoke again

"Is Miss Smoak in today?" She blinked rapidly

"Yes she's in a meeting at the moment with your father, Mr Steele and Miss Rochev" he remembered that name from the bank heist

"Miss Rochev?" He said his eye brows rose

"Yes Isabel Rochev"

"Do you know what the meeting is about?"

"No I'm not important enough for that" she leant forward pushing her elbows together slightly to make her bosom seem more immense "anything else I can help you with Mr Queen?" He didn't even look at her chest, his eyes stayed with hers. He wasn't interested

"Do you know when they'll be finished?"

"Probably another hour or so"

"Okay" he nodded walking off with Diggle on his tail

"That woman just practical fell for you"

"It happens a lot more than you think" he frowned

"Not interested though?"

"No not anymore have too much other stuff to worry about" Diggle nodded, this Oliver Queen was definitely different

"Where are we going?"

"Might as well get some breakfast" Oliver smiled heading to the restaurant next door.
Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

I just want to say that I have my own version of the "Island" that doesn't mean it is the actual island though so you'll have to keep reading ;). Also I just want to reiterate this is a very long multi-chapter story, and it is Olicity, however it is also a very slow burn, so fully prepare for pain, angst, etc (I'm mean I know ;) :p, but I hope you'll think it's worth it ;p)
Also I am planning on adding 28 chapters tonight, just so we catch up to my fanfiction.net updates then updates will be when I can (normally every 2 days).

A while later the men returned to Felicity's office. She was sat there working hard with lots of paperwork all over her desk

"Felicity" Oliver said. She was too busy working, she didn't even notice the men stood there till Oliver repeated her name again

"Fe..lic..ity"

"Oh" she said surprised "Oliver, John" she carried on working but as neither men spoke, she looked up raising an eyebrow "I know you're here for something so spit it out. I have a lot of work to do for your father's company today, that's if it stays as your father's company for much longer" 

damn it she realised that last bit had slipped out her mouth. She saw the confused look on his face "I mean not that you're in any danger of losing the company, though it's a real possibility but I'm sure your dad has it all figure out and he knows what he's doing..." Oliver was again by her side hand on her shoulder

"Breathe Felicity" he smiled, even Diggle smiled at the pairs behaviour "now calm down and slowly tell me what you are talking about?" He let his hand slip from her shoulder slowly

"You should be having this conversation with your father, plus you want something so go on"

"No clearly whatever this is has you rattled so talk to me" he gestured John to close the door which he did "and my problems can wait" he meant it too. He wanted to catch the Count but this clearly was something important as well. He saw different emotions spread across her face till finally she gave in

"Miss Rochev has been buying shares in your father's company she has 45%, anymore and she will have the say over it all. I'm doing the research to figure out how she managed to get so much of the company without us knowing. And yes the company's assets dipped a bit when you went missing, that was understandable, but they've been working hard to pull it back up but it seems some people jumped ship"

"Who is Miss Rochev?" Her name kept popping up too often in random places for Oliver's liking, who is she?

"Isabel Rochev, she's a ruthless business woman. She buys companies then pulls them apart, selling assets to whomever for the best price then moves on to the next. She keeps some companies but not
"And now she's working with my father?"

"Well he doesn't have much choice. He either works with her or he hands the company to her"
Oliver rubbed the back of his neck, eyes closed. Felicity, feeling he needed a little comfort, reached out grabbing his other hand she didn't interlock fingers merely placed her hand around his. He opened his eyes immediately looking at her face "it's okay Oliver" she smiled "we'll figure it out she won't get this company, your company" he actually felt reassured but looked at her hand still in his she followed his gaze. She pulled away cheeks flushing pink "We just need to get some more people invested in the company, but hey that's enough of that. We can sort it, how can I help you?" Diggle who had witnessed this whole event unfold in front of him, couldn't help grin at how these seeming strong individuals had such an effect on each other. He stepped forward pulling out the syringe, Oliver took it from him

"I wandered if you could find out the formula for this... Sports drink... See where I can get it from"
"Sports drink aye" she eyed it up carefully taking the syringe from him "then why is it in a syringe?"
"I ran out of sports bottles..."

"Okay" she knew he was lying but by this point she didn't care all she wanted was to figure out the mystery of Oliver Queen, but she was pretty sure that would figure itself out at some point. Oliver and Diggle were just about to leave when she piped up

"Oh and Oliver..."

"Yes?" He frowned slightly

"I think the club is a great idea" she beamed

"How do you know about that?"

"Your father and Mr Steele were talking about it whilst we waited for Miss Rochev"

"Oh..." Felicity could see the disappointment of a father not praising his son written all over his face

"I think it's a great idea. Something you can really throw yourself into. Something of your own and it won't be easy, nothing that's worth it ever is" she smiled at him "but it will be something to be proud of. Not for your fathers sake but your own" he smiled warmly actually feeling happy about the club rather than using it as cover for his Hood antics "and if you need any help with anything with it. Don't even hesitate in asking"

"Thank you" he said so gently before leaving the office. They walked to the car in silence

"Well your excuses are getting worse man"

"Hey I had to think on my feet" Diggle laughed "and I didn't see you thinking of anything" Diggle laughed harder

"She clearly is either mental or ignoring these ridiculous excuses" Oliver grinned to himself, then he remembered about Isabel and his face dropped

"I need to find out about this Isabel Rochev, her name was on the bank heist stuff... I'm a little worried where this is going especially if she's wrapped in with my father..."
"Well we can do a search when we go to the foundry" Oliver nodded as both men got in the car.

Oliver had to deal with his duties of the day first. Helping Tommy with the builders, being seen out by the press and pretending to be the man he most definitely wasn't anymore. But he spoke to Tommy about the club and he had a wonderful idea

"I think we should make a 3D map or model of sorts. Of the way we want this place to look. The builders are sorting out the structure which should take a week or so. But then the decorators will be in and yes these blueprints are good..."

"But you want something more visual more alive"

"Yes" Tommy grinned

"I might know someone who can help with that but it might take awhile"

"That's fine I mean there is no rush"

"Did you and Laurel enjoy the rest of your evening?" Tommy blushed

"Yes, we just got something to eat and called it a night. You know death dampens the mood" Oliver grinned

"That's fair enough"

"You get your emergency sorted?"

"Yes sort of..." Tommy didn't push or question just smiled and the two went back to checking the finer parts of the business.

It was late afternoon when Felicity called and Oliver was relaxing in his room after a dinner with Thea and his mother, who hardly spoke

"Hey"

"What you got for me Felicity?"

"Well the energy drink" he could hear the change in her voice at the words, knowing she knew he was lying "is made up of various drugs but the water component is from a factory near the water front, one that's supposed to be abandoned... I will text you the address. I presume you want it"

"Thank you" he smiled to himself "Felicity…"

"Yes?"

"Can we meet up tomorrow evening? I have a favour to ask"

"Well normally you just walk into my office giving me whatever tale it is you normally tell. Not that I think you're a liar or anything I mean we all have secrets, which is totally your right..."
"Felicity this is about the club"

"Oh… Ohhhh, okay yeh sure. I have work till late though so I won't finish till like 8” he chuckled he couldn't help it

"How about I meet you at yours about 8.30?"

"Okay I'll take my car..."

"But you live close..."

"Yes but the car will give me extra time before you arrive plus all the paperwork I have at the moment, it's not exactly easy to carry..."

"Okay, I'll see you then"

"Okay bye"

"Thanks again Felicity"

"No big deal Oliver" he hung up looked at the address and text Dig to meet him at the Foundry.

Oliver snuck out unsurprised no one noticed and got to the foundry before Diggle, getting in his outfit ready. He walked in dressed in black with his gun ready
"I got an address"

"Okay..."

"Lets end this" John nodded in agreement both men left; Oliver on his bike and Diggle in his car they parked a few streets away then made the rest of the way on foot. They broke into the factory with ease and knocked the guards out in minutes. They made their way through the mass factory splitting up. Diggle took the ground floor whilst Oliver went upstairs to the offices, as Oliver walked in he felt a thud on the back of his head, and the next thing he knew he was waking up strapped to a metal chair. His hood still covering his face

"Told you we caught him boss"

"Good, we want him alive" Oliver looked at the man he was of average height dark hair and long black coat trying to look like his part of the Count "nice to meet you Hood, I'm the Count and I'm going to take this city as my own" Oliver laughed

"Sorry but someone like you will never do that"

"You shouldn't underestimate me"

"Neither should you with me" in a split second Oliver broke free of the restraints as Diggle burst into the room disarming the two thugs. Oliver had the Count by the throat, just then they heard the factory doors burst open

"Police..."

"Get out of here" he directed at Diggle, he nodded slipping out the back exit
"Oh your little man left you... Not got the courage to truly kill a man..."

"I've killed worse men than you... and even better men"

"Haha you won't stop me you know"

"Freeze" Detective Lance said bursting through the office doors. Gun aimed at the Hood "let him go Hood, come with us peacefully"

"I can't do that..." In one swift move Oliver grabbed the two syringes off the side jabbing them into the Counts neck. Quentin pulled the trigger back slowly and without warning Oliver shoved the Count into him. He then jumped out the window, to his surprise he landed on a car

"Get in!" Diggle shouted. Oliver slid in through the open window as he sped off back to where the bike was parked. Then they slowly made their way back to the Foundry to now raise any attention. Both got changed into their every day clothes

"That was close Oliver"

"I know, I didn't expect the police to find him that quickly just by giving Laurel a name..."

"Well we just have to be more careful and least the Counts been taken care of"

"Yes and thank you John" he smiled at him

"It's okay dude, you'd do the same for me" he smiled back "Yeh I'm gonna leave now before this turns into a man hug moment" Oliver couldn't help but laugh watching the older man leave with a grin.

"How's he doing?" Quentin asked as the doctor came out the room

"The amount of Vertigo in his system should have killed him by now; no other person has survived this amount"

"So he's going to be okay?"

"I didn't say that..." Quentin raised an eyebrow "he's going to survive the overdose but his mental capacity... the drug has affected his brain he's talking nonsense. We'll have to commit him after the drug effects wear off because we cannot know the full extent of his..."

"Insanity" the doctor nodded "So basically he's gone even crazier, so he needs to be locked away..." she nodded "Do what you have to do doc, as long as he's not on the streets that's all that matters" she walked away as another officer approached

"Sir we lost him, he just disappeared..."

"No big surprise really, I'm more surprised he didn't kill this guy"

"He might have if you hadn't walked in"

"Or maybe some things are worse than death..." Quentin and the young officer looked through the room door to see the Count, a broken man screaming, tossing, and turning arms tied down.
The police have now confirmed the Count, creator of the latest drug Vertigo has been detained by police since last night but that his mental state has lead him to be sectioned... And the police are still appealing for information on the Hood who seems to be linked to this case but the police are unwilling to comment on as of yet

Oliver smiled to himself sitting in the living room eating toast, when he heard heels on the wooden floors. Clearly not Thea as she was at school. He heard them heading for the door

"Where are you off to Mother?" He shouted loud enough to be heard. She stopped dead then turned back round heading towards Oliver

"I have a breakfast meet with the girls from a charity" she looked flushed clearly lying

"Oh where are you meeting? And charity? How many exactly do you help now?"

"Just a lovely restaurant in town. Well since you… were gone I wanted to help others. So I joined various organisations helping with fundraisers, galas you know the way it is dear... And just because you're back doesn't mean I should leave them in the lurch" she smiled "I mean parents, and other children need help too, especially after stuff with your... Father" Oliver knew exactly what she meant

"That's really nice of you mum, maybe another time I can join you or help out... I'd like to give back to the city, the people that got caught up in dad's mess" he smiled gently he meant it. She placed a hand on her son's shoulder

"It would be nice of you" she smiled "anyway I'm going to be late and we both know how snooty these ladies can be" he chuckled as she walked to the door and Diggle entered

"Plans for today Mr Queen?" He said knowing Moira was still in ear shot then the door closed. He had a quick glance to see she was in fact gone and nodded at Oliver

"Well Tommy's taking care of the builders today and I'm supposed to ask Felicity to help us do a 3D design but she doesn't finish work till 8. So I can't help there but I can put stuff together for her plus I have to research Miss Rochev and maybe me and you do some sparring in the Foundry?"

"So no fighting bad guys tonight then?"

"No not unless something comes up, because I mean we did take down the Count" he smiled. John was proud they'd taken down a criminal and even more so that Oliver hadn't killed him. Yes he might have jabbed him with his own drug but he wasn't dead, which was a good step

"Are you going to get ready so we can go to the Foundry or are you coming in just your rope and underwear?" He laughed

"I'm not sure the press is ready for seeing this yet" he stood up making his way upstairs.

It took Oliver 15 minutes to get showered, dressed, and downstairs, and another 20 minutes for them to get to the Foundry

"What first?" Diggle said happily

"A bit of exercise? Some sparring and techniques? Then I'll sort out stuff for Felicity, maybe lunch then searching up Isabel"
"Fine by me" they pulled out the mats, dummies and other equipment starting a random exercise routine. Then ending up sparring each other, both learning and teaching the other in their techniques. They respected each other and fought hard, although Oliver did hold back a bit he could easily bring this man down in a few moves but that wasn't the point here.

After a few hours of physical exercise both men got showered and changed in the tiny room Oliver had arranged. Both men looked at each other

"Right you need to arrange this work for Felicity how about I go get us lunch? Any preference?"

"Errrm no get whatever you want and just use my card it's in the car" he nodded taking the foundry stairs 2 steps at a time. Oliver sat there gathering all the paperwork he required for Felicity's help. Later he placed it all in a folder, making various notes about colour schemes and possible 3D models. Then stuck a post it note on the front For Felicity tonight placing it next to the computer on the desk.

Just then Diggle returned and both men enjoyed their food in a peace, something they hadn't felt in awhile since the Count. Once it was all cleared up they began their search on Isabel Rochev. A normal internet search brought up the basics where they needed to start. She was born in Russia, went to school in England then dominated the business industry for about 5 years now. He then decided to do a more in depth search in "criminal" databases, nothing like what Felicity had shown in searching for Roy but it was enough. There was no criminal cases against Miss Rochev though there were suspected links with the Chinese triad and other possible crimes but nothing was confirmed

"So her name was on the bank heist which would have bankrupted your father?"

"Yes but with the sounds of her ruthlessness, it wouldn't surprise me if she had set this up to get my dad's company"

"How many companies has she acquired this last 5 years?"

"I don't know she started off with small companies in this country then moved around the world according to this..."

"Then why is she after your father's business?"

"I don't know... I think that's what I need to find out now"

"Okay man but it is 3 in the afternoon you might wanna think about getting something to eat and a change before you meet Felicity"

"Nah I'll eat with her later. But if you wanna go get food that's fine I'm only going to be here"

"Okay I'll go get some now" the man smiled at him before walking off.

Oliver spent the next few hours trying to find anything about his father and Miss Rochev. When he did find something he was a little taken aback. Just then Diggle walked in. He could see the stern expression on Oliver's face

"What is it man?"

"Miss Rochev was a Queen consolidated employee..."

"What?" He walked closer to Oliver
"She was hired as an intern directly under my father, till one day her contract was just terminated"

"How'd you find out that?"

"It's in the QC records. I mean I have access to them I'd have to do more digging to find out anything else but if my father trained her up why did he let her go? And is he somehow linked into a criminal past with her?"

"I think the only person who can answer these questions, is your father" he crossed his arms "but I'm pretty sure that conversation can't exactly be done with a father son chat..."

"Well neither do I... But can I confront him as our favourite vigilante? Does it warrant it?" Diggle studied Oliver's face the frown lines apparent. Also the apprehension in believing his father to be messed up in something criminal

"Oliver sometimes it's hard to believe the people around us hide things so easily… but you won't know unless you ask"

"I know, I have plenty of secrets"

"Well as long as you don't let them weigh you down, I mean we all need someone or even more than one, to keep us going" Oliver nodded. He knew this life was going to be tough but it only hit him then, with Diggles words, that he actually realised he needed other people and not to do everything alone.
Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oliver made up his mind and suited up heading to QC as the Hood. He checked to make sure his father was going to be alone in his office, before dropping from the corner of the roof with a small thud. Robert spun around as Oliver pulled the arrow back

"Robert Queen, you have failed this city… repeatedly" his voice distorted, Robert stood there expression unchanged

"Yes I have, I've failed everyone around me and I have been spending the last few years trying to make it up"

"It's not enough" again Robert remained unfazed

"It will never be enough… What do you want? My money? Take it all, my business? Well that's looking like it's going to be taken anyway… My life? Then take that too no-one would miss me“ Oliver stayed where he was unable to comprehend how easily his father was giving up

"Who is Isabel Rochev? What is she up to?"

"HAHA so you aren't one of her many men sent to kill me, to finally enact her revenge?"

"NO, what does she want with you?"

"She wants revenge, my company, my life and she won't be satisfied till she has destroyed it all…"

"WHY?" he shouted

"Why does it matter… why do you even want to know?"

"I ask the questions not you…"

"Who are you? Why do you want to know about her? She was just a disgruntled employee, I have many of those" Oliver went to speak but in one fell swoop Robert grabbed a gun from under his desk and fired. It hit Oliver square in the shoulder near his neck. He accidentally released the arrow hitting the desk, causing Robert to duck. Oliver hit the floor hard, winding himself, he could see his father looking from behind the desk and it took all his strength to pull himself out of there.

Felicity left QC a lot earlier than planned due to the attempt on Robert Queens life. It was just gone 6 when they were told to exit, though she was one of only a handful of employees left. She slowly got into her red mini slightly exasperated at the amount of work she still had left to do, when she heard a groan from her back seat

"Ohh!" she exclaimed as she saw the Hood

"I'm not going to hurt you, Felicity"

"How do you know my name?"

"Because you know my name" Oliver slowly pulled back his hood revealing his face to her
"Oliver, oh Wow. Everything about you just became so unbelievably clear" she pulled a surprised face "You're bleeding!"

"It's what happens when someone gets shot"

"You need a hospital!"

"My… my father's old factory, where the new clubs going to be built"

"No, you… you need a doctor, not a steelworker"

"Felicity please trust me"

"I do, but something tells me blood stains are not covered under my lease" Oliver smiled before slumping back moaning "Oliver stay with me okay?"

"Okay" he said softly. She pulled off slowly leaving QC at a controlled pace to not arouse suspicion

"Talk to me Oliver" she looked through her mirror, his eyes were closed "OLIVER" she raised her voice

"Yeh..."

"Tell me about the girl... The girl on the bridge what happened?"

"I... I was drinking..."

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Oliver had dropped out yet another university the fourth now. His father had called him a continuous disappointment and his girlfriend had called things off yet again, but he knew she'd come around she always did. He started off drinking with Tommy trying to forget everything. But now he was on a bridge, bottle of vodka in hand, watching the water of the river below

"I hope you don't plan on jumping, I mean no offence I don't want to jump in the water to save you, not that I wouldn't I just don't wanna get wet in this" he looked at the girl in front of him light brown hair with a fringe and wavy, wearing a tank top and short skirt with red heels

"I'm... I won't jump... Yet" she was by his side in seconds and jumped onto the brick wall sitting with her legs hanging over

"Neither of us are going to jump" Oliver clumsily got up beside her

"Why are you out so late?"

"I was staying at a friend's, their parents came home had a full blown argument. I was asked to leave for a bit, so I did"

"They can't be a true friend..."

"What makes you say that?" She said curiously, blinking furiously

"Because no friend would let you out in as little as that at this time of night" he put the vodka bottle down and slowly pulled his suit jacket off placing it on her shoulders. She was thankful as she was rather cold now. He smiled at her
"I hope this isn't an attempt to get me into bed Oliver Queen" he smiled of course that's what she thinks and of course she knows who I am

"No not tonight... Tonight's been rough don't think someone as fragile as you could manage"

"I'm tougher than I look" she smiled

"Really? Because I am drunk off my face and I can tell these clothes aren't you, and you're blinking a lot I'm guessing contacts... Which makes me think you changed your look for university..."

"I... How can you know that?" She frowned

"Because I've seen enough university girls to tell who changes to be liked... But you know something, girls are way more attractive when they do what they want for themselves" he gave a quirky smile. Oliver Queen playboy and actually a nice human being?

"I just I didn't wanna be seen as a geek" he laughed

"So what? I'm seen as a playboy who cheats and drops out of university. Why pretend to be something I'm not?... I tried for too long to please people and now, now I'm gonna drink it all away" she grabbed the bottle before it touched his lips and threw in to the river. He groaned looking into her eyes "what did you do that for?"

"Because the answers to your problems are not in the bottom of a bottle. I don't know you but there is one thing I do know, if you want to change you have to be the one to start it... You alone have to be the one to change your own future, your destiny and I believe you are more than what the press makes you out to be..."

"What happened next Oliver?"

"I... She..."

"She held your hand didn't she?" Oliver's eyes opened wide

"How can you know that? Nobody knows about that girl nobody..."

"She held your hand and sat with you"

They sat hand in hand, with her head resting on his arm. She rubbed her thumb gently up and down his to comfort him. She could tell this supposed playboy was a broken young man and at the age of 18 herself she felt he needed support, needed a friend, but most of all help

"You know sometimes we all need to stop ourselves to see what damage we're doing... And I think it's time you took charge over your own life, I won't tell you what to do but sometimes change isn't bad" he smiled at her

"I know, it's just big... But..." She looked at him "that doesn't mean you should change you to keep friends. They should accept you as you are"

"You're right" she smiled getting up and pulling Oliver back onto the bridge with her. She hailed
down a passing taxi and placed Oliver inside. She turned to the taxi driver “I presume you know where he lives” he nodded. Oliver wound his window down sticking his head out

“You're right too”

“I know” she smiled

“I never got your name... How will I find you and thank you when I sober up?” She smiled

“You don't need my name and I am sure I will just be a passing ship in your hectic life. So there is no need to thank me” she leant forward giving him a peck on the cheek. She then walked off as the taxi pulled away. She smiled to herself still wrapped in Oliver’s jacket.

"How..." He was hardly speaking now and she was nearly there

"Because I was that girl Oliver. I was going to tell you but I could never find the right time and I... I thought it was just... I didn't think it meant anything, not that it did or does, I mean it's just coincidence we met again..." She pulled up Oliver was completely unconscious now.

So far the police are unwilling to comment, but eyewitness reports claims that the vigilante attacked Mr. Queen in his office earlier tonight. He was unharmed in the assault.

Diggle sat watching the TV on the computer monitor screen tutting where was Oliver he wondered

"Excuse me. Can you help me? He's really heavy!" Diggle spun round in a second to see Felicity stood there, her purple cardigan drenched in blood. He ran up the stairs pulling Oliver down and dropping him on the silver table

"Oh, damn it. He just missed a carotid. It's a zone two wound" he said it more to himself than Felicity who clearly didn't understand "Press there" Felicity did exactly what he said, pressing all her weight into his shoulder

"I should have taken him to a hospital" she stammered nervously

"No, Felicity, that's why he asked you to bring him here, because he knew the police would want to know how and why he got the wound"

"I'm guessing how and why are Oliver Queen's least favourite questions"

"Yeah, well, there's also when and where he's not too fond of" he was making a joke it couldn't be too bad right?

"So if we can't take him to the hospital, we bring the hospital to him" Diggle exclaimed pulling a tray of medical equipment forward, before going off to the other side of the room returning with a bag in hand

"Is that..."

"Yeah. His blood, he stored it for a rainy day and I say right now, it's pouring" He set up the infusion, then told Felicity to stop applying pressure so he could retrieve the bullet "I got it" he held the bullet up with the forceps "Over there" he commanded pointing to a bowl, he dropped the bullet in before getting a needle and thread
"Do you know what you're doing?"

"Yeah, I had some medical training in the army. I just hope it's enough" he could see the pained look on her face "Remember playing *Operation* when you were a kid?" He tried to make it a little light hearted

"Yes and it never made me want to throw up"

"Hey, Felicity, listen, trust me. He'll be fine. He's been through a lot worse than this" her eyes fell onto Oliver's bear chest the scars, the marks, he looked truly broken.

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*Beep beep. The sound of a horn brought Oliver back. The next thing he knew he was being pulled out the taxi and into his house, straight into his father's study in one of the leather seats by the fireplace*

"For god sake Oliver! When are all these stupid antics going to stop" Robert was angry and then suddenly he saw his sons face sober up quickly

"I'm done dad I'm done!"

"What's that supposed to mean?" Robert said arms crossed over his chest, Oliver didn't look at his dad instead watched the flames flicker

"I have spent my life trying to get you to notice me, trying to make you proud but I'm done! I thought when I was kidnapped; I was dead for sure because I wasn't certain you'd pay. Then when you did I thought you'd be different, but I was wrong" he started loosening his shirt "I was damaged dad. Do instead of dealing with it, I became worse. Instead of talking I got drunk" he pulled his shirt up, turning slightly showing the lashes and scars on his back. Robert had tears in his eyes it was entirely his fault "I need to get away from here, from everything. I need to change... Grow up"

"Oliver..."

"It doesn't matter dad I just need to leave"

"I'll sort it..." Oliver pulled himself up wobbling towards the door "Oliver?" he turned around slowly "I would never let you die, ever and I am sorry this happened to you because of me..."

"It's okay" Oliver was too tired to argue more

"I'll call in a few favours but Oliver..."

"Yes?"

"If you leave, you'll have to disappear. It will be as if you're missing..."

"What about mum and Thea? Tommy and Laurel?"

"None of them can ever know. You need a break from all of this drama but they can't know about my... Contacts"

"But..." Oliver thought about it, about the young girl, only you can change you. He needed to do this, he knew it would hurt the people he loved, but if he didn't go he'd hurt them even more "fine but I will come back when I'm..."
"Better" Oliver nodded "And I will welcome you back son, but no-one can know I helped you leave and you can't contact us whilst you're gone..."

"His heart rate's elevated, but at least the bleedings stopped" Diggle directed at Felicity "Thanks for your help. You kept your head on"

"Well, I always wondered how I'd react if I found my boss shot and bleeding inside my car. Not that I helped because he's my boss. I'd help anyone who was shot and bleeding in my car..." she took a breath stopping herself from rambling further "I was thinking all of this would be more of a shock" Felicity admitted looking at Diggle

"What? Are you saying you called this all along?"

"I'm not saying anything. Except Oliver brought me a government encrypted USB stick, with plans of bank robberies that the Hood happened to stop. He asked me to search for who spiked Tommy and the Hood conveniently managed to help in that too. I may be blonde, but I'm not that blonde Dig" she smiled

"Yeah, Oliver's not too great with the cover stories"

"Well you didn't exactly help. The two of you with that whole energy drink thing. What was really in that needle, anyway?"

"Vertigo"

"I knew it! I mean, I didn't know it was Vertigo for sure, but I definitely knew it wasn't a damn energy drink!"

"Yeah, we needed it analysed so we could take down the Count"

"That was you and Oliver?"

"And you Felicity. Without you, we never would have found him" she was genuinely surprised by his admission

"But why come to me?"

"Hard as it probably is for him to admit, even Oliver needs help sometimes" she smiled she knew too well he did, from the bridge to having Chinese in her flat, he still needed help. The heart monitor attached to Oliver's chest started beeping erratically then suddenly silence

"His hearts stopped"

"I'm calling an ambulance"

"No. Wait, you can't" Diggle pulled a defibrillator out from under the stairs

"You know how to use one of those?" Felicity asked a little taken aback

"We are about to find out" the machine beeped but nothing happened as the paddles hit Oliver's chest

"You didn't say clear" Diggle looked at Felicity then at the paddles. She didn't hesitate she moved to
the machine messing with the wiring inside "Try again" she said with force making Diggle look at her a little differently

"Clear" he said this time, they both stared at the monitor till it started beeping again

"What the hell did you do?"

"I've been building computers since I was seven. Wires are wires" she shrugged like it was no big deal "What do we do now?"

"Pray we don't have a heart attack ourselves" she smiled lightly.

The small aircraft had been carrying Oliver for hours and when it finally landed he was welcomed by a Chinese man. He didn't look like a man he associated with his father

"Yao Fei" he extended his hand to Oliver and they shook hands

"Oliver Queen"

"I know who you are" he smiled "I hope you're ready to learn and work hard"

"Actually I am but..."

"How do I know your father?" Oliver nodded "we're old friends from 2 very different worlds he helped me build this village, my village, when he stumbled upon us in his younger days" he extended his arm to show the few dozen buildings around "you're going to help us rebuild and I'm going to teach you..."

"Teach me what?"

"How to be a stronger, better man... A fighter, a survivor, anything you need to be"

"How?" Oliver frowned

"Patience and hard work... We'll toughen you up..." He nodded he had no idea what this man meant, then it hit him

"We..." Just then he noticed 2 people stood behind him. A woman with long black hair tied back, slim, pretty but very tough looking. And a man with dark hair, tanned face looking even tougher and scarier with his large muscles clearly visible under his shirt

"My daughter Shado and an associate Slade Wilson" both stepped forward shaking his hand

"Nice to meet you" he smiled, she smiled back speaking softly

"We are definitely going to toughen you up..."

"Yes kid, you need it here" Slade had an Australian accent seeming very out of place in this tiny Chinese village.
"God damn it Oliver" Diggle said after having to restart his heart for a second time. He turned to see Felicity looking at Oliver's equipment.

"This bow has put arrows in quite a few people"

"Yeah, bad people"

"That doesn't bother you? Because… and I mean this in a good way, you seem like the kind of guy it would bother" she couldn't help asking the question

"When I was in Afghanistan, my unit was tasked with protecting this local war lord. One day, we were accompanying him when my convoy was ambushed by insurgents. Fire fight didn't last more than a minute. When the smoke cleared, I moved in on their position. They were all dead. I knew which one I had killed. When I pulled off his mask, I could see it was just a kid, no more than 18. Shot him in the throat. I killed this kid to protect this human piece of garbage, and I thought, am I still good? Am I still a good man? Doing this with Oliver; doing what we do, I feel good again for the first time in a long time. Plus it helps him like I couldn't help my brother..." Diggle had revealed a lot more about himself than he intended, but he needed Felicity to understand what things happen to make a man come to this decision

"And that's worth all the collateral damage?"

"I haven't killed anyone, if that's what you're asking" Diggle felt he needed to defend himself

"But he has" she said softly looking at him with a pained expression

"Unfortunately, there are always casualties when you're fighting a war... And I'm trying to help him..."

"By letting him be a killer?" He smiled at her

"Some things aren't always as black and white as that, but I'm trying to make him see it isn't always the way..."

"I've been here 3 months, building, fighting, training, and hitting water... What is this all for?" Oliver was frustrated

"You need to control your emotions" Shado smiled "it helps you have control over many things"

"But how is hitting water going to help?"

"Do I have to repeat this every day?" Oliver frowned he knew the speech off by heart "The palms will be sensitive to a bow and arrow, you chose this weapon and you will train as I say seeing as it is my weapon to start with! You don't argue with my father or Slade when they show you how to hunt, build and fight hand to hand combat so why question me?"

"I know I know... Sorry" he smiled at her "I promise I am taking it all seriously, I want this, I want to know how to do this"

"Here" she placed the bow and arrow in his hands

"Really?" She nodded. He took an arrow from the quiver, placing it on the bow stretching back with much more ease than he had when he tried this the first time
"Steady your arm" she came over placing him into a better position "Regulate your breathing, look at the end of the arrow to aim and try and hit the target" Oliver took a deep breath then released the arrow. It landed dead centre of the target, he cheered jumping around. Shado smiled but then it quickly faded "Good now we just have to work on moving targets, you moving and shooting and firing multiple ones..." Oliver's smile soon disappeared. He knew this would be desperately hard, harder than anything he had ever done. But he actually felt like he was doing something for the first time in his life and he would see it out till the end.

"I guess I didn't die... again. Cool" Oliver said sitting up slowly, rapping the blanket around himself

"It's not bad" Diggle replied referring to his wound

"So how am I going to explain this one? Hickey gone wrong?" He joked before his eyes met Felicity sat at his desk

"The police collected a sample of your blood at Queen Consolidated. I just hacked the crime lab and ordered the sample destroyed... Oops" she smiled and he smiled in return

"Heh" it escaped his mouth as he looked at the new computer system with a frown

"I hope it's all right. Your system looked like it was from the eighties and not the good part of the eighties, like Madonna and, well, leg warmers"

"That's a lot of work. Does that mean you're in?"

"You mean in as am I going to join your crusade?" She stood up now

"Well, you're practically an honorary member of the team already" he smiled softly

"Hmm. So Mr. Diggle's told me..." She stood their frowning "No..."

"Then why'd you upgrade my system?" He sound angrier then intended but that didn't seem to bother her

"First, because seeing a network that poorly set up hurts me in my soul. And second I don't want to kill people..." Oliver frowned not quite understanding

"You wouldn't be killing people..."

"No but you would, with the information I give you..." He didn't know what to say, she was right and he couldn't argue with that

"But some of these people are dangerous..." She looked at him, she saw the look in his eyes, and there was still something in there a soul of sorts she thought. Dig was right he needed help; he needed reminding of the good in life and not just the bad. In that second she made her mind up. She was going to remind him he was more than the broken, tainted killer he believed

"Okay..." He frowned even more "I'll help you; I'll get things started and help you as much as I can" he smiled a little "but..." The smiled faded again "when you don't need me I will to go back to my boring life of being an IT girl. That's my offer."

"Ok" he didn't even hesitate
"So I've been meaning to ask is there a bathroom? 'Cause I've had to pee since I got here" Oliver couldn't help laughing and she smiled in response it was nice to see him like that

"It's upstairs to the left"

"Great" she moved passed him towards the stairs

"Felicity" he said it so softly. She turned around smiling, he grabbed her hand squeezing lightly
"Thank you"

"No problem" and with that she ran upstairs

"Oliver, I know you don't want to hurt this girl and you didn't have any choice in telling her who you really were, but we're asking her to get involved in some pretty dangerous stuff"

"We can protect her" Diggle frowned

"How? Your father just shot you, Oliver. You can't even keep yourself safe"

"He was scared and defending himself"

"Or, he was hiding something"

"Diggle, I know he's not working with Rochev but he wouldn't tell me why she wants to get revenge. So he's definitely hiding something but we all have our secrets..."

"I know Oliver but where your fathers concerned I think we should be careful"

"I'm always careful where my father's concerned and I mean it Dig we can protect her"

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoyed the "island" explanation however I do have to say that everything that happens whilst Oliver is there is not approached in this story (these are the only flash backs to that I'm afraid, but we do learn more later on, but you'll have to keep reading to get that :) :P)
I just felt the need to add this after reviews on ff.net :) but yeh I hope you are enjoying this :D
Chapter 10

Oliver got home expecting the police and his family but instead it was silent. He went straight to bed, waking in the late morning to find Thea watching TV, dressed and eating breakfast

"Where have you been?" She said as Oliver walked in rapped in his robe

"Bed... Why?"

"Haha. I didn't mean now I meant last night! Dad got attacked by the vigilante!"

"What?" Oliver raised his voice and tried sound shocked; he could sell this easily to Thea "I was sorting out stuff for my idea, a lot of ground work... Is he okay?"

"Well I tried calling but it kept going to voicemail... Yes he's fine luckily"

"Sorry I didn't even notice. Thank god, what happened? Where is he?"

"It's okay and I dunno just that he was in dads office demanding money. So he shot him but somehow the police lost his blood sample. So yeh dad was pissed and to be honest so was Detective Lance" thank you Felicity is all he could think in that moment "dad went back to work like it was no big deal. Mum stayed here with me and this morning I dunno maybe she's gone to see dad at work or whatever"

"Wow I can't believe the police were so careless! We'll have to step up security. And typical dad, always putting work first" the last sentence came out a little harsher than he wanted but Thea just gave him a knowing look "so everyone's fine then?"

"Yes and dads already upped security the same firm your body guards from" she pointed to several men outside "you up to much this weekend?"

"Oh, good plan and not really maybe I can hang out with you?" her face changed immediately from a grin to a sympathetic look

"I have plans Ollie, sorry"

"Thea I'm your big brother, do not apologise for having a life when I clearly don't…"

"Well I don't think you'd appreciate spending the weekend with me and my girlfriends in Disneyland Paris…"

"What! You're going to Paris?"

"Yes mum okayed it and yes I am taking security, and the private plane. It's only for today and tomorrow" he couldn't believe how quick his 14 year old sister was growing up

"Okay Speedy but stay safe… please"

"Of course" she hugged him tightly getting up. He had to hide his wince when she caught his wound "maybe you can concentrate on your project, or go out with Tommy or maybe… Felicity" she said her name slowly making a point, seeing as Oliver hadn't mentioned her since the first day

"Good options, thanks for giving me a life" he winked intentionally ignoring the Felicity bit because he was not going there. She laughed shaking her head as she left. Oliver sat there awhile before
figuring out what to do. Then he remembered how he was supposed to ask Felicity about the 3D design idea and get back to Tommy

"Crap!" he said to himself. He hurriedly had a shower and got changed into a simple T-shirt and jeans. He text Diggle to tell him he wouldn't be needed today as he had no plans other than to see Felicity and maybe Tommy. Then he called Tommy no answer

"Hi I can't get to the phone right now, I'm probably asleep or busy but you know what to do"

"Hey Tommy, I'm going to try and sort out the 3D designs today. If you give me a quick call when you're available I'll let you in on the loop" he hung up getting on his bike and off he went.

He stood outside Felicity's flat again debating whether to knock. He had surprised and probably scared her last night. It was 11 in the morning, she might have friends round or be out. Then he stopped himself, why was he panicking so much, so he took a deep breath and tapped 3 times. When the door flew open Felicity was stood there in her pink onesie, spoon in her mouth and mint chocolate chip ice cream in her arms. He looked from the ice cream to her face

"I stress eat…" she felt the need to explain "come in" she opened the door wide and Oliver stepped in closing the door behind him. Without even a word she went over to the draw pulled out another spoon and handed it to him. She then offered the ice cream and Oliver couldn't help but take a spoonful

"I'm sure you didn't come here to eat my ice cream, so I presume it's about last night…" he smiled at her, of course she thought that

"Well I wanted to make sure you were okay?"

"Me okay? You're the one who got shot… are you okay?" he laughed he couldn't help it. She could see the flicker in Oliver's eyes, the one she liked so much which showed he was a good person

"I am fine… Actually do you have a first aid kit?" Felicity dropped the ice cream and spoon on the counter

"What's wrong?" she immediately pulled another draw open full of various first aid equipment. He looked at the draw full of various, bandages, drugs, medicines, plasters and creams

"Why do you have so much stuff?"

"Accident prone over here, again what's wrong?" she looked at him harder

"I probably need a new bandage on this thing" he pointed to his shoulder "I had a shower and got ready so quick I didn't think about it"

"Oh okay, well whatever you need" she smiled. Oliver pulled his shirt off not thinking about it. Felicity's eyes couldn't help but wander over his abs, quickly she realised she was staring and her cheeks flushed "need any help? Oh god I mean with the bandage not the whole taking clothes off thing, not that you'd want my help…"

"Felicity" he smiled softly "it would be much appreciated"

"Okay... But I have to say I have no idea what I am doing..." Oliver smiled taking something's from
"Antiseptic wipe to clean the wound and stitches a bit... Then put on that antibiotic stuff to stop infection then cover with the new bandage" she nodded

"Okay I'll try not to hurt you" she carefully used the antiseptic wipe which made him flinch slightly and she could feel how tense he was. He could feel the delicate touch of Felicity which was much better than when John treated him, and he couldn't deny it felt nice having a woman tend to his wounds. But he couldn't relax his guards were well up. Gently she applied the antibiotic stuff then placed a clean bandage on top softly pressing the edges down. When she had done Oliver took a look at her handy work and pulled his T-shirt back on so Felicity would focus more. He tried to pretend he hadn't seen the way she looked at his torso because "no way" was he going there after last night

"Thank you" he smiled

"No problem, I'm guessing you didn't come here for that so what can I help you with Oliver?" She said placing all the things back in the draw. All the dirty things in the bin and washing her hands

"Well I was going to ask about what I was coming to see you about last night before…” he points to his shoulder, she smiled walking over to the sofa

"You mean the 3D design of your club you want me to make?"

"How did..." She lifted up a folder

"It was on your desk last night. So not only did I update your system, I started on this and I finished it this morning all it needs is yours and Tommy's approval and yes before you start I can alter it..."

"Wow" was all that managed to come out. How could this girl, no woman, have saved his life, come to terms with his secret identity, updated his system, agree to help him and do this 3D model in less than 24 hours. He smiled broadly and Felicity found she liked this smile, one which seemed so truthful and genuinely happy

"Seriously Felicity you are remarkable"

"All in a nights work I suppose" she smiled chuckling at herself; she put her ice cream away and spoon in the sink. Just then his phone rang

"Hey Tommy"

"Hi man, what's up?"

"I was calling to say that the 3D model is nearly done and just needs a few tweaks... Just give me a sec..."

"Okay..." He turned to see Felicity making her way back to the sofas

"Would you mind coming with me to Tommy's? You know sort out the last few bits and we can get lunch on the way there and eat at his..." She looked at her attire, then back at him

"Errrm okay, but only if it's okay with him and I need to get ready too so no rushing around..." He nodded returning to the call

"Tommy, my friend Felicity who has done the model for us, wants to make sure I can bring her to
yours to finish it 'cause she doesn't want to impose... And we'll bring lunch too" Tommy burst in to laughter

"Seriously? Women are crazy sometimes... If she did the model I'm pretty sure it's vital she's here and also Felicity hey, you haven't mentioned her before?"

"He says of course it's fine you created the thing for us" Oliver turned to Felicity

"I didn't want to impose, I'll go get ready" and with that she went to her bedroom closing the door

"Errrm didn't answer my question Queen?"

"She's the best IT... Expert in QC she helped me when I was there"

"I bet she did!" He could hear the tone in Tommy's voice but he didn't want people thinking that it could tarnish her reputation

"Tommy seriously it's actually not like that... She's a friend and I mean it Tommy"

"Wow I've never heard you sound that serious about a girl"

"She's a woman Tommy and her friendship means a lot, like mine and yours. She helped me with my father and we both know..."

"Oliver it's okay dude I was just messing she clearly means a lot to you..."

"It's not that Tommy, my dad basically said he thinks we're sleeping together he said as much, which we aren't, but I don't want my reputation to tarnish hers"

"I get it. It's okay. I understand about the past antics effecting things now..." Oliver could feel his friends' jokey demeanour slipping slightly

"Tell me about it..."

"That's why we want this business to work, prove we are actually better than what people think"

"Totally!"

"That means we need the best, so if Felicity is that then I will welcome her without the insinuations"

"Thanks dude, we'll get some food and be over soon"

"Okay see you in a bit, gives me a chance to look smart for your female companion" he could feel happy Tommy returning, Oliver chuckled

"I'm not setting you up either I'm afraid, your reputation's as bad as mine"

"Hey!" Oliver laughed again "but fair point. Anyway I don't know what she looks like might not be my type at all"

"Who isn't your type Tommy?" he joked back

"Fair point see you later" and they hung up.
Another hour later, after much protest from Felicity about going on Oliver's bike in her skirt and him cramming himself into her mini, which she had somehow managed to be cleaned already and then arguing over food, they arrived at Tommys. Oliver carried the food whilst Felicity carried her precious babies her laptop and tablet. He knocked on the door and their stood Tommy in his blue shirt and jeans. He smiled at Oliver with the food, then his head turned to the pretty blonde at the side of him in her tank top and skirt, and his smile widened

"Welcome, come in" Felicity stepped in then Oliver. Tommy gave him a shocked expression mouthing nice with a wink, Oliver rolled him eyes as Tommy closed the door. He placed the food on the kitchen counter whilst Felicity set her laptop and tablet on the coffee table

"Tommy Merlyn meet Felicity Smoak, Felicity Smoak meet Tommy Merlyn" Oliver smiled as the two shook hands

"Nice to meet you Felicity" Tommy said kissing her hand. She blushed and Oliver gave Tommy a dirty look

"Nice to finally meet you Tommy"

"Well are we eating first or getting to business 'cause I don't know about you two but I could eat a cow... Not a literal cow that would be weird and gross, can you imagine it, wait don't imagine it I'm gonna stop in 3...2...1" Both men laughed

"Lets' eat then" Tommy grinned "we don't wanna risk any cows lives" he winked at Felicity; she rolled her eyes at him.

They all ate their food watching trashy TV, laughing and joking until it got to the serious nature of business. Felicity used a projector to show them her handy work, and both guys were amazed at how it looked exactly how they envisioned. They spent all afternoon arguing over colour schemes until Felicity had had enough, she made the floors black, adding blue and green lighting with some red of hers thrown in, giving the place a mixture of everything they wanted

"It's perfect..." Tommy smiled

"Now a name?" Felicity smiled feeling proud of herself

"Verdant..." Felicity looked at him a little shocked but smiled

"Verdant?" Tommy questioned "I thought you'd call it Queens"

"Verdant is a way to describe lush grass, the colour of it that is" Felicity grinned knowing it was a hint to the hooded figure Oliver became at night

"Right..." Tommy said eyebrows raised

"It was my way of saying a fresh start, the grass is always greener and all that stuff, well this is our own wonderful lush patch where the grass will always be green" he smiled at Tommy. He meant it but he also thought it was ironic for its basement lair underneath, and he knew Felicity got it from her reaction

"Sounds great to me" Tommy smiled. She tweaked the model adding Verdant as the name on a red background with silver writing and a large V looking like an arrow edged with green lights. She looked at Oliver and winked. His smile was genuine again. He liked this private joke between them it made him feel like even though Tommy had flirted with her relentlessly she was still his, well not his but his friend
"Perfect" Oliver grinned "thank you so much Felicity"

"Yes thank you!" Tommy hugged her and she hugged back

"God guys you act like I just gave you a million pounds each" they laughed "anyway I need to use the ladies..."

"Just down the hall second door to the left" she nodded and they heard her heels fade away "Jesus Christ this is amazing... She's... Wonderful no wonder you like her so much" Oliver raised an eyebrow "I know not like that! But I mean woman's a genius, funny, awkward in a good way, makes a memorable impression, sweet, kind, and cute... Hell I'd go as far as to say sexy with the way she types on that thing" Oliver laughed

"You got all that from a couple of hours with her?" He said playfully

"Like I say she makes a memorable impression... Plus the amount of girls we've been with, how many were like her?"

"Like her?" Oliver said confused with the statement, which part of her?

"Pulls us up on our own shit, but still lets us makes the decisions... She's honest but she also doesn't take any of our charismatic bullshit... None of those girls not even Laurel could with stand the appeal. But she just sat there, with both of us and managed to resist it, and create this. Even when we both tried to charm our ways into getting what we wanted..." Oliver smiled his friend was right she was different but that's why he valued her friendship most

"Do you get why she's important now?"

"Hell yes! I won't say another word but Ollie she is amazing" Oliver smiled as she entered the room again "Miss Smoak seriously you have earned a spot on our VIP list forever!" Tommy winked

"Does that include free drinks?" She teased back

"You'd have to ask the owner about that" he winked looking at Oliver who was grinning

"We'll see" Oliver smiled back "anyway seeing as it is nearly the evening, we should probably get Felicity back home and sort this stuff out for the decorators. When are they coming?"

"Decorators are coming Monday because the builders are actually ahead of schedule"

"Well I'll make a copy of everything including colour names and where to buy them cheapest, every little helps even if you are rich" he grinned

"Technically only one of us is rich" Tommy smirked

"How about this, when everything's done I take us all out to a nice posh restaurant, no expense spared and thank you both for your hard work and dedication" he smiled at the two people who he called friends

"Yes" they said in unison

"Right I'll see you soon man and Miss Smoak lovely to meet you and hopefully I'll have the pleasure of your company again soon" she smiled blushing slightly at Tommy's flattery

"Likewise Mr Merlyn" she hugged him lightly as she held her babies
"See you Monday dude"

"Indeed" they patted each other on the shoulders and made their way to the door. As they opened it Laurel was stood there her smile fading as she saw Felicity

"Hey Laurel..." Tommy said smiling "Ollie and Miss Smoak were just leaving"

"Oh hi"

"Laurel Lance, Felicity Smoak" Oliver gestured between the two ladies

"Nice to meet you" Felicity said extending a hand, Laurel took it only lightly with one shake "I'm helping the guys with some IT stuff for the business..."

"Oh I'm just here with some paperwork for the business..." Oliver raised an eyebrow "it's to do with Tommy's contract nothing to worry about"

"Miss Smoak was helping with the 3D design of the club and she was amazing!" Tommy said grinning and Felicity blushed feeling like she was in the middle of an awkward romantic encounter

"Oh how'd you guys meet?" Laurel said with a little bitterness

"She works at QC, helped me a lot when I was working there. She's a friend and IT expert so when Tommy suggested a computerised 3D model I asked Felicity and here we all are" Felicity smiled to herself. She could tell Oliver meant it when he said friend. But she also knew the rest was definitely added to make Laurel realise they weren't sleeping together, which made her heart slump a bit taking her by surprise. But obviously Laurel and Oliver had a deep history

"Well lovely to meet you Felicity hopefully I'll meet you again soon if you're a friend and helping the guys" she smiled more warmly this time, evidently Oliver's words had calmed her

"Yes of course, depends if my IT skills are required with this computer challenged pair" she giggled and so did Laurel, Felicity took this as her cue to leave and made a bee line to her car. Oliver smiled at Laurel. He could tell she was thinking that they were sleeping together, but for Felicity's sake he wasn't going to let her think that, so he said goodbye leaving the pair to it.
Chapter 11

Oliver spent the whole weekend with Felicity. She did as asked and set up files for the decorators; including a list of where to buy the cheapest materials. They spent time in the lair making alterations to most of the security systems Oliver had put in place, as though they were effective, they could easily be hacked revealing his secret.

Oliver never mentioned the bridge matter after Felicity admitted it was her. He could tell she was debating to talk about it all weekend. But he didn't want to, not yet, because it meant she'd need more explanations; which right now he didn't want to divulge. So he kept her at arm's length with that information instead talking to her about the Hood activities. He told her all about Isabel Rochev and her involvement in bringing down his father but with no idea why. Then about various bad guys, including the kid he helped, anything but the time they actually first met.

A week later the club was complete. It had been a slow week for the Hood catching a few petty criminals, but not killing any to prove to Felicity it wasn't about that. Oliver spent some time with Thea and his mother, informing them of his club plans and inviting them to the grand opening on Saturday night. Both seemed happy and pleased, though Thea wasn't impressed when Oliver made it clear the staff had been informed to serve her no alcohol.

He and Tommy sent out all the exclusive invites for VIPs and left the rest to the public. It wasn't hard to promote. As most people wanted to see them fail, or at least make fools of themselves. But Felicity was there for both men, making sure all would go off without a hitch.

So Friday night. seeing as business as the Hood was slow, Oliver sent Diggle home early and took Felicity and Tommy out.

"Where are we going? I need to know to dress appropriately... I can't exactly wear jeans and a T-shirt or a tight fitting dress for a good meal or if we go dancing..."

"Felicity I am taking you and Tommy for something to eat, it's really no big deal"

"Yeh but where? Is it an expensive one 'cause I don't wanna feel out of place..."

"Felicity you're with me and Tommy you won't be out of place..."

"But..."

"Smoaky wear a nice dress that will cover all sorts of occasions, and we are doing this discreetly. So there will be no press, no prying eyes, so no need to be nervous" Tommy cut them both off calmly

"Okay thanks. I told you, you should give me a time, so I knew when to be ready by! Rather than you both turning up here in suits" she said shaking her head going into her room closing the door behind her

"Seriously dude, I know she's your friend and all that, but she's still a bloody woman" Oliver raised an eyebrow "I mean in the sense of they need to know plans to dress accordingly. We just throw on suits and bam we're ready. But girls, even IT ones, like to look stunning" he smiled at his friend

"Fair point... I also forget we're the supposed playboys of this city and what that must be like for her" his smile faded

"Dude she knows we aren't like that, all the time" he winked "but seriously she knows what it's like with just us, you have to remember our private lives aren't always exactly private and she's getting pulled into that..."
"I know that's why I made it all discreet and backdoors, you know the drill" he smiled, and Tommy
  gave him a knowing look "I'll apologise" he got up off the sofa and gently tapped on Felicity's
  bedroom door

"Come in" she replied after some time

"I'm sorry I don't think about how different our lives are and..." He stepped in to see Felicity wearing
  a blue figure hugging dress the same colour as her eyes, her legs seemed longer than usual and he
  completely lost his train of thought

"It's okay... I was just freaking out for no reason" she saw his face, there was no smile just a blank
  look "guessing I chose the wrong dress?" Her expression fading slightly

"No" he said back with force, her eyes widening "you look amazing" his smile came wide now "and
  I am being serious"

"Thank you" she blushed turning away from him pulling her bobble out her hair, letting it cascade
down her shoulders. She brushed it to make it look smarter, then she pulled off her glasses and used
contacts instead

"I am sorry, but we're just going to a nice Italian restaurant. We'll have a private booth in the back
away from prying eyes but if you wanna go dancing after that's okay with me" he smiled at her as
she finished getting ready

"Oliver it's all good with me, as long as I have you and Tommy for company I'm good" she smiled
applying the last bit of her makeup. She put on her silver heels to match her makeup and stood in
front of him smiling

"Same to you Felicity" she walked out her bedroom and Oliver followed. Tommy wolf whistled

"Looks like Smoaks smoking!" She blushed

"Oh shut up you" she said tapping him slightly with her clutch

"Hey I ain't even joking am I Queen?" He smiled in his direction noticing the smile he had plastered
on his face

"He really isn't Felicity, you look beautiful" she flushed even further now

"Well you 2 don't scrub up too bad yourselves" she winked

"Oh we know we don't" winked Tommy as he stood up placing an arm around her shoulder
jokingly, she shrugged him off laughing making her way to the door.

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They got into the restaurant via the back entrance no press and nobody stared. Yet Felicity couldn't
help feeling out of place and uncomfortable especially when she noticed the prices. She couldn't help
going quiet and fidgeting nervously. She was sat in the middle of both men in this booth when Oliver
placed his hand on hers squeezing lightly

"Felicity I am paying, the prices don't matter. Relax. Seriously it's just me and Tommy, like when we
were at his" she returned his warm smile nodding and somehow she felt herself relaxing under his
touch. They ate and drank a lot more than they should have Felicity was a sucker for a good red
wine and the guys clearly enjoyed themselves too. The conversation flowed naturally never struggling; they joked about their past antics and Felicity's time at QC. Once they had finished Tommy had a call and left the two on their own

"I want to show you something" he smiled taking Felicity back to the car he hired. A 10 minute drive later they pulled up outside Verdant "I wanted you to be the first to see it" his smile was drunken and soft. He hadn't drunk this much since way before the island, but tonight with good company, he let himself go. Oliver walked to the doors and made his way inside. He turned on the lights and the place looked exactly as Felicity had planned

"Beautiful" she smiled "now you have a business and a great cover for your other work"

"Thank you..." He chuckled softly, then he stuck out his hand "care for this dance?"

"There is no music Mr Queen?"

"We don't need music Miss Smoak" he gave her a cheeky grin. She placed her hand in his and he twirled her, pulling her in close, swaying gently from side to side doing little circles and twirls until his forehead rested on hers. They looked into each other's blue eyes getting lost in them they could feel each other's breathes. Then something in Felicity clicked, this was her bosses son, who was the Hood, who was damaged and needed help. Not like this, he clearly loved Laurel. She took a step back still smiling and she saw his smile fade for awhile then a slight one return "We best get you home" he said slowly exiting the building turning off the lights and locking up. They drove in silence all the way to Felicity's flat, and then she turned to him as the car pulled up

"Thank you for a great evening Oliver... You and Tommy of course I mean obviously you paid but the company of you both and..." He could see her mentally counting down before she smiled looking up at him and gave him a peck on the cheek before getting out

"Goodnight Felicity" he said rolling down the window watching her walk inside

"Goodnight Oliver" she said glancing back to see a wide grin on his face. Both were a little tipsy, and yet both knew the other wouldn't mention all of this evening, because the drink must have got the better of them.

Verdants opening night went off without a hitch, everyone invited turned up including Tommy's father who even though skeptical praised him. However Robert was nowhere to be seen working at QC as usual. Tommy and Oliver spent the whole night running the club, entertaining the guests and keeping the staff and punters happy. Thea did not drink and she didn't even try to. Moira stayed for a little while till the music was too much and she returned home. Laurel and her work friends turned up dancing and drinking. Finally when the night was coming to an end Felicity turned up

" Seems like someone is a good manager Mr Merlyn" she joked having had found Tommy first

"Well Miss Smoak finally nice of you to join us" he teased back

"Hey some people get dragged into work you know"

"At weekends? Should be a crime… except here" he winked

"You truly seem to be in your element Tommy"
"I am glad you think so Felicity, and I must say none of this would be possible without you" she blushed

"Where is he then? We both know he'll moan if he doesn't see me here" he let out a loud chuckle

"He's in the VIP box, you know schmoozing the important people" she laughed rolling her eyes heading over to the staircase up to the VIP balcony. She didn't even say her name and the bouncer let her in; she walked upstairs to find a very drunk Laurel hugging Oliver

"Crap" she said softly. She had the worst timing in the world

"YOU!" Laurel exclaimed pointing towards Felicity. Then she flew at her, rapping her arms around her in a tight hug. Felicity stood there unsure what to do looking at Oliver for guidance, who gave her a sympathetic look and shrugged

"Yes Laurel?"

"I have never seen him or Tommy for that matter, compliment a girl… for her mind" Felicity stood there unsure what to say "it's not a bad thing, oh no it's good because it means they're finally growing up…" she leant in and whispered "finally ready to maybe stop messing around and commit to one girl… completely" Felicity could feel her pain in every word and in an instance she hugged her back "I want us to be friends"

"I want that too Laurel" Felicity smiled warmly. Then someone on the dance floor called Laurel and she let go sauntering off down the stairs

"I am so sorry, she is very drunk. I should get her home but obviously I can't leave this place"

"Oliver" he looked at her blue eyes "It's okay, she's drunk and not everything is your responsibility" he smiled at her

"You're wearing work attire?"

"Yes I got called in, your dad. He asked me to analyse some data from a prospective company to help make him look better… But that doesn't matter, that's work stuff that is not related to you… well clearly you're related but you don't work there… I promise I'll stop" Oliver smiled at her even more

"Hey it's okay… you should have gone home slept. You look tired"

"No because this is your first night, and with the buzz online… yes I have been checking at work… it looks like you are a hit" she smiles softly

"Thank you for coming Felicity" he put his hand on her shoulder giving it a quick squeeze then letting go "and my father's company, I'm guessing Miss Rochev is really taking its toll?"

"My pleasure and yes she seems to be getting a lot of investors on her side. That girls got a lot of thumbs in a lot of pies… your dad needs someone she can't touch" Oliver stood there thinking

"I might have an idea but… I don't think my dad will trust me with his business"

"Hey! Oliver Queen just proved he is serious so all you can do is try" she grinned at him "but I am going to go sorry, I am just too tired"

"Thank you and go! Sleep. It's been a long day for you. Goodnight Felicity"

"Goodnight Oliver" she said walking off. Oliver watched her leave the club as the dwindling crowds
started to be let out as well.

When the place was empty and the staff all left, Tommy and Oliver hugged

"We did it!" Tommy grinned

"Yes and now we have to keep doing it" Oliver smirked back

"Want me to lock up?"

"No you go home, get some rest and I'll lock up. I'll put the money in the safe so goodnight"

"Night queen" Tommy said exiting the bar. Oliver locked himself in not wanting anyone to sneak in whilst he was sorting the money. He went to the office door, down a corridor round the back, punching in his code then stepped inside turning the lights on. He went over to the safe that Felicity had recommended, one of the hardest to crack, and placed the money inside

"I think we should do more talking..." Oliver spun round quickly, closing the safe as he did

"Laurel..." She was stood in the doorway a look in her eyes that he knew all too well

"Ollie" she said slowly enticingly. She walked gradually towards him swaying her hips, in a second she grabbed him kissing him hard. Oliver didn't even react; he just let it happen. When he felt her hands move to his belt, he grabbed her wrists with a little strength, enough to stop but not hurt her, then he pulled away

"Laurel you're drunk..."

"Yes I am, and it's never stopped you before" she said bitterly. Oliver felt those words like knives to his chest. He knew how awful he was back then but hearing it now from his first love was hard

"Yes I was a jackass back then, we have established this, but I'm not that anymore... So come on let's get you home"

"Oh trying to get me into my own bed now how noble of you" she said pulling away from him

"No Laurel you need to sleep this off" he grabbed her by the arm tightly enough to be able to control her. He locked up and turned off all the lights. He drove Laurel home and took her to the door. She again jumped on him as soon as they entered her home, he pulled back immediately this time

"Laurel! You are drunk and I am sober, you will regret this in the morning..."

"No I won't! I never regretted it back then, when we got drunk and slept together, making up after every time we broke up!"

"This isn't like those times... I'm not drunk Laurel..."

"Oh so because you're sober you don't really want me!"

"I never said that. You aren't sober Laurel is this really what you want? Or is it just because I've come back its opened up old wounds? Because Laurel this isn't a break up that can be fixed. I was gone for 3 years..."
"Don't you think I know that Ollie. I spent a year wondering what happened to you, then a year after that believing you might be dead and grieving then finding out about you and Sara... And now you just pop back up"

"Okay. I don't know what to say Laurel; I can't change what happened no matter how much I wish I could. I'm sorry but I know that doesn't matter right now. I am not sleeping with you because in the morning, when you are sober, you will regret it and I don't want to be responsible for more of that. So night’ and with that Oliver walked out her flat with a sigh of relief heading home for the night.
Chapter 12

For awhile things in Oliver's life seemed to find a nice rhythm. He played the night club owner well and the club was going from strength to strength. He was able to still do Hood work without killing anyone thus far and Felicity and Diggle seemed to easily adjust to the life style. He hadn't spoken to Laurel in that time; he felt that was probably more due to her embarrassment. Tommy seemed to thrive in his new role as manager and he was brilliant. Oliver even managed to spend some time with Thea and his mother though he had picked up that things between them were a little strained, however he couldn't figure out why. None of this lasted though as he knows all too well nothing lasts forever.

It was Friday night when Felicity and Diggle entered the Foundry. Oliver was mid workout half way up the salmon ladder. Felicity often watched him do this; she would catch glimpses of his muscles then turn away blushing, which always made him smile. But tonight she didn't even glance his way, neither of them did. He dropped from where he was and walked over

"What's up?" He said looking at both; Felicity looked at Dig

"Well I think my wife's missing..."

"What?" Both said slightly shocked mouths aghast

"I mean ex-wife..."

"I always thought you and Carly had a thing, not that you have a thing for your brothers widow or anything or if you do that's totally cool... I'm gonna stop" she felt Diggle's hand on her shoulder he smiled slightly

"It's okay Felicity. I do like Carly but she was my brother's wife. My ex-wife Lyla, she was the one I got information from, she's tough real tough. I was going to ask if she had any info on Rochev but she hasn't got to back to me in 2 days... I guess I'll have to keep searching"

"I can always have a look to see if anything comes up" Felicity offered her help, giving a smile for comfort

"Thanks"

"No problem"

"She'll be fine I'm sure... Just she still works for our government"

"She will be fine" was all Oliver could offer "now what's up with you?" He turned to Felicity

"Nothing honestly it's silly compared to Diggles actual problems" both men looked at each other, eye brows raised

"Come on share" Diggle said smiling

"Just been a very long, hard day at work"

"My father?"

"No Miss Rochev... She's trying to get me over worked doing silly tasks her own assistant could do, just so I can't help your father and Mr Steele. I mean the business is doing okay, but she's winning
over more board members and she's been a sardonic cow with me all week, and today she had the gall to insinuate I was sleeping with your father and you!" Oliver's eyes went wide anger flashing

"Seriously?"

"Yes apparently I slept my way into this company and the reason I am so close to both Mr Queens is not because I am amazing at my job but because I know how to flaunt my assets"

"Wow that's low" Diggle muttered

"Ignore her. We know the truth that's all that matters. I know you got your place in the company because you're amazing at your job" he didn't even hesitate, as if Felicity would go anywhere near his father or even him for that matter. She was too good for them all. Silence fell

"So who's our lucky guy tonight?" Diggle added filling the silence

"Ken Williams. His scheme stole millions. People didn't just lose their homes, their lives are ruined. Why don't you call it a early night tonight, I'm not expecting much trouble" he said getting changed into the Hood outfit and making his way to the back entrance typing in the code, beep
"Felicity!...Did you just Computer override the lock?" He came storming back

"Maybe a little"

"What are you doing?"

"I pulled up some information on Mr Williams. Did you know he's a widowed father of a 10 year old boy? I told you, I'm not in this to be an accessory to orphaning little kids"

"I'm just giving him a warning" he said slowly, he hadn't killed anyone in weeks. Did she really think that he'd go against his word?

"Has it ever occurred to you, you could do some real good in the city? Beyond just recovering people's stock portfolios and their saving accounts" he ignored her

"You're not the only one who knows how to reboot my system" he was annoyed at her more for not trusting him more than anything else. But he couldn't hide the bitterness in that statement as he made his way to her computers

"I made a mistake" she said standing up from her chair

"Getting in my way? I don't disagree" he said harshly standing up straight almost intimidating

"No signing on with you" he didn't change his stance but her words hurt more than he thought. She grabbed her stuff pressed a button on the computer then stormed off out the door

"Smooth Oliver, smooth" Diggle said shaking his head. Oliver shot him a dirty look and then his phone rang

"Olll...Ollie... Ollie Ollie Oliver..."

"Thea?"

"Yes brother of mine..."

"Are you drunk?"
"Maybe..."

"Thea what the hell? Where are you?"

"I dunno... This lovely mans helping me" Olivers heart stopped

"What? Thea where are you?" His voice rose

"I dunno"

"Put the man on now"

"He wants to talk to you" she said to whoever she was with

"Oh okay" he heard the man's voice; he didn't even give him a chance to speak

"Who the hell are you? And what are you doing with my sister!" He said it with such force he could feel the man's hesitation

"I errrm, I'm taking her home sir. I promise we're in a taxi, you can ask the driver..."

"That's right Mr Queen, this young man told me to take her straight home" he heard the driver shout

"Fine I'll be there as soon as" he hung up

"Thea in trouble?"

"Yes! I gotta go you might as well too" Oliver changed as quickly as possible then ran out the foundry jumping on his bike.

He got home to find a taxi just pulling off outside, as he stepped in he could see his sister all over a figure. Anger took over, as he marched over but as he got closer, the scene in front of him became clearer, it was Roy Harper of all people. His little sister had her arms wrapped round his neck as he was gently trying to put her on the sofa where a glass of water was waiting. All the time she was trying to kiss him. Oliver didn't even think he grabbed her pulling her off him and she fell gently onto the sofa

"Ollie!" She grinned drunkenly

"Thea god damn it!" Her smile faded "what happened?" She said nothing so he turned to Roy who he now saw had a split lip

"I don't know, I was on my way back from work" Oliver looked at the young man in front of him. He wasn't dressed up for drinking and didn't smell of booze so Oliver gave him the benefit of the doubt "and I passed the club, Viper" Oliver nodded of course he thought "she was coming out with a jerk who looked late teens early twenties. He was pretty much carrying her and forcing his tongue down her throat even when she said no and tried to push him off" Oliver clenched his fists "I... I couldn't just walk away. So I walked over and told the guy to leave her alone, to be perfectly honest I wasn't expect much as he was pretty drunk but he punched me as I was talking thus this" Roy pointed a hand at his face towards his split lip "but I punched him back, he fell to the floor too drunk to get up so I grabbed your sisters arm and dived into the nearest cab. Then she said something about an argument with your mum and then called you and the rest you saw..."
"No funny business I'm unaware of?"

"Hell no sir, I don't take advantage of anyone in that state..." He saw it in his eyes

"Good job" he turned to Thea as he said the next line "because my 14 year old sister here shouldn't even be out!"

"Oh Jesus I didn't know she was that young..."

"Don't worry about it kid, as you can see she can dress up" he raised an eyebrow in her direction but she just sat sipping her water "but thank you, not many lads your age would have helped and I am sorry you got hit"

"No big deal, I've had worse" he smiled. Oliver looked at Roy whose life he had helped unknown to him of course and yet he'd now done this for him and his sister. He reached into his wallet "oh man I didn't do it for that"

"No you didn't but you just got my stupid ass younger sister out of something that could have ruined her life we can never thank you enough... You paid for the cab here and you need to get home. So take it. It's the least I can do to say thank you" he handed him the few hundred in his wallet

"This is way too much..."

"Not for my sisters' life. This is nothing compared to what you did" he needed Roy to know he helped him a lot; to inspire him and this was the very least he could do. Roy stared at him then took the money

"Thanks"

"No, thank you!" Roy walked off heading out the door. Then Oliver turned to Thea

"Seriously Thea! I told you what lads were like and what would happen if you got in this state for Christ sake!"

"Oliver Queen, so high and mighty..."

"Don't you dare. I might have gone off the rails but I was older, actually legal to drink!"

"You don't know anything!" she slurred slightly

"Really? Well why don't you tell me then" he could feel himself getting angry

"Mum and dad are divorced! He doesn't even live here anymore and she's now dating Mr Steele!" Oliver stood there open mouthed how could his whole family be lying to him "oh and Tommy and Laurel had a thing whilst you were gone, probably still are..." She got up off the sofa and stormed off to her room leaving Oliver alone in the living room. In one minute he had never felt more alone and distant from the people he was supposed to know best. He stood there unsure what to do and before he even processed it he was on his bike and outside Felicity's flat.

He knocked and then every part of him regretted it. He remembered the argument and her storming off. He thought about if she had plans or people round but it was all too late when the door flung open and she was stood there in a hoody and joggers...
"What do you want Oliver?" She said it so angrily. Oliver stared into her blue eyes behind her glasses searching for the Felicity he needed to talk to right now. But all he saw was anger and hurt. He closed his eyes pinching the bridge of his nose. Felicity stared at his blue grey eyes searching for her apology but then his eyes closed and he let out a sigh. He looked full of hurt something had happened but what? "what's happened?" Her voice softened and Oliver opened his eyes

"Nothing, I'm sorry to bother you" he spun round walking away. The way he said it Felicity knew something was wrong, not the bringing down bad guys wrong but something else

"Oliver" she literally chased him and caught his arm. He felt her hand and he spun round "come on, talk to me..." He looked at her face again

"I don't know... I..."

"Come on, you don't have to talk" Oliver was so used to keeping people out which is why he found it so hard to actually open up. He doesn't really talk about feelings because he knows that once he starts it will be hard to maintain the distance and front he has with people. He hadn't even realised that Felicity had pulled him inside and he was now sat on the sofa next to her. She let him sit there placing his bike helmet on the coffee table. She got up and came back with a two glasses of red wine; she sat down at the side of him giving him a slight smile

"Right I don't know what's happened but I know you aren't here to apologise, so talk to me... I mean it Oliver and FYI don't start with an apology because that needs to be made up to me in a big way"

"But you left..." That was all he could say

"Yes I left the lair and the Hood but I never said I was abandoning you... But again that doesn't mean I won't be waiting for an apology"

"I'm s..."

"Don't you dare! We aren't doing that right now... So what's wrong?" She edged a little closer tilting her head

"Thea got drunk some punk forced himself on her" Felicity's eyes went wide "but that kid, Roy helped her out, no he doesn't know who I am... But she... She told me..." Felicity could see the pain something he hid from everyone, the big front the world saw, slowly coming down "my mum and dad are actually divorced and she's been seeing Walter... And Tommy and Laurel apparently have been together..." Felicity frowned not understanding

"I know it's all a shock Oliver but I don't understand" she stopped herself from adding more this time the brain to mouth filter working

"I..." He rubbed his hand across his forehead

"I get it emotions are not always your thing... But you have to let us in a bit so we can understand, help me to understand" he looked into her eyes. He could see the warmth and friendliness behind them, the genuine sincerity and even concern

"I left all those years ago because I was weak... Now I'm stronger, a survivor but I thought once I came back I could live... But everything I've come back to is a lie" he saw her face and he could tell what she was thinking "I know I lie, but that's to protect people around me... There lies just pushed me further away" Felicity could tell this wasn't the real issue but maybe his way of dealing with things was to explain around it first "I just I knew everything would change, I just didn't realise how much my absence would alter and effect things..." Felicity knew things were getting closer and
clicking into place now "I never thought I'd feel more alone surrounded by the people I love than I ever did when I was forced into hiding away..." And there it was how he truly felt as well as letting slip a little about his time away. She didn't even think she wrapped her arms around Oliver's neck pulling him in close, he placed an arm around her back but he didn't pull her in tightly.

"You are not alone" she whispered into his ear she pulled back letting go "Oliver Queen you are so much stronger than the boy on that bridge thinking of jumping in" there she let it slip unintentionally but she knew Oliver couldn't explain anything tonight and she was fine with that "people change, that is not your fault. You cannot blame yourself for their actions; you didn't force them into it all. They all made their mistakes all of them... I mean Thea clearly is more influenced and being a kid needs help not that that is your responsibility or anything's really wrong but 3...2...1 what I am trying to say is I am here if you ever need to talk..." She smiled warmly and he found himself smiling back. He had no idea why her words grounded him but apparently they did.

"Thank you Felicity"

"Oh don't thank me when I make you squirm whenever you apologise" she smirked; he smiled playfully

"I know I'm being stupid"

"Emotions don't make us stupid Oliver"

"No they can make us weak..."

"Depends on the emotion... The situation... Plus sometimes emotions are all we have to cope and ignoring them can make it worse" he nodded. She was right of course that's why when he was angry he worked out harder and now he had sort out her comfort.

"I should probably go..." He said softly

"Oh okay if your sure?" She smiled sadly but he still felt disconnected from her. He knew he owed her an apology and he had made this night worse for everyone including himself. He stood up "Oliver I did mean it you know..." He nodded. He knew she did, but a part of him would never allow her in fully. She already thought of him as a killer. What would she think if she knew the truth? Knew exactly what he'd done whilst he was away, that he actually chose to leave everything behind. Felicity watched as a genuine smile appeared on his face. One that she had only seen a few times, not the fake ones she had seen him do for clients, or even his own family but then it faded. Instead his facial expression disappeared into a blank one but she could see the pain in his eyes. She knew he must be thinking something bad, she went to put her hand up but he stepped back away from her touch. He saw the hurt in her eyes but he couldn't let her in

"Goodnight Felicity" he said grabbing his helmet and heading for the door

"Goodnight..." The door closed behind him "Oliver" she sighed, helping Oliver Queen was not going to be easy but she wasn't the type of girl to give up either. Oliver got back on his bike driving swiftly trying to clear his mind. Felicity Smoak was a friend now for sure but he couldn't let her in, not fully at least. But all he could think about was the crazy things that he had just learnt; he pulled up outside his family home. He grabbed his phone texting his mother and father

We need a family meeting tomorrow at 9, it's about Thea and it is urgent and important. Be there or I will deal with it all myself
He turned his phone off then went to bed, as usual he spent most of the night awake or having nightmares but he was used to it all now.
When Oliver turned his phone on next morning, he had several texts and missed calls from both his parents. All in the same vein of worry and questioning but ignored them. He got ready into casual clothes and headed downstairs it was only 8.30 but both his parents were stood in the living room looking frantic

"It's actually quite nice to have my parents in the same room again..." Oliver said interrupting whatever his parents were discussing; both of them spun round

"Oliver what's happened to Thea?" Moira said unable to hide her concern

"She's fine, she's upstairs sleeping" she frowned

"Well then why tell us there was an emergency?" Robert added bitterly "some of us do have actual work to do"

"I said she was fine now..." There facial expressions changed again

"Oliver just spit it out" Robert said with a little force

"Thea got that drunk last night some guy tried to take advantage of her, but thankfully a responsible young man brought her home..."

"Oh my" Moira said shocked

"If it wasn't for the lad, she could have ended up being raped if not dead" Moira's hands flew to her mouth and Robert clenched his fists "I don't know what happened to make her start drinking at 14 but this family needs to sort its problems out. I get it, I was gone for 3 years and I'm not exactly easy to open up to at the moment but I am trying. And even I can tell this family isn't one anymore..."

"Oh..." Moira looked at Robert and he at her, then back to Oliver "I'll cancel everything today I'll talk to her. I'll sort this..."

"Mum she is going to have a terrible hangover; she doesn't need talking. She needs showing that you're actual parents. That you care enough to punish her for being reckless and make her make up for what she's done..."

"I..."

"I get it you two couldn't do what you did to me with Thea so you gave her everything; it isn't going to cut it here. She needs tough love and love in general..." Robert looked at his son

"Well there is nothing I can do..." He made to leave

"Actually maybe you could show her you're still her dad, even if you don't live here" Robert stopped in his tracks and Moira let out a little moan

"How do you know?"

"Thea. She told me everything in anger last night. I think this family has enough secrets" he shot a look at his dad "so maybe telling the truth wouldn't hurt either"

"Oliver we didn't mean to hurt you..."
"I don't want to hear it right now mum, Thea needs you, both of you" Oliver turned around leaving his parents stood there in a stunned silence. Oliver was grateful Diggle was outside waiting by the car, though clearly surprised to see him so early

"Everything okay man?"

"Just family stuff. Fancy breakfast?"

"The diner? Then I can check in on Carly"

"Good with me, is it okay if I invite someone?"

"Oliver it's a free country you do what you like" Diggle smiled to himself.

They sat there in silence waiting for the third person to join them. Diggle was not at all surprised to find it was Felicity. She sat down at the side of Diggle and across from Oliver

"It just accord to me that you might not actually want to apologise and only dragged me here to tell me not to reveal your secret"

"No, Felicity. I was hoping that I could get you to change your mind. I was worked up on adrenaline last night, and I didn't exactly put my best foot forward. I was hoping you'd give me the opportunity to do that now, to make it up to you"

"How about you start with Ken Williams? Did he also get to enjoy your adrenaline last night?" She decided to act like last night with Oliver hadn't even happened, as he didn't even mention it and the look in his eyes from last night was gone. Maybe buried deep away but definitely something he clearly wasn't going to mention now

"No, he returned the money that he stole just in time to put his son to bed. Like I said, Felicity, it was just going to be a warning but he didn't need it"

At this time, we'd like to remind the public that we are coordinating our efforts as the Dodger is still at large, and we want to advise the public that he is to be considered armed and extremely dangerous.

"You know, I heard about this guy. They call him the Dodger because he avoids getting his hands dirty and he uses hostages to do his stealing for him" Diggle said staring back from the TV

"How?" Oliver asked

"Puts a bomb collar around their necks. Last year, a guy in Madrid didn't steal what the Dodger told him to, and it took his head off. Literally"

"And now the psycho's in Starling?" Felicity asked

"How about you help us take him down?" Oliver enquired instantly; her eyes widened

"This is meant to be your best go at an apology?" She said raising an eyebrow

"Kind of that and breakfast anything you want" he smiled sincerely and she felt this was probably as good an apology as she was going to get

"Well this better be one hell of a breakfast..."
"Oh it is!" Diggle smiled. After the 3 ate way too much they ended up in the Foundry brainstorming how to catch this jewel thief.

"So I may have gotten us some information..." Felicity said softly.

"Okay then why do you sound so nervous?" Oliver asked.

"Because I may have hacked confidential police files..."

"I'm sure you've done worse"

"Yes, but I may also have tapped into the phone line and heard some specific information..." Oliver chuckled and so did Diggle.

"Come on out with it then"

"The police lost him a few days ago in Starling trying to sell a previous jewel stolen in London, meaning he's still here. And we now know the Dodger has a taste for a very specific type of antiquity, from the ominous decade. The last ten years of King Ferdinand's reign..."

"Are there any other places that sell or display items from the ominous thing? Around here" Oliver enquired.

"Not really"

"The Starling Cancer Society. It says right there they're holding a fundraising auction tomorrow night. We could lure him out into the open" Oliver said pointing to an open page on one of Felicity's screens.

"With what? A fake?"

"No. The Dodger clearly has a trained eye for this sort of thing; he's not going to fall for anything less than the genuine article"

"Where are we going to get our hands on a rare Spanish antiquity?" Felicity chuckled to herself.

"You really have no idea how rich his family is, do you?" Diggle said seriously, cutting off her laughs she looked at Oliver who shrugged with a slight smile.

Oliver looked around him at the people here to support this trust, he saw the usual caring faces of genuine supports and then he saw people of the high society. It was times like this he realised he didn't enjoy the social life of being rich anymore. He hated the entrapment of the designer suits, and polite chatter. He no longer felt like he belonged.

"The police are here too. Your bait's attracted them, at least" Diggle offered nodding in the direction of various undercover policemen.

"That's not exactly who I'm looking to catch" he replied "have you seen..." Before he could finish Felicity walked into view. Her hair was wavy down, no glasses on just contacts, wearing a figure hugging gold glittery dress. Both men looked at each other, eyebrows raised and a little smile crept onto Oliver's face as they approached her.
"So I'm getting a good signal from the GPS I put in your family's broach, I can track it on my phone. Speaking of, have you given any thought to what might happen if this doesn't work and the Dodger absconds with your family jewels?... I'm sorry, that came out very wrong" Oliver couldn't help a genuine smile and Felicity noticed the sparkle in his eyes before it quickly faded and was replaced with darkness

"Let's just keep our eyes open, Felicity" she nodded walking off to the other side of the room

"Hey, isn't that..." Diggle said as Oliver looked up to see Laurel stood talking to Tommy "you talking to them?"

"I would rather take my chances with a deadly jewel thief right now" Oliver replied and Diggle frowned "it's complicated remind me to explain... Later"

"Right" he said as both men turned around in different directions. Felicity went to check the broach finding a smartly dressed man, who wasn't too bad looking if you didn't think of him being a killer, taking the jewel

"Hey! That broach was donated by the Queen family. If you want it, you're going to have to bid"

"Actually, love, I thought I'd just take it"

"Maybe I should check out front, see if the security guards had any problems" Diggle offered Oliver

"That's a good idea, I'm going to go check on the bait" both men spun around to find Felicity standing there with a flashing necklace around her neck

"I think I have a problem" she practically whispered, fear apparent in her voice as she pointed to the device around her neck. The guys didn't even hesitate they quickly rushed her into a back room "Get away from me! If this thing blows..." Oliver could see the fear in her eyes

"Not going to happen"

"The Dodger said if I called the police, he'd... I'm going to get decapitated, aren't I?" The pleading look in her eyes caught Oliver off guard as Diggle cracked open the side panel to take a look inside the device "The tracker's on the move" Felicity's voice cut in

"If I find him, I can get him to disarm it. Talk me in. Stay calm" it was all he could say

"Too late" she practically whispered her whole body tense

"Go. Just go. Go, go, go." Was all Diggle managed to get out, as Oliver ran out of the building ramming the ear piece in

"Talk to me, Felicity!"

"Heading towards the other side of town, at the speed he's going, he's gotta be in a vehicle" Oliver looked around him seeing a man on a motorbike

"Hey. I need your bike."

"Are you kidding me?"

"No" Oliver quickly knocked the man ramming the helmet on and speeding off

"I'm mobile. Where is he? Talk to me, Felicity" it was all he could say to make sure she was still
there with him, still alive

"Come on" she said to herself, quickly pulling her tablet from her purse searching the streets "First time anyone's ever been grateful for traffic cameras. He's a few streets from your position. If you cut through the Plaza, you'll end up right behind him" Oliver did as he was told swerving and weaving between traffic

"Where is he now?"

"Got it. I got him, I got him. Silver Vauxhall driving north. At the lights ahead of you. Ok, hard right" Felicity could hear nothing but Oliver's breathing. The panic started to rise inside, as she watched her screen to see Oliver get nearly knocked off his bike. Then he turned the tables completely causing the car to crash flipping upside down. Oliver got off his bike as the Dodger crawled out the car

"Hey! Don't do anything stupid. I had the foresight to collar up a particularly inquisitive blond. I assume she's a friend of yours. Touch one hair on my head and she loses hers" he held up the trigger in his hand "You've got quite the choice to make, don't you?" He smirked at Oliver

"Not this time" he threw a tiny arrow hitting him straight in the hand "Your median artery's been severed. You couldn't push that button if you tried" Oliver walked over pulling the trigger from his hand pressing a green button. The collar started beeping and Felicity closed her eyes, prepared to die when it flew open

"Oh, thank God" she exclaimed, hands feeling her free neck

"Why are you doing this? I'm exactly like you. I only steal from the rich" he pleaded with Oliver but the Dodger tried to tase him and in one swift move he turned the taser around causing him to drop to the floor

"I'm not Robin Hood" Oliver said lifting his visor, leaving the Dodger there as the police sirens got closer.

"How are you two?" Oliver enquired as he walked into the Foundry

"Okay" Diggle smiled and Felicity merely nodded in her chair "how'd things go with the police?"

"Fine, gave me back the broach, explained what had happened, had the broach sent back and now I am here... Are you sure you're okay?" He directed the question at Felicity

"Yes I'm fine, just wanted to make sure you were okay, I'll go home now" she smiled getting up softly

"I'll take you home..." Before she could protest Oliver held her arm gently and before she knew it they were inside her flat yet again

"Goodnight Oliver" she said turning her back towards him. She could feel his eyes on the back of her head but she wasn't going to talk

"Felicity..."

"Don't..."
"Don't what?"

"I get it Oliver, I get why you kill because some people don't care about who they hurt but I still think not killing is a better way..." She still hadn't turned around, Oliver could only think how he wasn't killing anymore but she seemed to not notice that

"Felicity that's not what I was..." She spun around

"Then what is it?"

"I'm sorry for getting you involved for putting your life at risk..."

"Don't you dare" anger flashed across her face and she hated the look of utter failure on Oliver's face

"I stupidly put myself in that position, and you, you saved me Oliver so thank you but don't for a second blame yourself for what happened. It is my life and my choice... That's if you don't think I'm a liability?" Oliver smiled when she thanked him making him feel less lonely but the last question made him angry

"You are most definitely not a liability... You helped us stop the Dodger that was all you" she smiled softly back and in return he gave a genuine grin the ones she liked so much

"Well then neither of us died, or got injured, and neither is giving up on the other so I'd say it was a good night" her beam spread and so did his

"Does that mean you're coming back?"

"We both know I never really left, good night Oliver 'cause I am actually tired" his smile turned even wider and Felicity saw a sparkle in his eyes again

"Of course good night Felicity" he shut the door behind himself and made his way home.
Chapter 14

For the next week Thea ignored Oliver, giving him only dirty looks. His parents seemed to be around a lot more and Walter too. Oliver never said another word about all the truth coming out; he carried on as usual around all his family and Tommy. Instead he threw himself into the Hood work. Friday morning seemed to change things

"Morning" Thea said as she was watching TV and Oliver came downstairs

"Oh wow you're finally talking to me?" he said eyebrows raised

"You should be thankful I don't hold grudges"

"And you should be thankful that nothing happened that night... I'm not gonna apologise for telling mum and dad you know"

"I wouldn't expect you to. I was angry that you made them start being parents at first but now... I was an idiot and I am sorry Ollie" he walked over to Thea on the sofa, dropped beside her and pulled her into a giant hug

"Speedy I know things haven't been easy but you do know I am always here to talk to... Even all of the things like what you blurted out"

"I'm sorry about that, you shouldn't have found out like that..." Her eyes full of sorrow and remorse

"Don't apologise Thea. I needed to know and I want you to know in the future you can come to me and tell me anything"

"I will, I promise Ollie and I won't drink again until I'm 18 because that hangover was dreadful especially being dragged to see Roy in such a state"

"Good to hear! I think the hangover was the best option on what could have happened and they took you to see Roy?"

"I know I am sorry! Yes mum and dad gave me a very stern talk and dragged me to his home, you should see it Ollie... Dad offered him a job working in the mail room at QC"

"I know you are... Well no offence you needed it and that bad? Really he gave him a job?"

"Yes its tiny and barely standing... And yes said it was what he deserved for saving his daughter"

"Well maybe dad did a good thing then... Did he take the job?"

"Said he'd think about it, but he has been texting me"

"He has? Do I need to remind the kid you're 14?"

"I'm nearly 15 Ollie you can't wrap me in cotton wool forever"

"No but I can scare the crap out of him" he said half joking but with a hint of seriousness

"Ollie..." She said tapping his chest

"Thea you could do a lot worse but I think maybe you should wait. Though I can't say anything just
you know be careful and talk to me...

"Oliver that coming from you and how you were is quite surprising but I will on all accounts" she smiled at him "plus we're just talking. He's a nice guy, a possible friend" Oliver smiled at her nodding "have you spoke to anyone about what I said?"

"Not really, mum and dad know I know but I just couldn't be bothered with it… yet" just then the front door opened and in stepped Diggle

"Mr Queen, Miss Queen sorry to interrupt but you have an appointment to get to sir... And Miss Queen the cars waiting for you, for school"

"Thanks Mr Diggle" Thea smiled walking to the door "see you later bro"

"What's up Dig?"

"We'll talk at the Foundry, Felicity's meeting us there" he nodded and both men left together.

As soon as they stepped in the Foundry Felicity was there sat in her usual position in front of the monitors

"What's up Diggle?" Oliver repeated now safely inside

"I've found my… Lyla... Her boss contacted me wants me to go fetch her... Discreetly..."

"So?"

"She's in Russia and I need time off"

"Well looks like I should go see my dad with my proposal for a business partner in Russia"

"I can't ask you to do that man..."

"You didn't plus it kills 2 birds with one stone" he smiled at Dig whose grin spread across his face

"How do I fit into all this?" Felicity said softly breaking the silence

"You are my secret weapon the business partner is IT based making you an expert" he smiled softly

"You do realise that the only way your dad will accept this is if you come back to work for the company..."

"If that's the only way to help QC and save Diggles ex wife then I'll have to grin and bear it" she saw the pain in his eyes but then genuine determination in helping his friend

"Is there any way I can help you with, with the proposal?" She smiled tenderly

"Thanks Felicity but I think I have to do this on my own and probably now, I'm glad we decided to leave spare suits down here" he smiled back but she recognised it instantly as his fake one

"Oliver I can help you know..."

"I know but I have had this proposal ready for a week, it's on the system if you want to look at it and you should probably go now or you'll be late for work" he got up and went to get changed as
Felicity left.

When Oliver arrived at QC with briefcase in hand he instantly started regretting it

"You don't have to do this for me man"

"No I don't and I'm not doing it just for you" he smiled at him as they made their way to the top floor as he stepped out he was greeted by the stunning angry brunette

"Mr Queen a surprise to see you here" Isabel said staring straight into his eyes with a bitter tone

"Oliver please. Well nice to finally meet you Miss Rochev" he extended a hand

"I like to keep business formal Mr Queen, though you aren't a part of this business..." She made a point to say it so bitterly then stepped past him avoiding his hand and going into the elevator

"Well isn't she a ray of sunshine" Diggle whispered as the elevator doors shut

"Would you tell Mr Queen his sons here to see him... With a business proposition" he smiled at the ageing secretary who dashed inside. 5 minutes later she returned

"You can see him now" Oliver turned to Diggle giving him a nod. He stayed where he was as Oliver walked into his father's office to find him and Walter sat there. He closed the doors and sat down in the chair opposite his father and next to Walter

"What do you want Oliver? You made it clear you didn't want to work here..." Robert said without hesitation

"Firstly you didn't want me here and secondly I want to prove I can do this..."

"But you have a night club"

"I own a nightclub which is mainly managed by my business partner, still gives me time to do things here... If you let me" Robert looked at Walter who in turn looked at Oliver then he nodded gently

"Okay what's the big proposal then? I presume you were smart enough to do one"

Felicity opened the file on her computer at QC not expecting much from Oliver Queen just the basics. Feeling slightly anxious at the possibility that Robert would reject him and he couldn't help get Diggle's wife, ex-wife, back from Russia. But she was pleasantly surprised. he had in fact done all of his homework. The IT business he wanted to bring in with QC was a small part of a very large business empire ran by a wealthy Russian Anatoli Knyazev. Who everyone wanted, but he never allowed anyone to be a part of his business, and he would only work directly through Oliver and no one else. Meaning if the company did fail than Anatoli's business stayed the same and would not be affected, it also gave the Queens control not Isabel. There were projections and spreadsheets of the money both companies could make interlinking there companies; it also had information on the Business Empire and possible talks of a merger with other parts of Anatoli's empire. Felicity sat smiling to herself Oliver was clearly a lot smarter and business minded than he gave himself credit for. She had no doubt his father would invest in this proposal, especially as the IT department worked worldwide and after a quick search found it was one of the top 5 in the world. Every possible bit of information anyone could need was in this file. Even stats analyses which with Felicity's trained eye were quite impressive. Oliver Queen really was a mystery she thought to herself
"You did all of this" Walter said smiling looking through the paperwork

"Yes I did"

"Without any help?" Robert said also sifting through papers

"Yes apart from Mr Knyazev himself of course, I needed his approval and information first"

"I can't believe you did something like this Oliver, clearly the apple doesn't fall far from the tree" Walter smiled at both men, Oliver did not like this statement he was not his father's son and he could see the same thought all over Roberts face

"What's the catch?" Robert said looking Oliver in the eyes

"The deal has to be done this weekend or there is no deal..."

"Why?" Robert frowned

"I don't know that's all Anatoli said"

"It says here you, Miss Smoak and Mr Diggle would fly out to Russia tomorrow morning secure the contract and return"

"Yes..."

"Why no other associates? Why Miss Smoak?" He gave him a knowing look and even Walter looked uncomfortable in his seat

"Because he clearly states all transactions are to be done with myself and Mr Diggle is my body guard we both know why I have one and Miss Smoak..." He sat up straight for this "is the best damn IT personnel we have in this place. She might be young but she has more talent and skill than the department head, and you both know that's true" Walter looked at Robert who had his fists clenched

"This company is not going to pay so you can swan off to Russia for a weekend away with your latest lover!" He stood up punching the desk as he did "this company is not a joke, that you can utilise for your own gain and I already warned you to stay away from Miss Smoak Oliver!" He stood up straight now anger written all over his body. Oliver took a deep breath he wasn't giving his father the satisfaction. he stood up grabbing his briefcase leaving the paperwork behind

"Thank you for your time" he said to his father then smiled at Walter who returned it and nodded. Oliver made his way to the door "I know you won't believe me but I'm actually not sleeping with Felicity. She is exceptional in every way and I am in no way good enough for her. So don't worry about that father... I actually came here with a proposal for your business, a serious one and it is your fault you turned it down. I get why because I'm not the serious type but that's what I'm trying to show you I have changed" he opened the door and walked out, Diggle could see the look on his face and said nothing as the two got into the elevator.

"Don't you think Robert, maybe you should give him a chance..."

"Why Walter? He opened a night club for Christ sakes..."
"Yes one that's doing well by all accounts. I get you don't want to take risks with Miss Rochev but surely if you're going take one it might as well be now, before she takes it all. I mean he's done his research" he held the papers up "but it's your choice, I'll see you later Robert..." Walter got up leaving him to his own thoughts.

"So how'd it go?" Felicity smiled as both men walked through her office door

"Bad... Real bad..." Oliver said dropping into a chair; Diggle looked at her shrugging

"What? How could it go bad?" Anger in her voice he'd only heard a few times. He looked up at her with apologetic eyes "it's not your fault if that's what you're thinking Oliver; I read the files all of it everything you did and I am so impressed! If that was any other person your dad would be biting their arms off. I mean Anatoli is a big fish no one can catch yet you have! And this proposal has it all; I mean seriously you did spreadsheets! Spreadsheets Oliver! I just can't..." His chuckle stopped her dead and she looked over to see both men smiling

"Thank you Felicity. I did what I knew he'd want but he couldn't see past as he so eloquently put it 'this company is not paying for you to spend a weekend with your lover...''

"What? There's only Dig and me... Me! He thinks we're sleeping together!" Her eyes grew wide

"Hey it's okay I told him we weren't but I don't think he believes me..."

"Oh of course, how else can Felicity Smoak lowly IT girl be hanging round with playboy billionaire Oliver Queen unless sex is involved for god sake! I mean it's flattering that I'd ever be considered in the same league as you but..."

"You aren't a lowly IT girl you're remarkable! And hey I am out of your league Felicity don't ever sell yourself short!" She saw the sincerity and pain as he spoke those words, how could he ever think she was out of his league, she frowned

"Maybe you shouldn't sell yourself short too..." The two looked at each other staring into their blue eyes with small smiles trying to figure out what the other was thinking

"Sooo" Diggle interjected trying to bring the focus back "you actually did a proper proposal that anyone would have approved?" Felicity nodded "and your father rejected it cause he thought you two were using it as a lovers get away?"

"Yep" Oliver said sighing

"Your father's as short sighted as you are sometimes" Diggle said looking between the two, Oliver raised an eyebrow, and what was that supposed to mean

"I am so mad!" Felicity said loudly bringing him back "this is the best proposal I've read in months and he didn't even give you a chance!"

"It's okay I'm used to disappointing my father now and not feeling good enough" Both Diggle and Felicity looked at Oliver they could see the pain on his face, even if he tried to hide it "Let's go back to the Foundry, leave Felicity to get on with her day" he smiled softly at her before exiting

"We'll figure it out Dig I promise but make sure he's okay" she said looking in his eyes
"I know we will" he smiled at her "I will do, don't worry about him Felicity" he said walking out her office.

It was the middle of the afternoon; Felicity had been doing tedious work all morning for Isabel thus her anger from Olivers conversation had grown and grown. Before she could talk herself out of it she found herself in the elevator and marching into Roberts office, completely ignoring the secretary who said he was having lunch with Mr Steele

"I told her you were busy sir"

"It's alright Mary, close the doors behind yourself" Robert said staring at the ladies from behind his desk "what can I help you with Miss Smoak?"

"I…" she stuttered come on Felicity she told herself "Mr Queen, Mr Steele I'm sorry for disturbing your lunch but I felt I needed to talk to you"

"About?" he said

"Oliver"

"Why am I not surprised?" he rolled his eyes

"You know what I was going to ask to do this privately but no. Your son has done nothing but try to get your approval for god knows how long because he is so damaged he can't even talk about it… He went away and I don't know what he was like before personally but this man is hard working, determined, kind, decent, and a great friend. Yet for some bizarre reason he still is trying to fight for your approval even when it should be you fighting for him" she took a deep breath "I mean that man is so much more than you give him credit for and god only knows the things he's been through yet he came back here. He started his own business, which is doing bloody good by the way, and I am not just saying that he is literally making profit every night and he chose to come to you to help your business, one that I have to point out you might not have if Miss Rochev gets her way! Yes I know I've spoke out of turn and you'll probably fire me but you know something Mr Queen this is something worth being fired for" she had to stop herself before she carried on. She could see the smile on Walters face but a blank expression on Roberts "that proposal Oliver did surprised even me I won't lie but he did that, all of it to help you, to prove himself. And what do you do? Insinuate that I and he have a thing going. I'm sorry to disappoint but I'm not exactly Olivers type plus we're friends something he's needed since being back if you ever took the time to actually look at him. He doesn't need a fling with me, he needs a person to listen and I am that. If I brought this proposal to you and didn't mention his name you would have accepted it hands down, because all of us know that this is your best shot. So what is this Mr Queen? The fact you can't stand to look at your son in fear you might be able to see the damage that's been done. Because there isn't a day I don't look at that face and see suffering but you know what else, I see a man who fights every day for everything he cares about and it is worth seeing that pain just to see his true smile…” she took yet another breath "if you read that proposal then you know how hard it is to get Anatoli onside, yet Oliver managed it and you so happily reject the idea…"

"Enough" he said firmly, she had clearly hit a nerve. She blushed colour taking over her cheeks but then she remember how much Oliver did for this city

"No Mr Queen, do you know why I joined this company?"
"Because you felt obliged to…" he was clearly referencing to the bridge event that was not to be mentioned.

"No because I thought this company would respect me more than the others. That I wouldn't just be another cog I could shine, Mr Steele and yourself made me believe I was worth something more than the life I had. And your son made me believe even more in myself too. But today you did the exact opposite with your own son, and disrespected me in the process… Oh and Oliver doesn't even know I'm here so if you're going to fire me just do it because I'm not sure I want to work here anymore"

"That it Miss Smoak?"

"Yes sir unless you need me for anything"

"No thank you" Felicity left feeling her heart hammer in her chest crap she had just lost her job was all she could think.

"I think they are good for each other Robert… not in the way you think or maybe they will be but look at that. Your son didn't sleep with that girl for help. He actually has a grown up relationship with a woman, look how they talk about each other. How they've made each other grow because the girl we hired nearly a year ago, would never say that and Oliver would never had made a business proposal"

"I know Walter, she is something else that girl. I don't know what she does in his life but he's better for it… I think I might have over reacted earlier"

"Maybe just a bit Robert, but we both know that proposal is one of the better we've had…"

"But do I risk pulling him into this mess…"

"I think the better question is can you keep this company without doing so?" Robert frowned.

As soon as Felicity got to her office she messaged Oliver telling him she needed to talk. She was expecting a phone call but 30 minutes later still nothing. Just then she looked up to see Diggle and Oliver burst into her office concern on their faces

"What's wrong?" she wasn't expecting to do this face to face and her heart was hammering in her chest even more.

"Oliver I was… wasn't expecting you to come in I'm fine I just I did something, I don't want you to be mad but I was so angry and Isabel had me doing stupid stuff again, so I couldn't calm down and I…"

"Felicity breathe" he had his hand on her shoulder again, he could feel her shaking and her pulse quickening he frowned "what happened?"

"I confronted your dad in his office… I might have lost my job" he pulled his hand away crouching down to her level.

"You did what?"

"I told your dad exactly what I thought, no brain to mouth filter so I told him everything… some of which involved him not being a good father, or boss and I may have told him I didn't care if he fired
me because this was worth being fired for"

"Felicity, you stuck up for me? You fought for me?"

"Of course I did Oliver, this is one of the many great things you have done since being back"

"Thank you but you shouldn't have sacrificed your job for me" they smiled at each other, Diggle stood there smiling at the pair, when Oliver's phone rang

"Hello… yes… okay I'll be right there" as Oliver was talking on the phone Felicity's also rang

"Yes of course… okay I'll be right up" both hung up at the same time. Diggle watched them as they both got up

"My father wants me…"

"Your dad wants me too"

"Well we might as well turn it into a party..." Diggle smiled. They all made their way upstairs and into Roberts office, finding him as usual sat behind his desk with Walter stood up by the window

"I wasn't expecting you this quickly Oliver"

"I was in the neighbourhood"

"Fine. Well I might as well say it with all 3 of you here, you're going to Russia in the morning" Felicity's mouth fell open whereas Oliver just stood there, she looked at him she could see how defensive he was around his father

"What's the catch dad?"

"If you seriously want to do this, you need to be here at least 3 times a week, attend the most important meetings as well as running the club"

"I can do that..."

"You have an office on the floor below me near Walter. However it was agreed by Walter and the board if you are in this role you need someone to keep you in check thus Miss Smoak you will be Oliver's Secre..." He saw the frown spread on her face "executive assistant, for whilst he's here those days, the rest of your time is to your normal duties"

"So I'm not fired"

"No"

"But instead I have to be Oliver's assistant? No offence Oliver but I didn't spend my time at Cambridge studying hint not the secretarial arts to serve people coffee and tea"

"Felicity" Oliver said slowly she saw the pleading in his eyes, the sorrow

"Miss Smoak, you'll get a raise and it won't be forever, you just seem to click with Mr Queen here" Walter said calmly, smiling in their direction "you can help organise him, prep him, you told us about respecting you and so we agreed the best way to do that further would be to trust you with Oliver. To help him help this company" the sincerity in his tone touched her "plus the computers at your desk with Oliver are the latest models. You still are the best IT personnel we have and those skills will still be utilised, won't they Robert?" He looked over in his direction
"Yes" he said calmly "we need all the help we can get to keep this company with us. I am prepared to give you the benefit of the doubt here Oliver don't let me down"

"I won't, not this time"

"Well then I'll see you all Monday morning" he smiled and the three walked out calmly.
Chapter 15

It was early next morning when Diggle, Oliver, and Felicity were stood outside the private air craft

"So we know the plan right?" Felicity questioned yet again

"Yes Felicity, Anatoli will help us more than you both think..."

"How do you know him anyway?"

"I saved his life, when I was away..."

"What?!" Felicity was stunned how could he not have mentioned this previously. Before anyone could speak again a black car pulled up and out got Isabel

"Miss Rochev?"

"It seems Mr Queen, you are in this business after all. I think it only fitting I join you on this trip, don't you?"

"Well it was meant to be between myself and Mr Knyazev..."

"And I am in this business as well..." She walked past time "good job I'm a fast packer" and with that she was on the plane

"Oliver, her tagging along does not help matters" John said looking at him

"I will take care of her John, we're going to bring Lyla back" he offered him a small smile

"Wherever she is" Diggle said defeated trying not to think of the worst.

After an excruciating long awkward flight they landed in Moscow all going through the final checks

"I've arranged a meeting with Mr Knyazev for tomorrow morning 10am try your hardest not to miss this one"

"Well seeing as he'll only deal with me I probably should be there and you know, I'm not this person that you seem to think I am" he said looking at her

"That depends"

"On what?"

"On if I think you used the corporate jet for a weekend of fun with your new assistant"

"Excuse me?" He expected it from his father but someone who didn't even know him

"A blond IT girl all of a sudden gets promoted to be assistant to the C.E.O.s son? There are only two ways that happens. One is nepotism, and she doesn't look like your cousin..."

"That is absolutely not happening" he said a little angrier than he intended
"What were her qualifications? Aside from an abundance of short skirts"

"Her skirts aren't that..." She walked away laughing "short" he finished the last bit sighing

"What was that about?" Diggle asked

"Nothing" he shook his head "Everything with Knyazev is set, I don't just mean the meeting in the morning...You're going straight to the hotel in a cab" he aimed it at Felicity

"No, you're leaving me with her?!!" Felicity couldn't help herself

"Dig and I need to get a drink" he said as they both walked off

"Well I wouldn't mind a drink" she said to herself watching them leave.

They walked into a bar in the centre of Moscow and were lead straight into the back in an office

"No-one knows Anatoli owns this business, he has many links including to the Russia Mafia, the Bratva" Oliver whispered to Diggle as they entered. He wasn't even surprised by anything he had just said, it explained the tattoo Oliver had on his chest

"Oliver Queen? Ha! My favourite American! Dabro pazhalavat. It has been too long"

"John Diggle, this is Anatoli Knyazev. Thank you for meeting us and for agreeing to help my company"

"If Oliver vouches for you, you're my second favourite American and don't worry about it you saved my life there is nothing I can't do for you but first, a toast"

"None for me, thanks" Diggle protested

"Prochnost. To strength. Now business. This is woman you look for, yes?" Diggle nodded "Picture is from two days ago, from prison"

"Lyla was arrested?" Diggle couldn't hide the shock

"Not quite. From what I hear, she was trying to break in find some information on prisoners wanted by your government but clearly she had issues breaking back out"

"Anatoli, we need a way into the prison to extract her"

"You get in, you get shot before you get out or end up like your friend. Mmm, it's impossible."

"The only thing that's impossible is us leaving this country without this woman" Diggle said with force

"I like this guy" he said grinning at Oliver "The only way in to prison is as prisoner. Now, I have guard there, owes me favour" the men could see him thinking "It could work I'll give you one shot in twenty"

"Set it up" Oliver said, as the men exited the bar making their way back to the hotel.

"I'll go" Oliver said as they entered the room and explained to Felicity what was happening
"No" Diggle protested "It has to be me"

"No" Oliver shot back aggressively

"Oliver, what if something happens to you in there? What happens to me, Felicity, or Isabel, for that matter? You have to be on the outside making the moves. I'll go inside" he saw the frown on his face "I've got this" just then there was a knock at the door. A random man handed over a suitcase

"Now that is a lot of drugs" Diggle said opening it, then closing it again

"Courtesy of Knyazev" Oliver added

"About enough weight to land me in prison"

"This is Knyazev's man inside the prison" Oliver held up a photo of a man for Diggle to see "A guard, he'll know where Lyla is being held. When all hell breaks loose, you need to meet us at the rendezvous point with Lyla, or..."

"Or I am a permanent Russian" he saw the shocked expressions on both their faces

"Just thinking out loud"

"But, are we sure this is the best plan we can come up with?"

"I can't leave here without her, Felicity. We met in the Special Forces but we didn't stay married long when we returned to Starling. She took a job with the government; I went back to war... But I can't leave her I just can't" she nodded as John left the room suitcase in tow ear piece in as he made his way to the airport

"Two minute warning" Felicity told him as the police were about to come "Good luck, John" he removed the ear piece destroying it "They have him" Felicity said to Oliver who nodded then pulled out his phone making a call. She made her way to her own room, finding herself thinking about what Isabel would think if she found her in Olivers room. So she stayed in her room messing on her tablet for a few hours whilst ordering room service and eating a lot of ice cream.

There was a light tap at her door; she answered it to find Oliver there. He walked in looking at her and the vast room service plates

"I was hungry okay?" She felt the need to defend herself but Oliver just smiled

"You think Dig's ok?"

"I'm sure he's fine, we both know he's pretty capable..." She smiled at him "we need to go pick up the truck for tonight, Anatoli organised it for us and he's keeping Isabel busy for a bit"

"Oh okay" Felicity rushed around grabbing a coat and pulling her heels on, placing her tablet in her bag and then making sure she had her room key before she exited. They were in the elevator when Felicity couldn't stop her brain to mouth filter

"I wonder if Digs okay?"

"I think he's doing the same as he was when you asked me five minutes ago" he smiled coyly she flushed with embarrassment. They made their way downstairs to a rented vehicle which Oliver drove
to an unknown location far outside the city. When they got to the truck Oliver got out of the car

"Follow me closely okay? You're gonna have to drive the rental whilst I get the truck" she nodded not sure what to say. She got out and made her way to the driver's side. She followed as instructed never losing sight of him, they made their way slowly back into town having been gone for a few hours. Oliver parked the truck a few streets away from the hotel, and then went to get into the driver's side of the car

"Hey I'm driving!" She said "I've managed it so far without crashing and no offence Oliver; I'm already technically your PA, so I might as well drive you around" the tone caught him off guard he felt bad about his father making her basically his baby sitter so he got in the passenger side

"I am sorry about that Felicity you know?"

"About the fact that I'm your assistant now? And I basically have to keep your life organised?"

"Yes"

"I wouldn't be 'cause you don't know how organised and controlling I can be" she grinned trying to take away his hurt. She pulled into the hotels garage

"You're basically a highly trained babysitter and I am sorry you have to..." He said getting out of the car

"Don't. I chose to be a part of QC and your team. If it's easier for me to be your assistant to help make your 2 worlds easier I don't mind, like they said it isn't forever and my boss could be worse. I mean he could be a playboy billionaire trying to sleep with me" she winked. He laughed a hearty laugh she had never heard before, she had heard his fake laugh plenty of times for people, and his genuine chuckle but nothing like this

"Oh Felicity you always seem to know what to say" he smiled as they made their way to reception

"Ha! Normally I ramble so I pretty much say everything but seriously Oliver don't feel sorry for me or blame yourself, I am exactly where I want to be" she smiled. He placed his hand on her shoulder and squeezed smiling gently just then there was a cough. They looked up to see Isabel "anyway I'll see you later Mr Queen" Felicity pretty much ran to her room, she was not in the mood for her.

Isabel had a drink in hand as Oliver followed her to the bar; he thought now might be a good chance to find out why she wanted revenge on his father. So he ignored his desire to follow Felicity

"Vodki, pozhaluysta" Oliver said to the bar tender

"You missed the tour. What happened to you?"

"I saw a Russian vehicle that I simply had to have"

"Is that why you came to Russia? Car shopping?" She said it bitterly rolling her eyes, he knew what she was really thinking

"Does everyone really think that Felicity and I are..."

"No. Just everyone who works at Queen Consolidated" she said drinking her vodka and nodding to have it filled up again

"She's just a friend" he said it with clear pain. He hated having to keep justifying their friendship
"You don't seem like the kind of man who has female friends" ouch he thought.

"Can I ask you a personal question?" He was changing the subject whilst he had the chance.

"With some vodka in me, I just might answer" she teased.

"Why does my family's company mean so much to you?" He didn't say it bitterly, he needed her to trust him.

"It still isn't that easy to make it as a woman in business. I've given up a lot and met some ruthless people. Which means if I don't succeed at everything, then what was the point? Your father's company is just the latest in a long line"

"Hmm" he still didn't believe that was the truth.

"May I ask you a personal question?" She said flirtatiously. he was a little surprised at her sudden change.

"Others have tried and failed" he said with a grin.

"Why do you try so hard to make me think that you're a lazy idiot? I know you're not. Underneath that swagger, I see you pretty clearly" he couldn't believe her, nobody knew the real him the closest that did were Diggle and Felicity and even then they didn't know it all.

"Really? And what do you see?" He actually was quite inquisitive.

"You're intelligent. Driven. And lonely..." The last one caught him off guard.

"How do you see that?" He couldn't deny it.

"Because it's what I see when I look in the mirror" he could see the truth in her eyes just then she spoke Russian to another bartender.

"You speak Russian?" he tried to push the feeling of longing to the side.

"I was raised in Moscow until I was nine and then adopted by a family that took me to England. It took me years to get rid of my accent. It isn't easy making friends when you sound like Natasha" she said the name in her native accent, clearly the drink was making her more open but not enough about what Oliver wanted to know "that's how I know how it feels to be alone Oliver, I don't know what happened to you but I see myself in you searching for something... Someone" she scooted closer, and before he had a time to react, she was kissing him hard and in his own twisted way he didn't want to feel alone anymore.

"Isabel, I have to go sorry" Oliver said pulling on his clothes with her doing the same.

"Do I strike you as someone who needs to cuddle?" And that's when Oliver regretted it even more; the hole of loneliness was not filled by sleeping with her and in doing so no other information was obtained. He basically went back to his old playboy way of dealing with things, and he felt stupidly ashamed. A light knock brought him back and he opened the door now dressed.

"Hi" Felicity said standing there.
"Hi" he said back

"It's time. Ready?" She grinned at him

"Yeah, I..."

"I think she can take the night off. Don't you?" Isabel said walking past Oliver grinning

"Ohh" Felicity exclaimed her grin fading slightly

"Felicity It..." She cut him off

"What happens in Russia stays in Russia" she smiled turning around walking off "Even when it makes no sense whatsoever" she whispered to herself. After 5 minutes of waiting in reception, Oliver appeared they didn't speak to each other as they walked to the truck. They drove all the way to the rendezvous point watching the prison, in silence, with binoculars before Felicity couldn't take it anymore

"What were you thinking?"

"What?" Oliver actually was surprised at the anger in her tone

"Over 64 million women over the age of consent in Russia and you sleep with her"

"So we're not doing the 'What happens in Russia stays in Russia' Then?" he wanted to try to forget what had happened but clearly he had offended her

"We're still in Russia" she said bluntly

"Diggle should be heading out with Lyla in two minutes" Oliver said trying to change the subject but also very aware his friend was in possible imminent danger. Even though Felicity was angry, she knew he truly was worried about Diggle. Just then there was an explosion, without hesitation Oliver floored the truck straight towards the now apparent hole in the wall. Felicity flew into the back and as Oliver spun the car she pushed the back doors open allowing Diggle and Lyla to enter. Shots started firing and Diggle slammed the doors closed just in time. Oliver again floored the truck driving away as fast as he could. Nobody spoke, even when Oliver had dumped and torched the truck getting into another waiting car. Even when they all got back to the hotel exhausted, no-one said a single word they just all went to their rooms.

Felicity woke up in the hotel bed, it was 8.00am, she didn't want to get up and face the world. How could he sleep with her of all people? Kept flashing through her brain. She wasn't jealous. Oliver could sleep with whoever he wanted. But why the bitch who had slowly been draining the life out of her and who was clearly trying to destroy his father's company? Was he serious! Now she was angry again. She pulled herself out of bed had a quick shower, getting changed making herself a cup of coffee then headed to Oliver's room with paperwork in hand before it was even 9. She stood there for awhile still irritated but she knew she had no right to be. So she took a deep breath and knocked lightly. After a few minutes the door opened Oliver was stood there a towel round his waist and one in his hand, which he had clearly been using to dry his hair from the state of it

"I just came to make sure you were awake. I know the meetings not till 10 but I also know you're not the best at being on time, not that I am judging you. I mean I know why you're late... and not in the sleeping with girls' way... You know what I mean, I just thought I'd come make sure you're up..."
Her thought process had totally given up on her, lost in his perfect abs and muscles even if they were scarred and tattooed

"Felicity" he said smiling "as you can see I am awake, if you give me 5 minutes we can go get breakfast with Anatoli..."

"But the meetings not till 10"

"No that's the meeting with Isabel which I didn't arrange..."

"Oh..." She said slowly

"Come on in" he said opening the door wide. She looked away from his body, not wanting to look at the bed or around the room to think of her in here. Instead she sat on the chair in the far corner looking at her brightly painted nails. Oliver noticed straight away that she didn't look or feel comfortable he wasn't 100% sure why, but he guessed it was something to do with Isabel. He pushed those thoughts aside. He needed to get through today first, before he could even begin to explain that to her. He got changed into his suit in the bathroom not wanting her to feel more uncomfortable, and then he walked out

"Breakfast?" He said walking up forcing a smile. She lifted her head and straight away recognised his fake smile, clearly something was bothering him. So she gave a bright smile, just because she hated this fake one

"Let's go" she got up and Oliver followed. They were down in the restaurant where Anatoli was already waiting with various foods in front of him, he smiled when he saw Oliver

"Oliver my friend, I take it our mutual friend solved his problem" he stood up giving Oliver a slight hug

"He sure did, thank you"

"Please sit the food here is marvellous and who might you be?" he turned smiling at Felicity

"Felicity Smoak, my executive assistant, and the IT expert here for the meeting" Oliver said before she even had a chance to speak

"Nice to meet you Miss Smoak" he said taking her hand and kissing it causing her to blush. He held out a chair for her then gently pushed her in. He gave Oliver a quick wink saying Lucky boy in Russia, causing him to smile

"Nice to meet you Mr Knyazev may I just say your IT business is amazing, latest tech, great structure, top experts and just… it's perfect" he smiled at her laughing

"Thank you, but we'll discuss that in the later meeting for now let's talk about Miss Rochev... I don't trust her"

"Neither do we" Oliver said

"She is Russia born comes from poor background but she is ruthless, connected to many bad things. She rips companies apart but this is different... The look in her eyes says this is personal"

"I don't what my father did but I am trying to find out..."

"Remember Oliver, hell have no fury like a woman scorned... Anyway I am pleased to be part of
your company you know that but when Miss Rochev arrives I will have to be the ruthless business man, but that does not change my promises"

"I understand Anatoli more than you could possibly know"

"Well then lets enjoy some breakfast before she arrives" he grinned helping himself and so did they too.

At 9.50am they all made their way to a conference room in the hotel where Isabel was waiting. The meeting flew by in a couple of hours, both Anatoli and Isabel being completely merciless and driven. Felicity's testimony seemed to please Anatoli to no end, clearly stroking his ego Oliver thought unable to stop a smile. Isabel clearly did not appreciate the executive assistances input as she said in her bitter tone. But in the end it was agreed Anatoli would come on board under his own conditions, which meant Isabel had no involvement what so ever, much to her detest. But his name with there's was worth more to her.

After the meeting had done everyone packed. Then they made their ways back to the private plane, though Isabel made it clear she wasn't happy about Diggle's 'wife' coming back with them, but Oliver merely pointed out he would pay. She muttered something bitterly before sitting at the front of the plane. Felicity sat on her own near the back thinking about this weekend and how much she wanted to crawl into her own bed. But then she felt someone's present at the side of her. Oliver sat down smiling at her he looked over to see Miss Rochev headphones on staring at her laptop

"People will talk if you sit with me" she said bitterly

"No they won't. They'll presume it's business related" she rolled her eyes at him shifting slightly in her chair so she wasn't looking at him but she could feel his eyes boring into her. It was hours later when she couldn't sit that way anymore and was rather uncomfortable. She turned to see Miss Rochev eyes closed snoring lightly; Diggle and Lyla sat cuddled on the sofa nodding peacefully. Then she saw Oliver eyes open messing with his thumbs looking lost

"Oliver" she said quietly not to interrupt everyone he turned his head quickly his eyes full of sorrow "what's wrong?"

"I... We should talk..." He said softly, she placed her hand on his arm

"Not now, not here" she gestured her head around her, he simply nodded the look still in his eyes, she squeezed his arm gently then took it away "how did you save Anatoli's life?"

"I saved it twice whilst I was... Away"

"How?" He didn't want to let her into his world of pain but she clearly wanted to know so he told her the truth but just not all of it

"His boat sank just off the coast of the village where I was staying in China; I jumped in and saved him, plus a few of his crew. We helped them for a few days kept them safe from the people that tried and failed to kill him. Then they left with some supplies, we presumed they'd made it safely out of there but we were wrong. Awhile later a friend got kidnapped; we saved her from their prison and in the process found Anatoli, who we saved him again. This time we ended up in Russia making sure he got back fine. Then to thank me for it he made me a Captain in the Bratva, but I hardly use that connection. But hence the tattoo" he patted his hand to just over his heart where his tattoo rested on his skin
"Wow" Felicity said softly. She had so many questions; who was we? Why was he in china? So he wasn't kidnapped that time? So he ended up in China and Russia? But most of all what actually happened? Oliver saw in her eyes, she wanted to know more wanted to understand but he wouldn't, couldn't tell her more. He looked away. Instantly she reached out placing her hand on his rubbing small circles on the back

"It's okay. I mean obviously you don't feel like it is but it will be. I don't need to know anymore than you want me to or can tell me... What I'm trying to say is if you ever want to talk about it or anything I am here" he looked at her she still could see the pain and sorrow then it struck her "and whatever you tell me won't change my opinion of who you are now" his face turned to surprise. How could she know that's what he thought? He simply nodded unable to find words to express how he felt. She smiled at him, a wide reassuring grin and he couldn't help smiling back. Even if it wasn't as wide she pulled her hand away from his. They spent the rest of the flight in calm comfortable silence, when they touched down Isabel left without uttering a word and the rest all went home even if it was the middle of the day they wanted to relax.

"I just feel lucky we made it out of there alive" Diggle told Lyla the next morning

"Thank you for coming for me Johnny"

"You know me I couldn't leave you behind"

"I'm honoured to be the exception to the rule" she smiled

"Lyla, you're always the exception"

"I have a debrief with my boss at 0800"

"No, no, let them stew" John smiled "Stay for breakfast"

"Throw in your blueberry pancakes and you may be able to convince me" she winked

"Fine by me, I'll just text Oliver tell him I'll be late" he smiled. Oliver woke up and couldn't forget everything that had been happening the last few months since his return. He couldn't forget the ever present feeling of being alone, so he jumped out of bed and had a hot shower. Then got dressed for work, he had a text from Diggle explaining he'd be late probably getting reacquainted with his ex wife. Oliver smiled to himself replying he'd get a taxi in. It was still early but he needed to do something so work was his go to at this time. A taxi arrived 10 minutes later and he made his way into QC. As he got into the elevator, so did Miss Rochev

"Are we going to discuss what happened the other night?" He said cautiously

"Why would we?" She said frowning

"No reason" he nodded as the doors opened and she stepped out

"I'll see you later" then he travelled up a few more floors. He stepped out, walking to his office and there at the computer was Felicity. She had come early. First day in her official new role and she didn't want the staff spreading anymore rumours about her. She started bright and early preparing stuff for Oliver's day and night activities. She was surprised to see him standing at her desk so early and he read the look on her face
"Couldn't sleep, thought I'd better make a good impression as my new role, guessing you're thinking the same?" she merely nodded

"There is a pile of paperwork on your desk most of it just needs signing and some of it is just files your father wants you to read before your next meeting, which isn't till 10" he nodded this time about to step in his office "oh and good morning... Mr Queen"

"Good morning Miss Smoak" he knew straight away that was how this would be in here, a working relationship no first names.

Oliver spent all morning reading the paperwork, attending meetings, and actually having insightful comments, much of that thanks to Felicity, who had circled things and suggested he looked up others. After lunch which they didn't have together, Oliver was supposed to be signing documents when he walked out holding a few files

"Can you deliver this to Isabel's office, please?" He said softly. Felicity who had remained silent all day just looked at him

"Why her?"

"Because these files are for..." He saw her eyebrows raise, she didn't mean that

"I mean, besides the obvious leggy model reason" she tried to joke and he looked at her with sorrowful eyes

"It just kind of happened, you know trying to get info and all that. It didn't mean anything" he saw her face drop and a frown appear "Hey" he said making her look at him "Because of the life that I lead, I just think… that it's better to not be with someone that I could really care about" Felicity stood up looking away and walked around him. Oliver's shoulders slumped he let out a little sigh, pain in his features

"Well..." He spun around to see her about to leave the room and she looked him straight in the eyes
"I think... I think you deserve better than her" she walked off to the elevator head held high, believing he really did deserve better than ruthless Isabel. But he couldn't help thinking if she knew some of things he'd done she wouldn't believe that anymore.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you don't hate me (at least Oliver has less women than the TV show :) :P) and I hope you're enjoying this, because I mean I have loads more chapters still and I'm enjoying writing it :P.

Let me know what you think :) seriously I don't mind. Oh and if anyone thinks at any point (now or in the future) I need to change my rating from a T please let me know, I'm new and I don't really understand...
Chapter 16

Oliver spent the rest of the week juggling home life, 2 work lives and a night life. Tommy took on extra responsibility at the club which he seemed to enjoy even more. Felicity and Diggle helped ground Oliver at night and working at QC. However he still hadn't spoken to his parents or Laurel and Tommy, he knew he should but with the Russia incident it all felt a little awkward.

Friday night came and Felicity was in the Foundry typing a way as the boys patrolled the city, things had been quiet since there return from Russia only taking down a few drug dealers and robbers. So the boys returned early. As they entered Felicity was slumped with her head in her hands "What's wrong?" They said in unison by her side. She flicked on a monitor

*The Count, known creator and drug dealer of Vertigo has escaped from a mental institute, he is presumed dangerous so the public is being urged to not engage him*

"Crap!" Oliver said banging his hands on her desk making her jump "how the hell does that even happen?"

"Isn't he supposed to be off his face on Vertigo?" Diggle questioned

"Yes but it would seem the drugs affects wore off and his *sanity* is coming back, I tried tracking him but he's *disappeared*"

"I have to find him" Oliver spun around Felicity caught his wrist

"I get it, he's *dangerous* but he has literally *just* escaped. Running around the city isn't going to find him Oliver, it's just going to tire you out even more" he looked at her. She could see the dark circles under his eyes, he needed to have some time for himself. the work and she's guessing the stress of real life was starting to show

"She's right man, you need a break, we can catch him another time" Oliver frowned about to speak but Felicity cut him off

"I can have the computers searching for him and any known associates linked to my tablet to alert us of anything anytime… so please Oliver, do something for yourself tonight" she still hadn't let go of his wrist *"please"* she repeated again looking in his eyes. He nodded and she let go

"You guys should go, it is only 8 after all and do *normal* things" Diggle chuckled

"Same goes to you man" Diggle left the Foundry by the back exit whereas Felicity went upstairs to the club above, whilst Oliver got changed.

"Well, Miss Smoak it's a pleasure to see you in this establishment" Tommy joked sitting on the stool at the side of her. There were a few people in the club it was busy but not full, like it would be in a few hours

"HAHA" she said sarcastically sipping her red wine

"She isn't paying for a single drink tonight, you got that?" he said to the barman who nodded "Now Felicity tell me what's wrong?" She pretty much choked on her drink
"Excuse me?"

"I might be the joker, the insensitive 'sleeps with anything with a pulse' type of guy but I can see a
girl who is hurting, especially a friend" she looked at him unsure how to answer "who do I need to
punch?" that made her laugh. She thought about what she wanted to say really hard, trying to keep it
light and names not involved. But also wondering if she finally admitted something, it could make
things awkward

"Two things and you best not tell anyone… I mean anyone Merlyn you got that?" she said the last
part in her loud voice

"Oh god no, I wouldn't wanna be on your bad side" he joked then he saw the look in her eyes "hey I
promise I won't say anything"

"I presume you know about Oliver returning to QC"

"Yes his dads company's struggling, he found away to help but he had to work there" she nodded

"Well part of the deal was that I was his executive assistant because apparently I keep him focused,
organised, and whatever else…"

"Yes and I can see that. I mean he's different when he's around you not in a bad way, you make him
a better man" he smiled and he saw the sincerity in her eyes at being told such a thing

"Thanks. Well you know what the rumour mills are like; apparently I slept my way up the ladder. I
mean why would Oliver Queen have an IT girl as his assistant unless he's bedding her. Always had a
thing for pretty blond airheads, not my words of course. I mean I can't walk into a room without
people staring at me or whispering, and yes I am being stupid and girly. I know the truth, I and
Oliver is just… no but peoples words hurt sometimes you know?" he hugged her

"Right for a start you are not just some blond IT girl. I have seen your skills, you are way talented!
And I get it, shit having crap things said about you but everyone who knows you knows the truth,
plus why not play on the lies they want rumours give them something to talk about…"

"I am not sleeping with Oliver!"

"I'm not saying that. I'm saying whisper in his ear more, touch him more, nothing sexual just friendly
it will drive everyone insane I promise…"

"But we're already like that Tommy" she said sipping her drink looking even sadder

"Oh well then screw them all. Be exactly who you want to be around Ollie or is this more about you
wanting more with him…" he said raising an eyebrow, again Felicity choked on her drink her
cheeks flushing a little

"No but there is a guy…"

"Oh and he thinks you and Oliver are getting it on?"

"No. Can I finish telling you before you jump in? Serious advice would be appreciated this time" she
said rolling her eyes. Tommy felt a little ashamed she had come to him with this and he was being an
idiot, so he nodded sitting quietly "There's a guy at work, we really get on but we come from 2
different departments so not much in common. He's the sales side so all talk and a front, whereas
well you know what this is like" she gestured to herself "but he's actually a really nice guy behind
the front… I think I like him but we haven't dated or done anything like that. It's all you know, group
outings with friends or the like. He keeps saying stuff like he cares about me, and he listens to me, my opinions but he's never asked me out. I mean he has a lot of personal stuff going off, but his ex also works at the company. They're pretty close, though I dunno if anythings going on there or if there is any feelings involved, but he has come to me with a lot of important... things. Saying he only trusts me with it, but then he slept with someone. Someone who he actually detests and he openly told me saying it meant nothing but that's none of my business and Tommy I feel all mixed up and confused and..." she downed her drink "what do I do?" he could see the tears glaze over her eyes. He took a deep breath. That was a lot to process

"There is 1 of only two ways that guy feels and two ways this will end. I am about to be honest with you and I mean telling you stuff guys just don't talk about... okay?" she nodded not taking her eyes off of him "Us guys, we don't really do emotions or opening up very well, and sometimes telling the truth is hard too. So number one: this guy likes you too. He just hasn't either realised how much yet, or he has and he's keeping you at arms length. Because of his messed up personal life including his ex thus he doesn't wanna hurt you. So in his own head he's justifying it as protecting you by not being more than friend. Which means you have to wait around and hope he realises eventually which will hurt as you watch him go from different people, hoping one day he's ready for you"

"Or..." she said quietly

"He doesn't like you like that. He literally see this as a friendship or worst of all, he's using you to get with other girls and do stuff for him. Which means you should walk away before your heart gets crushed and date other guys who aren't as messed up..." she looked at him half heartedly

"Thank you" she almost whispered "for your honesty, but what do you think I should do?"

"Well that Miss Smoak is it up to you, I can't tell you how to live your life but honestly a bit of jealousy can show some ones true colours" he winked

"I'm not like that Mr Merlyn" she smiled still looking sad

"I never said that but if you date other people see where it goes, I mean you could always date me" he winked cheekily. She laughed

"Oh Merlyn I don't think you could handle this" she joked back, causing him to laugh harder. She'd never tell him the guy was Oliver, and she'd never give up on him in some respects. But she decided right there she would only wait so long to see where this went, because if she was honest, she wasn't even sure if she liked Oliver enough like that, or if it was just the situations they were in. She sat with Tommy carrying on drinking and even helping him schmooze some of the guests.

When Oliver had got changed he stood in the silence of the Foundry just the computers humming. He originally decided he'd do this alone. But since getting Diggle and Felicity both wrapped up in this, he realised he needed them now and this place felt lonely without them. He stood there unsure what to do. He had to speak to his parents and to Laurel maybe Tommy. It was just gone 8 and he didn't really feel like the club scene and his parents would probably not be around anyway, so he got on his bike driving to Laurels, hoping this time there would be no arguments. He tapped on her door and within a few seconds she answered. Her grin faded into a face of shame

"I thought it was time to talk. I mean I was hoping you'd come to me but the sooner we get this over with the sooner we can move on without shame" she nodded opening the door for him to enter
"Firstly let me apologise I was stupidly drunk and dealing with... stuff and you were right to push me away so thank you for being the better man"

"You do not need to apologise. I should have stopped you drinking and I told you Laurel, I've changed people can actually do that, me and Tommy included" she grinned to herself rolling her eyes. He could tell she wasn't convinced about that "we have both changed. We haven't been out drinking in weeks, and you know something he hasn't been with anyone since I got back" she stood there eyebrows raised

"Right... So are we done now?" She asked arms crossed

"No. I need you to know Laurel; I care about you, I mean really care about you. I would willingly give my life for you..." Before he even knew it she was kissing him hard on the lips. His arm wrapped around her waist. Then he thought of Isabel, the feeling of being alone even worse after sex that didn't mean anything and that's when he realised, this kiss, and this person wasn't the same one who he loved because he didn't feel in love. He let go pulling away gently "Laurel stop" she froze

"You can't keep playing with my emotions Ollie it's not fair to tell me all that then stop..."

"I'm not" he cut her off "just listen" she nodded "I meant what I said and truth be told a part of me will always love you. You were my first love but that kiss, it meant nothing to me. Didn't you feel it too? There was no spark, no love... It was just a way to stop ourselves feeling alone. Because of what we used to be, it makes it easy to fall back into this, but I don't want this" he gestured between the two "I love you Laurel but I am not in love with you..." She looked at him tears in her eyes. She wrapped her arms around herself then let out a long sigh

"You're right. A part of me will always belong to you but those times I kissed you it just didn't seem... real. I also think you're right about being lonely, and this being easy to fall back in to, but I think we'd be miserable" he nodded, she smiled softly "but that doesn't mean this doesn't hurt Ollie, I finally got the break up I never had all those years ago..."

"I am sorry Laurel, I just hope one day we can be friends" she walked up hugging him

"Maybe just give me some time" she said squeezing lightly then letting go

"Of course but..."

"But what?"

"Don't let someone else walk away, just because I turned up and messed with all those buried feelings" she frowned not sure what he meant. Then the realisation spread across her face as she realised he meant and knew about Tommy

"How?" She muttered

"Thea accidentally let it slip... But the Laurel I know never did one night stands. She only messed with people that meant something" he went to the door opening it "just remember that people can and do change, you just have to give them a chance to prove it" she nodded a little stunned and he left closing the door behind him.

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Oliver made his way back to the club. He might as well deal with Tommy in the same night; it still wasn't too late only about 9.00. When he stepped into the club, and it was just starting to get busy as
people queued to get in. He looked around unable to see Tommy; he asked a passing barmaid who pointed towards the VIP section. He made his way up the stairs when all he saw was his blond IT expert kissing Tommy on the lips, his arm around her waist

"If you excuse me I have to drag my boyfriend away" Felicity grinned at the men and women in the booth dragging Tommy towards the stairs

"Thanks for that" he said arm still round her waist

"Well not the first time I've had to pretend to be someone's girlfriend" she laughed "and such a great kisser too but..." "There's a but!" He said jokingly winking

"Yes not like it's a bad thing or anything, I mean obviously you're a good kisser..." Tommy laughed

"Come on just say it"

"It was like kissing my brother if I had a brother but I sure wouldn't kiss him like that" Tommy laughed even harder

"I get what you mean. Though I can't say there was no attraction 'cause look at you and me" he winked again

"But no spark..." he nodded in agreement

"More like good friends, sis" he winked. Just as they got close to the stairs Oliver came into view, he looked mad. He clearly had seen all that had happened, and Tommy didn't move his arm off her waist but he felt her tense up beneath his touch. She looked into Oliver's eyes, she thought she saw a glimpse of jealousy. But she was more sure that it was anger for Tommy, who was apparently with Laurel, Oliver's Laurel, and he shouldn't be messing with any other girl

"Felicity just saved my arse with a client's daughter" Tommy said automatically, feeling he had to justify it all without understanding why

"We need to talk" Oliver said straight faced. Tommy and Felicity looked at each other unsure which one he was talking to. He saw the confusion on their faces "we can talk in the office Tommy" he let go of Felicity's waist smiled at her

"Good night Felicity, hopefully see you soon" he leant in to hug her and whispered in her ear "and you figure out your problems"

"Thanks" she whispered back "good night to you too Tommy" she said louder hugging back. Tommy let go heading downstairs Oliver turned to her

"I'll talk to you later, wait in the Foundry" he said slightly aggressively. She looked at him feeling deflated then she thought of what Tommy said about her situation

"No" she said standing taller "clearly this isn't work related and seeing as you let me finish early and I can't have a drink without Oliver bloody Queen disapproving then I'm going home' she walked past him, I am not waiting around she thought to herself. She went to the bar, grabbed her coat and bag from behind and left. Oliver watched her leave in disbelief, not at standing up to him that he was used to but her kissing Tommy, then leaving him and for the first time not waiting for him. He made his way to the office where Tommy stood and the music wasn't as loud
"Hey man Felicity and I, it's nothing. Seriously she's like a sister, she just saved my arse and to be honest if you want her like that maybe you should let her know..." Oliver didn't want Felicity like that, yes he cared about her but she was just a friend

"I don't she's just a friend..."

"Then whets with the whole angry face" he said crossing his arms over his chest raising an eyebrow

"Tommy I know about you and Laurel..."

"Oh..." He said slowly his arms dropping down "in my defence we all thought you were dead"

"Tommy..." He crossed his arms now, he knew he wanted him to be serious

"God damn it, everyone wants serious conversations tonight... What do you wanna know Ollie? Every sordid detail of me and your Laurel, 'cause don't you think I know I am always second best to you..." Oliver stood there shocked

"I'm sorry that's not what I meant" Oliver said sitting down on the white leather sofa "and you aren't second best to me, this club wouldn't even be going if it wasn't for you"

"Oliver I... Thanks but I am always second best where Laurel is concerned" he saw the hurt in his eyes

"She isn't mine you know that right?" Oliver said slowly

"She will always be yours Oliver that's the point"

"Hey, I don't love Laurel anymore. Yes back then I did and whilst I was gone maybe. But now I'm back no, things are different and now finally she can move on..."

"What do you mean move on?"

"She finally got the breakup she needed, got to say things she actually felt and realise that the feelings we have for each other aren't feelings of lust but of resentment, pity, loneliness... I know too real for you" Oliver winked trying to keep things light hearted. He looked at Tommy who had tears he was holding back

"It was just sex to her Oliver, someone she was comfortable enough to do it with..."

"See that's the thing Tommy, Laurel doesn't do just sex... ever, and you know it. Have you thought maybe the reason she wasn't in a relationship with you, well not a proper one anyway, was because in case you hurt her like I did..."

"I haven't even slept with another woman since her I just can't"

"I gathered as much. That's why you go out for meals or show up at her work, because that my dear friend isn't about sex anymore"

"I know, I love her Oliver... But as soon as you got back she was all over you"

"That's not fair you weren't a couple and there was a lot of unresolved things with us but we talked it through..."

"And I'm her second choice"
"NO! I am not an option never was really. Me coming back just knocked her for 6 but there is no emotions or feelings towards me unlike you... I've seen the glances she has at you when we were working the case together, I know because that's' how she looked at me once but not now... I just wanted you to know I am all okay with this and that she needs to see you have changed"

"How do I prove that Oliver? Without it being like all the other girls..."

"I dunno, that I am no expert in. I can wine and dine any girl, but making her feel special like none of the others" he shrugged "just keep trying" he stood up and hugged his friend patting him on the back "still glad I came back?" Oliver asked half joking but also with seriousness

"Of course I am, you're still my best mate and thank you for making life a little less confusing" he smiled

"Thanks for taking care of stuff whilst I was gone and of the club now" he smiled at him "anyway best leave you to it and catch up on some sleep"

"Night dude"

"Night" Oliver left and got on his bike, where to now?

He turned up a while later at Felicity's flat and knocked, she flung the door open

"Oliver Queen why am I not surprised?" She said crossing her arms

"I brought a peace offering..." He said, and held up a bottle of red wine she shook her head

"It's a start, what do you actually want Oliver?" She was no longer in the mood she was tired, emotionally and physically

"I need a friend"

"So I'm a friend now? Not just the PA you sleep with or your IT expert..."

"No you're my friend Felicity" he frowned. She opened the door allowing him to enter; he put his helmet and wine on the kitchen table

"I'm only letting you in because of the neighbours... What do you want Oliver? I know you don't do opening up very well but for the love of god I am tired. It's been a hard week with Russia and you know the rest, so spit it out..." Felicity was blunt sometimes but never that direct

"I can't sleep..."

"Why?" She said arms crossed

"I don't sleep properly since I... was away, nightmares, never feeling safe..." He put his head down because he felt stupid and weak. She saw the honesty then the sadness as his head dropped. She was tired and angry, but she walked up to him pulling his head up gently by the chin

"Hey it's not weak, why don't you stay here tonight? I do mean on the sofa, and we can watch TV..."

"I don't want to impose, or be in the way"
"Oliver look around I'm doing nothing..." He nodded as she turned the TV on. He removed his jacket and shoes as they watched various programmes laughing and relaxing, till an hour later Felicity had fallen asleep in her chair. Gently Oliver scooped her up and took her into her room. He lightly placed her under the covers, then with a weird feeling in his stomach he turned away going back to the sofa. An hour later his eyes grew heavy and sleep took over

*He was running again, in the unknown before gunfire started then people attacking, he fought for his life he reached out grabbing a man by the throat squeezing  
"Oliver" he said but it was soft gentle*

Oliver's eyes opened wide. He let go of the hand around her throat automatically jumping over the sofa retreating to the door

"Oliver" she said softly, again taking a deep breath now able to breathe properly

"I'm sorry" the pain, fear, loneliness all over his features

"It's okay" he dropped to the floor back against the door head in hands

"It's not okay, I nearly killed you, I strangled you like the man in my nightmare" he felt her hand on his arm, he pulled away "no I could hurt you and I would never be able to forgive myself"

"*Oliver Queen!*" Her voice was loud now he looked up tears apparent in his eyes "listen to me that was a nightmare you would never intentionally hurt me... I trust you, completely" she put her hand on his pulling him up. He was reluctant at first "please come on, I think we both don't want to be alone right now" she pulled him back onto the sofa, both sitting allowing both of their heart rates to settle. She pulled throws around them then unquestioningly snuggled into Oliver's side he tensed up

"Oliver seriously you won't hurt me, especially as you know I'm here now" he looked at her neck the slight marks visible he put his hand there rubbing gently

"I am so sorry" a tear fell. She reached up wiping it away with her thumb

"I've had worse things around my neck remember" his face didn't soften "hey and that wasn't your fault seriously Oliver, I trust you so let's get some sleep" he nodded placing one arm around her as she snuggled in, before they knew it they were both fast asleep.
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy chapter 17, fair warning some things may be distressing for some people, apologises if so (seriously tell me whenever if you think the rating needs to change)

When Oliver woke up he forgot his surroundings, but was suddenly reminded he was at Felicity's when he looked down. Somehow in their sleep they had ended up holding hands. He looked up at the clock it was 10am. They had slept for a good 10 hours straight, the longest he had gone without a nightmare. He smiled to himself thankful of the rest, and then he gently pulled his hand from hers as he felt this was a little too personal but still didn't want to wake her. He stayed there watching her breathing, curled into a ball, head on his chest, and for the first time, he didn't feel completely alone. Just then she started moving, as she put her now free hand up in the air stretching, she stopped suddenly feeling the warmth of another person. She pulled back like she was on fire, bolting to the other side of the sofa wild eyed, until she saw and remember what had happened, then she smiled and so did he

"See nothing bad happened, anymore nightmares?" he smiled at her shaking his head then she saw the sadness in his eyes as they moved to her neck. He pulled himself off the sofa pulling his shoes on

"I should go home, thanks for having me, won't happen again sorry" with that he grabbed his helmet, jacket and left. Felicity jumped to her feet rushing to the mirror in the bathroom. She looked at her neck, there were two slight bruises from his finger and thumb and a very faint line joining them. It didn't look anything like she had imagined with his reaction. A little concealer would cover it easily; she's had hickeys worse than that. She went back into the living room wrapping herself in the still warm throw which she had shared with Oliver and turned on some more trashy TV.

As soon as Oliver had seen what he had done to Felicity he knew from now on he'd stay away, keep her safe from everything he could do to her. He got on his bike driving home fast and hard, when he walked through the door his mother was stood there looking at him with a raised eyebrow

"Mother don't give me that look anymore, I'm a grown man I can stay out as long as I like..."

"Oh I'm well aware of that" she smiled

"Are we going to talk?" He said softly catching her off guard

"About?"

"You and dad... Well you and Walter now"

"I..."

"I get it you wanted to keep it all the same for me but you all lied to me and made Thea lie too"
"I know and I am sorry we just didn't want you to feel everything changed because of you..." He frowned

"Yes because most of the things changed when I left..."

"I blamed your father when you disappeared, but we hadn't been right for years before then Oliver. We don't love each other, we hadn't for a long time and when we lost you again I couldn't cope. Your father wasn't around but Walter was. Nothing happened between us, I didn't want it to instead I divorced your father then I pursued Walter... He was kind, gentle, and listened. We've been together over 2 years now and I am happy Oliver" he smiled

"I am glad you are, but you don't need to keep hiding it now. He can come over whenever he likes and the same goes with dad... We are all family now but..." She tilted her head eyes wide waiting for him to finish "if there is anymore to tell me, just do it because the more lies the less I trust you all and I don't want to not trust you..." She nodded opened her mouth to speak and then closed it again

"I love you Oliver. You and Thea so much... what we did was terrible to the both of you, but from the day you called us out it changed. We want to be a family now, for you both" he smiled

"Mother, I think Thea needs you more than I do"

"Remember Oliver we all need someone... even you" she smiled softly "how about dinner tonight? Thea's out with girls all day, Walter and Robert have some work thing. So all of us tonight sit down for dinner?"

"Okay mum, I'll be there 6?" He smiled softly

"Yes I'll let you know if anything changes" with that she stepped out and Oliver made his way upstairs. He had a shower relaxing and trying to forget about hurting Felicity. He couldn't stop himself so he went for a run around the family home.

When Felicity heard her phone beeping she jumped grabbing it to find Tommys message

Morning beautiful! How's my fake girlfriend doing today? Need your advice Xx

She chuckled to herself

Morning handsome! A little worse for wear but nothing I can't deal with :p OMG the Tommy Merlyn asking me for advice? What's up with your electricals then Merlyn? Xx

She made herself some toast pulling on a cardigan and skirt,

Haha good one! Not an electrical fault... Womanly advice :/ xx

OMG! Are you being serious?

A few seconds later the phone rang, Tommys name on screen

"Yes" he answered very solemnly

"Well come on then out with it?"

"I like someone..."
"That much I gathered"

"Hey I listened to you yesterday"

"Sorry go on"

"I really like her but she knows about my past and it scares her. She thinks people don't change and I need to show her I have... But I don't know how, help me please?"

"Well for starters be honest with her. That will help a lot including about me in a non harsh way if a girl finds out you've been texting another girl, not going to help, so tell her the truth. And before you start yes it means opening up..."

"Okay honesty I can do..."

"Yes with feelings, and to show her you've changed that's harder... I mean you have already changed maybe be there for her more, ask about her day and actually listen be engaged. Tell her about your days"

"Where do I take someone who's special when I've done most things with the other girls..."

"By listening, she'll tell you what she likes and do one of those things, even if you did it with another girl, all that will matters is when you do it with her... And not do it like that either Tommy. I mean to me sex should be off the cards with her at the moment. Yes moan but it will make it all the more special"

"Damn it Felicity" he joked "I haven't slept with her in ages anyway..."

"Not what I needed to know!"

"Thanks Smoak you really are great!"

"Thanks for the call Merlyn bye"

"Yes talk soon bye" they hung up she sat there shaking her head, just then the TV changed to the news and her phone started playing a video. There was a man tied up by the arms, beaten and battered in a suit. The video was poor quality and shaking clearly a hand held camera, and the person holding it began to speak

"This man you recognise he's destroyed our city, ruined it, he's a criminal who got away with murders because the evidence against him was hidden, destroyed. He's stolen from us all, murdered some of us, destroyed our lives... And now he gets his judgement... There will be more to follow" without warning a gun was brought up and a shot fired the footage ended. Felicity sat there open mouthed just then her phone rang

"Foundry now" she didn't need to ask or answer Oliver. She hung up, quickly pulled her hair up, and putting make up on, even concealing the bruises on her neck, and then drove to the Foundry most of last night forgotten.

She was the first there. She straight away searched the video and reports, cracking down on the signal of the video but unable to pinpoint it due to all the security on it. She didn't hear the men enter, so she jumped a mile her heart pounding when she saw them
"Seriously guys, a hi or something would be welcome..." Diggle smiled, Oliver frowned

"What you got?" Strictly business and she could feel he was keeping her away

"Nothing. The reports say his body was found single gunshot to the chest, dumped in a random alley way, can't find anything in the video to pinpoint his location and his stream is protected with no single address I can't crack the code..."

"I thought you created that software to break in and find..."

"Oliver do I tell you how to sharpen your arrows?" She said it in anger and he felt it was for more than just what he had said. He looked back at Diggle

"I called Lyla, the government aren't sure who this guy is they think he was a guy from here, but the one they were tracking deleted himself from existence..."

"He's an experienced hacker... But I can beat him, I know I can" she said not looking at the guys but typing furiously. Oliver felt useless at times like this so instead he worked out on the salmon ladder and dummies pushing himself further than before. After an hour Diggle piped up

"Lunch we all need it any preference guys?"

"Nope..." They said in unison

"Burgers it is then" he said leaving them alone in an awkward silence, that felt like hours rather than minutes

"I think I have it, if he pops up again I think I can track him" she smiled half heartedly as Oliver dropped from the ladder landing in a crouch he walked over to her smiling

"Good job" his eyes went to her neck. She watched his eyes drop their, knowing full well he felt guilty. He was clearly surprised when he looked to find no marks

"Concealer works wonders" she said. He didn't look at her but she knew the guilt was building up

"Oliver" this time he looked into her eyes "I've actually had a lot worse" his eyes widened shocked by what she had admitted

"But none who actually tried to kill you..." She raised an eyebrow

"Believe me I've had hicckeys that hurt more than that... And you didn't kill me Oliver so stop it, stop looking at me as if you broke me"

"I could have broken you Felicity"

"But you didn't so stop this... I mean it Oliver. You can't dwell on the, what ifs..." Normally Oliver would step closer but this time he took a step back. She saw it. He was pulling away from letting someone in and then Diggle entered food in hand. They ate, one of her monitors showing a football game so the men could discuss manly things. Suddenly the football match disappeared again replaced by yet another man chained up, Felicity started hitting buttons and then a red light appeared on the map

"Got him!" She shouted Oliver was up pulling on a jacket running down town shoving the earpiece in

"I have with me assistant district attorney Gavin Carnahan. Now, DAs are supposed to go after bad
guys but this one can't even be bothered to bring them to trial. Like the ones who killed my wife..."

"Felicity" Oliver said as he ran to the location "I'm on it"

"They said there wasn't enough evidence. You think the evidence would have turned up if she'd been killed in one of Starling nicer neighbourhoods?"

"Emma Falk. Grieving husband is Joseph Falk"

"What do we have on him?"

"Not much. City worker. Department of transportation, computer technician, left his job when she was killed. No current phone no current address"

"You're a lawyer. You're used to making a case. So go ahead. I'm going to give you ten minutes to deliver the closing argument of your life"

"Come on" Oliver shouted as he entered the address Felicity's screen had shown "How's Carnahan?"

Oliver asked about the DA

"Not making a very persuasive argument, see anything?"

"I'm only on the first floor. Just six more to go"

"I tried" Carnahan pleaded the gun rising in the video "Oh, my God! I'm sorry!"

"Oliver, hurry!" Felicity said frantically

"Can't find him! He's not here, Felicity!"

"What?!"

"I searched every office on every floor! He's not here. Is this the right place? Are you sure?"

"Yeah, you saw it on the screen" She looked over to see the red dot blinking in a different location

"I... Oh, crap"

"What?"

"How is this possible?! This can't happen! He's..." He could hear Felicity panicking

"Talk to me!"

"He moved. Just north of you. Literally 2 streets up"

"On my way!"

"I'm sorry" He carried on pleading

"Gavin Carnahan, I find you guilty"

"Don't do this! Don't do this!"

"And I sentence you to death"

"I'm here Felicity. It's just a vacant lot"
"How is this possible? This can't happen. He..." She said confused

"Find the right address, now!" He shouted as a gunshot fired. Felicity watched as the man slumped, she got up pulling the ear piece off and running into the back of the lair

"He's... Oliver, it's over, Carnahan is dead" Diggle said using her ear piece.

Oliver walked back to the Foundry catching his breath in shock that Felicity's skills had failed them. He walked in to find the place quiet. He walked down the stairs to see Felicity stood alone twirling an around in her fingers

"Where's Diggle?"

"I asked him to leave me alone. In my loud voice" she didn't look at him

"This wasn't your fault"

"I was the one who was supposed to find Carnahan, and I was the one who sent you that bogus location... I've never seen anybody die... Been responsible for..."

"Hey" he cut her off "This is the thing with what we do sometimes we lose" he said it so softly, she stared hard at the arrow in her hands

"Maybe it is better being alone..." Oliver frowned unsure what she meant "I'm not seeing anyone currently as you probably gathered, but If I were, I don't know how I'd tell him about today" Oliver slowly pulled the arrow from her hands, giving her a sympathetic smile. Then he walked off leaving her completely at lost in her own mind. Diggle eventually came back, with drinks and a reassuring hand on Felicity's shoulder, whilst Oliver was again working out. But she never looked at him. She stared at her computers for any clue as to what to do. He didn't know how to reassure her. He had been responsible for a lot of deaths but now Felicity was feeling that burden. He couldn't help feeling guilty all over again. However she felt it was anger at her doing the job wrong and Diggle could sense this awkwardness between them. Several hours later and Oliver came to sit with them

"I'm heading home, if anything happens message me right away... Family meal..." He saw Diggles questioning eyes but Felicity never looked up, just then the monitor flashed on

More on the story of kidnappings. The kidnapper seems to have another victim and is now broadcasting the feed to a website. A warning to viewers, this is live footage, so we're not sure what we're about to see.

"Meet Robert Queen: the man who destroyed hundreds of lives closing his factory in our city... He's the reason crime rate grew, why gangs, guns, drugs went wild... The reason my wife lost her job why she was in a rough part of town when she died, yet you walk around without a care in the world..."

Oliver looked at his friends wild eyed, he looked at Felicity furiously typing away

"Anything?"

"I've been going through all the video we got, trying to see if there's anything that'll tell us where this guy is. I got nothing, except a sound buried in the ambient noise. Almost rhythmic. Here, I've isolated it"
"What is that? Sounds like a car driving over lane markers" Oliver said turning his back to the video of his father chained up

"It's bigger than a car" she said

"Bigger than a car" he said absent minded "What, a bus?"

"Uh… wait, I know this. I know it" Diggle said frowning

"Come on Guys!" Oliver said banging his hands on the desk in frustration

"Felicity, show me a map, sights of the abductions on where we've seen the signal so far."

"Right there and there" she pointed

"Those are all subway stops!" Diggle exclaimed

"Starling doesn't have a subway" Oliver frowned

"No, but they used to. When I was a kid, my dad used to take me down town by subway. For 14 minutes, I'd lean against the window, feeling the rhythm of the train moving"

"That's how he did it" Felicity exclaimed "He was where I said, but he was underground. He used to work for the department of transportation, so that's why he knows all the old subway stops. That's why I couldn't trace the signal. He was moving. He was in a subway car"

"Where is he now?" Oliver asked

"He's on the old cross town line if he continues on this route, he'll be at the next stop in 15 minutes" Oliver hooded up using his bike to get to the next stop and easily slipping on board.

"So Robert tell us all why should I let you live?"

"You shouldn't, just kill me. Kill me!"

"You really don't care if you die?" Joseph even sound surprised

"No one will miss me, I destroyed this city my wife left me, my son disappeared and now he hates me and so does my daughter all I have is my company which I am using to give back but it will never be enough..."

"My sentiments exactly Robert" He pulled the gun up but then suddenly the train ground to an abrupt stop, the camera flew out his hand ending the feed

I'm sorry we seem to have lost the feed but we'll keep you updated

"Felicity I stopped the train"

"Feeds down Oliver, good luck"

"Make sure to inform the police where we are"

"I'll direct them there once you disarm him" he slowly walked towards the carriage

"Joseph let him go" Oliver said his voice distorted

"I can't, don't you see what this man did to me, to this city..."
"Yes I do, everyday but you need to give him a second chance to make up for it"

"You and me we're the same..."

"No we're not"

"You're a cold blooded killer"

"I used to be, till I found another way"

"Oh really then why do you attack the corrupt, the criminals?"

"Because they destroyed this city"

"What and he didn't?"

"Yes he did but he's also trying to fix it. He isn't taking money from them he's trying to make things right but you. What would Emma think now?"

"She's not here anymore because of him and people like him" he swung the gun around Oliver had his arrow pulled back, in a split second everything changed Oliver released the arrow next to his father's arm breaking the chains. In that one second Joseph fired hitting Robert in the leg, Oliver pulled another arrow aiming it at him when Joseph turned the gun on himself

"You don't need to do this Joseph, think about Emma she'd want you to be the man she loved..."

"I can never be that in this world, I can only be with her" he pulled the trigger and Oliver stood there jaw twitching. He finished unchaining his father and put his hands on his wound telling him to press hard

"Ambulances and police on way should be there in like 5 minutes you might wanna get out of there" Felicity said in his ear

"Thank you" Robert said looking up at the hooded figure, before he suddenly disappeared

"Oliver, you can't save everyone remember" she said gently in his ear "this guy he knew what he wanted when he took his life this one's not on you" he knew that but how easily that man ended it scared him a little. He wasn't sure why.

He didn't return back to the Foundry instead he changed in the car and Diggle drove him to the hospital where Thea, Moira, and Walter were waiting

"Sorry reception in the club not that great, is dad okay?"

"Missed his major arteries, he's being stitched up and bandaged has to spend the night here but should be out tomorrow" Walter said smiling "might be a bit sore to walk for awhile too"

"Thank god!" He could see the tears that had run Theas mascara and he took a step forward and engulfed her in a hug

"I was so scared Ollie I thought we were gonna lose him"

"It's okay" he hugged her tighter "I think we should all talk with dad there..." Moira and Walter
nodded. Less than 30 minutes later they were in a side room with Robert who had embraced them all, tears visible in his eyes

"I never thought I'd see you guys again. I am sorry for everything Thea... Oliver" his eyes were pleading and Oliver knew he was serious. Thea hugged him tighter as Moira and Walter stood in the corner

"I have a proposition for everyone... If you don't like it you can all say no but I think it's time this family got back on track..." They all looked at Oliver to continue "firstly, I think dad should move into the house" he saw his dads surprised face and Moira's less than impressed one "only temporarily whilst dad heals. We have plenty of rooms and staff to wait on you but that also means you have time off from QC, Walter and I can manage for awhile right?" Walter smiled

"Of course we can"

"Fine, if that's okay with you Moira?" She looked at her children's faces seeing the pain of nearly losing their father

"Of course you are there father after all"

"Right thank you...

"Secondly and I am pretty sure this is what dinner was about tonight anyway... Why don't you move in Walter?" Oliver smiled "I do mean permanently you make our mother happy, and that's all I can ask for" Thea was beaming clearly she approved, then Moira looked at Robert

"You deserve to be happy Moira, after me you deserve Walter plus you got the house fair and square in the divorce you do as you please" he smiled softly

"Walter would you?"

"Of course I would" he said gently kissing her on the cheek

"Well seems Ollie's a bright spark after all" Thea said grinning, they all laughed. They stayed there for awhile talking, like a normal family till the police came to interview him. Quentin as worked up as ever about the hoods latest antics.

When Oliver got outside he found Diggle waiting by the car

"You can go home Diggle"

"Your bikes at the Foundry and we need to take your hood stuff in there too"

"Oh yeh i forgot about that..."

"Well tonight you've had enough to deal with come on dude" The guys pulled up and jumped out "I'll see you tomorrow Oliver" Diggle said pulling the hood stuff out and heading inside. It took him a minute or so to realise he wasn't getting on his bike and heading home after all. Oliver walked in expecting Felicity to have gone home but there she was typing away. He and Diggle placed all the equipment back then he turned to him

"You ok?" Diggle asked
"I'm getting there" he replied with a half grin

"Well I'm going it's been hell of a day, you two should call it a day too" he said making his way upstairs

"You deserve a day off tomorrow Dig, from me and this place, you too Felicity"

"Thanks man I'll see you Monday" with that he was gone, straight away the silence was awkward, Oliver took a step closer to her desk

"Thank you by the way" he said she turned to face him

"It's what I am here for..." She said getting up

"Also If you ever need to tell someone about your day you can tell me..." She looked deep in his eyes and she knew he meant it, but before she even thought she spoke

"Until you do something you think has hurt me and push me away again you mean..." His eyes widened

"You can always talk to me regardless of that, you are my friend after all" she'd take that. It wasn't an apology or a definite no to pulling away, but they could always talk. She nodded as she made her way out the club and Oliver went home.
Chapter 18

Awhile later Robert was recovering well, the family had settled back into a nice routine and Oliver was in a good place or so he thought. There had been reports of another vigilante saving women, a bright blond haired black leather clad lady, the Canary was her name. Oliver was trying to track her but it was leading to dead ends.

QC was hard work, especially as Oliver was there a lot more and thank god for Walter and Felicity. He could cope enough and Tommy thrived in the club making it a little easier for Oliver. However the Count was still on the loose and his drug started to circulate even more

"A lot of people have been getting sick from this vertigo... But how the hell is he getting it across the city?" Oliver said after jumping down frustrated from the salmon ladder "And how has he managed to make it even more potent?"

"I don't know Oliver. I've been cross referencing cases for the last week and this is the Count he kind of has a screw loose" Felicity answered honestly "are you two patrolling anymore tonight?"

"No" Oliver said "both of you go home. I'm meeting Tommy upstairs anyway, something about a client I have to meet" he rolled his eyes. Felicity smiled and so did Diggle

"Be nice to have a catch up with Lyla" he said softly "I'll walk you to your car Felicity" she smiled getting up and they both left Oliver to get dressed into a nice suit.

He made his way upstairs and into the VIP section. He could see Laurel and Tommy sat together but couldn't see who they were talking to. He was pleased that these two seemed happier. They hadn't said anything about being official, but he could see Tommy was really trying to win her over and the looks she gave him when he wasn't looking, told Oliver he was most definitely succeeding. He walked over with his big fake grin

"Hey you two" he said then he turned to see who they were talking to. His heart stopped and he felt the guilt showing on his face, there in her leather biker jacket was Sara Lance

"Hey Ollie" she grinned

"Hi" he said looking between the two sisters. She scooted over a bit

"Join us" she said patting on the spot next to her. He slid in beside her still in shock to be here with Laurel and Tommy across from them. Tommy gave him a sympathetic look, clearly to say sorry

"I think we should be going Tommy get to that dinner of ours" Laurel piped up

"Yes reservations and all that, Bobby's in charge Ollie, so you can leave when you want" Oliver nodded unable to speak

"Have fun guys" Sara smiled at them "see you later" Laurel gave her a giant smile and a wink before leaving with Tommy in hand "sorry about this Ollie..." Sara said the grin fading "should we talk somewhere more private"

"The office" Oliver said as the pair got up and went to the back room.
Felicity had been home 30 minutes when her tablet started beeping she had finally found a connection

"Yes" she shouted throwing a fist into the air. She grabbed her phone and went to call Oliver stopping suddenly remembering that he was seeing an important client. She stared at the screen all these people had had flu jabs, then a day later fallen ill and gone into uncontrollable rages. She looked online and found the nearest flu station was literally next door to QC. She looked at the screen then her phone. This was a lead. A good lead but it wasn't solid proof. If she nipped down there, took a look around, then she could call Oliver later or tomorrow with actual facts. Nothing can go wrong she thought to herself. She grabbed her bag then headed out the door.

"Hi Sara it is nice to see you" Oliver felt the need to say this after his behaviour earlier "it's just you know our past... With Laurel being there"

"It's okay. I had no idea we were being set up"

"Set up?" Oliver asked sitting down in his chair at the desk

"On a date"

"What!?!" Oliver exclaimed "I haven't seen you in over 3 years and I was cheating with you on your sister..."

"Yes, well she apparently believes we're good for each other. That we have more in common" he stood staring at Sara. She was the bad girl to her sisters' good girl image; she was wearing skinny jeans with a black tank top and jacket on. Her style hadn't changed but she looked more sure of herself

"Sara I'm not sure I'm ready for" he chose his next words carefully "anyone" she smiled tilting her head

"Don't worry Ollie I'm not in town to pounce on you, even if Laurel thinks that..." Oliver chuckled

"What you back for?"

"A well deserved break..." She said grinning. Sara was meant to be in the army, that's what her family thought but Oliver knew different. She had been drafted by the MI6, trained to be one of their best agents, but she definitely didn't know he knew that and he wouldn't say anything

"Don't we all" he said grinning raising his hand to gesture about this place

"Seems someone landed on their feet well after being gone for 3 years..."

"Well make the most of it and all that jazz" she laughed

"It is nice to see you though Oliver, and I'm glad Laurels finally starting to see sense with Tommy"

"It's nice to be back here and see you too Sara, and I'm guessing you knew about them two then?"

"I bet and well yes, she felt she was betraying your honour and memory so that's how I told her about us. Which as you have probably dealt with, didn't go down too well. It wasn't long after that I left for good" he nodded understanding
I had no honour left to betray after you know all that rubbish" she smiled. She knew all about the things that had happened before he left so he was thankful.

"So where were you for 3 years? Sunning it up somewhere" Oliver shivered his eyes went dark over, the anger, the pain everything all there.

Felicity stepped onto the flu truck

"Anybody home?" She shouted nobody replied. She walked further in looking at different cupboards as she went. She opened the fridge to the familiar sight of the green drug "Vertigo, Got ya"

"Funny" she spun around to find the Count stood there a wicked look on his face "you took the words right out of my mouth"

"In hell" he finally answered. He looked Sara in the eyes there wasn't the usual sympathy but a look of understanding that struck him as odd. Just then his phone rang, he saw Felicity's name flash on the screen "Excuse me" he said to Sara answering the call

"Felicity"

"Oliver" he frowned, who the hell is this? "Is it ok if I call you Oliver? Surprised to hear from me, right? Not as surprised as I was... You see, I find this not unattractive blonde, getting all up in my business. And what does she have on her? A Queen Consolidated I.D. badge" Oliver listened, breathing slowly trying not to react so Sara wouldn't notice "Now, I think to myself, why does that name ring a bell? Oliver Queen. The guy who came back from the dead, just before the hood put me in a padded cell. So I look into him and find the face of your bodyguard was the man who helped the Hood. Ipso facto, you're the Hood. So Oliver what are you going to do? I'm at QC if you're really interested" he hung up and Oliver turned to Sara

"Sorry, something's come up lets catch up another time" with that he got up and made his way to the Foundry calling Dig in the process. Then he made his way to his office in QC, hood down no point hiding his face anymore. As he rounded the corner, he found Felicity sat in a chair tear marks down her face with a gun pointed to her head

"Pretty swanky offices. You can see all the destruction that your father has caused from up here"

"What do you want?"

"World peace and personal satisfaction. Though not necessarily in that order..." His eyes went dark "You poisoned me and put me in a hole. You have no idea how much I hated you for that" then he smirked "Turns out, someone else hates you, too"

"Who?" Oliver said in anger

"Oh, you're going to be surprised when you find out. He's a man of means. Set me up with my new operation so I could draw you out"

"To do what?"

"This" he shouted firing at Oliver
"You're going to have to try harder" Oliver shouted from where he dived behind a corner.

"Done!" He shouted back "Come on!" He said throwing his gun across the floor and pulling Felicity by the hair onto her feet.

"Ahh!" She couldn't help but scream in pain.

"So now we move on to plan B" he pulled out a duel syringe full of vertigo. Oliver came out arrow drawn this time.

"Oliver, don't! Not for me!" She shouted it so fiercely without fear.

"Quiet, please. I'm threatening. Lower your bow" Oliver slowly lowered his bow tossing the arrow on the floor.

"Your problem is with me it's not with her" he said quietly almost pleading.

"Well then, consider this your penalty for making me go to plan B in the first place" in that second he plunged the syringe in the direction of her neck. Without hesitation, as if from a primal instinct, Oliver reached for an arrow from his quiver aiming directly at the Count. It hit him hard in the chest and he dropped Felicity to the ground. Oliver pulled out another arrow hitting him again in the chest, and then he pulled a final one causing him to crash through the window of his office and onto the streets below. Oliver stood there for a second able to breathe again, then rushed to Felicity's side.

"Hey, hey" he said cradling her cheek with his hand. Hers automatically wrapping around his wrist.

"Hey, shh, shh. It's all right. You're safe" she was shaking but she looked at him blood running from his arm.

"Oh, you were shot" she put her hand on the wound.

"Hey. It's nothing" he smiled reassuringly. He stood up and Felicity's hand fell to the warmth of where his hand had been. Oliver made his way to the window, looking out onto the body of the man he'd killed 3 arrows to the chest, and Felicity felt the guilt wash over her. Sirens could be heard and Felicity didn't move she merely spoke.

"Oliver leave..." He looked at her "Go" she said in her loud voice "they can't find you here" he gave her one of his sorrowful look then left.

An hour later after being checked over by paramedics and giving multiple statements Felicity found herself in an interrogation room with Detective Lance. He seemed angry.

"You're not exactly a hardened criminal, are you?"

"No, I'm not any kind of criminal"

"What do you call computer hacking?"

"A hobby?" She closed her eyes realising what she had said "That I do not engage in"

"Hey, I got a whole mess of computer gobbledygook that I don't understand, that says otherwise. I had my tech guys go through your computer at Queen Consolidated. You used it to hack into various networks and to analyze a water sample to tie back to a Vertigo drug lab. These are all cases involving The Hood" he crossed his arms "Tell me, Felicity. What am I thinking?"
"I..." Felicity couldn't believe it. She had been cornered with no way out. She could feel her heart raising and panic climbing then her brain seemed to click in place "I don't know Detective but I would like to know why you illegally searched my company computer, Which is accessible by anyone at QC, after I have just been tied to a chair" she made a point to rub her wrists where the marks of the bands were "and my life threatened..." Just then his phone rang

"Saved by the bell"

"Hello, Detective" the voice was low and altered

"It's funny you should call. I got your trusty sidekick sitting right in front of me"

"I don't have a sidekick; I'm calling because I just cleaned up a mess your bosses tried to cover up"

"By killing a guy? Yes good cleaning up there"

"I didn't have that intention, he had a hostage and that woman in front of you breathing now, the terror in her eyes from your questions was intensified by a thousand when he had that gun then that drug to her throat... Do the right thing Detective let this go, there are bigger problems in this city"

"Yes and you're one of them" he hung up "you can go Miss Smoak, just don't leave town"

"I have no intention of" she said standing up, still shaking from the nights events and that's when she saw the regret in his eyes at pushing her so hard. She walked over to the door and turned to him

"You know I used to think the Vigilante was a criminal too, but don't you think he's trying to change his ways. I mean tonight was my fault, he killed again. But it seems to me, whoever he is; he's willing to sacrifice an awful lot to help the people of this city. Kind of makes him a hero, doesn't it?"

She walked out leaving him with a slight aghast expression. As she left, Diggle was waiting with the car. He embraced her then let her inside where Oliver was waiting

"I just wanted to check in on you"

"I've felt better. Thanks for making the call"

"I didn't think he'd have done that, otherwise I wouldn't have left you to that interrogation..."

"It's okay. He couldn't arrest me if he wanted to, the stuff he has isn't strong enough but I'll be more careful now... Where are we going?"

"We're taking you home Felicity" Diggle said softly. They drove in silence to her flat then they all got out once he had pulled up

"Night Felicity" Diggle said hugging her again

"Night John" she said back. She went to turn to Oliver who was already at the door "where are you going?"

"I'm walking you to your flat"

"Nothing's going to happen between now and then..." She rolled her eyes

"Just humour me" she opened the door and they walked in silence to her door. She opened it walked inside grabbing a throw off the sofa and wrapping herself in it

"Good night" he said about to leave
"Good night" she replied as he stepped out "Oliver" he turned around "I, uh I just wanted to say thank you"

"Yeah" he smiled brushing it off as no big deal again turning to leave

"And I'm sorry" he spun around quick this time

"For what?" He said frowning

"I got myself into trouble again, and you killed him. After all that time changing you killed again and I am sorry that I was the one to put you in a position where you had to make that kind of choice" she said dropping her head slightly. He walked over taking her hand in his

"Felicity he had you, and he was going to hurt you. There was no choice to make" he said it slowly to show he meant it and gave her a genuine sincere smile

"How's your arm? I totally forgot..." He squeezed her hand gently

"It and I are fine, honestly but get some sleep Felicity. You know where I am if you want anything" he said letting go of her hand and leaving slowly closing the door behind her. She straight away locked the door. She wasn't going to read into the fact he just said he'd kill to protect her. She found it crazy but most of all she didn't want him to feel tarnished anymore. She wanted him to feel joy and light in his life, just then her phone rang to pull her back in to reality

"Hey Tommy"

"Oh my god are you okay? We just saw the news"

"I'm fine. A little shaken up, you know the whole kidnapped by a crazed mad man being saved by the vigilante and getting interrogated by the police does that to you..."

"Oh Jesus, Smoak! Seriously I can come round..."

"I'm fine Tommy plus what would Laurel think? Don't think I didn't notice the we there" he laughed

"Still joking you must be alright... But why'd you get kidnapped in the first place and how'd the vigilante save you? And why where you interrogated?"

"Wow that's a lot of questions! Long story short I was caught up in the middle of whatever those 2 have issues with. Wrong place at the wrong time basically. But he saved me, I don't know why he just did and Detective Lance thinks 'cause I got caught up in this the vigilante must know me and I know who he is... To be honest Tommy I'm just glad to be home"

"Wow sounds like a crazy night! Well you know where we are if you want anything"

"Thanks Tommy and I'm happy for you both"

"Thanks Smoak me too and I hope you get your happy ending soon" she smiled

"Me too night"

"Good night"
It wasn't long till Oliver had a.run in with the Canary; she helped him take down a prison escape riot with little ease. She suddenly disappeared; well that's what she thought. Oliver managed to track her back into the city centre right to the clock tower. He made his way up there, arrow drawn he was taking no chances

"So that's how you thank a girl who helped you Arrow?" Her voice seemed so familiar

"Arrow?"

"Well that's what the police are calling you these days, didn't you see the statement..." He shrugged "we will carry on our pursuit of the hooded vigilante aka the Arrow but we do have other cases" she said in a manly mocking voice "seems Detective Lance is warming to you"

"That'll be a first..." He grinned

"Don't I know it Oliver" his eyes went wild

"How?"

"Let's just say your secrets aren't as safe as you think..." Oliver stood there, arrow still drawn back

"Who are you?" She pulled her wig off, revealing shorter darker blond locks and then she pulled her mask off slowly "Sara?" He stopped the tension in his bow, placing the arrow back in his quiver and the bow on his back turning his comms off. She smiled softly "What the hell?"

"Well we all have secrets Ollie" she smiled coyly

"Yes like you working for MI6" her mouth opened in shock

"What?"

"Your secrets aren't as safe as you think" he mocked, she laughed

"Oh Ollie! Who would have thought that we'd go from those reckless kids to this" she gestured between the two

"Circumstances, people, situations they change us and our perspectives on life..."

"I know" she said softly "I know what happened to you"

"Excuse me?"

"MI6 had a file on you, it was destroyed to protect your identity but first they showed it me... I read
the reports. I am sorry you lived through that” he didn't speak

"I never told anyone the truth..."

"No you didn't, your statement was in there but so were a lot of others, plus footage obtained illegally... They can't touch you Ollie and your secrets safe"

"So is that why you're here? They sent you?"

"Not really. They told me to keep an eye on you make a report on the Arrow for them but I was sent home for a bit after my last assignment went bad" she lowered her head. He recognised the look, the same look he saw on his own face

"A report on me? I didn't think I was so important…” he said trying to make things light again

"Taking out the head of the Chinese triad, then denying it all to return home and become a hooded vigilante, that started off killing then suddenly stopped but killed again to save a random young woman. How would the MI6 not be interested in that?" she winked

"When you put it like that… but seriously I did what I had to do to survive"

"I know that Ollie, I know that more than most. You don't have to explain… but stopping what was that about?"

"A friend once told me I had to find another way and they were right... the Count well that wasn't intended he had my friend" she nodded

"I understand, but the fact you stopped yourself and came back from the darkness it's commendable” Oliver felt awkward

"Why are you dressed like this?" he gestured to the leather outfit

"I… I can't not do what I am trained to do, it's a part of me now a part of my soul" she said eyes dark

"Then why leave?" he frowned

"I wasn't given a choice Ollie, I left, my return is up to me. But I did some horrifying things in the name of our country, things that I can never take back…” he understood completely. Neither could talk about what they had been through, but both had a mutual understanding of doing things to survive, changing who they once were "If you want any help you just have to ask" she smiled

"Same goes to you" he replied, slowly leaving the clock tower to return to the Foundry.

"You turned off your comms, I thought you were in trouble!" Felicity shouted as Oliver entered

"I ran into an old friend"

"So this Canary is a friend?" Diggle asked

"Sort of… I'll explain another time but I am late for the charity recovery event my mother arranged for my father" he rolled his eyes

"Well I best be leaving then" Felicity said getting up from her computer

"Hold on Felicity…” Oliver said, she spun around with a confused face "you're coming too"
"What?!" she said eyes wide

"It's part of the EA contract, you attend work related functions plus Diggles got to be there as my body guard"

"No way! This isn't work related it's personal!"

"This is a charity event for the entire city, and for my father's health. Other QC employers are invited plus you're my EA, it won't look good if you don't"

"I can't believe you sprung this on me! I don't have a dress or anything and I... this isn't fair" she said looking flushed

"Calm down it's all sorted" she looked at him confused and Diggle grinned like a Cheshire cat.

Oliver walked into the party late, using the back entrance wanting to avoid the press. They made their way through the kitchens into a hallway. He pulled open a door to reveal a very large room full of coat rails

"Right Felicity nobody will bother you in here, get changed and come out" he smiled at her as she stood frowning, he squeezed her shoulder "I cannot apologise and thank you enough" she merely nodded as the two men left her. She walked to the far side of the room pulling off her coat, placing the dress bag and large bag Oliver had given to her at the side. She pulled her hair out of the pony tail, letting it fall and brushing it to the side. She spent 30 minutes applying her makeup, sorting her hair, putting in her contacts and slipping into the red dress she had chosen from the various ones Oliver had to offer. She pulled out a gold clutch and heels to match her jewellery. Then placed all the bags on a rail, she was just placing her last shoe on when the door opened

"What is she doing here Robert?" She recognised the voice instantly as Moira Queen. She had met her a few times at QC when working with Walter, and more so now she was Oliver's EA. But something about her made Felicity feel uncomfortable and uneasy

"I didn't invite her here Moira why would I?" Robert said back

"She still looks at you like a love sick puppy!" Moira spat out

"Hey... That's uncalled for..." He replied calmly, Felicity sat on the window ledge frozen in place unsure what to do

"Really Robert? Because I think it's uncalled for to leave your wife and kids for an intern at your company!" She said getting louder, he sighed and Felicity held her breath

"Moira you and I both know our marriage was over long before then..." She sighed too

"I know, I'm sorry about that but she spooked me... I mean it's not every day you come face to face with the woman who could have made your husband happy if we hadn't found out the hard way how much of a vicious little slut she was" Felicity was still unable to move. Who were they talking about?

"She did make me happy Moira and I did love her but... My kids came first she didn't get that and I will never forgive her for what she did to Oliver" Felicity steadied herself on the window ledge after slipping slightly from shock
"Oh Robert..." She sighed "I truly am sorry you had to have your heartbroken but keep her away from Oliver and our family please..."

"I've been trying but Miss Rochev is slippery and a part of the business now"

"I know but Oliver went through enough back then because of her... And we promised he'd never know about her, we'd let him believe he was kidnapped and... You know the rest, because of you closing the factory..." Felicity sat there open mouthed Isabel was Roberts mistress and Oliver had slept with her, and she was the one who kidnapped and tortured him. Her head started spinning and she felt the floor was about to swallow her up when she heard the door opening slowly

"I am sorry Moira about it all, and I'll ask her to leave..."

"Thank you and I am too Robert" she heard the footsteps getting quieter and the door close. She sat there all things flying through her mind she rushed out the room, unsure what she was going to do. Then she saw him stood there dancing to the music with Thea in his arms smiling. She had to stop herself and then Diggle came over

"You okay?" He smiled, Felicity took a deep breath

"Yes I'm fine" she tried to smile back and he frowned

"Seriously you look lovely so don't worry about that, you fit right in" she nodded turning to the bar, ordering a massive glass of red wine and downing it in one

"Wow Smoaky, someone might say you have a drinking problem" she turned her head to see Tommy there grinning, and as soon as he saw her face, his dropped too "hey, what's wrong?" She went to speak then stopped herself "is this about lover boy? Or Queen making you attend this function? Or..."

"What would you do?" She blurted out

"What would I do about what?"

"If you found something out about a dear friend, that could destroy them. Not physically I mean unless you killed them or something but even then destroy implies..." She felt Tommys hand on hers stopping her. She looked into his eyes

"Breath okay?" He smiled half heartedly; she took a big breath collecting her thoughts then looked around

"No Laurel tonight?" Trying to think about something else

"No her mums in town, since her sister showed up there having a family get together or something" he squeezed her hand still in his "and I know what you're doing, so come on tell me what's up?"

"What would you do if you found out something about a friend... Something that had the potential to pull their family apart and upset a lot of people, would you tell them?" He looked at her then glanced over at Oliver. He wasn't sure it was him she was talking about but he had an inkling

"Would you?" He asked back

"I'd give someone the chance to tell the truth first but yeh... I'd tell him..."

"Then there is your answer Smoaky" he smiled lightly; she hugged him tightly
"Thank you" she said softly in his ear

"Felicity?" Oliver said from nowhere, she pulled back from Tommy to see Oliver was no longer smiling

"Yes" she smiled trying to hide her troubled mind. Oliver looked her up and down in her figure hugging floor length red gown

"You look beautiful" she blushed

"Thank you... Mr Queen" she suddenly remembered this was a work outing and Tommy laughed from at the side of her

"Felicity there might be work people here tonight but you are allowed to use my first name..." She nodded flushing even brighter "would you care to dance?" He said placing out a hand. She looked at his face, then his hand, then at Tommy's school boy giggling then to the room and she spotted Moira heading towards a side door. Oliver followed her gaze around at everyone; slightly confused

"Uh… not right now thanks" she said sliding past him. He stood there a little stunned, feeling instantly guilty about making her come to this party. He looked at Tommy who shrugged, sympathetically patting him on the shoulder and handing him a beer.

Felicity slowly opened the door into a small room to see Moira talking to a smartly dressed man

"Yes of course Mrs Queen, we will send out the food in the 15 minutes and advice the people to take their seats" he bowed

"Thank you" she spun around as he exited out the door in the back

"Mrs Queen?"

"Yes my dear?"

"I'm Miss Smoak"

"Who?"

"Felicity Smoak I..."

"If you're looking for Oliver, he's out there my dear"

"I know I wanted to talk to you"

"Really? What about?" she said smiling softly

"I… I heard you and Mr Queen in the coat room" her smile faded instantly "I wasn't eavesdropping, I was in there getting ready because your son sprung this event on me, and you know what Oliver's like he doesn't do on time we were already late and I was all flustered and he made me get changed in there said nobody would come in and well you did…” Felicity stopped herself finally breathing

"So what are you going to do with this information Felicity?" she frowned and Felicity felt slightly uncomfortable
"I don't know. I just thought you and Robert deserved the chance to tell Oliver yourself. He should hear it from you" she said simply

"I'm not going to tell my son anything" Moira said standing up tall "And neither are you" Felicity opened her mouth to speak but Moira jumped in first "If you won't keep my secret for Oliver's sake, you should keep it for your own" Felicity frowned unsure what to say "I see the way you look at him, those days I nip by in the office or at events like this, or at the club. If you tell him this, you will rip his world apart and a part of him will always blame you" she said pointing a finger at her "Oh, he'll hate me, for sure but he will hate you, too" Felicity could feel the panic and fear rising "We all have to keep secrets, Miss Smoak" and with that Moira walked out the room. Felicity wanted to cry but she wouldn't for Olivers sake. She hadn't noticed all the feelings for Oliver and yet his own mother had noticed.

She took a deep breath and headed out to find the hall was now full of tables and people seated. She looked around to see there was a spot on the head table with Olivers family between Oliver and Tommy. She sighed, plastering on a fake grin and sitting down between the boys, who had already poured her a glass of red wine. Felicity sat there listening to the conversation between the people on the table flow, whilst they ate their 5 course meal that seemed to last a few hours. She was deep in thought staring at her wine waiting for her dessert

"Felicity" Oliver said slowly. She sat there staring into her third glass of wine and he felt something was terribly wrong "Felicity" he said it slower and longer

"What? Sorry" she said a little flustered not looking him in the eyes

"Are you okay?" he said with his sincere look, again noticing she couldn't look at him

"Uh yeh, it's just things in here" she said tapping her wine glass on her head

"What things?" Felicity regretted it instantly, she placed her glass down

"I... uh have to go to the ladies" Felicity rushed off before anyone had a chance to react. She locked herself in a cubicle and allowed silent tears to fall. *How could she be so stupid as to cry in a toilet at the thought of losing Oliver Queen, who put his life at risk all the time?* She felt idiotic but she still felt Moiras words, he would blame her, the pain would be the same.

"Tommy do you know what's wrong with Felicity?" Oliver turned to his friend

"I dunno she seemed quiet" he lied slightly.

"I just thought you two were pretty close, I mean you were hugging earlier"

"Ollie I don't spend nearly every day with her like you... Yeh hugging a friend, I have Laurel remember" he said giving him a knowing look

"I know that... I just I'm worried about her" Tommy raised an eyebrow "as a friend Tommy..."

"Really? Because I don't see you asking any other woman to dance here or specifically saving a seat for any others..."

"It's not like that..."

"No it's not but how many Queen Consolidated employees are here" he gestured around him "and how many of them think you and Felicity are sleeping together?" Oliver's jaw clenched "I know you
aren't believe me I'd know, and I get why your dad gave her the job but you have to think of all the comments people make, the looks they give her. She worked hard to be where she is and now people believe she slept her way up there..."

"No offence Tommy, but I'm guessing she's spoke to you about this?"

"Once but just to vent, she'd had a long day and she hasn't mentioned it tonight..."

"I'm such an idiot!" Oliver said getting up as he made his way out the hall and down the corridor turning to enter the ladies as Felicity exited smashing straight against his chest. He held her arms to stop her from falling and then stepped them away from the doors. She looked up into his eyes

"Oliver?" She frowned; he noticed the red puffy eyes and freshly applied makeup. He let go of her arms

"I'm sorry..." She frowned even further "I made you come here and wear this dress that clearly makes you feel uncomfortable... I didn't think about you being dressed up like this, spending the event here with me and all the rumours about us sleeping together..." She half laughed, stopping him

"Oliver they're rumours, they're annoying as hell sometimes I mean it wouldn't be too bad if they were true. But seeing as they aren't, I don't get to reap the benefit of sleeping my way to the top, not that I want to sleep with you or that I wouldn't I mean look at you... oh my brain thinks of the worst ways to say things" he smiled a genuine smile "What I'm trying to say is the dress doesn't make me uncomfortable. I actually quite like it and the rumours, yeh sometimes they get too much but then I remember about... Night time stuff and it seems small in comparison. So don't apologise Oliver" she smiled softly getting lost in his eyes "though the fact I've been gone awhile and you have now left too, and we'll return together does look a little..." she pulled a face causing Oliver to laugh louder just as Thea came round the corner

"You're missing dessert guys!" She said smiling before going into the ladies

"We can't miss dessert" Oliver said jokingly allowing Felicity to walk into the hall in front of him. They sat down tucking into dessert, but Moira stared at Felicity and almost instantly everything came crashing back. She ate her pudding then started circulating the room avoiding Oliver again.

When everyone finished, the tables were cleared and the band began to play again, various donations had been made and the objects for sale around the room brought. Oliver could feel Felicity avoiding him, and found himself with Tommy again

"She says she's comfortable with the rumours and as usual dropped some bad lines" he grinned to himself

"Yes she does do that" Tommy smiled back

"But..."

"She's still avoiding you"

"Yes is it that obvious?"

"Probably not to everyone else, she looks like she's being a dutiful EA but yeh I think you need to talk to her..."
"I plan on" Oliver said making his way straight to Felicity, he was two feet away when he felt a hand on his arm

"Not going to ask me to dance then?" Isabel was stood there in a plain black low cut gown; he had seen her earlier in the evening but presumed she had been asked to leave

"Well..."

"Actually he promised me a dance" Felicity said from nowhere. She instantly dropped her hand from his arm

"Oh really?" She said raising an eyebrow, Oliver grinned

"Yes actually, can't deviate from my Executive Assistants plans" Felicity stepped forward linking her arm with his then made their way to the dance floor as Isabel stared on giving dirty looks "thank you for saving me..." You have no idea she thought "Why?" Felicity's eyes went wide crap she had said it out loud

"Nothing" she smiled awkwardly feeling the blush rise from her neck

"We don't have to dance you know?" He said sadness in his bright eyes

"Hey! I saved you from her we are so dancing" she smiled and she saw the sparkle in his eye return. He held her hand in his, and the other on her side, taking a dancing stance and swaying gently to the lively music. He spun her around gently and they smiled at each other just as the music's tempo changed to something more slower.

"Guessing you see it too" Diggle said to Tommy who had just asked the band for a slow song

"Haha I think most people do. I just wish they'd do something about it..."

"You do realise forcing the issue could end badly right?"

"Yes but I also believe maybe it could be good" he winked at him. Felicity didn't even hesitate she stepped closer keeping her hand in his and slipping the other up around his neck, his hand went to her lower back and they swayed slowly, forgetting everything around them. She was staring into his beautiful blue eyes, full of joy and hope, then she remember the conversation with his mother it knocked her for 6, as she fought back tears but a single drop came spilling out onto her cheek. Oliver who was staring just as intently into her eyes and could see her joy and couldn't help grinning, till he saw another emotion: guilt, fear then a tear

"Hey..." He started but before he had time to finish Felicity had pulled away

"Sorry..." She said walking off through the crowd

"Yeh doesn't look like that went too well Merlyn" Diggle said as he and Tommy watched Felicity heading towards them

"Yes agreed" he said rubbing the back of his neck

"You okay?" Diggle asked as Felicity stood in front of them

"Yeh I'm just tired... I'm going to head home, first I'll get changed though" she smiled softly pain still in her eyes, he frowned

"I can take you home Felicity"
"No Dig it's fine, I'll order a taxi Goodnight guys"

"Night Felicity" Diggle replied

"Night Smoak, you know where I am if you need to talk" Tommy whispered as she nodded walking away. Before Oliver could give chase his mother pulled him to one side to introduce him to some of the charity people. By the time he got away it was 15 minutes later

"Where'd she go Dig?"

"She's getting changed and going home, something's up man" he replied bluntly

"I gathered that much, I'm going to go get her..." He walked off and swung the door open to the coat room closing the door behind him. He spotted Felicity who was now back into her normal clothes, coat and glasses but heels, makeup and hair still the same

"Felicity" he said firmly walking up to her "What is going on with you? And don't say...

"nothing" she said immediately

"Don't say nothing The truth, please" she stood looking at him for what felt like hours but was merely seconds she took a deep breath

"You might have noticed that I talk a lot"

"It has not escaped my attention" he smiled lightly

"You might have also noticed that I don't talk a lot about my family" probably not is what she thought

"I have noticed that" he said softly, she was a little surprised he had noticed

"My mother is she's..." She hesitated "She's my mother. And I don't really know what my father is, 'cause he abandoned us. I barely remember him" she looked into Oliver's eyes now "But I do remember how much it hurt when he left and just the thought of losing someone that important to me again..." Her voice was cracking and her eyes filled with tears

"Hey" he smiled placing his hand on her arm squeezing "You're not going to lose me" he smiled and he meant it "Whatever it is that's bothering you, Is it about your family?"

"No" she sighed "It's about yours" his arm dropped from hers. Before she could stop herself she told him everything. She saw all the emotions flash across his face anger, fear, disgust, then he was blank he spun around leaving Felicity stood in the room. He sighed deeply, he needed to know the truth but she had lost him just as his mother had said; she left through the back getting in a waiting taxi and going home.

Oliver walked in heading straight towards his mother and father, he was angry just before he reached them a tall gentlemen grabbed his arm

"Mr Queen would you like to say a few words, the evenings coming to an end and I thought it would be nice for you to introduce your parents" he smiled softly, Oliver just nodded making his way to the stage.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I'm here today to say a few words about Moira and Robert Queen. I bet many of you think that you know them, because you read about them in the press, or you saw them
on TV. But I can promise you, you don't know my parents. You don't know them like I do and you
don't know what they're capable of” he hesitated faking a smile. He wouldn't announce this to the
world "When it comes to helping the people of Starling, with grand events like tonight so to my
mother, Moira Queen and father Robert Queen" the crowd erupted and his parents headed on stage
he pulled them into a joint hug "I know" he said with anger pulling away walking off stage

"Thank you! Thank you, Starling!" They both smiled talking to the crowd, hiding the shock. Oliver
made his way to Diggle
"Let's go..." He nodded and both men left.

Oliver was in the Foundry working out when his phone rang

"Hey"

"Hi Ollie, I didn't know who else to call..."

"Hey Sara it's okay, what's up?"

"Are you busy?"

"No, I'm in my lair..."

"Oh it doesn't matter"

"Sara it's round the back of Verdant codes 3672, head down the stairs I'll be there"

"Thanks Ollie" she hung up and Oliver carried on training hard beating the dummy. He didn't turn
till he saw Sara stood at the bottom of the stairs

"You've been crying" Oliver frowned looking at her puffy eyes

"Yeah, I was happy to know I still could"

"Are you ok?"

"Well, turns out my family wasn't as thrilled to see me as we thought"

"Give them time"

"I gave them years Ollie, seems like they still can't accept my choices... So what exactly are you
taking out on that dummy?"

"My parents they're not who I thought they were... Even more so"

"I guess it's going around, family trouble"

"So what now?" Oliver asked

"I don't know" she said truthfully

"I don't, either” he admitted

"I know one thing though" she said softly
"What's that?" He said softly stepping forward

"I'm home" she grinned, as he looked into her eyes he saw himself and everything he had been and still was. So without thinking he walked forward pulling Sara in for a heated kiss, which she returned without hesitation. This wasn't like Isabel, he didn't feel like he was just filling a hole but it wasn't like Laurel either without lust, she was what he needed right now and he wanted it.
Chapter 20

Oliver and Sara slipped into a routine, nobody knew about them. They didn't want it to affect anything and she naturally slipped in to being a part of the team too, so nobody questioned why she was there. Oliver had avoided his parents at all cost, only spending time with Thea when she was available and seeing his father at business meetings.

Felicity knew about them she could tell. She was happy he had found someone but part of her heart ached even if she chose to ignore it. The man she cared for was finally happy so why couldn't she be. She could hear Tommy saying about not waiting and moving on. She was finally thinking maybe it was time to. It had been awhile since the charity event, and Sara joined the team but it was now that Felicity started doubting herself.

They had been tracking a man, William Tockman, who had stolen technology from a competitor of QC so he could steal money. He was an accomplished computer hacker, and now he had the skeleton key it made it harder to defeat him. He had Felicity and the team in a spin for a few days, but finally she thought she'd found him, tracing a signal from the bank his men were trying to rob, back to him

"It's leading back to our network. Tockman's piggybacking off my hack!" She was furiously working away as Sara made her way to stop the bank robbery "It's a trap. He...he's trying to break into our network" she told the men stood either side of her

"I'm not trying. I am" Williams's voice came through the speakers loud and fierce "Where are you? Are you home? Are you safe? Somewhere you think you're safe, somewhere without windows for anyone to creep through? Underground, perhaps? You think no one can get to you? You think no one can touch you in the safety of your hidey hole Felicity. But I can" Her eyes shot wide at the fact this man knew her name. Suddenly all the electrical, that she had spent her time improving over the course of working with the Arrow, blew, sparkling, and tumbling them into darkness. She gasped and the emergency lights kicked in. After awhile of composing themselves, Felicity stood up and made her way to the frazzled looking towers

"How bad?" Oliver asked her

"Tockman used the skeleton key to penetrate our firewall and recode our security" he frowned at her not understanding "Basically, he told our system to commit suicide and it did. Bravo, clock king!"

"Sara stopped Tockman's men before they could get away with the cash" Oliver said not knowing how to make it better

"So Tockman is going to be looking for another score?" Diggle asked kneeling beside Felicity, flash light in hand

"Maybe we should give him one. I'll call Walter and have him put cash in my vault at Starling National, and ask him to do it tonight. If Tockman wants to make another score who better to rob than a suddenly cash flush Oliver Queen?"

"And what if he doesn't take the bait?" Felicity said not looking at him

"That's a good point" he questioned "I'll make it my entire trust fund" he smiled to himself
"What can I do?" Sara said softly

"Go to your dinner" Felicity said again not looking up "Your family's probably waiting for you"

"Right... Dinner at Laurel's with both parents..." She sound uncomfortable "This is more important" she decided

"You can't do anything here, Sara" Felicity looked at her "Your family's important too"

"Yeah" she said looking down

"Hey! You should go..." Oliver said looking at her uncomfortable stance

"Will you go with me?" She said without thinking

"What?" He said raising an eyebrow

"Laurel has Tommy coming and it will be the first time we're all together as a family with mum and dad" she took a breath "It's just, now that it's actually here, I'm nervous" she told him the truth "I mean, last time I saw Laurel and mum, it didn't go very well I mean questioning my army choices and it'd be helpful to not have to go alone"

"I should probably stay here" Oliver said looking at Felicity in front of him. Felicity heard the conversation behind her, if it wasn't obvious before they were together it most definitely was now and she was not in the mood for it

"What is it exactly you think you can do here to help?" She snapped not looking at Oliver who looked at Sara

"Call if you need us" he told them as the two turned around

"Yep" Diggle called after them "You know, it's not your fault Felicity" he said softly trying to reassure his friend

"Really? Which one of the rest of you put up the security safeguards?" She snapped pulling random bits of burnt wires from the machines "Maybe if it had been Sara, we wouldn't be in this mess"

"Now, I know we haven't talked about this, but it must be difficult for you seeing them together..." He said slowly trying not to provoke her more

"So you noticed too? I think they thought they were hiding it well" he chuckled a little "This isn't about them being together" she said, he looked skeptical "This is about me" she was telling the truth with that one, she didn't feel good enough anymore "Ok, Sara can analyze blood. She can kick ass. She can do anything" she sighed "And the one thing I'm supposed to be good at, I'm failing at miserably" she didn't look Diggle in the face feeling stupidly vulnerable "And why do you even need me now that you have her?"

"Because you're irreplaceable, Felicity" he didn't even have to think of the reply it came naturally, he knew however she didn't believe him. It was times like this when Diggle wished he could bang the heads together of his team mates, who so obviously cared deeply for each other, more than either would admit. But seeing Felicity doubting herself made him a little sad

"I have a lot of work to do" Felicity said clearly gesturing for Diggle to leave, which he did maybe some alone time was what she needed he thought.
Oliver was surprised how easy it was to fake being interested in all of the Lance family interests, and it was very clear that not a single person believed that me and Sara were not sleeping together. Laurel and Tommy were happy for them; her parents were a little dubious especially Quentin. He still saw Oliver as the playboy drunk from years ago. They chatted about her mother's life as a university scholar and her new man, to which Oliver noticed the slight disappointment in Quentins features. They spoke about Quentins search for the Arrow, and Laurels new position working for the district attorney. Tommy spoke about the club but ever so often he saw Tommy looking at him with a slight sombre expression. He couldn't put his finger on the emotion or the meaning behind it which was annoying him some. When the time came to leave, they were all very courteous and Oliver and Sara headed straight to the Foundry to see what was happening

"Have you seen Felicity?" Diggle asked as they came down the stairs

"No" Oliver said "Wait, why?" concern in his tone

"I went to get some take-out after she seemed a little off. When I came back, she was gone. I haven't seen her since just after you left" Oliver frowned feeling very uneasy when suddenly his phone rang Felicities name on screen

"Hey Tockman took the bait. The money you had Walter deposit, I'm reading his signal at Starling National" she said quietly

"Wait...How do you know that?"

"Because I'm here" Oliver hung up, told his two companions what was happening and before any real time had passed they were stood at the computer outside of Olivers vault

"What are you doing here?" he said with a slight bitter tone

"I'm tracking Tockman. He fried our computers, so I'm using the banks to trace the skeleton key's signature" she said in a matter of fact tone

"Diggle, get her out of here" Oliver said without even trying to consult her

"My life, my choice Oliver" she said staring into his eyes not backing down. Just then an alarm sounded out "Tockman disabled the bank's security system. So I re-abled it. His men are blocking our way out"

"I'll deal with them" Oliver said making his way upstairs

"Tockman's signal's strong. He's here, he's close"

"Find him Felicity" Sara said smiling. His voice came loud over the speakers again

"No need. I'll tell you exactly where I am. I'm everywhere. At the moment, I'm particularly focused on the sub-level. The gas mains specifically" Felicity typed away on her tablet

"Oh, my God. He shut down the gas main release"

"And why is that bad?" Sara questioned

"The build-up could cause an explosion"

"It will. It'll blow up three square blocks" the Clockmans voice sounded again
"No, it won't" Diggle protested running down into levels below to turn the mains on manually

"Wait" she said catching Sara who was about to go after him "Tockman overplayed his hand. The gas main's in the city's network, that's where I live"

"Am I supposed to understand that?" Sara replied

"In trying to blow us up, he gave me a way to track him down"

"That I understood" she smiled at her; Felicity grabbed her tablet running down a corridor Sara hot on her heels. Sara got distracted by one of the Tockmans goons running into a room being refurbished

"What's happening?" Felicity said running into the room, Sara turned to face her. Just then the Tockman came round a corner pointing a gun "Look out!" Felicity shoved herself and Sara over behind a wall, as the shot rang out

"You don't even know why I'm doing this, the money's not for me! I'm doing this all for my family! They need the money after I die..." Sara stood up to face him Felicity sat up the pain in her shoulder very apparent, she looked at her tablet in front of her then to him

"Doesn't make it right" Sara spat

"Tempus fugit" he smirked raising the gun

"Time flies" Felicity said pressing a button on her laptop, in seconds sparks flew from near his heart shocking him and causing him to drop into a heap

"What the hell was that?"

"His cell phone. I uploaded the same virus he used on my gear in the Foundry" she smiled through the pain, then reality hit "I didn't just kill him, did I?" Sara walked over checking his pulse point

"Just knocked him out" she said

"We did it" Felicity grinned sitting up slowly

"No, you did it" Sara grinned "Let's get out of here before my dad gets here" Felicity nodded.

"Are you sure you don't want to go to the hospital?" Oliver said now back in the Foundry, him and Diggle stood well in front of the girls with their back turned to save Felicity of her modesty as Sara was patching her up

"Mm-mm. You guys never go to the hospital. Besides, Dig gave me some of those aspirins" she slurred a little "Are you spinning?"

"Aspirin?" He looked at Diggle eyebrow raised

"Oxycodone" he grinned and both men chuckled

"I wouldn't be here if you hadn't been so brave" Sara said softly "Thank you" the sincerity genuine in her tone
"It was nothing" Felicity smiled in her drugged state "I've always wanted to say I've taken a bullet for someone, and now I can. So really I should be thanking you… though I can't actually tell anyone you know secret vigilante business and all that…" Sara laughed

"All done" she said "Not bad, but you're still going to have a scar"

"My own scar, Yay!" she said throwing her fist in the air and pulling on one of Olivers spare shirts. Sara stepped away as Oliver came close

"You all right? Diggle had mentioned that maybe you were feeling a little left out" he was still in his Arrow get up

"What? No…" she protested and he raised an eyebrow "I was just use to being your girl…I mean, not your girl girl" she sighed "Just your girl, I know it sounds like the same word, but it means something different in my head…" He placed his hand gently to her face cupping her cheek "Mmm" she sighed closing her eyes resting further into his touch, she didn't realise how much she liked his small touches till then

"Hey" he said softly

"Hmm?" she looked into his eyes

"You will always be my girl, Felicity" he smiled a genuine smile at her as he let go to get changed

"Can I have another one of those aspirins?" she asked Diggle as he stepped forward to hug her

"Ollie I'll see you later" Sara said as she had changed

"Where you going?" he questioned pulling on his T-shirt

"Tommy offered me a trial bartending, you know I have to make money somehow, if you know I stay…"

"Oh okay…"

"I'm going to stay at Laurels as well tonight Ollie, so don't wait up" she smiled softly. He wanted to walk up and embrace her but something told him Sara didn't want that, instead he nodded

"Good luck and good night" he smiled turning to face Diggle with a now sleeping Felicity "need help?" He smiled softly

"If it's no trouble" in one fell swoop Oliver scooped Felicity up and subconscious she pulled in closer resting her head in the crook of his neck. His heart beat faster. He ignored it passing it off as his feelings for her being safe. They made their way up stairs and Diggle opened Felicities mini "She had to come in her car" Diggle groaned and Oliver chuckled. He gently lay her across the back seats, which curled up she fit in perfectly

"Diggle I'll take her home, go spend some time with Lyla" he said patting him on the arm

"If you're sure?" He nodded squishing into Felicities tiny car which Diggle couldn't help laughing at.

The short drive took longer as the gear changes crippled Oliver. When he got out he stretched before slowly pulling her into his arms, again her head resting on the crook of his neck pushing further into
him. He carried her all the way into her home, opening and locking doors with ease. He gently placed Felicity on her bed. Her hand had gripped tightly on his T-shirt and he slowly prised it away staring down at her wearing his shirt and jogging bottoms, smiling kindly to himself. He gently took off her glasses placing them on the nightstand then smoothly pulled her heels off letting them fall to the floor then he pulled the duvets up which she wrapped herself in. Oliver wanted to leave every part of him said it was a bad idea to stay, especially after what happened last time. But as if still able to read his mind whilst asleep she reached out grabbing his wrist. Her eyes remained closed but she softly spoke

"Stay" then gently she squeezed pulling her arm back in. He couldn't move he pulled his jacket off and shoes then slumped in the chair in the corner. He couldn't sleep, instead he watched her curled up; he didn't know how long for then softly he heard her

"Oliver..." He sat up straight "no please not for me..." He frowned walking over "I'm not worth it" he could see her breathing start to pick up but she was still asleep "don't kill for me...watch out!" Her breathing got faster "I... I can't lose you..." All of sudden she shot up "OLIVER!" She shouted, her eyes shot open her breathing so fast her head darted around as panic took over. Before he knew it he was by her side

"Hey hey shhhh calm down I'm here" tears were streaming down her face as she looked into Oliver's eyes her breathing steadying

"I'm... Sorry" she said putting her head down feeling completely embarrassed. She had gotten shot and had a silly nightmare all in the same evening. He pulled her head up gently by the chin

"Hey there is nothing to apologise for... I should apologise for giving you nightmares" she could feel his pain and before she knew it she had her arms wrapped around his neck but Oliver didn't hug back unsure where to place his hands

"They... This isn't your fault I... I chose this life I know what I'm doing this is just a bad day" she winced as she pulled away trying to hide the pain. She still had the dopey look in her eyes letting him know she was still drugged up

"I know and I am sorry for that"

"Stop apologising..."

"Do you want to talk about it? The nightmare I mean..."

"Just the normal in danger, me being trapped, you save me, you get hurt" she didn't look at him instead she pulled off the jogging bottoms, pulling the shirt down which was long enough coming to her mid thigh "too hot" she said softly as she caught his eyes widen in confusion. He nodded

"I should go, let you sleep"

"No" she said sounding oddly vulnerable "please don't" he could see the tears in her eyes

"I won't go, I'll be right in that corner" he pointed to the chair. Her hand wrapped round his wrist pulling as she pushed further into the bed

"This bed is big enough... I" she knew she wouldn't be asking this if it wasn't for the effects of the drug "I need comfort, please Oliver" her voice pleaded and although every fibre in his body screamed no, his heart made the decision for him and he pulled himself into the bed "you can take clothes of you know... Not like that, not that I wouldn't want you like that but you know, you and I nope. You and Sara yes" she couldn't stop herself "I mean if you get too hot, we're both mature
adults here" she closed her eyes trying to stop herself.

Oliver looked at her, her eyes slammed shut he was already too hot but less clothes with Felicity around he wasn't sure about. He got back off the bed and Felicity still kept her eyes closed. A silent tear rolling down her cheek she had blown it, she just needed comfort and her babbling had blown it

"I'm just putting on the joggers you took off, more breathable than jeans and taking my top off too. You haven't blown anything" her eyes flew open; she had said the last thing out loud. She cursed herself then Oliver slid in bed next to her "hey calm down" he said noticing the panic in her face "I can leave at any point you want me to. I can go and if you don't want to, we don't have to tell anyone about this. I'm here for you Felicity I told you"

In the drug induced state with pain trickling back and the nightmare still lingering, Felicity lay on her side placing her head on Oliver's chest and shoulder and gently sobbed. Her hands pulled up to her chest and knees curled up by his side. Oliver pulled the duvet up covering her. He gently rubbed her arm to comfort her, being gentle to cause no pain in her shoulder and he soothingly placed his chin on her head.

They stayed that way for awhile till her sobs subsided, her body relaxed, and breathing became regular clearly having had fallen asleep. He lay there listening to her breath steady, feeling guilty at getting her in danger again until eventually he too fell asleep.
Chapter 21

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy this chapter I'm leaving another authors note at the end because I want to explain something's that happen... I hope you don't hate me...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

During the night both had subconsciously entangled themselves. Oliver's hand had slipped from Felicity's arm to her hip. Her legs uncurled and had wrapped around his, her hand was spread on his chest and his other hand rested on top of that. So when Felicity woke up first she felt the warm of another person under her touch. She curled in closer, and then suddenly remembered she had no one to curl up to. She bolted away from the person lay at the side of her, but was unable to get far as his grip on her hip didn't loosen and her legs were stuck. She screamed in pain as her shoulder was jarred from not moving, that's when Oliver woke up and she realised it was him. Instantly he sat up easily able to untangle himself from her and turned to her concern all over his face

"Are you okay?" He still looked half asleep but somehow alert, Felicity lay back on the bed rubbing her shoulder

"Pain..." Was all that managed to come out as she closed her eyes trying to remember all of last night that was a little hazy

"Is it really bad? Where are your painkillers?" He said placing a hand on her other arm. She wanted to keep his touch but this was Oliver, Oliver Queen who was half naked in her bed when he was with Sara Lance. She pulled away sitting up the pain subsiding slightly now she had relaxed from jerking. Oliver frowned looking at her as she got off the bed wearing his shirt

"I can't do this Oliver" he frowned he completely didn't understand "you are in my bed topless..."

"No it's not what it looks like"

"I know that! But really? If someone else walked in right now how bad would this look?" He put his head down

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have listened to you high on drugs" he said rising from the bed, she rubbed her forehead sighing

"I was the one that asked for comfort Oliver. I was tired, drugged and this was a mistake" she said shaking between the two "I mean you're with Sara what would she think? I'm the one who's sorry for getting the lines of friendship blurred... I think maybe... Maybe we should keep our distance" Oliver stood staring at her he didn't understand what had happened. He had fallen asleep in bed with a friend; yes a female one, but still a friend. He was there for her and nothing happened between them so why was she so worked up?

"Okay" was all he managed to get out "I should go then" he grabbed his clothes exiting the room quickly pulling on his T-shirt and shoes carrying his jeans and jacket, then left without another word. Felicity stood there feeling lost. She went into the kitchen taking a strong painkiller and then crawled back into her bed that still smelt of Oliver. She curled up letting the tears fall. She didn't know why
she was crying. She guessed it was a mix of emotions and pain. But she knew she'd never have
Oliver like she wanted and now she knew she needed to move on, just not right now pushing herself
deeper into her bed.

He ran home. Ran trying to figure out what this hole was that was in his heart. He thought Sara had
filled it and maybe she would again. He would tell her the truth about what happened, well what
didn't happen but he couldn't shake this feeling of dread. That had suddenly appeared as he carried
on heading home.

It was Diggle that noticed the change in his partners, although it wasn't obvious and a very subtle
change it was still there. They didn't touch anymore, or overly comfort each other. Diggle didn't
know what had happened. But Oliver seemed happy now he and Sara had become more official, and
Felicity seemed to leave early on nights that were slow. He also noticed she didn't stick around to
make sure Oliver was okay in person like she used to, his words were enough. He didn't want to
bring the conversation up with either party, hoping they would eventually bring it up themselves. So
instead he stayed neutral, watching both slowly pulling away from each other.

Oliver had told Sara about what happened at Felicitys and she wasn't remotely bothered. She knew
they had a connection but if neither were going to act on it she was happy to just have Oliver for
now. Someone who understood what she did. She cared about Ollie but she was by no means in
love with him. So she never mentioned it to Felicity, feeling there was nothing to talk about and
instead threw herself into having fun with Oliver, spending a lot of time with him which he also
seemed to enjoy too.

Oliver told Felicity he had told Sara. She wasn't surprised as this was the man who he had become
now. What she was more surprised about was the way that Sara didn't seem bothered by it at all.
Felicity had spent the last few weeks slowly pulling away. She kept it professional at QC and at
night she made the decision to not touch him, to not watch him work out. She even started dating,
no-one made her heart beat like Oliver and she'd end up home alone feeling confused. So she threw
herself into her work, especially with Vertigo still being used, causing more rampages from the users,
destroying places, and carried on with the dating game.

It was a Saturday night when Tommy saw Felicity in the middle of the dance floor, glasses off, hair
down, tight short dress on, and a man with his hands all over. He could tell she was drunk so he
marched over there pulling her away. The man grabbed Tommy's shoulder

"Hey dude that's my girl!"

"Back off or you can be thrown out MY club" the man pulled back "good decision" he dragged her
all the way into the office and she dropped onto the sofa

"What did you do that for?" She said staring at him

"Because that man had his hands all over you!" He shouted

"What if that's what I wanted hey Tommy? Meaningless sex with a stranger... You and Oliver did it
plenty enough at my age why can't I?" She said crossing her arms over her chest

"Because you're too good to do that and I know how empty meaningless sex makes you feel..."
"Pffft" she retorted

"Don't do this... I'm going to get you some water and then we're going to chat"

"Whatever" she said like a stroppy teenager. So Tommy left grabbing some water and ice. When he returned Felicity was curled up on the sofa asleep. He placed the drink on the coffee table, pulled off his jacket and draped it over her. He pulled out his phone

"Hey Ollie it's me, I don't know if you're still awake or if you're busy but Felicity's kind of passed out on Verdant's sofa... I don't know what's going off man but she needs a friend" he hung up; Oliver would know what was wrong he spent the most time with her. Tommy left her to sleep going back to work, making sure she was okay occasionally. When he entered the room a couple hours later she was awake

"Sorry" she said softly and he could see the tears in her eyes

"Hey what's wrong?" He said sitting down beside her

"I'm just being silly..." He knew that was one thing Felicity wasn't "thank you for stopping me doing that"

"It's okay I've been there... I'm guessing stuff with your guy didn't work out?" He had long guessed the guy was Oliver but she still didn't tell him. Maybe because it was easier to not say it out loud he thought

"We slept together"

"What!?" He knew Oliver and Sara were together and had thought he had changed

"Noo not like that... I meant I was... ill awhile ago and he took care of me and I was drugged up, I asked him to stay with me and we fell asleep together but he has a girlfriend now..." She put her head in her hands breathing slowly

"So nothing happened?"

"No"

"Then what's the problem?"

"Because I wanted something to happen" she looked up tears threatening to spill "and he's never going to see me like that, I am his friend but nothing more... And it hurts so much Tommy; I didn't think it would because we were nothing to begin with" he put an arm around her

"We all have feelings and sometimes they hurt..."

"I tried to do what you said and move on, but all the guys at QC think I and Oliver are sleeping together and that's all they want... And I... I'm being weak and stupid and..."

"Stop this; you are not weak or stupid. You have stayed in this guys life through god knows what and clearly been there for him. This is his lose not yours, but maybe you need a break from him for awhile? And those men at QC are idiots" she smiled at him

"I can't leave Oliver in the lurch or him for that matter..."

"Felicity we all need time for ourselves. I think you deserve a break, if not now maybe sometime soon and maybe try dating guys who don't work at QC" he smiled softly and then she hugged him.
Just then the office door flew open and in burst Oliver. Felicity jumped eyes wide. She pulled away from Tommy, passing him his jacket. She stood up not looking Oliver in the eyes, then went to leave he caught her wrist and she tried to pull away

"What's going on?" Oliver asked her staring into her eyes

"Nothing" she said still trying to free herself from his grasp

"Let her go Ollie" Tommy's voice came stern and he let go. Felicity practically ran from the club

"What the hell was that about man?"

"You told me she was passed out, then she tries to leave without an explanation"

"Ollie man, I don't know what the hell is happening with you two but that girl is hurting" Oliver frowned "guy trouble" he said simply Oliver's heart pounded. He didn't even know Felicity had a guy to be troubled about

"There is nothing between us two we're friends, I have Sara… and what? I didn't even know she had a guy... And why is she talking to you about it?" It came out more bitter than he had hoped but Tommy was not at all surprised

"There is no guy, that's the point plus I'm not her boss just her friend and with how you just acted no big surprise why she talks to me" Oliver knew he was right but had she told him about their night?

"Well what's up with her then? If there is no man"

"I promised I wouldn't say anything Ollie... She's just stuck in rut at the moment you know likes someone she can't have" his heart beat faster "and the guys at work think she's sleeping with you and we all know what those guys want from her" he felt guilty then. Felicity clearly liked someone who wasn't treating her right and he wanted to hurt them but he was also making it worse. Maybe the distance between them was a good thing after all

"Fine..." He said softly "thanks for looking out for her"

"Anytime" he said stepping out the office. Was his friend really that blind to see Felicity was clearly crushing on him, he must be Tommy thought to himself.

It was a week later that Felicity met Daniel Jones. He was part of a team from Gotham, A city the other side of London, with Bruce Wayne to discuss business between the two companies. He worked under Mr Fox who had offered Felicity a job in his department, which she had obviously refused. He wasn't much older than her with dark hair, green eyes and strong jaw. He seemed physically fit, he laughed when Felicity babbled about their department being amazing and he asked her out for coffee. She agreed and they had lunch together. The conversation flowed naturally between the two without much effort, and Felicity found she was enjoying herself

"So Miss Smoak tell me are the rumours..."

"Of me and Oliver true?" She said rolling her eyes, he laughed

"That wasn't what I was going to say but the answer to that would be nice to know before this goes any further" she raised an eyebrow so he wanted this to go further
"The rumours are not true, Oliver is a friend and he's been through a lot, he's not the man he once was and I only got this position because I stood up to his father on his behalf..." He laughed and smiled

"Well not a bad promotion, apart from not doing IT"

"Oh I do that too. I'm not with Oliver 24/7" she smiled softly "what was the other question?"

"That you turned down jobs from around the world to work here?"

"Yes that's true" she smiled "I chose to work here. I dunno, Mr Steele, he seemed like someone I could really get on with and the respect he showed me, I mean Mr Fox was amazing too but I clicked more here. It just felt right you know what I mean?" He smiled at her eyes bright, they were a beautiful emerald colour that she strangely made her feel safe

"Yes I do" he grinned "well I should be getting back to work" he gently touched her hand and pulled it to his lips kissing her

"It was lovely to meet you Felicity, I'm in town for the rest of the week it would be really nice to... To get to know you better" his smile was wide and warm

"Same to you too" she grinned back, he pulled out a pen and scribbled something on a napkin

"It's my number, when you aren't busy give me a call it would be nice to be shown around the city" he grinned again before leaving. Felicity grinned to herself, and couldn't stop grinning at the Foundry. Business was as usual, a few vertigo dealers taken down but none able to say where the drug was coming from. They finished early that evening so Felicity decided to call Daniel.

For the whole week the two spent a lot of time together, and for the first time in a long time she felt happier, felt whole. So when Daniel had to go back to Gotham at the end of the week she thought it would be another friendship like all the rest. They spent Friday night at her apartment watching Doctor who, eating Chinese, she didn't expect what happened next

"It has been a great week Fliss, honestly" he smiled at her wide

"It really has, you're a great guy" she smiled back she saw the sparkle in his eyes, so far he had been a gentlemen. No kissing other than her hand and cheek, hands on her back and arm, not her bum, she thought he was being friendly. So when he looked at her like that and leant in kissing her gently on the lips she was slightly surprised. She wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him back hard. They got carried away her hands ran through his hair and he pulled her closer to deepen the kiss, slowly they pulled back eyes glazed with clear passion his smile was wider than before

"Wow, well that was unexpected..." She said softly

"Really? Because I've been trying to resist doing that from the first time I saw you..." Felicity's eyes went wide in shock. It was nice to hear that something she felt was being reciprocated "which leads me to my next thought... I wasn't intending or expecting to meet someone but Felicity you are amazing and if you want to? I want to stay in touch..."

"I... As friends?" She frowned and he laughed awkwardly

"I was hoping that we'd be more than that..." He said rubbing a hand through his hair

"Oh" he just wanted to be friends with benefits like everyone else. She felt her heart aching already, as if sensing where her brain was going he replied
"Not like *that...* I want more of you, as in a *relationship?*" He blushed feeling awkward "but I understand the distance etc or if you don't want that... *Me*" he didn't look at her

"No" she blurted out and she could see the pain on his features "I didn't mean no to you... I meant no to what you said, I... I'd really like to see where this is going; I haven't felt this comfortable with someone in..." She couldn't say Oliver, so she chose her words carefully "awhile, maybe just see what happens? See if we can make the distance work" he looked at her smiling wide

"Yes of course" he beamed and she beamed back. *Finally a man who told her exactly what he wanted.* She leant over turning the TV off and he frowned. She grabbed his wrist leading him to the bedroom.

Chapter End Notes

I hope Felicity is still in character but I needed her to meet a head with her confused feelings, so hopefully I did it justice especially only being 21 in my story. So Olicity has hit some bumps, I promise this is Olicity but it is very very slow burn (and why can't Felicity have someone in the mean time :P). Daniel was named after the characterisation that was released by CW but when it turned out to be Ray Palmer, I didn't want to change it because I like my OC :P... I hope you don't hate me for adding him or hate him either...

Anyway let me know what you think because well I'm currently writing Chapter 39 and still got a bit more to go, maybe (just so you know roughly this is a very long one :P), and your words encourage me to keep going :)

Chapter 22

Oliver noticed almost instantly the change in Felicity. She smiled more, and was constantly on her phone any spare second she got. Oliver found it nice to see her smiling again, but a part of him found it sad that they were no longer directed at him. He and Sara were spending all their spare time together as he was still avoiding his parents. But he still made time for Thea, who although she liked Sara was a little surprised by their pairing. She was too busy planning for her birthday party to voice her true opinion though. The week things in Oliver's life started to get more complicated he wasn't prepared, everything took him by surprise.

He and Sara were on a nightly patrol when they were attacked by a group of highly trained professionals. When they returned to the Foundry Felicity was gone as usual of late and Diggle was waiting around

"What the hell happened guys?" he said

"Got ambushed" Sara shrugged off

"No, there was more to those guys than that… you knew them?" he stepped closer to her "Who are they Sara?"

"No one you should be concerned about" she added taking a step back

"Well clearly seeing as they went for you, and me I should be worried… you knew them?" he said voice rising. She didn't even feel intimidated, instead she just walked out leaving him stood there. He slammed his hand on the table in frustration

"Oliver we all have secrets man…"

"Yes but some can get you killed. They said she was coming for her tonight…” Diggles eyes went wide "Go home Dig, take a leaf out Felicitys book. I'll go sort this out" Diggle stood up to argue but then thought better of it instead he just walked away.

Oliver found Sara walking down the middle of the road, a woman in front of her knife drawn. He raised his bow arrow aiming, as the woman whose was covered stepped forward. Before he could process everything both women were kissing. He dropped the bow, placing the arrow back in his quiver. He didn't want to eavesdrop but he couldn't help it either

"Come home" the lady appealed

"Nyssa, I am home, my family, friends they need me here and you didn't want me stay back then"

"I had no choice Sara, you know that"

"No, all I know is I thought you had my back, you'd be there for me" Nyssa's head dropped

"I am here now…"

"It's not enough Nyssa; I told you that the day I left, it was over between us"

"Sara…"

"No, I have killed for this country, I gave my all… but I killed that kid to save our own and I have to live with that decision. But you guys told me to leave, told me to take a break. You didn't give me an
option, so now I'm here and I plan on being here indefinitely" Nyssa sighed looking in her eyes
"I was your superior. I did stick up for you Sara, for our team, the decision came from above"
"Your dad you mean?"
"He doesn't want to lose a valuable asset to the team. He just thought you needed a break that was all Sara"
"Well Nyssa you can tell your father I will come back if I want, not because he demanded it… and the report on the Arrow…"
"The Arrow?"
"It's his new name, the Arrow is no threat. He's skilled, and he will be an asset to this city, not a menace… tell him that too"
"Sara please…" Nyssa took a step closer
"No, I loved you once I was devoted to you… you saved me. Showed me the way once but not now, you hurt me and I need time" she stepped back taking a breath. Oliver could see the hurt in both women
"I understand. I will tell my father… but Sara remember I will always love you and I'll wait for you… always" she bowed then disappeared. Sara took a deep breath unsure how she felt then she shouted
"You can come out now Ollie you don't have to snoop" he stepped forward
"I'm sorry I didn't mean to eavesdrop"
"It's okay Ollie" Sara walked up and hugged him before kissing him deeply. Oliver finally realised what he was for Sara: he was a distraction from her hurt from Nyssa. He didn't care because he never had to explain anything to her. She just understood, and she knew his history. He thought that was enough, what he needed now.

It was a couple of days later when Oliver decided to nip into the office early. When he walked in, he found Bruce Wayne's business associate sat in Felicity's chair with her sat on his lap, laughing loudly arms around his neck. She nearly fell off his knee when she saw Oliver stood there, but Daniel caught her keeping her steady
"Oliver" she said getting up. His face was blank not giving anything away
"Mr Queen" Daniel stood up walking around the desk arm extended "I'm Daniel, Daniel Jones" Oliver looked at his hand then back up again. He couldn't explain the feeling in his chest but he definitely didn't like this man. So he walked straight past him standing in the door way to his office
"Oh if you aren't too busy with Mr Jones, Miss Smoak, I need the business files for the Wayne meeting, it's why I came early make sure I know everything..." He said looking over his shoulder at the man stood there. He walked into his office closing the door behind him. Felicity looked at Daniel, grabbing the file off her desk and walked over to him
"Sorry about that... He's never seen me..."
"With another man?" He said looking at her

"No it's not like that"

"You keep saying" he smiled "I don't care as long as it's me you come back to" he kissed her lightly on the lips and she smiled

"See you later Fliss" he said walking to the elevator

"See you later Dan" she grinned before turning to open the office door. Oliver watched the scene in front of him unfold. He saw the way she smiled at him and that's when he realised he was the reason that she had been changing these last few weeks

"Here you go Mr Queen, files as requested" she dropped them onto the desk walking towards the door but she spun around just before she got there "oh and no need to be a jerk to him" Oliver looked up he could feel the anger prickling in his gut

"What did you just say?"

"You heard me loud and clear Oliver" she said her tone changing. He was annoyed now

"You were the one who insisted on being professional at work, which I have obliged to completely yet you brought your fancy thing here how hypocritical, is that!" His own tone was bitter. She looked at him in utter disbelief

"That fancy thing, as you so eloquently put it is my boyfriend" Oliver felt his fists tighten "and you have the audacity to call me a hypocrite! You cheated on your girlfriend with her sister, slept with the enemy for information, and then told me you couldn't be with someone you really cared about yet now you're with Sara! So how dare you!" Her voice was raised now and Oliver was fighting every urge to get up and shout too

"Well you aren't needed in the meeting this afternoon, so go back to what you enjoy doing rather than wasting your time with me" they stared at each other. She knew he was keeping her out of the meeting because he was annoyed. She didn't understand why, but she was too angry to even deal with him right now

"I think I might just do that" she walked out slamming the door grabbed some stuff off the desk and left as Diggle entered

"What the hell has happened?" Diggle said walking in

"Will you do a background search on someone for me?" Diggle frowned

"Why do I not like the feeling I have here?" Oliver frowned "okay who?"

"A Daniel Jones works with Wayne"

"Oh, so now I have to search Felicity's boyfriend?" He crossed his arms

"You knew and didn't say anything?" Oliver spat out

"Hey, she didn't tell me. Well she did but only 'cause her phone went off when she wasn't there and I answered plus it's none of our business really man" Oliver gave him a dirty look

"She's a part of our team of course it matters in case she tells him..."
"Okay if that's how you're going to justify this" Diggle said about to walk off

"Justify what?" Diggle span round raising an eyebrow

"You really didn't think she'd put her life on hold for you did you?"

"No of course not..." He frowned. Diggle sighed 

"She wasn't going to wait forever Oliver" he said walking out. Oliver frowned what was that supposed to mean? He hadn't made her wait for anything. He was open about what Team Arrow involved, he was confused so instead he threw himself into work.

At the meeting with Mr Wayne's team, Oliver spent most of the time staring at Daniel. He hadn't heard anything anyone was saying just merely nodded along to the conversation. He was shorter than himself, not by much but he was; he had dark brown hair and piercing dark green eyes. He clearly worked out from the defined muscles below the tailored suit but nothing like his own. So this was Felicity's type and yet for some reason he couldn't help comparing himself.

When the meeting was finished and contracts signed, they all shook hands. Oliver shook Daniels a little firmer than the rest but Daniel didn't back down he shook his hand just as tightly, smiling not cockily, much to Oliver's annoyance, but warmly. When they left Isabel turned to Robert, Walter and himself

"That was another successful meeting but you won't be able to keep the board on side for long..."

"Miss Rochev we will be keeping this business, there is nothing you can do about it" Robert said arms crossed

"Well I have a meeting with a client..." Isabel stared straight at Oliver and he frowned "Mr Wilson, Slade Wilson" Oliver's eyes shot wide. He practically choked on air as he felt his throat close and Isabel walked out with a laugh

"Who's Mr Wilson Walter?" Robert asked

"I'm not sure Robert, I'll do some research" he looked at Oliver whose face had drained of all colour "are you okay Oliver you don't look so good?"

"I..." He couldn't share this "I'm not feeling too well actually I might head home..."

"I thought you seemed distracted during the presentation" Walter added, and Oliver nodded. Robert said nothing as Oliver left they still hadn't found a way to have a personal and professional life especially since he'd found out his father had been sleeping with Isabel.

Oliver was at Verdant and talking to Sara within minutes having drove his bike like all hell was let lose

"Slades alive" he said slowly to her. She frowned in disbelief

"No not possible, you left him for dead on a boat after what the triad did to him"

"I know that but Isabel Rochev just dropped his name. I need you to find out all you can I know your contacts are well..." She stepped forward placing a hand on his cheek
"Hey for you I'll ask them" he nodded

"He promised he'd destroy all my life Sara..." He said closing his eyes

"Calm down okay? We don't know what his intentions are at the moment" he nodded skeptically

"Let's keep this from my family okay?"

"Of course, but I think you should mention it to Dig and Felicity just so they're prepared..." He nodded

"I'm going to go down to the Foundry" she nodded as he walked off.

A few hours later the team were all down in the Foundry. The atmosphere was very tense. Oliver could tell Felicity was still mad and he could tell both she and Dig didn't understand why he'd left QC without saying a word. Sara also could feel the tension, but presumed it was just the Slade situation. Oliver turned to face them all at Felicity's computer, not looking them directly in the eyes

"When I was away..." They all looked at him, not sure where this was going "I did some terrible things and terrible things happened. But I had friends too, people who taught me" Oliver still avoided their eyes "one got kidnapped. He was tortured physically and mentally, they messed him up pretty bad, twisting his view of the world. His name was Slade Wilson and I put an arrow in his eye and left him for dead..." Sara stood there already knowing this. Diggle wasn't surprised but gave him a sympathetic look and Felicity was just staring at him wide eyed "but today Isabel Rochev dropped his name in a conversation. He promised he would destroy me and everyone I loved all those years ago and now he's alive and back... I just need you to know, to keep a look out, and to warn you because I don't know what he wants or how far he's going to go..." His shoulders slumped as he let out a deep sigh.

Felicity couldn't believe Oliver was opening up. He looked pained and tortured as he warned them about this man. She was still angry at him but at that moment it didn't matter, she reached out placing her hand on his smiling not in sympathy but comfort. He looked at her face, earlier he had made her so angry but here she was comforting him, showing him the way

"Dude, we're a team we can do this... together. We'll figure it out I can look him up and so can Sara plus Felicity can search him" they all nodded "as for his plan, we'll figure it out and our safety we'll be fine. We can handle ourselves and I can put more men on your family" Oliver nodded smiling sincerely. He couldn't thank his team enough, they all stayed silent for awhile then slowly each went to their duties.

Felicity's quick search revealed only the basics that Slade had been working with Isabel for nearly two years. In that time her company had gone from strength to strength due to his influence and funds. Before that he'd gone missing whilst serving for the Australian army which was clearly the time when Oliver knew this man. It left him feeling frustrated and Dig and Sara's contacts needed time to gather Intel. So he decided to hound up and do some Arrow business.

They had a particularly rough night with a few Vertigo high thugs trying to rob a bank. They nearly got away after giving all the team the slip. When they got back Sara changed quickly for a shift at Verdant, it wasn't too late but Oliver's frustration came crashing out once Sara had left

"What the hell was that Felicity?"
"Excuse me?" She said not understanding why his anger was directed at her

"You sent us in the completely wrong direction and I nearly got hit by a bus... a bus, for god sakes Felicity!"

"Well you lost them all in the first place!" She shouted back

"Don't blame me because you didn't have it tonight! Maybe if you spent less time messing with that" he pointed to her phone clearly vibrating with messages from Daniel "you'd actually do your job right!"

"I haven't touched that whilst we've been doing a mission!" She was getting angrier

"Alright. Maybe we should just take a breath here" Diggle said stepping towards the two who had inadvertently got right into each other's faces

"No, what was that crack about my phone meant to imply?" She said taking a step back from him voice still loud

"That maybe you should spend less time canoodling with your beau and actually concentrate on the task at hand!"

"You hypocrite! Don't you even dare after this morning. I'm done. I am so done" she said angrier than ever before. She grabbed her stuff and stormed out

"At the risk of my getting my head knocked off, playing the blame game is not going to help us figure out this son of a bitch" Diggle said staring at Oliver clearly talking about Slade

"Neither are doing things halfway!"

"Is that what you think is going on here, Oliver? You think she was distracted? She wasn't giving it her all?"

"She almost ran me into a bus, Diggle"

"Yes but you also caught your bad guys" he said crossing his arms

"What do you think?" Oliver asked the older man

"I think you didn't have a problem with Felicity's performance until you found out about Daniel Jones" He spun around leaving him stood there dumbfounded. He was so frustrated about this week he wasn't sure what to do.

When Felicity walked into her flat, she burst into tears. Not because she was upset but because she was so incredibly irritated. Her phone rang and she saw Daniels face on screen, she answered taking a deep breath

"Hey I don't mean to keep bugging you..."

"Dan you aren't bugging me, I had some stuff to do for Mr Queen and Mr Steele I was working late..."

"That's funny, I went to the office but they said you weren't in" she could hear the tone she'd had a
rough night let alone a fight with her boyfriend too

"To be honest Daniel" she couldn't help her tone now "after this morning Oliver had me in the IT department. Then Miss Rochev had me running around and Mr Steele asked me to come to his home to sort some stuff out which is when I ran into Oliver, who asked me to check over some figures ready for Monday... So it's been a very annoying long day" she didn't snap but she let him know she wasn't in the mood either

"How about we go away?" He said cheerfully

"Excuse me?" She was not expecting that

"You can come see Gotham, where I live, and make it a break for you... For one whole week, just some you and me time or if you need it you time" she smiled her wonderful boyfriend recognised her attitude wasn't at him and was trying to fix it

"That sounds wonderful babe but it's all a bit short notice" she could hear Oliver and Diggles reactions, hear them saying she's not fully invested. Then she heard Tommys, you deserve a break and she did especially after today. Maybe she needed some time away from Oliver, away from the Arrow

"I just thought..."

"Lets do it"

"Really?" He said sounding a little shocked

"Yes, I'll pack tonight call office first thing and arrange it all"

"Okay then babe! I'll pick you up about 10, then catch the train together back to mine"

"Sounds great"

"Good!"

"And thank you Dan"

"What for Fliss?"

"For not shouting or getting pissy with me for snapping, I'm sorry"

"Hey we all have bad days. I didn't wanna make it worse plus this more than makes up for it" he chuckled, she laughed too

"Goodnight"

"Goodnight Fliss, sweet dreams" they hung up and she couldn't help smiling to herself, that she had found someone so good to her and told it straight never holding back.

It was 9am when Felicity was completely ready to go but she had two things left to do, call QC human resources and then somehow tell Oliver. The latter was scaring her most so she called human resources first
"Queen Consolidated human resources department Sally speaking how may I help you?"

"Hi Sally, it's Felicity Smoak, I was wandering if I could use my holidays to book next week off..."

"Okay just give me a second Miss Smoak" she heard the click and then music playing she was bobbing to the music when it clicked again

"Miss Smoak?" her eyes went wide

"Mr Queen"

"I take it you and Oliver are wanting some time off" Roberts voice was loud and you could hear the hint of disapproval in his tone

"Actually no Mr Queen, just me so I can spend some time with my boyfriend..."

"Oh, I didn't realise you were involved with anyone"

"Why would you?" She interrupted "I mean it's not like I flaunt my love life around the office, not that I think anyone in QC does that or even that it would be creepy if you knew about my love life..." She stopped herself "sorry, what I mean is yes I have a boyfriend so it must be a surprise to think I'm not sleeping with Oliver" he laughed she was something else Robert thought. She blushed feeling embarrassed "and seeing as I am embarrassing myself, I think the least you can do is give me a week off I mean you did make me Oliver's EA and no he doesn't know I'm going away but I've set up a programme which will automatically alert him to important stuff"

"Miss Smoak" he said stopping her rambling "I was going to give you the time off anyway, you haven't had any in all your time here so go enjoy it and thank you for babysitting my son"

"Oh well thank you sir and I don't baby sit him he is more capable than you think"

"I'll approve the vacation bye" and he hung up. She shook her head. She sat there for a good 15 minutes trying to figure out what to say to Oliver and knew no matter how she spun this he'd be mad. So she chose the easy and probably crueler option

"Hey Felicity what's up?" Diggle asked concern in his voice

"Morning sorry if I woke you"

"You didn't wake me; we got an early night so I got up early to see my nephew..."

"Oh well I'll try to be quick"

"Felicity there's no rush..."

"I'm leaving" she blurted out

"What?" He said concern in his voice

"I'm leaving today I mean not leaving leaving... I just you know need a break, things are getting a bit arrggg and I just..."

"Felicity breathe... It's me you're talking to, just speak slowly okay?"

"Okay" she repeated taking a breath to calm herself "I'm going on holiday for a week with Daniel. I need a break from all of this Dig, QC, the Arrow, Oliver" she practically whispered his name "I'm
not leaving the team, I'm not jumping ship, I just I need some me time you know?"

"I get it" he truly did. He knew it was Oliver that was the big problem. They might not admit it but they had feelings for each other and clearly Felicity needed a break from him "just be safe okay?"

"Thanks Dig, I've run programmes to keep him in check at QC and the computers in the Foundry are all set up too. I'll have my phone off but you know my emergency one if anything goes off or you really need me... But please try to limit it I want to see what it's like..."

"Felicity don't worry about us, I'm here. So go have fun..."

"Thanks Dig... Tell him, tell him I'm sorry I just couldn't face him"

"I'll tell him alright... Now forget us for a few days, enjoy your me time, bye"

"Bye" she hung up as there was a knock at the door. She opened it and there stood Daniel grinning from ear to ear.
Chapter 23

It was Monday morning when Oliver came to the office, and found Felicity was not there typing away at her desk as he expected. It was when she was late he started to worry. He called her, her phone was off, now he really was worried. He went to human resources to see if she had called in sick

"No my dear she has a holiday booked for the whole week, didn't she tell you?" Said the petite lady behind her desk

"No she didn't..."

"It says here it was okayed by Mr Queen" he frowned, had she hacked the system to give herself time off was his first thought

"My father?" He asked and she nodded. He was about to head upstairs when his phone beeped

Meeting 10 mins don’t forget the files :)

He frowned what was happening? By the time the meeting was over Oliver felt completely confused. His father looked at him and when everyone left he turned to him

"Missing your right hand woman?"

"Where is she?"

"I dunno you tell me, she is your executive assistant after all" Robert was not going to give Oliver the satisfaction of knowing Miss Smoaks private life that was up to her. Oliver wasn't in the mood; he stormed off to his office to find Diggle there. He closed the door with a slam

"Diggle something's wrong, Felicity's phones off and she hasn't shown up for work... I need to know about this Jones NOW"

"Oliver... She's fine"

"How can you know that?" He said angrily then he looked at the man his expression said it all "you spoke to her..." He said bitterly

"She needs a break Oliver"

"Oh she needs a break things get tough and she jumps ship..."

"Don't" Diggle jumped in

"Don’t… she's left me, us in the lurch and she didn't even have the decency to tell me!"

"You know what she asked me Oliver?" He looked at him now as he leant on the desk

"No"

"She asked me to apologise on her behalf for not telling you in person... That's what she's like Oliver after having the worst possible day with you and having every right to leave QC, the Arrow, and YOU behind she apologised. She needs time Oliver. She needs a break to see what all this means to her... Can you really blame her for that?" Oliver couldn’t answer. He felt like his whole life was
falling apart his family ruined, now his vigilante family too. He rubbed his hand over the back of his neck, *maybe that's what she needs time to figure out what she really wants*

"You're right, I'm being an *arse*..."

"Well I'm not arguing with that but Oliver have you thought about what you're gonna do when she eventually chooses to leave?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well that girls not going to put her life on hold, *marriage, kids, a family* for being in danger forever..." he looked him in the eyes. This thought had never crossed his mind, he always presumed she'd leave because she got hurt or injured because of *him* not to be with someone else

"I'd let her go..."

"Would you really? Because right now she's left and you aren't exactly handling it very well" he eyes him up hinting yet Oliver still didn't seem to understand

"I know, it's just shock... I'm sorry" he said looking down feeling a little ashamed at how he handled things but also feeling oddly at lose of Felicity not being there

"And Mr Jones... background search" he dropped it on the desk, before turning and leaving the office.

Oliver read the files; Daniel Jones was raised in Gotham by his mother after his father's death. He worked hard got into a good university, graduated with a first in engineering with a minor in biochemistry, was sought out by Bruce Wayne and has worked at the company since graduating in the applied science division but also directly under Mr Fox. He had no criminal record, nothing. He was by all accounts a stand up guy. Oliver felt a horrible feeling in the pit of his stomach; *could this man really be the one Felicity? And if he was, was he prepared to let Felicity go? Of course he was. She was his partner, a valued member of his team but she needed to lead a normal life at least then she wouldn't get hurt he thought. He pulled out his phone and called Felicity *

"You will probably have several missed calls from me, and texts and maybe angry voicemails. But I'm sorry. I will apologise in person too but this will do for now. You need space, time to yourself, and I've been acting like an *idiot*. So if Daniel makes you happy and things get serious, I won't hold you back. But just remember that for as long as *you* want to be a part of the team you always will be Felicity" he hung up and was so glad he hadn't had to do that in person, emotions, feelings, opening up really were not his strong point.

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It was Saturday night when Felicity got home; she dropped her bags off and headed straight for the Foundry. She had enjoyed an amazing week with Daniel, just those two enjoying each other's company. He really was a sweet guy he wined and dined her, showed her off at company balls and gave her the freedom to do what she wanted too. He was everything she had dreamt of, yet Felicity missed it, missed Starling, missed working at QC, and missed her home, her friends and most of all the Arrow business. After they went to bed some nights Felicity would wake and check all the latest news reports, to make sure nothing had happened to her team. It was then she realised she could never have a normal life again, because this was part of who she was now. She wouldn't change that but things with Daniel, at some point, would get complicated.

She was thinking of Oliver's message when she drove to the Foundry, well messages really. The first
lot were angry but then the last one was different a side to Oliver she had only seen a few times. But the way he said he wouldn't hold her back made her heart ache, and she needed to know more, she was ready to confront him but at the same time not.

Oliver was in the Foundry alone, music blaring from upstairs. The night was slow, nothing happened. Sara had a shift, and so Diggle went home to see Lyla. Oliver stayed working out his frustration like he had most nights since his IT girl had gone. He carried on as normal, but the place was quiet, empty without her. It was weird thinking how the place seemed darker without her too, even work at QC was harder without her babbling around. So when he heard heels on the Foundry stairs he thought his mind was playing tricks on him.

"Where is everyone?" Her voice cut the air making everything seem lighter again and he turned around quiver on his back, arrow and bow in hand. He threw the bow over his shoulder and arrow back in the quiver and before he even thought about it he was embracing her. She was stunned at first, tense, and he pulled away a second later realising that was probably a mistake. The atmosphere became tense which both found slightly odd.

"It was quiet, they went home for the night..." Oliver broke the awkwardness.

"Oh okay, how are my babies?" She asked stepping closer to see what damage had been done to the computers she loved so much. All thoughts about a confrontation long gone.

"Diggles been doing most of the technical side so they should be fine" and of course they were, she sat checking them as Oliver checked his equipment.

"I'm sorry" he said unable to look at her.

"Are you apologizing to me or were you talking to your quiver?"

"I didn't snap at my quiver"

"You kind of more than snapped" she said arms crossed, she wasn't mad anymore but she was going to make him squirm.

"I know. And I'm sorry" wow 2 apologies and one on the phone too.

"I understand that this Slade thing has you freaked and I have been spending a lot of time with Daniel..."

"Felicity, it's not that" he cut her off "When you aren't here, well, it just made me realise how much I need you here" he stood up getting closer to her "In the beg..." He hesitated unsure if he should tell the truth here. She could tell he was trying to open up, so she stood up too getting closer to him "beginning, I was just gonna... I was gonna do all of this by myself. And now with you and Diggle, I rely on you" she saw a sparkle in his eyes and she smiled.

"Does that mean I have a shot at employee of the month?" She teased.

"No because you're not my employee. You're my partner" she smiled broadly as he reached out and squeezed her hand, and he returned the smile.

"And I will be here for as long as I can" she was trying to say she wasn't going anywhere but Oliver clearly took it as a sign that she may possibly go. He pulled his hand away slowly and turned his back "you know I missed you guys".

"Are you talking to your computers?" Oliver teased her as he turned to see her facing him deadly.
"No, because I actually miss you... both more" she smiled

"We missed you too" he said truthfully "now I think you should go home, get some sleep" he grinned

"I will do" she smiled back "goodnight Oliver"

"Goodnight Felicity"

Next morning Oliver woke up to a very teasing Sara. He pulled her in close then spun around so he was on top of her planting a kiss on her lips

"Well good morning Ollie" she teased

"Good morning to you too" he beamed cheekily. Sara knew his now good mood was because Felicity was back. She had seen her leaving Verdant last night and she was not at all bothered if she was reaping the benefits, as both were too foolish to act

"I'm pretty sure we've been in this hotel room before" she questioned looking around

"Well yes I've been in most hotel rooms in Starling when I was younger, but this one I think we trashed this one" he smiled still kissing her neck making her groan

"Sara?"

"Yes" she replied looking at him lustfully

"Well seeing as you are going to be living here indefinitely, and we spend most of our nights together plus my whole parents thing... Maybe we should find a place together?" He smiled looking into her eyes, she froze and he felt her tense underneath him

"I dunno Ollie... That's a big step, I mean really big"

"I know but I'm ready for commitment now, ready for more..." He said it softly urging her to trust him. She did but this was fun for her, not meant to be anything serious. She breathed and just then Olivers phone rang

"You should get that..." He looked at her. Then her phone rang too. They both leaned over to see Diggles name.

After the phone call, in which Diggle said his contact would have information on Slade by the end of the day. Sara made excuses to go see Laurel and Oliver went to see Tommy. He knocked on his door

"Dude come in, haven't seen you properly in ages" Tommy said, giving him a pat on the back, he smiled

"I know been crazy with QC and Sara..." He trailed off

"Women trouble?" He asked coyly
"When isn't it?" Tommy laughed

"Come on sit down" They dropped on the comfy sofa and chairs "So what's up?"

"I just asked Sara to move in with me, and I saw it in her eyes she freaked... Like what I used to and then she made excuses about seeing Laurel and left"

"Okay, strange a woman who is actually more afraid of commitment than you" he teased

"Thanks dude" he said running a hand over his face

"One question" Oliver looked at him nodding him to continue "do you love her?"

"I care about her a hell of a lot!"

"No I asked if you were in love with her. I'm talking as in you see her and she could be wearing a bin bag and she still takes your breath away. She makes you want to be a better man, and she makes you one. She knows most things about you, good and bad yet she doesn't judge you and she sees the real you. You think about her all the time and not even in a sexual way, and when she's not there your heart aches like it never has before..." Oliver looked at him he had known this man for years but never had he heard anything like that from him. He was silenced and he thought about every word and none of that was how he felt with Sara

"Is that how you are with Laurel?" Tommy looked nervous, not looking him in the eyes

"Yeh man, I love her... completely, I'd do anything for her" Oliver smiled, the men were clearly not used to talking about their feelings

"I'm happy for you man..."

"Thanks" Tommy smiled at him "I'm guessing it's not the same of Sara?" He said not looking at his friend, scared of the answer

"I… Not really... But that doesn't mean we can't get to that right?" Tommy nodded

"You never know..." Was all the comfort he could offer "so... Wanna catch a game?"

"Yes sure" Oliver spent the rest of the afternoon with Tommy.

Later Oliver went to the Foundry to work out, trying to forget his disastrous love life. It was still early when the computers beeped about a news report, a vertigo user had taken hostages in a store in there drugged up state. He didn't hesitate or even think he hooded up and made his way over there, he called Quentin

"Detective Lance..."

"Makes a change to have you call and not your blonde friend"

"Well she's not available..."

"Fair enough, she has a lot of trust in you"

"I know she does"
"What did you call for?"

"Hostage situation..."

"Oh work related well it always is, haven't you got your gang and Sara helping" Quentin knew Sara was the Canary, but didn't want to know the Arrows identity. He was also the only one to know about her MI6 job but none of this was discussed, because as she once reminded him, she wasn't his little girl anymore and these were her choices to make

"No, they were busy plus you know this best"

"We have a man high on vertigo with a shotgun still struggling with the drug problem in this city. He's got a few kids in there, mother and baby, cashier, few guys, he's trashed the shop says he doesn't want cash just wants his family back"

"Where are his family?"

"They're dead, car accident..."

"That makes this situation more dangerous"

"Why so?"

"Because that mans got nothing to lose"

"Well communications are sporadic as expected with someone off his face on vertigo but he's also really calm too"

"Thanks Detective" he said hanging up, just then Felicity was speaking in his ear, as he had automatically placed the comms in there

"Really Oliver? Don't wait for us just go straight to the place! Diggle and Sara are en-route and believe me neither are happy you didn't contact us"

"I don't have time for this Felicity; I need to get in the shop. Diffuse the situation" the tone told her something was wrong other than this

"Floor plans simple, roof has a skylight will take you right into the office, but Oliver you go in there all hell could break lose"

"Thanks Felicity, and I know but I can't not go in"

"Fine but you best come back"

"I promise I will..." Oliver made his way to the sunroof

"Sara, sunroofs open I might need your help getting hostages out..."

"No problem Ollie be there in 5"

"Dig?"

"Yeh man"

"Get the car ready we'll probably need a fast get away"
"Way ahead of you I'll park 2 streets from the back of the store"

"Thanks guys" As Oliver dropped silently through the sun roof. He looked out the office window to the scene inside there was a woman with a crying baby, 2 teenage girls, all huddled together near the counter near the door, then there was the cashier still stood behind the counter shotgun pointed at her head and 2 guys round the other side of the counter. He could see the guys concentration zigging and zagging but the gun never moving, Oliver went to move as he felt a hand on his arm he spun to see Sara

"Distraction technique" he said softly she nodded "get the women out first" Oliver slowly opened the door sneaking out to leave Sara where she was. Oliver hid behind stands avoiding the man and when he was at the back end of the shop, he knocked a can off

"Who's there?" The man shouted turning to face the noise "don't mess with me I will blow this bitches head off" the woman whimpered tears rolling down

"I think you should let these people go... They have families too just like you"

"You don't know what you're talking about!" The man shouted as the baby screamed louder

"You're scaring the baby... The baby who has done nothing and so haven't these people..." Oliver stepped out he didn't aim his bow wanting to talk the man out instead

"Oh the honourable Vigilante! Killer of Starling!"

"I kill bad guys not innocent people... There is a difference, let these people go"

"Make me" the man said turning the gun towards Oliver. His eyes, face all looked contorted it must be the drug twisting everything and before he had time to react the man was running at him fast. Oliver flipped him on to his back and the gun flew across the floor at that moment Sara rushed out from the office straight to the hostages ushering them out of the shop. The man's strength was unbelievable; it must have been another side effect of the drug, as they fought hand in hand. The man got a lucky shot into Oliver's stomach winding him, and before he had time to react the man grabbed the shot gun and a shot was heard throughout

"Oliver! Oh my god! Oliver, are you okay?" Felicity was frantic in the comms, but there was no response

"Sara what's happening?"

"I don't know" her voice shaky "I had to ditch out after saving the people... too many police"

"Oliver! Oliver!" Felicity was fighting back tears now

"I'm... I'm okay" his voice was like a whisper and all 3 of his team let out a lengthy breath they had been holding

"What happened?" She said fear subsiding

"He, he shot but it backfired, it… it killed him..." No-one responded, no-one said anything. Sara didn't know how to comfort him or what to say.

As soon as he walked the last step down the Foundry steps Felicity ran towards him pulling him in
for a hug. Her arms around wrapped his neck and he had one arm round her waist they pulled away slowly looking into each other's eyes

"I told you I'd come back..." He said smiling sadly

"Good" she said walking back towards the computers. Sara smiled to herself how were both of them so oblivious to how they were each other's true ying and yang. She shook her head and got changed quickly leaving without a word. It was only when the door closed, that they realised she had gone

"She must have a shift at Verdant..." Oliver said softly not quite sure if she was leaving to avoid any awkwardness between the two of them

"I'm sorry it ended that way dude" Diggle patted Oliver on the back

"Me too..." He said looking slightly sad

"I... I thought you were a gonna for sure" Felicity said not looking at either; Oliver placed his hand on her shoulder squeezing

"We both know I don't go down easily..." She smiled to herself at his touch

"When I was with Daniel..." He pulled his hand away slowly, she noticed but didn't say anything "he showed me some pretty cool stuff at Wayne Enterprises. He even let me have a play around with some stuff and... Well" she stood up walking to the bench picking up a white box with a dark green bow "I got you a present" she said handing it over to Oliver. He stood there shocked unsure what to say when Diggle interjected

"Where's my present?" He teased she walked over to her desk pulling out a bag and handed it to him, unlike Oliver who hadn't opened his yet Diggle pulled it apart with ease to reveal a pistol. It had his initials edged in the side with a dark green holster. He looked at the weapon, felt it's weight

"The specs are in the bag too, it's the latest military weapon from Wayne Enterprises. It is completely registered to you and all above board; it's supposed to pack a real punch..." He hugged her tightly

"Thank you Felicity" he smiled "I've missed you" she smiled to herself. She felt like she had finally found a real home. Oliver was smiling at the two hugging but still hadn't touched the box

"Even the vigilante deserves a present Oliver" Diggle smiled stepping closer. Oliver pulled the bow and slowly opened the lid there inside was a beautifully crafted mask. He pulled it out looking at the craftsman's ship noticing the similar style to Sara's. Felicity took it from his hand and pulled the elastic over the back of his head. Slowly pulling the mask carefully over his eyes making sure it was a perfect fit, which to her surprise it was. He looked her in the eyes, his startling blue irises standing out further due to the dark green around his eyes

"How do I look?" He said smiling

"Like a hero" she grins and for the first time he believes her.
Chapter 24

Things between Oliver and Sara had seemingly gone back to normal after he didn't mention moving in together again, though she did seem slightly distanced from him in a personal capacity. Not going to functions with him, or to family things including time with Thea. But Oliver was too distracted about Slade to really care too much about his love life.

Diggle's and Sara's contacts found that since Oliver left Slade for dead, he had somehow been left with all of the Triads money. He left a web of destruction as he made his way across the countries, till finally he made his way here to Starling. His business with Isabel was legit but how they came to know each other is still unknown. Deathstroke was the name he had been given and Saras bosses wanted the man before any other leaders or officials got killed. This information only served to cause Oliver to become more anxious, more troubled bringing back pain and regrets he had hoped would fade. But he still had no idea what Slades plan was, and that scared him more than anything.

The day of Theas birthday party arrived, she had a marquee set up in the yard. She had invited various friends but practically all her school attended, then several family members and lastly some business associates showed up too.

Oliver wasn't overly keen at being forced to interact with his parents as there was still tension between them all and they still hadn't had that discussion yet. So when Sara said she wouldn't be attending he felt even worse about it all. That was until Felicity noticed his odd behaviour and helped him chose Theas birthday presents, which resulted in him inadvertently asking if she'd come to the party too. She was his EA after all. She felt incredibly guilty and agreed on one term, Daniel could come too as he was up for the weekend. Oliver reluctantly agreed it was better than having to face it all completely alone.

As the party was in full swing Thea was wearing a black dress the latest in the summer collection of a designer Oliver really wasn't bothered about. It was Felicity who helped him find this dress, with all its matching accessories, to make up for not being there for the last few birthdays. Oliver chatted to some associates, danced with Thea whose friends kept chatting and giggling about her attractive older brother. He was pretty much avoiding his parents at all costs. Then Felicity walked in wearing a bright pink dress, hair curled, carrying two bags, and a rather smartly dressed Daniel by her side. Who by all accounts looked a little nervous. They headed straight towards Oliver

"Well this is your gift... I picked it up earlier because well they only just finished it" she grinned

"Thanks, I could have fetched it if you had let me know..." Oliver smiled taking the bag "what's the other bag for?"

"Well I can't turn up to a party and not have brought a present" she winked

"Seriously you didn't have to" she smiled rolling her eyes "You look beautiful by the way" he said slowly as Daniel looked at him. He could feel him staring but it didn't matter he was merely stating a fact

"Well you don't scrub up too bad yourself" she grinned back "right boys, play nicely I'll be right back, I just spotted Thea" and off she went searching, leaving the two awkwardly stood there
"Thank you for inviting us" Daniel said extending a hand. Oliver shook it. He was going to be the better man tonight, Felicity was happy and he needed to be happy for her. After all this man might be her future.

"It's fine honestly, after Sara left me in the lurch I didn't want to attend this alone, family problems" he said it bluntly, so he wouldn't presume he was trying to steal his girlfriend.

"Yes Felicity mentioned something to do with an awkward atmosphere or something, but hey none of my business" Oliver smiled just then a voice came through.

"Ollie! I can't believe Thea's 15!" Tommy stood there all smiles then noticed the man at the side of Oliver "sorry, Tommy Merlyn" he extended an open hand towards Daniel.

"Daniel Jones" he grinned shaking his hand.

"This is Felicity's other half..." Oliver said looking in to Tommys eyes.

"Oh" he said looking him in the face as if something had clicked "oh! So you're the one who snapped up Smoaky!" Daniel laughed he'd never heard her being referred to that way.

"Yes I have" he beamed and Oliver remained blank faced.

"Well she is one hell of a woman... So you best treat her right. Otherwise I'm pretty sure me and Oliver here will be beating your arse" he grinned teasingly with a hint of truth.

"That she is, and I have no intention of mistreating her gentlemen, but how do you know her may I ask?" He was speaking truthfully and also intrigued how it came to be that Felicity knew 2 billionaires.

"Good, and to be honest I met her through Ollie. She helped us with a few things with the club and stayed friends since then. I mean she has great advice and she is talented" he said smiling softly. Daniel smiled too but also looked a little confused "oh and I don't think of her in that kind of way, completely in love with someone else who she helped me get" he beamed at Daniel "who is actually talking to someone over there" he pointed towards Laurels directions "oh and yes Felicity's like my little sis now so yeh, be good" Daniel nodded smiling to himself.

"She is rather amazing, and I hope we get to spend even more time together" Oliver had remained rather quiet on the subject not wanting to say anything he regretted.

Felicity found Thea talking to some girls.

"Hi Thea, I don't know if you remember me..."

"Felicity right? Oliver's friend and now EA?"

"Yes! I didn't mean to crash your party but I think Oliver wanted some company with Sara not coming..."

"Yes well his girlfriend lets him down, I'm not overly surprised to be honest..."

"Not a massive fan of Saras?"

"Oh it's not that I've known her for years I just... maybe Oliver needs to focus on someone who isn't"
a Lance sister..." Felicity smiled softly "plus I dunno Sara always seems to bring out this bad boy side of him, I mean he's hardly home anymore" that's when her smile faded. She knew why he wasn't home 'cause of his parents not Sara

"Well errm I brought you this" She handed the large bag over "I just… I didn't have much money and I always thought birthday presents had to be special, personal and if I totally invaded your privacy you can tell me you know, I mean I don't really know you apart from what Oliver tells me and..." Thea chuckled

"No wonder my brother likes you" Felicity blushed

"Well we are friends, he's probably just being kind..."

"No I've never seen my brother the way he is with you" Thea said it straight and Felicity felt kind of awkward. She felt she had crossed a line and wasn't sure how to go back. So instead she opened her present pulling out a large silver multi-photo frame inscribed with Time can change many things but it never breaks the bonds we forge in love... It was full of photos of Thea and her family, some of them were personal ones, that nobody knew about and others were photos taken at events. A tear tolled down Theas cheek

"Oh I'm sorry I never meant to upset..." Before she could finish speaking Thea had embraced her tightly

"Thank you... No one has ever gotten me something so... So special before and I... Thank you"

"It's okay I mean, I hacked some systems to get some photos but I made sure to make the security tighter so no-one else could... I mean it's your birthday Thea and I can only imagine what it was like when Oliver was gone so... Yeh..." She let go

"You truly are extraordiary Felicity..."

"No you are, living through what you have" she smiled broadly as her smile spread too and it reminded her so much of Olivers "anyway Happy Birthday"

"Thanks again" she said walking off to place the present with others.

When Felicity came back to the boys she found Tommy and Laurel there too. All seemed to be getting on just fine apart from Oliver who seemed unusually quiet. She walked towards him first and whispered

"Everything okay?" He frowned, and then smiled his fake smile, the Oliver Queen front

"Yes fine" she knew he was lying but no point pushing him just yet. Nothing good would come of that

"Thea's over by the presents if you wanna give her your gift" she smiled walking round him and returning to Daniels side, who kissed her on the cheek when he saw her and her grin spread

"Excuse me" Oliver said stepping away leaving his friends to their discussion not enjoying being a third wheel to two couples. Oliver was by Thea in a matter of minutes. When he got there he was surprised to see Roy stood there chatting away in a suit, a nice one at that
"Hmmm" Oliver said loudly causing Thea to spin around

"Ollie you remember Roy?"

"I do" he said standing a little taller

"I invited him, you know to say thanks and all that"

"Fair enough" Oliver nodded "excuse us..." He said pulling Thea away, as Roy stood there looking a little uncomfortable

"Don't lecture me before you start..."

"I actually wasn't"

"You weren't?" She said with a confused expression, who was he to stop people from being happy especially with the past he had with women

"Thea it is your life, you're still only a kid, but it is your life. Though I'm always going to be the big over protective brother plus..." He leaned forward almost whispering "you could do a lot worse" she blushed clearly embarrassed "just promise me one thing?" She nodded "don't rush into anything you don't want to do, okay?" He didn't want to embarrass her further but he didn't want her to be treated like he treated girls when he was younger. She nodded again unsure what to say then he looked at her "And you can tell me anything" she smiled now

"Thank you Ollie" he smiled too

"Oh I got you this..." He held up a bag "seeing as I missed a lot, I felt the outfit wasn't enough and Felicity helped me with this one" she smiled and opened the bag to reveal a box. She opened it slowly to reveal a charm bracelet and various charms

"It's handmade and so are the charms. They're designed by myself and Felicity, I mean I told her what I wanted things to mean and we came up with something 'cause she does pretty better than I do" Thea laughed and then looked at the charm bracelet

"What do they mean then?" She said softly

"The silver jewel encrusted T, is for you, expensive sparkly and obviously your name. The hand crafted rabbit is to represent your nickname Speedy. The horse is to remind you of your passion as a child, and same with the rainbow, for your innocence. The 15 for the age you received this gift" she held each one as he spoke

"What about this one?" It was a heart shaped black granite stone with diamond at the centre

"That... that's supposed to be two things; 1 that even though I was gone for 3 years you were the hope in the heart of us and 2 in this families pain, you are the diamond in our family who shines on through" her tears fell now and Oliver pulled her in hugging tightly

"I love you Ollie, so much"

"I love you too Speedy and I'm not going anywhere" She hugged tightly then pulled back drying her eyes

"You best not had made my mascara run" she teased tapping him. He took the charm bracelet placing it on her wrist it was then he noticed the bangle itself was an arrow. Felicity must have added
that feature and he couldn't help smile "thank you Ollie"

"No problem now go enjoy yourself" He grinned as she walked off towards a large crowd of friends. Oliver made his way to the bar, he could see his parents there but he needed a drink. He took the champagne flute downing it in one

"Mr Queen" Isabel's voice cut through him like a knife, why would she be here? "My business associate wanted to meet you" Oliver spun round "Slade Wilson, Oliver Queen" Slade stuck his hand out in Oliver's direction. He noticed he looked older, more pained. He had an eye patch over his right eye where Oliver had thought he ended his life but clearly not. Oliver took his hand as his mother and father joined them

"Mrs Queen, Mr Queen" Slades strong Australian accent was smooth and calm "what a pleasure. Miss Rochev has told me everything" he empathised the last word letting him know he knew about it all. Moira's face screwed up clearly not happy and Robert stood blankly

"Well Mr Wilson, I presume?" He nodded "this is a family occasion and like I tell Robert, we leave business at the door if you'd be so kind" Moira extended her arm in the direction of the exit, bitterness and unwelcome clear in her tone

"I'll see you out" Oliver said standing taller. He might not be talking to his parents but he would never let anything happen. Isabel scowled leading the way and then Slade followed next to Oliver step by step. Isabel got in her car and Slade walked to his own

"What do you want?" Oliver pleaded

"A few years ago, I made you a promise. Do you remember? Well, I'm here to fulfil it" he said staring into his eyes and Oliver couldn't hide his fear "Once you were my friend and that's why I don't want you dead… yet! Death would be a release from this life, and your sentence is yet to be carried out. I am going to tear everything you care about away from you. Destroy those who choose to follow you. Corrupt those you love. And once you have lost everyone and everything you value, I will drive an arrow through your eye" Oliver felt the world spinning, he had openly told him what he was going to do and everything inside him panicked unsure what to do "I'll see you around, kid" Slade said stepping into his car and driving away with a laugh.

Oliver left without looking back, running, not away from his responsibility but from the fear creeping in.

It took Felicity 30 minutes to notice Oliver's disappearance. She text him, asking if he was okay? But nothing. After 10 more minutes she sent another text. She excused herself from Daniels side and went outside the marquee calling Oliver, no answer. she rang at least 10 times and still nothing. She felt a hand on her shoulder, she span around to see Dig stood there

"Are you okay?"

"Olivers not here, he's not answering my calls have you seen him?"

"I'm sure he's okay, I saw him escorting Isabel and her gentlemen friend out... I'll give him a call" he let it ring "hey man, give us a call we're worried about you"

"What happens if something's happened?" panic apparent in her whole body
"Felicity breath, I'm sure he's okay... Daniels probably looking for you" he nodded. She took a deep breath returning to the party. Daniel smiled at her and even though she returned it he knew something was wrong.

"What's up?"

"Nothing" she grinned

"Fliss come on it's me" he smiled softly; she couldn't even explain without it sounding bad. Se saw the sadness in her features "do you want to go home?" She sighed then nodded.

They drove home in silence Felicity checking her phone every minute. They made it into her apartment and the mood had clearly changed. she rang Oliver again when suddenly

"It's him isn't it..." Daniel said not meeting her gaze

"Excuse me?" She said softly

"Oliver, the reason your mood changed, the reason you're looking at your phone every second..." She frowned "Fliss you have told me time and time again those rumours weren't true and that there is nothing between you"

"They aren't and there isn't!" She said angrily phone still in hand

"Then why does it feel like you're lying to me..."

"I'm not! Oliver is my boss, he's..." She breathed "my friend..."

"A friend you seem to spend a lot of spare time with and support hell of a lot..."

"That's because he needs me..."

"And I don't?" He looked sad now

"Daniel... It's not like that and you know it! Oliver's life it has been chaos. He was missing for 3 years and he is not the boy that he was when he left..." She took a breath she was going to lie but also tell the truth "he... He struggles sometimes with everyday stuff, and he most definitely doesn't talk about it but he needs help and that's what I and Diggle do. He is a friend, a friend who I am helping because that's what friends do..." Daniels head hung low

"I am sorry... I didn't even think of him being gone for 3 years and what that could do to someone... I mean I know you do a lot I just, I don't like sharing” he said rubbing his hand at the back of his neck

"Sorry, I didn't mean to make you feel like that but Daniel I'm not a possession nobody owns me and this means a lot to me" she gestured between the two "but so does my friendship with Oliver and if you can't accept that... Well I dunno..." She shrugged. Before she knew it he had closed the gap and was kissing her

"I'm sorry..." She smiled, and then she heard a cough from her phone. Her eyes went wild

"Oliver?" She said hesitantly pulling the phone to her ear

"I'm fine Felicity, just needed some air didn't mean to scare you" oh my god, had he heard all of that conversation. Even Daniel looked a little scared to hear he might have heard that "I didn't mean for you guys to fight"
"Oliver that's not your fault..."

"Hmm anyway night" he hung up before she had a chance to say anything else and she felt guilty without even realising why when she had defended him. Daniel looked at her before going to her bedroom.

Oliver stood in the Foundry never feeling as lost as he did right then. He had been through hell but this was different. He had people to lose, a life, a family, friends. He stopped himself and then start working hard, hitting dummies with all his might.
Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

I am leaving an authors note at the end because I want to explain stuff that happens but I don't want to ruin it, so here...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Felicity didn't sleep well, and from the restlessness of her partner, neither did he. She turned to look over to find his green eyes staring into her blue. She was feeling guilty for arguing, guilty for Oliver hearing their argument, and felt like a bad girlfriend. She raised her hand up to caress his cheek, running her fingers softly down his jaw line. Just then his phone went off. He closed his eyes frowning turning over. He looked at his phone sighed then answered. Felicity got up making her way to the kitchen to get them coffee.

She was just pouring it out when Daniel came in completely dressed holdall in hand. Felicity looked at him then at the bag, panic set in he was leaving her. She wasn't prepared or ready she guessed this day might happen eventually but not yet. She laid the coffee pot down shaking not looking him in the eyes

"Hey, Fliss..." He said walking to her side, he dropped the bag and took her hands in his "I'm not leaving you... Well I'm going back to Gotham" she looked into his eyes "Mr Fox called something's come up at work, a theft apparently I need to head back" she looked into his eyes, he was pleading her to believe him and she knew he was telling the truth. She gave him a half smile "Fliss, I'm sorry about last night, I don't want to go" She leant forward and kissed him trying to convey her own apologises without words. She squeezed him trying to reassure him all was okay between them

"I understand and we're okay, aren't we?" His eyes sparked

"After that kiss I'd say so" he grinned and she chuckled "I'll call you when things get sorted, and tell Oliver I am sorry..." She nodded as he walked out her door. That was when she remembered Oliver, and felt guilty again. She got ready slowly, trying to figure out what was best way to say sorry, when her phone rang Diggles name flashed on screen

"Hey Dig. What's up?"

"I think you should come to the Foundry" his tone was calm but she could hear the tension

"Be there as soon as" she hung up and reached the place as quickly as possible.

When she walked in she saw Diggle and Sara hunched round her computers. Then she heard banging, glancing over to see Oliver was in the corner ferociously pounding the dummies. There was equipment all around him and he had his arrow outfit on, she frowned. She walked to the two

"What's happening?"

"We aren't sure" said practically whispered, Felicity frowned
"He's been here all night, he hasn't slept, he hasn't ate..." Diggle added frowning in Olivers direction

"When we try to talk to him, it's like he can't hear us, or he does and just turns his back... We have no idea what happened" Sara said frowning. Felicity felt even guiltier this couldn't be due to her and Daniel, stop being stupid, no he disappeared last night for a reason. She took her coat off

"Can you guys give us a minute?" Both looked uncomfortable "he's not going to hurt me nothing's going to happen..." They looked at each other

"Okay but a minute" Diggle said as he and Sara went to wait upstairs. Felicity took a step closer to him

"Oliver" she said firmly, no response he carried on hitting the dummy hard "Oliver" she said loudly still no response, as he pulled his arm back she grabbed his wrist. He looked at her hand squeezing gently but pulled away. As he did it, something inside Felicity snapped and she stepped directly in front of him and the dummy. The only way to avoid hitting her was to allow himself to fall as he did he ended up with his back on a support column. He looked defeated, broken and Felicity saw that look in his eyes. The same one she had seen all those years ago on the bridge. She knelt down in front of him. He put his head in his hands covering his eyes. She gently prised them away, leaving one hand wrapped around his wrist whilst the other pulled his head up to look in her eyes

"Oliver... Come on talk to me... To us" he shook his head and she saw fear flash in front of his eyes "Oliver we can't help if you don't let us in..."

"I... I don't want you to get hurt... I don't want to be the reason you all get hurt" it came out so quietly she was stunned. She had never seen Oliver like this. She inched forward squeezing his wrist lightly

"Oliver please..." Just then Dig and Sara returned. Oliver pulled away standing up and was just about to pound the dummy when Sara stepped in his way catching his fist

"Stop it!" He said

"No Ollie! You stop it we're here to help, so goddamn it talk to us"

"He's going to kill you all!"

"No he won't!" She said louder

"You can't know that he made a promise, a promise to destroy everything and everyone I love!" He shouted at her

"I don't know what to say Oliver..."

"There is nothing that can be said to help this! You know what happened!" He walked away nearing the desks; Felicity and Diggle were frozen in place.

"I do but that isn't your fault..."

"3 years! 3 years where nothing good happened!" He slammed his fists on the table "of course it was my fault. It's my own entire, stupid fault and nothing you say can make it better Sara!" She looked at him not with anger but with sympathy

"Fine then Ollie, I'm not needed here" she said storming off; the atmosphere was tense, awkward.
Felicity spoke first sitting down at her desk

"I'll have all searches keeping a track on Isabel and Slades activities..."

"And I'll add extra people on to your family and friends..." Diggle added; Oliver lifted his head from his strained position

"NO!" He shouted

"No Oliver we're already in this..." Diggle said standing straight

"And we have no intention of abandoning you now things are getting more dangerous" Felicity added staring into his eyes

"But this could kill you both" He said fighting back tears

"Well then, we have to make sure it doesn't" Diggle said straightening his back and pulling out his phone walking off to make a call. Oliver dropped in the chair next to Felicity

"I'm sorry..." She raised an eyebrow

"About?"

"Your argument being the cause of it..."

"Stop! What I do here is important and if that means lying to Daniel then I have to" she didn't look at him, just kept staring at her screen

"And dragging you away from him to be here..."

"Oliver he went home, work thing before you start, and there was no dragging involved I happily came here. I've told you I'm here, my life my choices" she smiled at him with the last statement and he smiled back as Diggle came back sitting in another chair

"I think it's time I told you more about what happened in those 3 years I left..." Diggle and Felicity looked at him in surprise. Felicity spoke first

"You don't need to" she said softly, Diggle nodding in agreement

"I do..." he took a deep breath

"Over 3 years ago now, as you both know, I left... I wasn't kidnapped or taken as believed; I left on my own accord because I needed to change. To deal with some terrible things that happened and only I could change that" he looked at Felicity, she knew instantly that he was talking about what she had said on the bridge that night

"so I left with my fathers help. I ended up in a tiny unknown village in China. I was trained to do what I do now by 3 people Yao Fei, his daughter Shado and Slade Wilson" he looked away from them "for 6 months I trained there, learning everything. Then, as you know, I met Anatoli when he was captured, he inadvertently gave away Yao Fei's position to the Chinese triad who were out for revenge" he sighed "they kidnapped myself and Shado. They tortured me" he gestured towards his body and his head. His actions speaking more than words as they realised he meant mentally too

"Slade and Yao Fei saved us. They broke in but Yao Fei was killed in the aftermath and Slade badly injured. He begged me to take Shado out and I did as he wished" he was avoiding their eyes "we went on the run, taking Anatoli back to Russia. We travelled around I was trained harder and faster, easily taking lives of people that attacked us, or threatened us... we did what we could to survive"

He felt like he was swirling, things he could never mention appearing in his mind, faces, pain, torture
nearly a year of running we went back to Shados village. The Triad had destroyed it in the search for her. We stayed, we built and we trained even harder till they came, they ruined the village again and in the end they killed Shado but what I didn't expect was that Slade was alive. His mind twisted and distorted. I stayed with Shados village I carried on building and training, pushing away everyone and everything, until the day Slade attacked. We fought. It was the worst beating I had ever taken. He told me it was my fault Shado was dead for saving Anatoli, if I had let him drown the triad would have never come…” he looked at his hands "he was right, if I wasn't there things would have been different. He loved Shado, I did too but not like him, and when I lay on the floor wearing her hood, this hood he promised he would destroy me as I had destroyed him" Oliver looked up "that's when I fought back. The will to survive, to fight took over. I barely made it out alive. He got stuck under a boat whilst we fought near the docks and I rammed an arrow in his eye, pushed him into a small wooden boat and let it drift off to his death or so I thought"

Felicity couldn't believe it. This man had changed so much and she was the one who pushed him to change and yet this changed haunted him. She couldn't help feel responsible she couldn't look at him now as she held her tears in "I was in a bad way, the villagers healed me physically and a few months later, once I was at full strength I made a decision. I destroyed the Chinese triad. I walked in and I killed every man in my way till I put an arrow through the heart of the man who took Shado's life" his voice was cold then as he felt the feelings of happiness disappear "that's when I collapsed exhausted. I woke in a Chinese hospital, by then there was no denying who I was but I remember what Shado had said, home is important to us and my home is Starling. So in her memory I chose to come back and save this city from the corrupt…” he took a breath "so you see this is who I am… what I did to survive" Diggle stood up walked over to his friend clutching his shoulder

"No Oliver that is who you were. We all do things to survive and you got a pretty bad deal but… this time you aren't alone. You have us and we'll all fight, you hear me?" he looked into Diggles eyes and his smiling face and Oliver nodded actually feeling hopeful "right I'm going to get us all food because god knows we need it’ he smiled, walking off, as soon as the door closed Oliver looked at Felicity who was staring at his hands.

Oliver felt it tight in his chest. She couldn't look at him. He had disappointed her. He had distorted her view of him. He was no longer her hero. He got up unable to stand the silence and changed out of the hood, into his joggers and a T-shirt. When he span back round he found her staring at him, she must have been staring for sometime

"I..." A tear rolled down her cheek and he was kneeling down in front of her wiping it away with his thumb

"Hey, it's okay... I understand I'm not the man you thought I was” he said letting his chin rest on his chest as he dropped his head. Felicity frowned she pulled his head up to meet her watery gaze leaving her hand resting on his cheek and jaw

"No you are so much more..." He looked confused, he didn't understand "Oliver what you...” She took a breath to stop the tears "endured is unbelievable, it explains so much... You are fighter, a survivor but being here, being the Arrow none of your past changes any of that for me. That was the man you were and this” she put her other hand to his face "this scarred, courageous, guilt-ridden, fighting for his city, family orientated, handsome man you are him now, you are a hero Oliver” she smiled at him silent tears rolling down her face "but I am sorry, I am truly sorry I ever said what I did on that bridge... You wouldn't have gone if it wasn't for me. You wouldn't be scarred, not that you are any less hot for the scars but you wouldn't have had to go through all that you did" by now her hand was off his face. Oliver stood up and reached out for her arm stopping her

"Felicity don't ever and I mean ever! Blame yourself for what happened. I made the choice and stuff
happened bad stuff but..." He closed his eyes "I would still be that broken playboy drunk, if you hadn't spoke to me that night, and I wouldn't be this man who wants to be better..."

"You are better Oliver" he opened his eyes and she was now standing in front of him "well not better better, but more so than you were. You aren't the same man I met all those months ago and I know the real you even if this world doesn't and I'm not talking your playboy front or the vigilante I mean Oliver"

"Thank you Felicity" he said smiling, she frowned "for being you, for not judging me"

"I never would! Unless you know, you needed to be called up on it but that... that's the past... But thank you Oliver"

"For what?"

"For being you too..." He stepped forward wrapping her in a hug and she hugged back. She looked up and he automatically kissed her on the forehead. Both parties felt the spark run down their spines, as they stayed hugging but staring into each other's eyes. Blue on blue. Both lost in a vast ocean. It was only when the door opened they pulled away sitting back in there chairs, both suddenly and unexpectedly missing the warm of the embrace.

Oliver found Sara upstairs, practising her bar tending skills

"I'm sorry" he said standing in front of her "I just...

"I get it Ollie, you don't need to apologise I understand..." She smiled softly at him and he returned the smile. She leant over the counter wrapping an arm around his neck to pull him into a passionate kiss. He returned it but something felt lacking, something felt wrong but he couldn't quite understand why

"Are you working tonight?" He asked already guessing the answer

"Yes but I have time to kill now" she winked and he half heartedly smiled

"Actually I'm going to get some sleep... Diggle said he'd keep an eye out tonight and call if there was any trouble" she nodded

"That's okay then, well Ollie you know where I am if you need me" he nodded. As he stepped outside he saw Felicity stood by her car

"Come on you..." He frowned "I know you don't really want to go home, and I know you want to keep everyone safe too. Well Saras here with Tommy, Diggles got more people on your family and Laurel too, even if she doesn't know..."

"And you?" She grinned

"I have my own security to set up but for today I have you... That's if you want to come to mine, get some sleep, relax you know? I mean Diggle gave me your spare suit for tomorrow morning not that you plan on spending the night, or anything" He smiled at her as he made his way to the car

"Felicity... It would be nice to have a friend..." She smiled back

"Come on then" he got into the car trying not to look as uncomfortable as he really felt but she
couldn't help laughing at how ginormous he looked in her tiny car.

When they got to hers she pointed to the bathroom

"Go relax!" He smiled softly then made his way for a nice hot shower.

Felicity instinctively changed her bed sheets, reasoning he wouldn't want to smell Daniel as he slept, not that he'd want to sleep on her bed but just in case. She went into the living room putting the TV on as background noise. Then she sat with her tablet on her knees looking at security features to keep her flat safe. It wasn't until Oliver plopped down beside her with slightly damp hair she realised he was finished in the bathroom. She turned to look at him his eyes looked heavy and sunken in, she tilted her head a sad smile on her face

"Go get some sleep Oliver..." He shook his head "my bed is free for now, and tonight you can sleep on the sofa. I know you don't want to compromise either of our relationships but sleeping in my bed now isn't a big deal when I'm not in it" he looked at her differently and that's when it hit her "I can sit in there with you if you want?" He didn't want to be alone. She stood up and he followed. She pulled her covers back and he crawled in. He pulled them back over himself. She closed the curtains so the room was darker and then she sat on the chair in the corner. She was making the alarms and cameras in her block more up to date and hijacking them to alert her of certain presences but she could feel Oliver watching her making sure she was safe

"Wake me up in a few hours..."

"Oliver sleep" she said softly

"I know I just won't sleep later if I'm gone too long" she nodded at him and then turned back to her tablet.

It was a few hours later when she realised he'd been asleep a very long time. She stood up to go wake him when he turned to face her

"Felicity..." She smirked his eyes were still closed, must be a dream "Sara, Laurel, mum, dad... Thea!" They came out strained faster panic clearly visible. She went to reach out but then remembered what happened last time, so she didn't "nooo Slade nooo" she crawled on the bed resting her back against the headboard right near his head "Nooo" he jumped in his sleep, his head landing on Felicity's lap arms out. That was it. She automatically rested a hand on his face soothingly stroking his hair line

"Shhh shhh, it's okay Oliver, it's okay" his laboured breath started to steady. He turned up eyes now open to look at her confusion on his face. She carried on stroking down his face till she could feel the tension of the dream disappear. He caught her wrist stopping her mid-stroke. He gently kissed the back of her hand, both feeling the electricity again but ignoring its effects "I... I didn't mean to wake you but you were having a nightmare and well... I don't like to see you tense or pained or..."

"Thank you..." He said smiling eyes still sleepy. He let go of her wrist. Then slowly rose up trying to push out the fact he had had his head on her lap and how soft she felt. She too got up leaving the curtains drawn and made her way into the living room getting herself a coffee. She poured one out for Oliver too.
When Oliver stepped out in his shirt and sweats, she thought of the very different scene this morning, wishing her boyfriend had been dressed like that instead of his clothes. Oliver noticed a flick in her eyes, her features softening as she stared at him. He knew she was thinking of something else or someone else.

"I'm sorry..."

"Stop saying it Oliver. It isn't needed we're friends" she smiled softly "though I probably shouldn't mention to my boyfriend you slept in my bed"

"Why? Is he the jealous type" Oliver teased not sure where the question came from, knowing full well he was after hearing their argument last night

"Ha! Just as jealous as any other man, I bet you get possessive?" she counteracted knowing full well he heard that conversation

"Well what man doesn't, what is his is his after all" he grinned but his words hit him slightly. Felicity wasn't his. She was part of the team and she had someone special in her life that wasn't broken

"Women are not possessions, Mr Queen!" She said raising an eyebrow

"No but men get jealous at the thought of losing someone that is special to them..." He wanted to say more but he felt this wasn't a subject he could touch. She smiled softly

"That so..." She smiled wider sipping her coffee "anyway how about movie marathons and takeout?" He smiled taking a sip of his own

"Sounds like a plan" he smiled back.

Several hours later various films watched, with Oliver mocking the skills of the archers in the movies they had chosen, and bellies full from takeout Felicity went into her room, pulled her duvet and pillows off her bed and wadded back into the living room

"What are you doing?"

"Well it's not that late, I thought keep us warm and comfy whilst we watch Frozen and yes before you start it is a girly Disney film" he shook his head smiling as she handed him a pillow and had one herself. She sat beside him and pulled the duvet around there legs.

They sat watching and he couldn't help laughing at her singing the songs, which he even had to admit, were quite catchy. Her phone rang and she answered without hesitation, pausing the film and going to her room. Oliver sat there. He knew it would be Daniel and then he looked at the TV screen thinking how it would be more appropriate for him to be here and not himself. After a few more minutes, she returned smiling playing the rest of the film and sitting by his side. She noticed how tense he seemed, how he had consciously edged away. She frowned they were friends watching a film together this was ridiculous the credits started

"What's wrong?" She said it bluntly; he didn't think it just came out

"Does he make you happy?" He wanted to say do you love him but he couldn't bring himself to say it
"Of course he does Oliver, I wouldn't be with him if I wasn't" she said tilting her head frowning "Doesn't Sara make you happy?"

"Of course she does..." she made him happy and what they had was fun but it wasn't serious as he'd learnt the hard way "but you're serious right?" She frowned still, *where had this come from this sudden interest in her relationship*

"Yes Oliver as serious as we can be, I mean it would be easier if we lived closer but when is anything ever simple... yeh I'm happy and we're serious..." She looked at him "but I'd never tell him your secret unless you wanted me to, that's not my place, and if that means sometimes we argue then we do but I am happy Oliver" she put her hand on top of his "with all choices in my life" she was trying to comfort him now and he could tell that's what it was. But if she was happy that's all he needed to know. He didn't want to lose her as part of the team but if he was going too at least he knew she'd be happy "What film do you want now?" He shrugged "how about we just watch some trashy TV?" He smiled and she turned the TV over flicking through the channels, before turning over to see Oliver head flopped on the sofa asleep. She smiled softly, pulling the duvet up around him and leant her head on the sofa arm watching some random TV show before she too found sleep.

Chapter End Notes

SO now you know what happened to Oliver on his "island", I don't get in to any more detail than this purely because I needed Oliver to tell them and I don't think he'd be able to say all of what happened and it leaves it to your imagination to what he did whilst hiding but yeh that's it (sorry if that disappoints anyone). Second I added Frozen as a thing for myself, I'm obsessed :P so you can ignore that if you wish, as I say this was written for me :P but anyway tell me what you thought, I love to hear from you guys :).
Chapter 26

It was a few days later when all hell broke loose, more cases of vertigo induced rampages; mainly
destroyed buildings with no real casualties had accord. The symptoms lasting longer each time and
Felicity was struggling to make a "cure". She was a genius but not with those kind of things. So
when a young man was drugged everything changed. He went on a rampage; but he killed or injured
anyone that stood in his way whether it was civilians or police officers. The information found on the
lad was simple. He was a recent university graduate who had come home. He had no connection to
drugs of any kind and was seemingly a nice guy until now. Sara and Oliver had tracked him, and
tried to stop him. But his anger and brute force stopped them before he gave them the slip again.
Both were completely frustrated when they got back to the Foundry, having let the man go but for
different reasons

"He's killing people Ollie, we have to end this!" She shouted

"Sara I am not killing an innocent man, he can't control his actions you've seen what that drug does!
Plus we don't know who's making this vertigo and why people are reacting this way!" He shouted
back

"Just because you've gone soft doesn't mean I have!" She grabbed her gun off the side and left the
Foundry, he punched the table in frustration

"God damn it!"

"Well I..." Felicity looked between both men

"You two should go, there's nothing we can do and your systems tracking him, I'll stay here keep an
eye out"

"Are you sure man? You might need us" Diggle asked

"Yes go..." Felicity looked at John

"Do you fancy a drink? I mean we could get a booth?" She smiled softly

"Yeh why not, then we aren't too far away" she smiled as they made their way upstairs. The music
was loud but it was not overly busy which wasn't surprising for a week night. Diggle walked over to
the bathroom as Felicity made her way to the bar ordering their drinks. When the music suddenly
stopped she spun around and saw him. The young man they had been tracking was in the middle of
the dance floor with his hand around a man's neck. Felicity instinctively dashed forward

"Let him go" she said sternly

"Go away blondie" the people inside started screaming and rushing for the nearest exits

"I can't do that... Let him go" she was glad to see Tommy must have not been working tonight
otherwise this would have gone down terribly. Anger flashed through his eyes as he dropped the
man, who scuttled off to the exit. He turned to Felicity shoving her hard. She hit the floor and felt a
pop. She looked up just in time to see Diggle rugby tackling the guy mid-run at her. She pulled her
phone out SOS was all she sent Oliver. Diggle couldn't restrain him for long as one quick smack
knocked him out. He stood up spinning around as Sara stepped forward gun pointing at his head
taking the safety off
"Stop now!"

"Do it..." He almost whispered. She frowned and Felicity could see it. Could see the man behind the drug fighting for control "I don't want to hurt anyone... Didn't mean to" they stared at each other in disbelief. Then suddenly there was a swoosh and 3 sedative filled arrows hit the man and he fell to the floor

"We need to take some blood..." Felicity said from where she had dropped. Oliver rushed to her side touching her shoulder gently as she winced

"I think you've dislocated your shoulder"

"Oliver the blood..." Sara had put the gun away and was checking the man's pulse; she pulled out a syringe and took a few vials full. Oliver gently helped Felicity up then went over to make sure Diggle was okay. He was just coming round

"Well that wasn't fun" Diggle said rubbing his head, police sirens filled the place

"We best leave before my dad gets here... What's the plan?" She didn't look at Oliver

"We have to leave him here..."

"What about your arrows?"

"It doesn't matter, they'll know I've been here that way, plus Diggle and Felicity will be on the CCTV" he turned to face the two now standing together "you could always say you were meant to be meeting me here as a thank you for all the hard work... And I can slip round the back and appear in the crowd" they nodded in agreement

"What about my shoulder?" Felicity asked as they were about to leave

"Maybe better if that is corrected at hospital and your head checked too Dig" they nodded, knowing it would be better for actual medical attention this time and with that Sara and Oliver made their way downstairs.

Oliver placed the blood in the analysis equipment for Felicity. He knew if he didn't she'd kill him later. Sara got changed out of her leather suit and into her normal clothes, not interrupting Oliver whilst he worked hard sorting the blood sample. She waited till he had spun around before speaking

"I would have killed him, I was ready to" she said looking at him "He'd be dead right now if you wouldn't have stopped me"

"But he's not that's all that matters" Oliver smiled at her hopefully

"That's not true, I wanted to kill him because that's what I do, that's who I am now. I spent years training in the darkness. And I looked into the eyes of the devil and I gave him my soul" her eyes started to brim with tears

"Let me help you get it back" he smiled softly. He knew Sara had a good heart and he wanted to help her, he truly did

"No, you deserve someone better" she looked into his eyes "Someone who can harness that light that's still inside of you, but I'm not that person. And I never will be"

"Sara don't" he said reaching out for her
"I'm sorry, I just care about you too much to be with you" she stepped back "to hurt you anymore" she looked at him sympathetically before leaving. Oliver stood there unsure what to think. She had left him and oddly he wasn't hurt, not like he should have been anyway. He quickly got changed making his way upstairs by the back exit so he appeared to emerge out of nowhere.

"Let me drive you both home" Oliver insisted as they left the hospital

"What we're doing role reversal now?" Diggle joked

"You have mild concussion so no driving for you tonight, and well she's slightly high on pain medication" he pointed his head in Felicity's direction. She was practically asleep in the wheelchair they had used to wheel her outside. Diggle laughed

"Well we have no car here man, so I'll just grab a taxi, you taking her home?"

"If you're sure?" Oliver questioned. He nodded and both made their way to the taxi rank practically carrying Felicity into the taxi.

When the taxi pulled up outside Felicity's apartment, Oliver paid the taxi driver took Felicity's keys from her bag and then pulled her up into his arms. She was asleep now and naturally curled into Oliver's touch. He let them into the building and then into her apartment with ease. What he didn't expect was to be greeted by Daniel's concerned face

"What the hell happened?" he said rushing over

"Let me put her in bed and then we can talk" Oliver said bluntly. Daniel merely nodded, without thinking Oliver took her into her room gently placing her under the quilt, pulling her shoes off, dropping them to the floor and taking her glasses off, placing them on the night stand. Daniel watched him arms crossed from the door way. Oliver pulled the quilt over her and she burrowed in and then he walked out. Daniel closed the door behind him

"Soo care to explain?" he said arms still crossed

"I offered John and Felicity a night out, as a thank you for all the hard work they do for me… and some maniac got into the club. They tried to stop him and she got injured in the process"

"Injured how?"

"Dislocated shoulder, been at the hospital. They popped it back in place and the pain killers seem to have knocked her out…"

"What? Is she okay? I mean other than that"

"She might be a bit sore from an over stretched shoulder but nothing permanent" Oliver saw Daniel's concerned face ease a little

"Thank you for being there for her"

"Well was kind of my responsibility, no need for thanks though if I had known you were here I'd have insisted she called"

"She didn't know I was here. It was meant to be a surprise… I have some time off work, thought I'd spend it here with her"
"Oh" Oliver nodded "anyway I guess I should be going" he made his way to the exit

"Oliver?" Daniel said slowly and he span around

"Yes?"

"I know this might be crossing loads of unspoken lines but..." Daniel looked down

"But what?"

"Do you have any feelings for Felicity?" Oliver stood there frozen in spot "I mean beyond friendship, I know you have Sara" well not anymore but he definitely wasn't telling Daniel that information "and you guys are friends and she has told me there is nothing going on between you... Which I believe but it doesn't stop me wandering, if maybe... Maybe you feel something?" He looked him in the eyes emerald on blue. What was he supposed to say?

"I have never seen Felicity happier than when she is with you. She smiles wider, walks with a skip in her step and is more cheerful, more hopeful that the future is bright... And I..." He took a breath "I'm broken... I make her life more complicated and sometimes I rely on her too much and for that I am sorry" he hadn't answered the question but Daniel had read between the lines

"I get it..." He smiled sadly at Oliver "she is amazing..." His smile brightening now as he thought about Felicity but Oliver just stood there

"If she ever decides to leave..." Daniels eyes snapped to Olivers as he spoke "I won't stop her, I need you to know that I won't come in the way of her happiness" he nodded in response

"Thank you Oliver... For being honest, I do really care about her you know?" He looked at the man's face, boyish in features but still full of promise not like Oliver, not broken

"I know, and as long as you make her happy and don't hurt her then I will take a step back from everything"

"I hope I do Oliver, and I will never willingly hurt her..." He nodded

"Good night Daniel" Oliver said as he stepped out the flat.

A part of Oliver felt lost, felt heavy, like he had been beaten but he hasn't. Then his heart ached and it hit him. Hit him hard. He did have feelings for Felicity all this time. All those touches and looks that had happened between them. He truly cared about her but she was not and never would be his and as much as it hurt him he had to keep away now. Had to let her be happy, with a man she deserved. Who wasn't broken or dangerous, who wouldn't get her killed. He felt his heart tighten and let the realisation take over then he ran, ran all the way home burying his emotions.

Oliver found it hard. It had only been a few days but he kept Felicity completely at arm's length. No letting her in. No late nights, even at the Foundry he pushed her away. It was easier with Daniel there to serve as a distraction but it was harder for him to not ask for her help with the paperwork, or for help with Arrow stuff. He truly had come to rely on her and Diggle, but at least with Diggle there were no complications.

With Sara now gone, she left everyone saying she'd be back. She just needed to sort some stuff out but Oliver didn't tell anyone what had happened. Sara had told Laurel she had done the dumping and
Tommy was made to "comfort" Oliver, which he refused, stating he was actually fine. Which he was with Sara gone he his heart didn't ache but with Felicity, well that was something he would not discuss with anyone because once he did there was no going back.

It was Saturday night; Oliver was in the Foundry working out Diggle long gone and Felicity with Daniel. He should have been attending another gala set up by his mother, to help the poor in Starling, but he didn't feel like attending just yet instead opting to arrive late. That way he avoided time with his mother and father, especially as Thea wasn't in attendance. Just then his phone rang

"Well Mr Queen…" He recognised the Australian accent instantly

"What do you want Slade?" Oliver spat

"It seems I might have been too soft on you, seems all those Vertigo thugs were just the warm up act kid"

"What?!" he was confused; all the vertigo induced attacks were thanks to Slade? He heard Slades laugh in his ear

"I thought you were smarter than this kid… and your team were too. Felicity Smoak and John Diggle" no how did he know their names? How could he know any of this? "I made you a promise kid, things are going to happen and they are going to happen quicker now. I'm done taking it easy on you"

"Leave them out f this Slade they're nothing in this…"

"Too late Oliver!" he shouted "You took Shado from me! Maybe I ought to drop in on your little family shindig this evening… or maybe I already have"

"What have you done!?!" he shouted almost pleading with him; he laughed loudly then ended the call. Oliver threw on his clothes not even bothering to make his suit look nice. He rang Diggle on the way there, informing him of the impromptu call he just received. With Diggle informing him that he would be there as soon as possible and call Felicity in too, much to Olivers protests.

Oliver pulled up outside the building with a screech, as he did he jumped off his bike practically running inside. The scene he was greeted with was of peace and tranquility. He found his way over to his mother slightly out of breath, looking anywhere and everywhere for Slade or Isabel but there was nothing

"Oliver are you okay?" His mother gave him a look

"I... I'm fine..." He didn't look at her just kept searching the room

"Well if you're going to attend my events but not speak to me anymore, you could at least make more of an effort" she stared at his shirt hanging out, no suit jacket or tie looking slightly dishevelled

"Sorry, mother" the thought of anything happening to either of his parents struck hard. Yes they lied but they were his family "I, I mean for everything..." He looked at her face now; he could see the tears forming in her eyes

"It's… I who should be sorry Oliver" She said trying to make this scene less obvious "maybe we should talk in the other room..."
"There is nothing to say mum" he stepped forward hugging her tightly and she returned the hug

"Well I would still like to clear the air" she smiled softly and he nodded

"Later" he smiled tucking his shirt back in. He was just starting to relax when the room fell in to darkness and every nerve in his body stood to attention at he grabbed his mothers elbow. There were loud crashes as several masked men came rushing in, ushering guests out onto the street. It was then that Oliver realised the only people left in the room where himself, his mother, and his father.

The lights came back on dimly. A taller masked man; in full body armour with an eye patch on the mask stepped forward Oliver knew it was Slade before he even spoke. Thugs came to subdue him and Oliver fought back, he crippled 2, knocked out another 3 when suddenly he felt a sudden blow to the knee and he dropped to the ground in a heap

"Too easy kid..." Slade laughed. He turned to Robert and Moira stood there in disbelief "I thought I knew what true despair was until I met your son... He took the woman I truly cared for, away from me it's his fault she is dead"

"No! She died protecting her village! She died saving the people she loved"

"No she died saving your pathetic life! You should have protected her but instead you put her life in further danger..."

"Then kill me, kill me now and be done with it" Slade laughed a deep laugh sliding his mask off

"I am killing you Oliver, only more slowly than you would like"

"No!" Robert shouted "Kill me! Take me instead of him..." Slade looked at him head tilted, when Moira spoke up

"No kill me, just kill me..." He looked at her eye brow raised "there is only one way this night will end, and we both know that don't we Mr Wilson?" She said calmly

"No!" Oliver shouted from the top of his lungs feeling like he was drowning. Slade nodded at the man holding Moira pushing her forward, Robert tried to move

"No Moira! No kill me instead Slade!" He laughed again

"Death, just like your son, would be a release and my acquaintance isn't quite finished with you Mr Queen..." He gave him a sarcastic grin nodding and the thug hit Robert hard. He fell to the floor in a pile, unconscious. Slade turned his attention back to Moira "You possess true courage. I am truly sorry…” he said slowly pulling his sword from behind his back. Oliver tried to move but somehow in all the commotion he had been restrained unable to

"What?" Moira said standing there

"You did not pass that on to your son" he stabbed her without warning

"No!" Oliver shouted sobbing hard as his mother hit the ground "No!"

"There is still more to come and one more person who has to die before this can end Oliver" he walked off thugs in toe as one cut Olivers binds. He grabbed his mother pressing hard on her wound trying to stop the bleeding

"Oliver..." She whispered
"Mum don't talk, we can get you help"

"Nooo... Listen" her hand reached over his on her stomach "I'm proud of the man you've become the man who you are..." She smiled softly "I am truly sorry for everything" she took a breath trying to finish "I love you my precious child. Tell..." a tear ran down from the corner of her eye "tell Thea that too..." And suddenly her whole body went limp

"Mum! Mum! No!" He shook her slightly but he already knew he felt it. He felt her slip away from him. She was gone. Her body still warm but it was not her anymore. He pulled her closer sobbing heavily letting the emotions over take him. He didn't care about the blood soaking though his shirt or the tears running down his face. He sat there until he and his father were found.
Chapter 27

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy this chapter, you might even notice this is where I got the inspiration from the title for ;) :P, as usual let me know what you think :)

It was a horrible day. It was raining which seemed kind of a cliché for a funeral Felicity thought to herself. They were all in black; the coffin was being lowered into the ground. Diggle was by her side holding an umbrella above them, and Robert was there holding Thea as she sobbed. Walter stood their silent tears falling, allowing the rain to fall on him. Laurel and Tommy were there too, huddled together under an umbrella as both shed tears. There were random people who were Moiras friends and some of Robert and Walters colleagues attended too. But there was one person missing. One person who was nowhere to be seen. Oliver

"Where is he Diggle?" Felicity whispered as everyone made their way to Queen Mansion

"I don't know Felicity" he said frowning, as they got into the car to drive to the wake

"It's been 3 days Diggle… I mean it's crazy how fast they can hold a funeral, clearly it helps to have your own private gravesite but that's not the point. She died Wednesday night, we saw him then and he was…” she felt the tears spilling out, Diggle handed her a hanky "and then Thursday morning he was with Thea and it's now Saturday morning… I don't even know why I'm crying, it's not like I knew Moira well or even liked her that much…"

"You aren't crying for her Felicity, you're crying for Oliver" she sobbed a little

"How could he not be at his own mother's funeral?"

"I don't know Felicity" they drove the rest of the way in silence.

As they entered there was a sombre mood, and Thea appeared by Felicities side

"Do you know where Oliver is?" Thea said makeup smudged

"I honestly don't know Thea, I am so sorry for your lose" Thea hugged her tightly and Felicity hugged back "if you need anything, don't hesitate to call" she handed her phone to the girl who typed her number in and she pranked her "I mean it Thea" she smiled

"Thank you Felicity" she said walking back into the main room. Just then the door went and in stepped Tommy and Laurel

"How are you guys holding up?" Felicity enquired sincerely

"We're okay…" Laurel said "to be honest we're more worried about Ollie… nobodies seen him since Thursday" concern edged on her face, and Tommys too

"I've checked all the usual places and left messages" he added slowly "but we all know he's not the same anymore… and you probably know where he is more than anyone" he said slowly looking in her eyes, she didn't fully understand "I just meant the time you spend together etc, he trusts you…”
she nodded

"We don't know where he is either..." there was a loud clash from the main room and all 4 rushed in to see Robert already drunkenly moving around. Diggle and Tommy got there first helping him up and ushering him out of the room and into the study

"Where's Oliver?" he shouted "he missed his own mother's funeral!" he stumbled around as Tommy, Diggle, Laurel, and Felicity stood there "How could he miss this!"

"Hey!" Felicity stepped forward "we all deal with grief in different ways..." she took a breath pushing him into a seat "I think you have had too much to drink and your son, where ever he is, is grieving just as much as you" she shot him a look one that told him she knew. She knew he had helped Oliver leave, and that Oliver felt responsible for his mother's death. He reached a hand out to hers

"Find him. Help him. Save him" she looked in his eyes and saw the pain of a father who blamed himself for everything. Who didn't spend a day regretting what he did. He looked at her like he knew the truth the whole truth of the Arrow. She nodded pulling away. He slumped back in the chair, eyes closing

"We'll keep an eye on him" Tommy smiled softly "on all of them..."

"Please find Ollie" Laurel added

"I'll try" Felicity turned to Diggle and both walked out getting in the car.

"I've got multiple searches using all the CCTV around Starling but that's presuming he hasn't left..." She sighed twisting in her seat toward Diggle who was leaning on the table

"I doubt he's left Felicity" he smiled at her reassuringly. Just then her phone vibrated she grabbed it pulling it to her ear not even looking to see who was calling

"Oliver!?"

"Uh sorry no it's me"

"Sorry Dan, I just..."

"You don't know where he is, it's fine I get it..."

"I'm sorry this isn't what you expected when you wanted a break with me, then again I don't think anyone expects their bosses' mother to be murdered in front of them... And said boss to disappear..." She was rambling even now and she could hear Daniel smiling on the other end

"I think I can help you find him"

"What!? How!?"

"What I am about to share with you goes no further and is only for this use, okay?" Felicity frowned she hated mysteries but finding Oliver meant more

"Okay..."
"Do you have access to a computer?" She looked at the screens in front of her, he couldn't know about this

"My tablet" she pulled it from her bag

"Right okay, I'm taking control for a second..." Her tablet came to life to reveal a picture of its own

"What is this?"

"It's a satellite owned by Mr Wayne, it's a private one. Only 3 people have access to it and the passwords and security are constantly changed"

"How can a satellite help?" She was genuinely confused

"Because this isn't just a satellite Fliss... It has a lot of features, but I can't get in to those. You can turn Olivers phone on... You can track it and find him wherever he is"

"I... I don't know what to say... How does Mr Wayne, have something like this?"

"You don't need to say anything and because he's rich... Plus he has all us workers creating things"

"Thank you Daniel"

"It's okay Fliss, just remember as soon as you find him close the programme and you will never be able to access it again"

"No problem, I'll see you later"

"Yeh see you" he hung up first. Felicity remotely tracked his phone turning it on and controlling it. She found him within minutes, still in the city but about 20 minutes from them. Diggle didn't question how she did it, he just let her work. She pinpointed his location exactly; the basement of an old abandoned building. She closed the programme just as Daniel said, still a little inquisitive, but she would not dishonour her boyfriend's wishes.

When they found their way to where Oliver was, the place was dimly lit with a few basic training equipment and arrows. They saw Oliver sat there back perched against one of the support pillars in his suit, looking desperately miserable it broke Felicity's heart

"How did you find me?" Oliver said so calmly

"Daniel... he used some of Mr Waynes equipment" Felicity answered "We were worried about you"

"After you missed your mother's funeral" Diggle added but Oliver still sat there looking in the opposite direction

"I'm sorry that I didn't go, I left for the cemetery but I ended up here" he said it softly sounding nothing like the man either recognised

"Here is?" Felicity asked

"Here was a secondary facility, in case the foundry was compromised. But it became somewhere that I could just go and be alone sometimes" he turned to look at the two now "She's dead because of me" he stood up slowly his knee in a brace after the medical attention "I could have stopped him all
those years ago, convinced him, helped him and that would have prevented all of this" he looked his 2 friends in the face "And now, all the people left, that I care about are at risk. It ends tonight"

"How?" Felicity asked bluntly

"I turn myself over to Slade. I end this vendetta" he replied

"Oliver, you think this ends with you turning yourself over to Slade?" Diggle asked unconvinced

"Yes, I do. After he stabbed her, he told me that one more person had to die. And then it would end. This ends for Slade when he kills me" he said with certainty

"I don’t accept that" she said walking close to him stopping about a foot away "You shouldn’t, either. You can’t just accept things, Oliver. If I had accepted my life, I would be a cocktail waitress like my mother, and I never would have gone to university, and I never would have moved miles away to work at Queen Consolidated, and I never would have believed some crazy guy in a hood when he told me I could be more than just some IT girl" she looked into his blue eyes pleading with him "Please don’t do this" she emphasised every word

"Felicity" he said not able to stand the look of despair in her eyes "Someone once told me that the essence of heroism is to die so others can live"

"It's not that simple, Oliver" Diggle said from the side of them. Oliver looked him straight in the eyes

"Yes, it is. Slade's whole plan was to take everything from me. He almost has. He's nearly won. All that's left is for me to die" Diggle looked away unsure what to say to the younger man and Oliver walked slowly round Felicity not looking at her

"No, there has to be another way" she said spinning around grabbing his hand with both of hers, he looked into her pleading eyes and he could see the pain, the hurt. His eyes flicked to her lips, he wanted to remember her face

"There isn’t" he said slowly walking away. One hand falling from his and the other holding on till he was too far away that she couldn't reach him. He limped away, as Felicity stood there fighting back tears.

Oliver walked into the mansion to find his father and Walter in a deep discussion. He didn't interrupt them instead he went upstairs to Thea's room knocking lightly. She opened it slowly and when she saw Oliver she smiled pulling him into a hug

"Oh Ollie"

"Thea I'm sorry I wasn't there for you...

"Ollie, it's okay we both lost our mum and you..." She tried to stop the sob "you saw it happen" Oliver couldn't help the flashes of his mother's face, of the pain and anguish. She hugged him tighter pulling him into her room

"I love you Thea"

"I love you too Ollie"

"I think it might be best if you get away for a bit, have a break"
"I think we all need one" she smiled

"I need to stay, sort some things out but... I need you to be safe. I need you to be happy"

"Ollie, what are you talking about?" She said confused pulling away from him

"That man, he killed mum because of my past and I can't, won't let him get to you. I need you to remember I will always love you and I am so proud of the young woman you've become and I need you to promise me" he looked in her eyes "you won't give up, won't let this loss get to you, you won't drink all the problems away. You will carry on regardless of what happens" she frowned

"I promise Ollie, I promise but this isn't your fault. I don't blame you but promise me you won't do anything stupid" she had tears again

"I can't promise that Thea, I don't know what's going to happen but remember I love you" he kissed her on the top of the head

"Ollie I don't understand"

"Just be you, okay?" She nodded as he exited the room and made his way downstairs, leaving her confused. As he stepped in the living room Walter and Robert stopped their conversation

"Oliver" Walter said placing a hand on his shoulder "I am so sorry for your loss"

"Yours too" he put his head down

"I'll leave you two to it. I'm going to visit some family for a few days"

"Of course Walter take your time" Robert nodded as he exited

"Dad" Oliver said turning to him without hesitation "you need to take Thea and leave, get as far away from here as possible"

"Not without you Oliver"

"I have to stay, I have to face this"

"No, we do this together, as a family"

"Dad we haven't been a family for years... I need you to keep Thea safe, you are all she has now"

"No, she has you too Oliver"

"We both know this only ends when I die"

"Yes but I will be hunted too, by his acquaintance"

"No! Okay dad, I get it. I am this stupid, disappointment to you but right now I need you to put Thea first. Stop arguing with me, for once in my life and just trust me... Get the hell out of here and don't look back" Robert stuck a step forward and Oliver one back "I do love you dad but I need to do this" he spun around walking out the mansion as Robert stood there in stunned silence.

"It's me Slade, I want to end this. I'm at the docks I'll be waiting here alone" Oliver hung up his
phone and looked at the city around him. The place he truly called home, which he thought he could save. He stood there in his funeral suit, the sky bright in the mid-afternoon sun. When he felt a sting in his neck pulling out a small dart he dropped to the floor.

He blinked looking at the bright room around him. His head feeling fuzzy from the effects of whatever drug had knocked him unconscious. He was expecting to be restrained but there was nothing tying him down. He sat up when he realised he was actually in the Foundry

"Dad?" he spat out, being met face to face with his father

"Oliver... I needed to speak to you, but you walked away and I knew Miss Smoak and Mr Diggle would know where you were... And I figured, rather I gathered sometime ago about your night time activities"

"Why are you here dad?"

"Because you can't give up. I... I made some silly mistakes growing up. I married someone I didn't truly love. I put my career before my family and then when I met someone I loved, I planned to leave it all behind in a heartbeat" he looked at Oliver "but I never regret Thea or You. I am so proud of this man" he gestured towards Oliver "The man you have become. I had no idea what the time with Yao Fei would do to you but there is not a single day that I don't look at you and regret every single thing I caused. I saw the suffering in your eyes after being kidnapped and I couldn't live with what I did, so I stayed away" he looked at Oliver fighting back tears "I know that was wrong and I watched you spiral until you hit rock bottom. Then I sent you away because I didn't know what else to do..." he took a breath "I am a terrible father Oliver and I can never expect you to forgive me for any of the things I caused you to do, but I do and always will love you" he stepped closer, but Oliver couldn't believe what his father was saying "what you do for our city, it is amazing. This vigilante deal is inspirational and there isn't a day I am not proud to call you my son, because even if the press and most the population don't see it. I am proud of you" he took a breath "I am so sorry I caused all this. I'm sorry I wasn't around. I'm sorry I couldn't protect you. But most of all, I am sorry that you ever thought you weren't good enough because you are!"

"Dad... I" Oliver smiled "thank you...

"I know it will be hard, but you can defeat Slade... And I'll do as you asked, I'll get Thea away"

"Thank you Dad, and I love you too"

"It's the least I could do for you Oliver but don't ever give up again when things get tough..." He nodded and then his father hugged him. He was tense but then both relaxed, all the years of torment and torture on both men seemed to be final released. In its wake; hope. Hope of a better future. He patted his son on the back and made for the exit.

Diggle and Felicity reappeared once Robert had left

"I need to go see a few people, I need them to leave for their safety" Felicity and Diggle nodded

"What do you want us to do?" She asked

"Monitor him and Isabel, see if you can find where they're hiding out and where he managed to get all those drugged up thugs from" she nodded spinning on the computer chair typing away furiously

"I have extra guys on everyone Oliver especially your dad and Thea"

"Thank you..." He limped off making his way to his friends.
He knocked on the door and it flew open before he had a chance to say anything he was being pulled in to a group hug

"Oh Ollie, I thought you might have done something stupid..." Laurel whispered

"Where have you been man?" Tommy asked

"I... I just I couldn't handle it all you know... Can we talk?" They all walked into Laurels flat but none sat

"I... I need you to leave"

"What?" Laurel said "why?"

"Because everyone I care about is at risk"

"What do you mean?" Tommy frowned

"The man that killed my mother he told me" he closed his eyes "he's from my time away and he lost the woman he loved and he blames me. So he said he'd destroy my life and the people I care about so please leave. I need you both to be safe, I care about you too much" he looked them both in the eyes

"Ollie you're not making sense..."

"Laurel, the man that murdered my mother in front of me was a friend, when I was away for those 3 years. But he blames me for the death of the woman he loved and some things I can't share with you two happened" he tried hard to make her understand "and he's prepared to hurt everyone I care about, including you two. So please just pack a bag and leave just for a bit, get as far away from me and this city"

"We can't leave you man! What happens if he comes for you?" Oliver dropped his head "oh my god, that's the plan isn't it?"

"Tommy...."

"Ollie no, you can't offer yourself to him..." Laurel added stepping closer

"Guys! There is no discussion here; I'm not offering myself. I'm going to fight but to do that I need to know you're all safe... Everyone I care about can't get mixed up in this" he could see them about to argue "I've already lost my mother, my dad's taking Thea right now... I can't lose you guys too. So please go. I promise I'll fight, I'll do what I can and I know none of this makes much sense but if you trust me, just go" the 3 stood in silence, Tommy and Laurel looking at each other when suddenly Oliver's phone rang

"Talk to me" he said answering it noticing Felicity's name

"He's been taking prisoners... Iron Heights have been hiding the fact some of their inmates have been disappearing"

"So that explains their anger and control when high..."

"Oliver I have a bad feeling about this" he could hear the fear in her voice "something just doesn't
feel right"

"I know, I'll be back soon" was all he could say before hanging up and turning his attention back to his friends "please guys... Car, bus, train, ship, plane... Just leave for me..." Tommy looked at Laurel

"I can't leave you man... But I want you to be safe Laurel"

"Well I don't want to leave either. This is my city, my home and my dad..."

"Laurel, Tommy please... I can't deal with all of this right now I need you" his voice cracked slightly "you to go, if you want to warn your father that's fine but please leave" he walked towards the door "I can't have anyone else's death on my conscious" he saw the realisation in their faces as he stepped outside making his way to his next destination.

He knocked on the door and it opened

"Oliver?" Daniel stood there in jeans and a T-shirt frowning

"Daniel we need to talk" he practically barged his way in closing the door behind him

"Okay... What's this about Oliver? I mean if you're annoyed I helped Felicity find you..."

"No, not at all... I mean that was brave of you" Oliver plonked on the chair placing his braced leg on the coffee table. Daniel looked at it then at Olivers uncomfortable facial features

"Can I get you anything? I mean pain wise"

"No thanks I'm fine..." He lied "there is no easy way to say this..."

"Is this about Felicity?"

"Not really, well kind of it's more to do with me..."

"You're the Arrow?" He said bluntly unfazed

"Did she tell you?" He said sounding angrier than normal

"No, I mean at first I wasn't sure but the more time has gone on, it just makes the most sense"

"I guess we don't hide it well enough"

"Oh no not at all, you hide it really well but the scar on Felicity's shoulder, some of her excuses are getting worse"

"Yes we really need to work on them..."

"But why are you telling me Oliver? Why now?"

"A few reasons... I know about Mr Waynes night time activities" Daniels eyebrow rose "it isn't obvious but lots of coincidences. So I presume that makes you trust worthy with this secret, that and your applied science knowledge could help us" he smiled at him "and because you make her happy, she needs to know when things get tough she has you without any lies... That and she'll listen to you about leaving"
"Leaving?" He frowned again

"This city, it isn't safe and she needs to go. I don't want her hurt"

"I can't make her do something she doesn't want to..."

"No but you can help me" he smiled "so let's go back to my lair if you want that is?" he got up now hand held out and Daniel shook it with a nod

"Of course" he smiled.
Chapter 28

Chapter Notes

So that's it, I am now officially caught up with ff.net and you know what I'm going to? seeing as its 8.20pm here and that is enough time for me to proof read and tweak the next chapter so there will be another to follow :) :P... So both sites will be updated together from now on :)... I hope you continue to enjoy this :D and let me know

Oliver entered the lair with Daniel close behind. Diggle looked slightly shocked to see Daniel but Felicity hadn't even noticed, she was too busy on her computers working away hacking the prison database

"Oliver all the "missing" prisoners are people the Arrows been putting behind bars, I mean all of them. There's a bus load of thugs that they managed to let slip" she said without even looking at him. After about a minute of no one responding, she span around and nearly fell off her chair when she was met with Daniel "Daniel?! What are you doing here?"

"I told him Felicity, I told him who I am and what we do..." Oliver said stepping forward a little; she looked at him in utter shock. She turned towards Daniel "I am so sorry I never said anything, I mean it wasn't like I didn't want to, I really did but this wasn't my secret to tell..." Daniel stepped forward lacing his fingers in hers, stopping her ramble

"You do not need to apologise, I get it. I get this, all of it. I am proud of you" he smiled his emerald eyes shining and she smiled back

"But why? Why did you tell him?" She turned to face Oliver, who was slumped against a table

"Because a relationship based on lies is not a great relationship look at my family... He needed to know and I need you to leave"

"What?" She said letting go of Daniels hand and walking towards him

"I don't want to be safe, I want to be here with you" she realised what she said, so carried on "with the others unsafe" he shook his head

"I've already lost my mother-" She didn't let him speak

"If you aren't leaving, I'm not leaving" she crossed her arms looking him in the eyes "my life, my choices right?!" He looked into her eyes. He could see the determination, the strength, and the belief and no matter what he said he couldn't and neither wanted to let her go

"Yes but..."

"No buts Oliver" she turned to Daniel "but if you want to leave I fully understand this is all
complicated and..."

"Fliss I'm staying... I wasn't even considering leaving" he smiled at her

"Then maybe you can help me find a way of making a cure for the drug induced thugs. They're the most dangerous" he nodded stepping forward and hugging her. Oliver watched the couple in front of him, knowing with the life he had, he could never have that. His heart ached at not being able to tell Felicity how he now felt, but his head told him it was unfair to tell her, when she was happy with Daniel. Diggle looked over at Oliver with a sympathetic smile, as if understanding what he was thinking. The computer started flashing alerts everywhere

"Oh my god!" Felicity exclaimed. They were all huddled by the screens masked men like Slade had started rampaging, killing innocent people, destroying the city "I guess this is what all the thugs were for"

"I need specialised equipment to create a cure, your applied sciences division?"

"Diggle can you get him there? Keep him safe?" Oliver said

"What about you two?" He asked back

"We'll come too" Felicity added, not even looking at Oliver's reaction

"I don't need protection guys, I'm trained in fire arms and hand to hand combat" Diggle and Felicity looked at Daniel eyebrows raised "you can never be too safe working with Mr Wayne, take me to the building then leave, keep them all distracted for a bit so I can figure out this cure"

"Only if you're sure Dan I don't want you to get hurt..."

"Yes Felicity, all the information you have and results, it shouldn't take too long… I'll be fine if you are..."

Oliver got changed into his Arrow outfit, drugging the pain from his leg as he took off the brace. Then he got into their van as Diggle drove through the city. The destruction around them was clearly visible. Buildings in flames, cars slammed into others, people running, screaming and then masked men destroying everything. Oliver sat there feeling helpless as the scenery changed and they pulled up outside the Applied Science Division building on the outskirts of town. They all jumped out. They gave a quick search to find the building empty, Daniel walked in grabbing bits of equipment pulling stuff to a random table

"Do you have everything you need?" Oliver enquired

"Yes, I should be able to make a cure..." Oliver nodded "I'll need a distraction; they can't come here till I finish this..." Oliver nodded again

"I'll do the best I can..." he turned to look at Diggle and Felicity. Diggle gave him a knowing look

"We'll meet you at the van" Oliver said with Diggle in toe. Felicity stepped forward

"I'm still sorry" she practically whispered. He was by her side in a second slipping his hand in hers

"Fliss, there is no need for apologies honestly. I get it, all of it including Oliver and John, it all makes sense. I can see how much this all means to you and him..."
"I never directly lied to you… I mean he does need me, do you understand now?" she said fighting back tears

"I always understood" he smiled squeezing her hand "I want you Felicity, and this is a part of you so I understand but please be safe…" she looked into his eyes. She leant forward pulling him in to a heated kiss, trying to say what she couldn't, after a few seconds they pulled apart

"You keep safe too… and we will talk about your "training" later" she said rolling her eyes, trying to keep it light

"Of course" he stepped back to the table "now go, go do what you do best" he smiled and she returned it slowly turning, her heels clicking as she round the building and jumped into the front seat of the van. No-one said anything. Diggle just drove back towards the city.

Felicitys phone rang it was Detective Lance

"Yes Detective, I have him right here, yes, yes we know, okay" she pushed the phone over to Oliver in the back

"Detective…” he said using his voice modulator

"We need your help, they just somehow over ran the police station but I have it back under control but not the city… I…"

"It's fine Detective, I'm trying to do the best I can… how many people got out?"

"Not many, the governments decided to barricade the city keep the thugs from leaving and… my daughters out there" Oliver felt his breath catch in his throat

"Where?" he didn't think he just asked

"Her and her boyfriend were at the train station when it got taken… I, I couldn't find her…"

"Detective, do your best for the people… defend them all and I'll keep you in the loop about a possible cure but Slade… he's mine" he almost growled at the end and even Felicity looked at him with uncertain eyes

"Okay, I'll do my best" he hung up passing the phone back to Felicity whose eyes held not fear but sympathy

"I need to get Laurel and Tommy, I need to find them…” Without hesitation Felicity pulled out her tablet tracking their phones

"They're at the train station…” she said slowly

"Diggle take me there and keep driving. Don't stop and I'll call you when you're needed but don't ever stop, you two can't get caught up in this""Man we're a team…”

"Yes a team that's useless if we all get caught" he said steely eyed, boring into the back of Diggles head, Felicity turned to look at him

"Comms, you shout as soon as you need us… and I'll be there to talk to" he nodded as she handed him the ear piece. Diggle slowed by the train station and Oliver dived out before he could stop and
looked to see the van speeding off.

He cautiously made his way inside. There were bodies, innocent people dropped in various positions, he scanned the faces desperately praying that they weren't there

"Oliver…" he heard Felicity's voice but his mind couldn't respond at the thought of having lost 2 people he cared about "they're alive…" she practically shouted it and he bolted his head up away from the guilt of the bodies around him "Oliver…"

"Yes" he said slowly

"I'm on the camera footage. They're at platform 2, hiding on a train but there is a rampaging thug…" she took a breath "be careful" He didn't respond he didn't need to.

He was on platform 2 in minutes, before he had time to think he saw the worst image available; Tommy was thrown through the window of the train with a crash. He ran to his friend, who was covered in small cuts but groaning oh thank god, Oliver turned to see the man on the train with his hand around Laurels neck. He didn't hesitate; he grabbed an arrow

"Let her go…" his voice even lower through the simulator. The man turned his head but did not release his grip "I said let her go" he started laughing manically, as his grip tightened around her neck. Her eyes started to flutter shut. Oliver released the arrow landing in the man's arm. He dropped Laurel who landed with a thud and the man turned to him. He pulled the arrow out his arm in one swift movement. He jumped through the broken window, straight at Oliver. He had no time to react as Tommy moved to stand up. Instead Oliver took the full blow pushing him out the way; Oliver's head hit the concrete floor hard, stunning him slightly as the man's hands wrapped around his neck. There was no give; Oliver was just about to fight, when suddenly the man dropped on top of him. Tommy stood there fire extinguisher in hand and he dropped it with a loud clang to the floor. Oliver pushed the man off him

"Thank you"

"Ollie?" Laurel stepped into view rubbing her neck. He hadn't noticed that in the fight his voice simulator wasn't working "is that you?" he stood up quickly, as she stepped forward trying to pull his hood away. He dodged it easily

"Oliver" Felicity said softly, he closed his eyes

"We need to leave…" he made sure his voice simulator was working now

"No…" Laurel said slowly "Why should we trust you?" Tommy looked at the two unsure what to say, the man had saved them but then he had killed before

"She's right…" was all he said "we have no idea who you are… you could be just as bad as him" he pointed to the masked figure on the floor

"Oliver… I don't mean to rush you but there are more men heading your way, we're on our way now"

"Okay" he said to the comms, turning back to the pair that were now holding each other "you can trust me you always have…" Laurel stared at him and so did Tommy. He slowly pulled his hood down to expose his face with his mask still in place

"I knew it!" she said pointing a finger at him
"Oh man!" Tommy looked hurt "how could you not tell us, how could you be the Hood?"

"The Arrow…" Oliver corrected

"What's the difference? You still kill people…" Oliver closed his eyes "You're not the man I knew… you aren't my friend" Tommy looked at him blankly and then Laurel stared at Tommy mouth open

"I don't have time for this, I need you to come with me…"

"There's no wonder that man's after you… if you killed the woman he loved and this explains you wanting to fight him…" Oliver saw the emotions in Tommys face he couldn't hide it. There was pain, hurt, confusion but most of all disgust and Oliver hated himself

"I know, I know I'm a monster" he said dropping his head

"You could never be a monster Ollie" Laurel said softly. He looked up to see Tommy looking at her with confusion "You're still that good man… I can see it…"

"Please, I need you BOTH to be safe" Laurel took his hand and pulled Tommy reluctantly with them, their pace was quick

"You aren't a monster Oliver…" he heard Felicity practically whisper "you're a lot more than the man you used to be. I know it must hurt what he said but he's shocked and angry, I… I'm sorry, we'll be there in 2" he couldn't bring himself to say anything. He just pulled his hood back on as they left the building and the van screeched to a halt.

They all jumped in the back, as thugs from down the street spotted and started in chase. Diggle floored it before they even had a chance to close the doors.

"Police station Dig" he nodded in response "you'll be safer with your dad" he said at Laurel, voice simulator seemingly forgotten. It was then he realised that Tommy was staring at Felicity in the front seat, then he turned to him anger very much apparent

"Jesus Oliver! I thought you were stupid enough to do this" he gestured to the hood "but bringing in Felicity" at the mention of her name she span around "she's a defenceless young woman!" Oliver's head dropped

"Excuse me Thomas Merlyn" she was using her loud voice and he turned to look at her. He saw the anger and hurt "defenceless young woman? I'm not some stupid little girl; I came into this knowing full well all the risks... So you want to shout at anyone shout at me!" She looked at him challengingly "I mean it Tommy" the van stopped.

Oliver helped Laurel out the back in silence, as Tommy and Felicity sat there. She lowered her voice now, so only he could hear her, as Diggle tried to pretend not to "He is still your best friend! And you know what? He has done so much for this city, for all of us and you" she pointed a finger in his chest "who do you think helped get the drug charges dropped?" She tilted her head with a look he knew all too well and he realised then it was Oliver "he might be a monster to you right now but that man has fought more demons and is still continuing to fight... He doesn't need the negativity Tommy. He has enough to last a lifetime and every day I look at him I see the pain, I see the hurt but I also see the man he truly is... The hero" he looked at her and nodded

"Sorry..." He said slowly and she turned back around as he exited the back
"Well remind me to never annoy you" Diggle said looking at her and she grinned "great speech though, exactly what was needed with no babbling" she smiled softly as the back doors closed and Oliver climbed in

"Thank you" he said softly to Felicity. She spun around placing a hand over his that was resting on the top of her seat

"He's just angry" She tried to reassure him but she could see the pain in his eyes, just then her phone rang pulling her back into reality

"Daniel" she said with fear

"I've done it"

"Oh my god" she practically screamed, grinning and both men looked at her. She mouthed to them *he's got a cure*. Diggle span the van around flooring it, as usual, to reach him

"I've made enough to cure hundreds and all the data is set up here"

"I can't thank you enough Daniel, we're on our way right now"

"You don't need to thank me" he sound happy "okay, how's the city?"

"It's... Bad" she said looking around at the burning buildings, and panicked citizens. The destruction looking worse in the dark sky

"Well, well what do we have here?" Felicity froze at the female voice down the other end of the line. She recognised instantly as Isabel, Oliver saw the panic on her face frowning reaching for her, she put the phone on speaker

"Miss Rochev, I'm..."

"Mr Wayne should keep a better eye on his employees and Oliver should have known better than to send you here" her voice ice cold, then suddenly there was gun fire and clinking of heels "looks like I just put one problem down Slade" she laughed. Felicity looked at Oliver, unable to stop her tears falling; as they drove closer to the building. They couldn't hear anything from the other end apart from Isabels heels getting further away

"Daniel..." Felicity shouted "Daniel" she shouted even louder. All 3's gaze locked onto the building in front as it seemingly exploded in front of them. The ground shook and the car too. Felicity was screaming as tears fell down her face. She screamed Daniels name sobbing. Diggle spun the car around yet again avoiding shards of building being flown there way. He weaved in and out, as Oliver had his hand on Felicitys shoulders as she shook from heavy sobs

"We can't leave him" she turned to look at Diggle

"Felicity the building was levelled, it's too dangerous and everything will be destroyed..." She sobbed again "we need a new plan guys..."

"Oh my god the cure, it's been destroyed too" Felicity still couldn't stop crying. She turned in her seat to face Oliver. Her blue eyes glistening from her tears, make up streaked down her face and he leant over the seat

"I am so sorry, so so sorry" was all he could say before he pulled away holding his head in his hands, letting the burden of yet another death weigh on his shoulders.
They drove in silence, apart from Felicity’s occasional sobs, which she was trying to control. She knew Oliver felt bad and blamed himself, but she didn't, although she felt bad someone she had been sharing her life with and cared about deeply was dead. Dead. And she felt a little guilty too. The sudden swift movements of Diggle jolted them back.

"I've got two thugs on my tail... I'm trying to lose them but…” Diggle looked in front of him "crap! Roads blocked!” He flung the van around trying to avoid an abandoned car and it flipped them all in the air landing upside down. Oliver opened his eyes; now lay on the roof, to see his friends hanging from their seat belts. Diggle dropped after opening his buckle.

"Dig, Is she breathing?” He asked, fear creeping in, as Diggle moved over to her limp body, finding her pulse and feeling the heat of her breathe on his arm.

"Yes yes" Oliver twisted around.

"Get her out of here"

"Yes I'm on it" he kicked the windscreen out and unbuckled her as the backdoors flew open. Oliver aimed an arrow before scrambling out after Diggle dragging Felicity. The back end exploded in the thugs faces knocking them unconscious.

Without words Oliver passed Diggle his bow. He scooped Felicity up into his arms, ignoring the aching in his leg, instead feeling comforted as he felt her chest rise and fall. Diggle looked around, as Oliver stared at Felicity to make sure she had no visible injuries. She had only a small scratch on her head from the crash but otherwise seemed fine. He stared at her, thanking the world she was safe, as he and Diggle walked away leaving the van behind.
So here it is as promised :), a pre-warning this may upset some people (I hope not but just in case)
I wont be able to update for a few days now as I have work and then a wedding tomorrow, then the following day an early shift so Wednesday evening (my time) is earliest for you guys :) , see I'm even able to tell you the next update for once :). Anyway enjoy and let me know what you think :)...

"Dad!" Laurel said running into the police station

"Laurel, sweetheart!" He embraced her "you're safe!" He hugged her tighter

"The... The Arrow he saved us" she said pulling back pointing to Tommy who seemed uncomfortable

"He did?" Quentin smiled "I didn't think he'd actually go get you..."

"Dad... I know who he is..."

"What?" Quentin said surprised, he had an inkling but he didn't want to go down that road

"It's..." He placed a finger over her lips

"I don't want to know Laurel..." he let his hand fall to his side "There was a time when I would have done anything to find out his name, but then I realised I didn't care who it was" he took a deep breath "I didn't want to know who it was"

"Why not?" she said eyes tearing up

"Because if I knew who he really was he'd become a person… maybe he has family, friends, people who care about him. Someone with a life. And then he couldn't be what I need him to be, what this city needs him to be" Tommy was closer now listening to everything he said "the man under the hood isn't important..." Laurel shook her head "Can you imagine what it's like to be him, what he has to live with day in and day out, what's that gotta be like?" Quentin shook his head, as Laurel nodded that she understood and she looked at Tommy his head down, clearly in thought

"Sir... we need your assistance" a young officer said

"Excuse me guys, take a seat, stay safe" they nodded as Quentin went to the other side of the room. Laurel and Tommy sat on the wooden seats, she wrapped her hand in his squeezing gently

"Talk to me Tommy" she smiled softly, he looked up and she saw the anguish in his eyes "I won't judge you please, talk"

"I... I told my friend he was a monster Laurel... and your dad just told us the man under the hood wasn't important"
"He's important to me…" she said slowly

"to us" he added

"You feel bad don't you? For calling him a monster…” he nodded "hey, Tommy he knows that was the shock, he knows we care…”

"But that's the thing Laurel, I didn't think about what it must be like for him, how hard it must be until your dad said that because he's like a brother to me and he didn't tell me…”

"I'm angry too but look at his way, if we didn't know we couldn't get caught in the crossfire. He was doing it to protect us, to keep us safe… look at today he told us to leave"

"I know Laurel… he best make it out of this"

"He will and you'll get to tell him you're sorry…” she leant over and hugged him, he let her reassurance wash over him

"I really hope so Laurel, because I need to tell him"

"You will" she leant forward placing a soft kiss on his lips.

When Felicity woke up she could feel a dull pain in her head and her hand went up to press there without opening her eyes. Then she realised she was moving, but not walking. Her eyes flung open panicked; remembering the car crash

"Hey hey, you're safe I got you" Oliver spoke softly, without hesitation she wrapped her arms around his neck

"Thank you… Thank you" she whispered in his ear "I can walk…"

"No..." He said with some force. She let go staring into his eyes and she saw fear. She said nothing as they entered a building and he gently placed her down. She looked around her and realised they were at the bottom of the clock tower.

On wobbly legs she managed to make her way upstairs with Diggle and Oliver close behind. She leant against a pillar for support as Oliver made his way to the broken clock face, staring out at the devastation his failings had caused

"What do we do now?" Diggle asked cautiously stepping toward Oliver

"We can't stop Slades men without the cure"

"We'll find another way" Diggle said to Olivers back

"There is no other way!" Oliver shouted still not facing him "The Foundry's not safe so we'll have to stay here, it needs securing"

"I'm on it" Diggle said walking away downstairs to secure the building. The two stood in silence for awhile till Oliver spoke

"I didn't know Felicity. 3 years ago I was a completely different person, I couldn't imagine that Slade would destroy my city as he had Shado's" he took a breath "I made a vow to myself nothing like that
would happen to my city" his back was still turned. Felicity placed a hand on her aching head

"What's happening now isn't your fault" she said softly

"Yes it is" he turned around to face her, she shook her head "I have failed this city, Yao Fei, Shado, my mother, the people of this city, Daniel…" she looked up at the mention of his name "I wanted to honour them…"

"You honour the dead by fighting" her voice getting louder "and YOU are not done fighting, everyone who has tried to hurt this city so far, you have stopped them!" she walked closer with every word and then her voice went soft "you will stop Slade"

"I don't know how" he looked into her eyes

"Neither do I" she took a step forward "but I do know two things; you are not alone" he pulls his eyes away trying not to let the intensity of her gaze effect him, then he looked back slowly "and I believe in you" she took a step forward arms outstretched, wrapping them around his neck pulling him down a little and squeezing tight. His arm wraps around her waist, his gloved hand squeezing her side in recognition. They both squeezed tighter.

Oliver let her words sink in, she believed in him. He had known that all along. He had seen it in her eyes but to hear that made his heart beat faster, and the burdens of his life feel less. He reluctantly let go, giving her a short smile which she cautiously returned. Diggles return had them stepping away from each other quicker than normal and if he thought anything was off, he never said so.

The 3 remained there in silence unsure what to do, or how to react. Oliver's phone brought them all out of their own heads

"I heard you might need some help..."

"Sara?" He said softly

"Who else Ollie, I came back with some help... We know where Slade is..."

"You did? And how can you know that?" He pressed

"Of course, I told you I care about you plus this is my home too... And because I went back to Nyssa, they tracked him he's at QC"

"Thank you Sara but we won't be able to get to him with his thugs"

"That's the thing Ollie, it's only him and a handful, we can take them..."

"But there dangerous... Strong"

"So are we!"

"We can't kill them Sara, some have just got dragged into this they aren't all criminals..."

"I know. I'm surprised you didn't have a cure by now"

"We did but it got destroyed..."
"Oh… well let's get Slade it's the best plan we got right?"

"Yes..."

"Ollie one more thing..." He heard her take a breath "the government doesn't want this spread that's why they have blocked the city, they're going to bomb it, destroy the place..."

"WHAT! Is it your department?"

"No above even us..."

"How long do we have?"

"A few hours tops" he pinched the bridge of his nose taking a deep breath "we'll meet you outside QC Ollie, the back entrance..."

"Okay... And Sara"

"Yeh?"

"Thanks" they both hung up. He span to face Diggle and Felicity who had stepped closer

"He's at QC, I know we don't have a cure but if we at least get him we have some control right?"

"We're with you man, all of the way..." Diggle said patting him on the back. Oliver looked at him and he could see the defeat already in Olivers eyes "I know what it's like to stare death in the face and be the one who blinks, Oliver" he said softly, he cut him off before he could continue

"That's not it. I've..." he closed his eyes briefly "I've been close to death more times than I can remember, and I never feared it. 'Cause I had nothing to lose but tonight all I can think about is all the people that I've let into my life since I've been back. My family, Laurel, Tommy, you two and that makes me afraid. Afraid of what would happen to those people if they lost me… again. And for the first time in so long, I have something to lose" his head dropped. Felicity turned away feeling this was a conversation for the two men and disappeared out of ear shot

"Well, you got it backwards, Oliver. You think the people you let in are taking your edge. I think it gives you one. Maybe a stronger one" he smiled at him "You can stare down death with something to live for or not, but something or someone to live for is better" he gave him a knowing look to let him know he was talking about Felicity. Just then alarms sounded "Felicity what is that?" Diggle shouted

"Well after you did your thing, I set up a security measure to alert us if Slades men got in here to kill us. So yeh Slades men are here to kill us" she frowned showing them her phone. Without hesitation Oliver shot a zip wire down to the floor below, through the clock face. Diggle grabbed some spare fabric and jumped on, flying to the ground landing on his feet. Felicity stood in the opening as the door flung open to reveal several masked thugs. Before anyone could think he scooped Felicity in his arms using his bow to fly down the zip wire landing by Diggles feet, just as a helicopter flew by aiming a rocket launcher causing the building to explode. A wire dropped and feet landed at the side of them

"Lyla! The governments planning on blowing this place up..."

"I know Johnny""And you came here anyway?"

"Yes because you're here" she smiled and he embraced her lovingly "what's the plan?" She smiled
"Is there any way you could delay the drone?" Oliver enquired

"I could give it a good try but... It'll be a challenge without Slade caught"

"We plan on catching him..." She nodded holding Diggles hand

"I'll see what I can do..."

"That's all I ask, thanks" he nods and she smiled at Diggle who returns it "go with her Dig" he locked eyes with him

"Oliver man I don't want to leave you..."

"Hey if all else fails you are at least safe" Diggle nodded turning to his wife

"Till death do us part right?"

"This time it might' she said with a serious tone, Oliver turned to Felicity

"Go with them... Get out of the city"

"No" she looked in his eyes then turned to Diggle "be safe you two but my place is here..." Diggle could see the look in her eyes, the determination, the will and he knew he couldn't argue

"Be safe please and take care of her" he looked at Oliver whose jaw clenched

"No you are leaving Felicity..."

"Oliver! Don't start you need all the help you can get and I can do stuff right here... Remember what I told you it's still true" his heart clenched, she wasn't leaving him alone to deal with it; she truly did mean all that she said

"But..." he still needed her to be safe

"But nothing" she turned around walking off towards QC, Oliver turned to Diggle

"I will always take care of her Dig remember I told you that ages ago" he nodded

"I don't doubt it for a second man" he smiled briefly before running off to catch up Felicity

"When are they going to realise what's right in front of them?" Lyla said turning towards Diggle

"Hopefully not before it's too late" he frowned and she caressed his cheek lovingly

"Hey if we can sort stuff out I'm sure they can, come on we have to go speak to my boss..."

Oliver caught Felicity up within a mere few strides

"You shouldn't just walk off like that" he said not looking at her

"Oliver seriously..." She turned her head to look at him, he could feel her eyes boring into his face till he caved in and looked into her eyes

"I'm sorry..." She frowned "for causing all this pain, Daniel..." He saw the hurt flash across her features

"Me too... But it's not your fault; we have to save the city Oliver. We can grieve properly later" he
didn't like the cold nature of her tone but he knew she was right, knew they had to keep going and that later they would grieve when it was all over.

They reached QC in silence after that, Sara and Nyssa plus a few more friends were stood there. They embraced awkwardly

"Here's the plan..." Felicity said surprising them all "all security inside is down, heat cameras pinpoint Slades location in your father's office... There is no-one with him and a few thugs on the floor below... My strategy is take out the guards on the floor below, that's you guys" she nodded towards Nyssa and Sara "whilst Oliver confronts Slade, then you can provide backup"

"and where will you be?" Oliver asked with sincerity and curiosity

"I'll start the elevators, stay in there..."

"That's too..." Oliver started before Nyssa stepped forward

"You have no training?" she asked her directly, Felicity shook her head "no weapon?" again she shook her head "yet you made this plan? You provide all logistical backup?" she nodded this time "You are very brave, we'll keep you safe" Nyssa turned to Oliver and he caught a glimpse of pride in her eyes and he looked at Felicity who was smiling wide now. Oliver still didn't like the idea and was most definitely not happy about Felicity being in potential danger but he knew he had no choice right now.

It took Felicity minutes to get the elevators working, Sara, Nyssa and their team took on the guards whilst Felicty and Oliver went to the floor above. As the doors opened he turned to Felicity

"Stay safe..." and she nodded staying crouched down in the elevator as he stepped out. As soon as the door closed she turned off the power, making sure no-one could get in. She had the comms on listening to Oliver.

He walked into the office with the doors wide open to see Slade stood there in all his gear

"Didn't think I'd make it this easy did you kid?" he laughed before jumping on a zip wire line straight out the window by the desk. Oliver went to give chase but stopped dead when he heard heels and clambered foot steps behind him. He span around quickly to see Isabel in an outfit similar to Slades, two blades in her hands with a man knelt down in front of her with his head covered with a sack, arms and legs bound. She looked at Oliver smirking and in one fell swoop pulled the sack off

"Did you really think I didn't know who you were Oliver?" she said without hesitation. Olivers gaze flicked to the man staring at him. He was taken aback but remained composed. He pulled his hood down

"My father is nothing to do with this Miss Rochev let him go..." she laughed

"Oh he's everything to do with this" she spat back, leaning closer to Robert placing the blade next to his throat "why don't you tell your son the truth? Tell him who I really am..." Robert looked into Olivers eyes with steel determination

"I don't need to Izzy..."

"NO! You don't get to call me that anymore" she hit him with the base of the blade handle, hard on
his nose. His head flicked back but he pulled himself forward, a slit across his nose bleeding "Your father used me… used me to further this company then left me, abandoned me. So I used my links to the Chinese triad, my associates, to have you kidnapped" Oliver clenched his fist around his bow "the money your father gave up for ransom furthered my career. Then 2 years ago I met Slade Wilson. He wanted to end you as much as I wanted to end your father. So we started a plan, and here we are…" she bent down to Robert again "finally" she looked at Oliver "oh drop the bow Oliver, or else daddys head is going to roll" Oliver clenched and Robert finally looked up

"Do it Oliver… not for me for Thea" his eyes went wide "she's safe I came back for you so just listen to her"

"Wise words" she said giggling, Oliver saw the glint in his fathers eyes

"Oliver, Sara and Nyssa are on their way" Felicity whispered. He took a deep breath and dropped the bow with a clang on the desk

"Good choice" she grinned

"I'm sorry…" Robert said softly

"What did you say?" she said, pulling the blade away

"I'm sorry, I'm sorry I hurt you Izz… Isabel" he turned slightly on his knees to face her "I meant everything I said to you back then, I loved you with all my heart… you weren't just a fling for me. I saw a future of happiness without work, for the first time in a long time work didn't matter" Oliver could see her features softening but her eyes flicked to Oliver to make sure he wasn't touching the bow "I loved you from the moment you accidently split the coffee and spent the whole day doing the work you had ruined…" he turned his head slightly to Oliver "Love is the best when it comes from somewhere you didn't expect" Oliver saw the true emotions of care flash through his fathers eyes "see that's the thing, I did love you but that's what you couldn't see, my children would and always will come first… so I'm not sorry I chose them, I will never be sorry I picked them" Oliver saw her anger flick across her face "because that's the thing Izzy, the love for your children it's incomparable. I love my children and I am not sorry that I lost a crazy bitch like you" something in Isabel snapped as she threw both blades forward hitting both straight through Roberts heart. He smiled as his body went limp; as she pulled the blades out

"NOOOO" Oliver screamed running forward clutching his dad "I'm sorry…"

"No, I'm sorry…” his dad said softly as Oliver felt his life slip away, eyes closing. He looked up to see Isabes blades aiming for him as he felt more of the darkness consuming him but she was pulled back by the hair by Nyssa who in seconds broke her neck. Felicity was by Oliver within a flash, she pulled him away from Roberts body

"Oliver…" he couldn't pull his eyes away "Oliver" she squeezed his arm, placing a hand on his cheek. He instantly stared into her blue eyes seeing nothing but belief, faith, and hope "this isn't your fault" he closed his eyes feeling the pain again, she pulled his hood up. He opened his eyes again confusion

"Someone else is in the building” she whispered "I'm so sorry" she took a deep breath letting the pain take him as he grabbed his bow in a defensive position. As he turned the corner with Sara and Nyssa, the sight in front of him was not what he was expecting.
Daniel was stood there, brief case in hand covered in dust, it was Felicity's heels that brought everyone back, she ran into his arms pulling him into a tight hug

"Fliss careful" he smiled returning the hug, she pulled back slowly

"You got shot!" she said eyes widening

"Yes in the arm, no big deal and I got the cure" he held the briefcase up in his good arm towards Oliver

"How did you survive?" Oliver asked bluntly in shock

"Isabel let off a couple of rounds, thought she had me but I was too quick. When she left I slipped out a side exit, started heading into the forest when boom the place went up and I got knocked flying. Hence the appearance" he gestured to himself "then I walked here, kept to the side streets, and I saw Sara and Nyssa earlier so presumed they'd be heading here" he smiled

"I'm glad you're alive" he walked over patting him on his good shoulder taking the briefcase

"Sit down let me fix you up" Felicity said dragging him to the secretary chair. She brushed the dust off his clothes gently and then started to bandaged up his arm. Oliver opened the case to see syringes full of a bluish liquid; he closed it placing it on the desk beside the pair. As he did he noticed the slight smile on Felicity's face. He could feel the weight of Daniels death lifting off till it hit him his father had just been killed. He turned back towards the office and towards his fathers still warm body. He looked at him, remembering all the people that had suffered at his hands or by what he had done. He turned away bracing himself against his fathers desk, taking a deep breath. He placed the bow down. He could hear the rest talking in the other room but the voices were muffled and quiet, all Oliver could feel was numbness. No pain. Just darkness.

Felicity bandaged Daniels arm with relative ease, it was just a graze, nothing too bad. He had a few cuts from the blast too, considering she thought he was dead 15 minutes earlier she was happy. She squeezed his hand smilingly only faintly, as the situation still around them didn't warrant a celebration. He squeezed back

"Thank you" he whispered

"No thank you, thank you for being alive..." She kissed him lightly on the cheek, he grinned at her, and then his eyes scanned the room. He froze when he saw the two bodies of Isabel and Robert. Felicity followed his gaze, noticing Oliver stood alone in the darkness of his fathers office, hood still up, leaning on his fists. She looked back to see Daniel staring at her

"Go... He needs you" he said nodding reassuringly. She frowned. She wanted to stay by his side. Her boyfriend was alive, alive and relatively well. But her heart ached looking at Oliver struggling so badly

"Fliss seriously I'm fine..." He stood up smiling to show her he was exactly that. She shuffled lightly then headed towards him. He let the darkness consume him, pulling him deeper till he felt a small hand on his forearm. He turned his head to see Felicitys beautiful blue eyes staring back at him, bold and vibrant even in the dark of the room. The low light making them sparkle, making them somehow brighter.

"Oliver..." She said softly when he said nothing but stared into her eyes. He nodded not trusting his voice "It's okay... It's okay to be afraid" he looked at her frowning

"I'm not scared Felicity... I feel nothing..." She looked at him squeezing his arm a little tighter
"I don't believe you feel nothing Oliver, I saw the pain, I've seen the pain you have held on to for so long... I see the guilt..." He slowly closes his eyes feeling darkness again "but I also see the determination, the survivor, the fighter, the man who made me believe in myself..." He opened his eyes again looking into hers "the hero you are" she smiled softly "you are allowed to feel pain Oliver, allowed to be scared, but don't let it stop you being who you truly are"

"I need to call Detective Lance, let him know I have the cure…" she knew he was deflecting but she nodded pulling her phone out her pocket and handing it to him. He quickly put the voice simulator back on "Detective we have a cure…"
"I'll meet you at QC as soon as possible then" Quentin said hanging up, turning to his Officers
"Right boys, Mr Wilson was using Queen Consolidated as a base for operations. He's abandoned it
now but there is hope… There is a cure" Laurel and Tommy stood joining them all looking anxious
"Listen, I know you're scared. You wouldn't be human if you weren't. But tonight, this city, our city
It's counting on each and every one of you. So you go out there and you be the heroes I know you all
to be. Knock out and detain as many drugged up thugs as possible. I'll get the cure and we'll sort this.
Now go" the men turned to leave checking all the equipment as Laurel and Tommy stepped forward

"I know your sister skipped down a few days ago but…"

"I'm sure she's fine dad" she smiled softly

"I know but I need you to be safe Laurel and you Tommy" he turned to the younger man

"I'll protect her Sir, I always will" he said with seriousness in his eyes Quentin had never seen before

"Stay in here please" Laurel went to open her mouth, he could see the protests already, till Tommy
cut her off

"We will, I promise" Laurel looked at the man she loved and her father, never feeling more lucky in
her life, at the look of utter sincerity and the need to protect her written all over there faces. Just then
the atmosphere changed as two thugs proceeded to charge into the room. Quentin pulled his gun
without hesitation but it was too late. He was hit hard thrown across the room landing on the floor, a
desk collapsing on him

"NOOO" Laurel screamed as Tommy pulled her away to another room. The men were too quick
though, one grabbed Laurel by the wrist wrenching her from Tommys grasp. She kicked and fought
her hardest but it was no use, one quick blow knocked her unconscious. Tommy lasted longer as the
man seemed to enjoy watching him suffer, as they dragged the two out the building. Tommy was still
fighting hard, till in one swift motion the man snapped his arm like a twig. He screamed in pain, and
then a second blow to the head sent him into darkness.

"So what's the plan Ollie?" Sara said walking into the office after he hung up from her father. Her
eyes glanced momentarily to his father "I'm sorry about your mum and dad" she gave a sincere smile.
He nodded, handing the phone to Felicity, grabbing his bow and walked out the office

"I don't know… we can cure people but capturing Slade… that's the challenge" He said looking out
the window

"You need to do, what you need to do or your city will burn" Nyssa said slowly. Oliver didn't turn
to look at her. Felicity made her way to Daniel and he instinctively held her hand, giving her a sad
smile

"The cure, I can't guarantee it's 100% safe, I mean I didn't exactly have time to test it fully but…"
"Will it work?" Oliver asked turning to him desperation in his eyes. Daniel straightened his shoulders standing a little taller

"Yes… I have no doubt in that" He needed to show Oliver he was confident in his own ability and in turn it caused Felicity, still interlinked in his hand, to stand taller too. Just then her phone bleepered she span around picking it up

"All the remaining drugged up thugs are heading to the exit on the other side of town…” she said softly

"Isn't that a tunnel?" Sara asked softly, Felicity nodded

"Then all the people we need to cure are in one place. We can take them. Once his men stop destroying the city I can find Slade…” Oliver looked between Sara and Felicity both nodding. Just then the elevators sprang open and Quentin stepped in

"Sara!" he walked forward embracing her

"Dad? Are you okay?" he frowned stepping back

"One of those masked guys, they took Laurel and Tommy. I couldn't stop them, believe me I tried…” Oliver closed his eyes briefly before composing himself

"We have to take out his men…” Oliver said voice simulator back on

"What about them? Wilson clearly took them for a reason" Quentin pleaded

"I know what it is, but the city comes first"

"This is my daughter" he turned to Sara "your sister, your friend!" he turned back to Oliver "Look, I know you said you were trying another way, and I respect that. But Slade Wilson? His men? They're monsters and monsters, they need to be destroyed. You've killed before. Tonight, I suggest you get back in the habit" Quentin span around leaving the building frustrated. Sara stepped forward placing a hand on Olivers arm

"To fight the unthinkable, you have to be willing to do the unthinkable" she said slowly. He knew she meant killing again he could so easily do it all again. He could easily let the darkness destroy everyone. The look that Tommy gave him of disgust at his murderous ways flashed in his mind but still it wasn't enough. He clenched his jaw. Tightening his fists, Sara stepped away taking Nyssa and her men towards Daniel and the cure. Trying to distance themselves from Oliver. Felicity didn't move. She stepped forward

"They're wrong" she said loudly enough for him to hear, and not cause the others to look around

"They're right" he said turning round to look in her eyes "I've lost everything because I'm fighting Slade with one hand tied behind my back. The man murdered my mother, helped murder my father, and is destroying everything I care about. I have to kill him" Felicity shook her head

"You told me you had a choice, years ago you could have saved Slade but you chose to kill him instead" she placed a hand on his arm "This isn't happening because you're not willing to be a killer; it's happening because you were one"

"You're right. That's how this started and it's how it has to end. The only move that he has left for me, is to kill him. I can't capture him, I can't even out-think him!"
"Then don't. Just make him out-think you" she smiled softly.

Oliver was at the location within 15 minutes with Felicity in his ear as always. Sara, Nyssa, there men, Detective Lance, and his men, all of them went to "cure" the thugs. Felicity and Daniel listened and watched as they majestically took down thug after thug, without hesitation. They were half way through when Oliver's phone rang

"Mr Queen, seems that there is nothing more left for you to do..." Oliver froze at the sound of Slades voice "Meet me kid, come alone or I will cut your beautiful girl and friends throats... it's time all this came to an end" he hung up, a message with a location left behind. Felicity heard through the comms, and she knew he'd leave. Knew he'd never leave Laurel or Tommy to die

"Oliver..." he took a deep breath "It's okay these guys have got this... go save them, stop Slade"

"Thank you" he said slowly spinning round

"But Oliver..."

"Yes..." he said racing to the location he had been given

"Stay safe, and promise me... you'll come back" he could hear her voice break. He couldn't make such a promise to her but if he said nothing it would destroy her

"I'll try" he said softly, removing his comms. Daniel turned to her, squeezing her hand

"I know you care about him..."

"I care about everyone" she said turning to him "but he's lost so much already, given up so much for everyone" Daniel nodded with understanding

"He's lucky to have you" he smiled softly

"You have me too" she said softly "he's turned his comms off he doesn't want me to hear whatever he has planned, that's not a good sign" she frowned and he squeezed her hand harder

"Felicity we can't protect him or stop him from doing what he deems fit but I'm here for you" she smiled softly leaning over and hugging him.

Oliver reached the coordinates, an abandoned warehouse, quickly. He entered cautiously bow drawn. It was quiet, too quiet. He warily swept through the open rooms, with no Felicity to guide him or soothe him he felt like it was never ending. When he reached the final room, he could hear screaming and muffled laughter; he tried to scope the room and the sight he saw angered him. Laurel was chained by her arms from the roof; one thug pulled the chains holding her up, her legs kicked whilst her arms strained. She screamed in agony till he dropped the chains. She landed on the floor with a thud, in a heap. The other thug laughed as Tommy was chained to a large pillar, tape around his mouth, shaking, frustrated and helpless, and his arm clearly broken.

Oliver took a deep breath, and in one fell swoop he entered the room. He shot the man nearest Laurel first; straight threw the knee bringing him down. The other man charged Oliver but he hit him hard in
the legs bringing him down too, however in doing so the man grabbed Olivers bad knee causing him to drop to the floor.

Just then the other man pulled the arrow out his knee, dragging himself up nearer to Oliver, anger flush over his face. However the pain from his own leg kept him from noticing. It was only the movement of large chains that brought him back. He turned his head to see the man's boot about to crush his face and span from under it. At the same time Laurel had dragged herself up wrapping the chains around the thugs neck pulling hard. Oliver heaved himself up, pulling out the cure and injecting both men, knocking them out with a good thump each

"Ollie..." Laurel said grinning, tear marks down her face

"Are you okay?" He asked limping towards Tommy. He pulled the tape from his mouth

"I'm fine, just sore arms... Tommy, are you okay?" She said unable to move closer due to the chains, Tommy said nothing his head hanging a little lower, eyes flicking closed as Oliver untied his chains. He slumped down as Oliver made his way to undo Laurel

"Tommy?" She said rushing to him as soon as she was free "Tommy talk to me"

"I'm sorry..." he murmured

"What for?"

"I let you down"

"No you didn't look at your arm, you fought for me... I love you" she said pulling his head up to look into his eyes. Oliver looked around confused to where Slade was

"Where's Slade?" He said breaking the pair up

"What?" Laurel said turning

"He said he had you. To come here and it would be the end" With some assistance Tommy stood up

"Oliver he was never here" Oliver closed his eyes pinching the bridge of his nose. He looked at Tommys arm grabbing a sack from the warehouse floor and making his way over to him. He used it to support his arm around his neck

"Your arms badly broken; we need to get you to a hospital..."

"What about Slade?" Tommy asked bluntly

"Well he's clearly not here, must have been a-" just then a booming laughter filled the room

"Oh Oliver" the Australian accent echoed off the walls "seems you are more idiotic than I thought" all 3 stood silently eyes looking around "it seems I got it wrong, I thought you loved Miss Lance from the time we spent together but you willingly rejected her and gave her to your friend... so I used them to my advantage..." a woman's scream could be heard causing Oliver to tense "seems your affections lay elsewhere, I must say I'm starting to see what you see in her, she is quite lovely... your Felicity" Oliver felt his heart stop

"Oliver don't come..." she shouted loudly then there was a slap noise and she went quiet

"I think we both know that's not an option Mr Queen, I'll see you soon" the speakers clicked off.
Oliver punched the pillar nearest to him, **how had he been so stupid.** He'd left the one person who couldn't defend herself alone, well she wasn't alone she was with Daniel but he was no match for Slade, **damn it.** He would never forgive himself if anything happened.

He stood there a moment letting the anger wash over him. *Something to live for is better* it hit Oliver, Diggle was right; he had to fight for Felicity. To save her. He let the emotions take over, it wasn't numbness he could feel, it was fear. It was a mix of everything including the pain in his leg. But none of that mattered now, he had to save Felicity. He had to keep her safe. He spun towards Laurel and Tommy

"Go Oliver" Tommy said without hesitation

"But what about..." Laurel started

"We'll call your dad, we have our phones but Ollie needs to go get Felicity" he span towards him

"I'm sorry you aren't a monster... She was right and I was wrong... You help the city, god you've helped me, us... So go get her, help her, she needs you, not us and we both know how important she is. So go" Oliver looked between Laurel and Tommy not wanting to leave them defenceless "Oliver seriously!" Tommy raised his voice slightly stepping forward "we were clearly a diversion and she is in real danger she needs you... Now" Oliver closed his eyes taking a deep breath

"Call Quentin **please** be safe" he said softly spinning around. Forgetting about his injured leg and practically running to QC.

When the doors to the elevator opened to the top floor, Oliver saw Daniel slumped and tied to the secretary chair, blood running down his head but chest still rising and falling. *At least he was still breathing.* Oliver raised his bow turning the corner to the office.

The scene in front of him made his heart beat harder in his chest. Felicity was sat in his father's leather chair, with a split lip and tear marks. She was looking down whilst Slade stood beside her, his hand clamped on her shoulder

"Seems our guest has finally arrived Miss Smoak..." She lifted her head, blue eyes to his; she shook her head slightly before closing her eyes. She couldn't believe he had come, he had handed himself over for her

"It's over Slade; your men are done..."

"You really have missed the point... I have the one you love" he squeezed Felicity's shoulder tighter and her eyes opened wide looking at Oliver, with utter confusion. He couldn't look at her instead he looked at Slade, arrow still aiming

"I'm done playing your games!" It came out angrier than intended

"You're done when I say you're done" he spat back pulling his hand from Felicity's shoulder and instead drawing out his sword placing the blade gently on her shoulder

"Drop the bow, kid" he said slowly "Do it" Oliver dropped it without much thought "Good. Countless nights dreaming of taking from you all that you took from me" he said slowly sliding the blade to her throat

"By killing the woman I love?" He looked at Felicity now trying to convey the emotion he could
never tell her. Felicity couldn't react she could only think; *He didn't love her did he?* Slade was clearly mistaken. Yes they cared about each other and maybe a form of love but not *in love*, she looked at his eyes, his face. It was a look she'd never seen before but she trusted him completely.

"Yes" Slade answered

"Like you loved Shado"

"Yes..."

"I remember her beautiful, young, kind. She would be horrified by what you've done in her name" Oliver said slowly, its then it caught his eye. He saw it something sharp and shiny in Felicity's hand she looked at it then up at him. She was waiting for the opportune moment, waiting for him. He couldn't believe the feeling of hope rise in his chest, the feeling of utter admiration for her and the way she trusted him even with her life.

"What I have done? What I have done is what you lack the courage to do! To fight for her!" Slade said angrily pulling Felicity up from the chair pushing it aside "So when her body lies at your feet, her blood wet against your skin, then you will know how I feel!" He placed the blade firm against her neck making her shiver.

"I already know how you feel. I know what it's like to hate. To want revenge. And now I know how it feels to see my enemy so distracted, he doesn't see the real danger is right in front of him" With that Felicity turned ramming the sharp scrap of metal into Slades exposed collarbone. He loosened his grasp and she ran into the other room to a now conscious Daniel trying to untie him.

In the time it took Felicity to run, Slade had stepped forward charging Oliver. He spun out his way hitting him hard on the back. Slade stumbled but was quickly back up. They engaged in hand to hand combat each landing punishing blows on the other, till Slade had the upper hand kicking him hard in his injured knee bringing him down.

"The end is near. But maybe I'll be merciful enough to let you live and see your city burn!"

"We both know there's only one way that this can end" Oliver said eyes closed through gritted teeth, Slade chuckled loudly

"To beat me, kid, you're going to have to kill me. But in the moment of my death, you'll prove one thing... that you are a murderer, a monster, and you can't ever change that" he lifted his blade high "pity you don't have that chance" Oliver prepared himself, he was ready to die. To leave the pain and suffering behind, to be punished for what he had done. He felt the blade getting close then he heard her.

"Noooooo" Felicity screamed throwing herself in the way; Oliver opened his eyes to see her crumble over him. Without thought Oliver grabbed his bow, he shot 3 cable arrows securing Slade to the wall. His blade lay on the floor covered in blood. Slade grinned smugly laughing.

"They still won't see you as anything more than the enemy. You'll never be anything but a murderer to them, which means you'll never be a hero" Suddenly Slade stopped, Daniel stood there briefcase in hand. He looked to Oliver who turned to Felicity

"Drone strike" she stuttered

"I'm on it" Daniel nodded rushing into the other room to find a phone to call Diggle, feeling he needed to leave the two.
Oliver pulled her up slightly; the blade had caught her left side. Oliver pulled his gloves off, pushing hard on the wound trying to stem the bleed. It wasn't helping, blood was pouring out. He hadn't even realised tears were falling down his face, until her hand was on his cheek wiping them away.

"Hey..." She said slowly

"Don't try to speak Felicity" she pulled his hood back so she could see his face even if was partially covered with the mask

"This..." She took a breath "isn't your fault..." More tears fell and she wiped them away "my choice..."

"You shouldn't have saved me; I'm not worth it..."

"No!" She said forcefully "you... You're always worth it... You saved us all" tears fell down her own cheeks now. Oliver quickly looked around the room, seeing a spare jacket of his fathers splayed across the floor he grabbed it, pushing it into her wound "Oliver" he looked back into her eyes nodding, her hand fell on top of his "promise me... You'll be happy, you'll keep going" she took a breath "and I won't be another painful death..."

"You aren't dying, I'm not losing you" he said angrily

"Please promise me... No guilt please... I... I chose this and I want to be a happy memory..." Tears flowed freely now from both "please"

"I promise..." he practically whispered. Her eyes fluttered closed. Panic, pain, everything took over him. He hadn't even noticed Sara and Nyssas presence as well as Daniels, all he could see was his light fading, his hope, his safety, he shook her lightly

"Felicity" she opened her eyes for a second "stay with me okay?" She nodded lightly "I can't lose you... I won't lose you!" He was shouting now through tears "stay with me!" Her hand fell from his and her eyes closed "I LOVE YOU!" It came out naturally but loud. Her eyes stayed closed. Sara was by him in a second checking her pulse

"She has a pulse, we need to get her to a hospital" she went to move her but Oliver wouldn't let go "Ollie..." He didn't stop looking at her "Oliver!" He looked up "let her go... We need to get her help" he let go instantly "Daniel you go with her, our men will get you there, Nyssa call in the team we'll take Slade and I'll go get Oliver changed" they all nodded and Oliver stared at his bloody hands

"No" he protested "I'm not leaving her"

"Ollie, you can't go as the Arrow" he had completely forgotten about his outfit

"Sara..."

"I know, I'm sorry" he hadn't even noticed that the people around him had gone "do you have spare clothes in your office?" he nodded "come on" she pulled him up dragging him to the elevators. He wasn't aware of anything around him; he was on autopilot. All he could see was Felicity's face, her radiance fading and shadows finally consuming him.

Chapter End Notes
I hope you enjoyed the chapter, as always it's nice to hear what you think. I'm sorry how this ends, I truly am but you know I have to keep it on tender hooks ;) :P... After this Chapter it is completely freeform, I might have some quotes creep in ;) but the plot is now all me (which is scary! So I hope you continue to enjoy it :D)
Chapter 31

Chapter Notes

So after the awesome promo yesterday (go watch it, it is AMAZING) here's the next chapter... I'll leave a note on end...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Oliver had refused to wash; he merely threw on trousers and a jumper before making his way to the hospital, leaving the Arrow gear stuffed in his desk. When he got there it was bedlam. There were various people on stretchers, with a range of injuries from scratches to broken bones, gun shots to surgical interventions.

Sara had to ask where Felicity was after Oliver virtually scared the nursing staff after shouting. She was given directions purely because Oliver was listed as Felicity's next of kin. Something she had insisted they all did for each other, because of Arrow business. They had to travel up a few floors and when they walked into the relative's room Daniel was already sat there. He looked up at them with knowing eyes, nodding and they sat down on the other available chairs.

Nobody spoke. They sat there in utter silence, all lost in their own worlds. Oliver was staring at his hands, completely numb he loved her and now he was going to lose her. It would be entirely his fault. He saw her bright blue eyes closing over and over, her brightness fading. He looked at the now dried blood on his hands, completely and utterly lost. He felt a hand on his shoulder and he looked up to see Diggle stood there frowning

"Oliver we need to clean you up..."

"No I'm not going anywhere..." He said slowly "I left her, I didn't protect her... I'm sorry Dig" he let his head drop, Diggle took a big breath

"This isn't your fault man, we all knew the risks plus... Daniel told me what happened" Oliver looked up eyes wide

"She shouldn't have saved me Dig"

"But she did Oliver and we both know she'd do it over and over again" Oliver closed his eyes. He knew that was meant as comfort but all he could see was her getting injured, badly hurt, and even dying repeatedly because of him. He felt the hand tighten on his shoulder "Dude seriously the doctor and nurses are worried about you, they even agreed to fix you up on this floor" Oliver looked at him with hallow eyes "if you won't do it for me do it for Felicity" he got up slowly. Now the adrenaline had worn off his knee was aching. Without much thought Diggle allowed Oliver to use him for support. They left the room; he was led away by Diggle to a side room.

He was allowed to clean in silence, he washed his hands. The water quickly turned red. Ruby red from her blood. He stopped again, everything disappeared and it was just him in the darkness with the scarlet water

"Oliver?" Diggle said with clear concern. He turned his head to look at him nodding. The doctors came over examining him; he refused any scan or x-rays that couldn't be done there and then, much
to Diggles protests. He had severe bruising on his body, possible cracked ribs; they braced his leg
giving him pain medication. He had barely heard anything or flinched at all the various hands
checking him. Even when the nurse cleaned his face up and put a few stitches in he didn't recoil.

After they had done they returned to the waiting room to find Sara had disappeared

"Sara had to go, her dads in here having emergency surgery" Lyla informed them. Oliver nodded
sitting in the corner chair looking out at Starling still burning. Diggle and Lyla sat near Daniel,
audibly talking but Oliver didn't want to hear them anyway. He sat there watching the city, feeling
lost. He had no idea how much time had passed but the dark sky was starting to lighten slightly

"Mr Queen" he spun his head around to see a doctor standing by him. It was then he realised that at
some point Laurel, Tommy, and Sara had joined them. Oliver merely nodded in response still not
trust he voice "as you are Miss Smoaks emergency contact and next of kin I thought it right I
address you first" he blinked slowly

"You can tell us all" Oliver said gesturing to the room

"Very well... Miss Smoak has had major surgery. She lost a lot of blood before she got here, and
well we had to repair her lung. She has a clear concussion from the head wound and the blade
chipped a rib" with every word Oliver felt nothing, not anymore "but she is doing remarkably well"

"What?" Daniel said not hiding his joy

"She is in recovery at the moment. We repaired what we could and she is going to need a lot of care
and bed rest for awhile, but there should be no long term affects"

"So she's alive" Oliver asked needing to clarify

"Very much so, she gave us a few scares due to the blood lose but you have a fighter there" the
doctor smiled

"That we do" Diggle added with a laugh causing strained laughs from the others, apart from Oliver
who winced

"So when can we see her?" Oliver asked instinctively

"Well she has only just come out of surgery. So not yet but when she wakes up I'll come fetch you,
though probably one at a time and to be honest she might not wake up for hour, so maybe get some
rest or go home. All of you" the doctor said looking around the room at the various injuries on the
party

"Thank you doctor" Both Daniel and Oliver said together, shaking his hand

"My pleasure gentlemen" he said leaving. Oliver stood there trying to let relief wash over him she
wasn't dead. She was alive. But he couldn't stave off the darkness. He knew right then what he had
to do.

He walked up to Sara, Laurel, and Tommy first

"How's your father?" He asked with genuine sincerity

"He's out of surgery" Sara said

"He had internal bleeding but they fixed it, he's resting now" Laurel added "Told us to come keep an
eye on the other girl in his life" she smiled sadly

"You don't need to be here guys, go home, relax or see your dad" Oliver didn't want all these people waiting around. Tommy spoke first his arm now in a cast

"Ollie we aren't going anywhere buddy... You're our friend and so is she, we care and so that's why we're here and why we're going to stay" Tommy placed his good hand on his friends shoulder squeezing

"Thank you" was all Oliver could get out

"Don't mention it, it's what friends are for" Tommy smiled at him before he sat down and Laurel curled up beside him. Sara looked at Oliver

"Slade's been taken care of, he's in a facility, so he won't be going anywhere"

"Good" Oliver said eyes turning to steel "he can't be with anyone or near anyone..."

"He isn't Nyssa took care of it personally. It's why she can't be here but she sends her regards" Oliver nodded turning before Sara grabbed his arm. He turned back, she spoke softly so only he could hear "don't do this Ollie" he frowned "I can see it, I've seen that look a thousand times before" he still frowned unsure what she meant "the look of a man who is going to give up his everything for the sake of others...” He closed his eyes thinking of how to word it

"Sometimes Sara, in order to save others we have to sacrifice ourselves, our lives, our soul, and our happiness"

"But doesn't everyone deserve happiness?” She interrupted

"Not when it comes at the expense of the other person... Not when it can get them killed" she understood but she only frowned, before Oliver stepped out of her grasp and headed to Diggle and Lyla

"We aren't going anywhere before you start man" Oliver nodded

"I just think you all deserve some rest..."

"And we will do but right now SHE is more important" Diggle patted him on the shoulder "she's alive" Diggle said slowly trying to let the words sink in to Oliver, but he still stood there with his guarded stature, and lifeless eyes

"I know, but she'll need you" Diggle frowned

"You mean she'll need us..." Oliver closed his eyes. He didn't speak he just slowly turned around, giving a nod to Daniel before he returned back to his seat.

Oliver couldn't sleep; he was still watching the city as the sky got ready to welcome the morning light. It was the presence of someone sitting beside him that pulled him out. He looked around the room. Sara was nowhere to be seen. Diggle and Lyla had their eyes closed and fingers interlinked slumped in 2 chairs and Tommy and Laurel were also a sleep her head resting in his lap and his leaning back in the chair. Oliver turned to see Daniel sitting next to him

"I... I'm sorry" Daniel said not meeting his gaze
"What for?" Oliver said staring at the younger man who was leant forward, elbows on his thighs looking at his hands

"For not keeping her safe..."

"You're girlfriend just threw herself in front of a blade for me, it's I who should be saying sorry for failing to protect her against that beast" Oliver looked away this time "I failed her, and I will always fail her" Daniel looked up frowning

"Well I know you love her..."

"It doesn't matter" he replied instantly

"How can it not matter?" Daniel said staring at his face, Oliver turned to look at him

"Because she doesn't love me... She loves you and you will make her happier than I ever could"

"Oliver..."

"No listen to me Daniel" he nodded "I... We nearly lost her because of me, the life I lead, the man I am..." He took a deep breath "she will never be safe here, so when she's released you need to take her to Gotham with you"

"What?" he sat up straighter

"You heard the doctor; she'll need bed rest and care. Who better than her boyfriend? The guy who is always there for her because I can't..."

"But Oliver she... She won't just up and leave, she won't just stay away, this is Fliss... Felicity she cares about you and this cause"

"That's the thing Daniel; I'll make her stay away..."

"How can you possibly do that?" Daniel frowned now

"By making her hate me..." It would destroy him. But it was for the best. She would be safer hating him away from Starling than staying and caring about him.

"I don't think she could ever hate you..."

"She could... And she will Daniel, whatever you say cannot change this. I have never seen her happier than when she is with you, she needs security in her life not a risk every night..."

"But..."

"Yes you know Bruce Wayne and help him but nothing like what we do. She is in more danger every day she stays here with me, so please take her to Gotham. Treat her as the woman she deserves to be treated" he still could only see darkness, only the edges of pain from his knee and a twinge in his heart made him feel alive

"I..." Oliver looked at him

"I know you care about her too, and this situation is hard but after today I will never go anywhere near her again. She deserves a fresh chance at something real and to be happy with you, without all this baggage" he gestured towards himself "so she'll hate me but at least she will be safe" Daniel looked genuinely shocked and concerned. He went to speak when the door opened gently and the
doctor nodded at them. Oliver rose to his feet ignoring his knee, he turned to Daniel who still had his mouth a gape "I'll see her first, take good care of her Mr Jones" he extended his hand and Daniel shook it still looking confused.

When he entered the room, he wasn't sure what to expect but what met him knocked him for six. She was lay there slightly propped up wearing a hospital gown with blankets too her waist. She looked pale, no makeup, and no glasses. She looked so much younger and vulnerable. It broke Oliver's heart all over again to know she was like this because of him

"Oliver?" She said half smiling, hand outstretched. He walked closer to her, pulling up a chair and taking her hand

"How'd you know it was me?"

"I'd recognise you anywhere" she smiled softly; he squeezed her hand before letting go. She could tell he wasn't happy, even without her glasses she was still able to read his features

"You did it" she said softly

"I had some help" he gave her a little smile. They stayed in a comfortable silence for a few minutes "Felicity?"

"Yes"

"You... You're going to need some bed rest and care so you're going to Gotham"

"Excuse me?"

"Daniels going to take care of you" she frowned there was more to this. She reached for her glasses on the night stand but pulled back grabbing her side. Oliver handed her them, concern all over his face

"Thank you" she said sliding them on. She looked at him now with all clarity. He looked defeated yet guarded; his eyes cold. It was then she realised all those walls she'd been pulling down brick by brick were now back up tenfold "But what happens if I want to stay here?"

"You can't, there is no-one to take care of you" she thought it through. Diggle would be busy with Lyla, Oliver now had Thea, and she couldn't ask that of them. Daniel was the logical choice. He was right

"Fine but when I'm better I'm coming back..."

"No" he cut her off "you aren't needed here"

"What do you mean I'm not needed here? Of course I am, as part of team arrow and to help rebuild QC" she was frowning

"No, Daniel makes you happy you need to go be with him... Live your life rather than being stuck here" with me he wanted to add

"I'm not stuck here Oliver" she frowned "I want to be here" he knew he only had one option and that was to hurt her, make her hate him; make her leave

"You will be safer, happier in Gotham with Daniel, someone who cares about you and wants to spend the rest of their life with you. Wants the same things as you do" he looked at her as he said this
"you're too much of a liability..."

"What?" She said anger clearly apparent

"We can't always protect you Felicity, tonight proved that"

"I don't need protection Oliver. I'm not some china doll that's going to break" she said anger rising

"Really? Because from where I'm sitting, you nearly died tonight! And you can't even stretch to reach your own glasses" he raised his voice also

"I'm going to get hurt no matter where I am Oliver!" She shouted back "and that happens when you've been STABBED!" He cringed closing his eyes and standing up

"Yes but that shouldn't have happened in the first place!" Neither spoke for a while just glaring at each other, neither backing down

"No it shouldn't have... But it did because I would never let you die" she spoke it softly not looking at him

"That's the problem... I never want you to die for me" she looked up at him then and she saw it a flicker of longing but it faded as quickly as it appeared "that's why you're going to go..." He took a step back "you're going to go with Daniel, he's madly in..." He looked out the window now not wanting to see her face "love with you, and you'll set up home together, get married, have kids and be happy. Have a life full of hope, joy, and love. And you'll forget about this city, the mission, the team and..."

"You?" She asked, he didn't look at her just nodded "and what will you do when I have his happy ending?"

"Carry on" he turned round giving her a fake smile "protect the city..."

"What about Thea? And your personal life?"

"Thea doesn't need me, plus she has Walter as a father figure..." He closed his eyes then opened them giving his fake smile again "I'm not CEO material and you know there is always some girl out there trying to bag Oliver Queen makes it easier to not be with someone you care about" he watched Felicity's face change into one of horror. She couldn't help the grimace at how easily he faked this to her

"Just don't..." She said softly

"Don't what?" He frowned

"Be that... be Ollie" she hated the way that name sound to her, and he hated the way she called him that. He frowned even more "I mean give me these bullshit reasons all you want, but don't give me that Ollie fake smile, and speech I thought I meant more to you than that" she closed her eyes

"I... I'm sorry" he said softly as she fought back tears

"Just tell me the truth, and I'll leave and never come back..." She looked into his blue eyes "tell me you don't want me here anymore; tell me that you truly don't, that you want me to be happy with..." Before she even finished the words flew out, it was the only way

"I don't want you here anymore. I genuinely wish you all the happiness in the world with Daniel, but
he is the one for you, clearly" those words hit her harder than she thought they would. She knew he didn't think of her in that way and she did have Daniel. But for him to close up and push her completely away, especially when she needed someone, hurt her more than she ever imagined. She simply nodded at him; he turned around heading for the exit

"You promised me once I wasn't going to lose you..." She blurted out stopping him dead at the door, he didn't turn around, she fought back the tears growing "but I guess that was an Ollie lie" she took a deep breath forcing the tears away, she wasn't going to cry over him "Goodbye Oliver" he felt his heart ache, he felt like the world's worst person and it took all the strength he had left to not walk back over there and comfort her

"Goodbye Felicity" he said not looking back and closing the door behind him.

Chapter End Notes

I AM SO SORRY! It HURT me re-reading this, and fair warning things have to get worse before they can get better. But the next chapter I will add a note to because I need to explain some stuff with it… Anyway I hope you kind of enjoyed this and comments etc are welcome, honestly they keep me going especially seeing as I am trying to write the end and failing at the moment :P
Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

I hope you enjoy this Chapter, I've added it due to all the awesome reviews here and on ff.net but yeh enjoy :D

It had been a week, a very bad week for Oliver. If he was truthful he didn't remember most of it. All he saw and felt was darkness. But here he was sat next to Thea holding her as she wept, as the minister delivered his service. Oliver held her tighter, letting her know he was here for her. But he kept staring at his fathers coffin, and his brain went back into his week of hell.

"You can't keep doing this man" Diggle said when Oliver entered the layer on the 5th night in a row. He ignored him getting undressed. Diggle had his arms crossed "What do you do? You hood up. You go home. You repeat. This isn't much of a life?"

"The life I'm living right now doesn't leave much room for an actual life..." Oliver delivered with his back towards him pulling his T-shirt on

"You can't keep doing this man..."

"Doing what Diggle?" He turned to face him

"Pushing everyone way, pushing yourself too hard, beating the criminals to a pulp before handing them over to the police..." Oliver crossed his arms defensively "we've all noticed man. I'm sorry about your mum and dad, I truly am but Thea still needs you, so does this city"

"Thea isn't back yet and she most definitely doesn't need this, it's already got my parents killed and people I care about injured..."

"Dude, she still needs her brother not a vigilante and if you keep going like this she's going to lose you too... And then she will be all alone in this world" Diggle stood up taller as Olivers shoulders slumped "I know you miss her" he looked up

"Of course I miss my sister..."

"I'm not talking about Thea, Oliver" he knew instantly

"She had to leave; she's better off with Daniel"

"Really? Or is she better off without you?"

"Same thing Diggle"

"No it's not... And you know it" Diggle uncrossed his arms "I know you think you did the right thing and you're protecting her, I understand I love her like a sister. But you didn't see her when she left. You didn't see whatever thing you told her to make her leave, actually make her go..."
"Where are you going with this Dig?" Oliver said exasperated

"What happened sucked, I mean you lost your parents, people got hurt but you are still here fighting for another day expect you aren't because you let her go... And that is your fault Oliver, that girl would have done anything for you. But you pushed her and now everyone else away" Diggle turned around grabbing his jacket "and you know what man, it's working... I can't stand around here watching you kill yourself" he stormed up the stairs then turned his head "you know where I am" he slammed the door to the Foundry behind him, leaving Oliver in silence.

After that night Oliver hadn't gone out as the Arrow, instead Thea came back and he didn't leave her side. He listened to her, let her cry, let her grieve but he couldn't. He felt nothing but darkness. People visited offering their condolences but Oliver just went through the motions. He hadn't even bothered with QC; he presumed Walter would deal with it.

When the minister stopped talking, he felt Thea rise to her feet to place a flower on her fathers coffin. Oliver followed looking at the crowd. It was all business men, workers, Walter was there, and so were Laurel, Sara, and Tommy. Then in the back was Diggle, even though he hadn't spoken to him since that night, he was still doing his duty as bodyguard and driver. He automatically searched for her without thinking, knowing full well she wouldn't be here. And she wasn't. He placed a flower on his dads' coffin leaning forward and whispering

"I'm sorry I failed you... I'm sorry for everything but I have always loved you" he didn't cry. He turned around and stood with Thea as the coffin was lowered into the ground.

The mourners all returned to the Queen Residence, offering there sympathies. Thea was stood by Olivers side being hugged by some lady who worked at QC. Oliver walked to the bar ordering a double whiskey and telling them to leave the bottle. He was just about to down the drink when a hand landed on his arm pushing it down

"The answers aren't in there believe me" Thea said softly "I... I know you don't want to talk to me. I know I wasn't there when it all happened and that there are some things I will probably never understand" Oliver placed the drink down and turned to face his sister "but this isn't healthy Ollie... I mean you have been here for me through all of this, you have held me when I cried and have watched crappy soap operas with me, but you need someone here for you too"

"Thea I'm-"

"Don't lie to me, okay?" He nodded "I've seen you pushing all the people you care about away, apart from me and yet you won't let me in... So I did something" he frowned now

"What have you done?"

"I... I asked around so if you want to blame anyone blame me..." He was still confused "I asked her to come. I know she's special to you and you need someone too Ollie..."

"You need me"

"I do but I have others too" she pointed in the vague direction of Roy standing there watching her and Walter talking to him "I have other people, so please talk to her... Let her in"

"Who did you invite Thea?" She turned her head to the entrance. He followed her gaze and there she
was, Felicity Smoak. She was in a long navy coat, hair down and straight, with a little suitcase in her hand. He walked over there not even realising what he was doing till he stood before her.

Felicity was still mad, still upset about how Oliver had left things. Leaving her in the hospital, never saying goodbye, never bothering after his "speech", she only agreed to come here because of Thea. She had sound so vulnerable, and genuinely scared for her brother that after only some reluctance she agreed to come. She didn't know why, because Oliver had made it very clear he didn't want her here. But when he walked over she looked at him.

To anyone else he would have looked like a hard faced Oliver Queen, hiding his emotions, being quiet when he was genuinely grieving. However one look at him and she knew. He didn't look like he was hiding his emotions, he looked emotionless. His eyes void of anything, sunken visibly from lack of sleep. He still had the leg brace on, so noticeably his injuries were more serious than he was showing. Even though he looked hardened and stoic, Felicity could tell this was Oliver not dealing with grief. This was like the man who had first returned. In that instance all the anger and upset disappeared

"Sorry I'm late I was meant to be here for the service but delays, lots of delays. Then I was meant to go to the hotel but it was getting late, so I headed straight here hence the suitcase" he was staring at her again no emotions in his features and Felicity hated this "I should probably go to the hotel..."

"No" they both turned their heads to see Thea smiling lightly as she walked over "I mean please stay, we have plenty of spare rooms here, right Ollie?" She looked at her brother, he was silent. Clearly debating with himself

"I don't have to honestly it's fine..." He nodded at Thea

"No you can stay here, as long as you like. I'll have a staff member set a room up, but for now why don't you put your suitcase in the study" she smiled again "Ollie can help you" she gave him a look and without a word he walked off to the study

"Thank you Felicity" Thea said softly

"I haven't done anything"

"You came. I know I don't know what happened, but I do know it was bad, and same with things between you two. So thank you" she smiled and nodded before walking off to the study.

She walked in the room, pulling her suitcase behind her. She pushed the handle down and placed it beside the door

"Why are you here?" He sound so much different. His voice husky and deep, she spun around but he wasn't looking at her. He had his back towards her looking out the window

"Because Thea asked me" she remained where she stood

"But that still doesn't explain why you came..."

"Because..." She took a step forward "she's worried about you"

"I'm fine and that doesn't mean she should call you, you have your own life to lead" she took more steps forward
"Well I didn't mind, she still needs people... And so do you" she was by his side

"I'm just fine..." He felt a hand on his arm and he turned his head to look at it, after everything he had said she was still touching him

"I know you aren't" he looked into her eyes and he could see the concern all over her face. He pulled away from her, placing his back towards her once more

"You should be in Gotham with Daniel where you belong"

"I don't belong in Gotham, you and I both know that" she couldn't help herself. He spun around quickly

"Yes you do. I'm sorry Thea called you, but you aren't needed here. So when this thing is over I think it best you return home" he walked out the room not looking back. It was hard enough letting Felicity go the first time let alone again now. He had kept watch over her in hospital from the buildings opposite. After that, when she returned home, he'd find himself sat looking into her apartment just to make sure she was safe. Then the day she left he broke into her flat, just so he could be close to her again. But without her there he saw nothing but darkness.

Felicity left the study a little stunned, he really was pushing away everyone

"I must say I'm surprised to see you here, and up and about so soon" Diggle said softly pulling her from her thoughts

"It's nice to be out to be honest" she smiled at him but it didn't reach her eyes

"What's wrong?"

"Oliver... He.. He's still pushing me away" he gave her a little hug careful of her injured side

"Don't take it personally. He's pushed us all away, Laurel, Sara, Tommy and myself. He won't listen to reason"

"He's not dealing with anything"

"Oh he is just in a very destructive way..."

"I saw" Diggles eyes widened "I mean I've been looking at news reports and that" he raised an eyebrow "it's not easy Dig, I miss this place, and I miss what we do..." He nodded understanding fully

"But he isn't your responsibility anymore Felicity" he gave her a knowing look

"Don't John" she gave him a weary smile, he tilted his head his brow furrowing "I can't not care about you guys, we've been through so much together"

"I know that and I do understand but..."

"He isn't going change? He's an insensitive idiot? He doesn't deserve my kindness after what he said?" His eyebrows rose "I know Dig. I know it all and I'm not being naïve, but don't you think HE deserves some help, don't you think after all he's been through he needs people more than anyone" he smiled at her
"You are too good of a person Miss Smoak" she smiled "but he has to want to be helped... It's not a one way street Felicity"

"I know that, honestly I do but I'm not giving up on him... just yet" he nodded as she made her way into the living room, as Oliver pretty much avoided her. Instead Tommy, Laurel, and Sara came to speak to her, all taking it in turns to hug her

"It's good to see you again Smoaky" Tommy said grinning, Laurel nodding in agreement

"But I am surprised you came back so soon" Sara added

"It's good to see you guys too, Thea called said she was worried about Oliver" she said her features filling with concern as she glanced at him at the other side of the room

"Ah that makes sense..." Sara said

"How come none of you guys told me how bad he was?" She asked gently

"Well..." Tommy started staring at the girls for assistance

"We didn't think you'd want to know after he never said goodbye, plus you were happy with Daniel. We didn't want to disrupt your life" Laurel said with genuine sincerity

"Oh" she said softly "thank you for thinking of me guys" she gave them a small grin "but I still care about him, and you guys, so in future I'd like to know" they all nodded

"Well I'm leaving this week back to work, so you'll all have to keep me informed" Sara added

"You're going back?" Felicity asked. Sara nodded

"It's where I belong. I mean I'm good at what I do and Nyssa... Well we're giving it a proper official go this time" she smiled broader now

"As long as you're happy" Felicity smiled, pulling her in for another hug "you best come visit and stay in touch"

"Of course!" Sara said pulling back "but how long are you staying here for?"

"I... I dunno, my stitches need removing at some point over the next few days plus I have to sort stuff out with my apartment and then there's Oliver..."

"What about Daniel?" Laurel asked

"He has work, and like I told him I'm fine. The wounds completely healed hence the stitches being removed, plus he's okay without me taking up all his space. I mean his flat is massive but it is all his, technically I am a guest-" Tommy chuckled

"You never change" Tommy smiled wide "and we can deal with Oliver, you need to look out for yourself" he put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed lightly before letting go

"I know you all can but... I need to do this one last time" they all nodded understanding this was Felicities way of saying goodbye, of letting go of the past. She wasn't forgetting just purely needed closure. She glanced over to where Oliver should have been stood but he wasn't there anymore

"How is everything? I mean your dad, the club, the city?" She asked them trying not to think of Oliver
"Dad's healing up nicely, frustrated being stuck in hospital but he's not as young as he used to be so he needs some time" Sara smiled "and I am sure he'll appreciate a visit from you" Felicity smiled back nodding

"The club, well I haven't opened it back up yet. Got some minor damage in the whole rampage thing plus Ollie's not in the right frame of mind to do business yet" Tommy looked slightly saddened looking at his potted arm in a sling

"Oh, I... Leave it with me Tommy" she smiled

"I couldn't ask that of you"

"You didn't and I am technically his EA so I can get it sorted"

"But..."

"No Tommy I want to" she smiled at him before continuing "And the city?"

"A mess but healing" Laurel stated "I mean it's getting better, a lot of business have stepped forward to offer to help rebuild things. There even considering giving my dad captaincy. The Arrow is even being regarded as a hero, even if he has gone off the rails a bit" she gave a sad smile "Walter is the acting CEO of QC and he's doing great. He somehow managed to salvage the board after Isabell's involvement and death were uncovered. They'd prefer Ollie's association but as you can tell he's just not... with it. So things are a bit shaky there too" Felicity closed her eyes breathing out slowly

"Thanks for the honesty Laurel"

"I know I'd want to know"

"I do, maybe I have a bit more work cut out for me than I thought"

"Hey Smoaky it's not all on you, I mean it... All of us are here to help" Tommy offered smiling at her

"Thanks guys, I might have to take you up on that... I need to get through to Oliver first though"

"We have tried, all of us..." Sara said tilting her head "but he seems..."

"Lifeless?" Felicity finished and questioned, they all nodded slowly. Just then more guests appeared causing the 4 to break up.

The rest of the day, Felicity's time was spent reassuring board members, or QC workers, and just keeping the mourners "happy" well as happy as mourners could be.
Later that evening, once all the mourners had left, Thea showed Felicity to a spare room next door to Olivers. She left her to unpack but she didn't. She merely opened her suitcase. She changed out of her black dress into her sweats and a tank top. Putting on her panda flats and pulling her hair up into a ponytail before heading back downstairs.

"Felicity, come join us!" Thea shouted from the living room. She walked in to find Thea and Roy sat on the sofa together watching a film, whilst Walter sat in a chair reading paperwork

"Where's Oliver?" Felicity asked causing Walter to look up

"He left. He does it sometimes, disappears in the middle of the night" Thea said bluntly "I'm sorry I invited you here and he doesn't even bother..."

"Actually I think I might go look for him, if that's okay?" she asked Walter. Walter stood up placing the papers down and walked towards Felicity

"Of course it's alright my dear" he ushered them out into the entrance "I'll get the staff to call you a taxi" he shouted for someone, told them what to do and they rushed off before Felicity had a chance to respond

"Thank you Walter"

"No thank you Felicity. Oliver has seemed to flourish with you by his side and I know both his mother and father appreciated it" he gave her a teary smile

"I'm not sure about that"

"Miss Smoak, Robert valued your opinion beyond most so he entrusted you with the most important thing he owned..." She frowned in confusion

"His company?"

"No his son..." Felicitys eyes flew open "I know he didn't come across as fatherly but he loved Oliver above everything else. And he saw what Moira did and I do" she frowned again "you bring out the best in him, you somehow make him... brighter, more determined, happy" she merely nodded a little taken aback "this family has always been complicated, but you seem to make it simple for him, not in a horrible way, you're like a constant"

"But he..." She sighed "he doesn't want me here Walter"

"Ah you see the thing is Felicity, we always push away those closest to us. Because we can, we know how to, and I believe you know Oliver better than anybody. Hence why you probably know where he is right now" she smiled

"I have an idea"

"I presumed so" just then the doorbell rang "that'll be the taxi, those two are fine with me and don't forget a coat" he smiled softly.
Oliver was sat in the darkness; he felt it in his body, so he might as well allow it to surround him too. He didn't know how long he'd been sat there staring at nothing. Just blank. Numb. Suddenly the lights came on shining bright

"How'd you know I'd be here?" He said without moving from the shadows

"It's where you always come, here or the other place..." Felicity stood by the switch near the stairs

"I thought you'd be back in Gotham by now"

"Why?" She said, both still not moving

"Because that's what we agreed after the wake, you'd leave"

"No that's what you said, there was no agreement" Oliver stepped out the darkness hovering in the shadows still. She could see his face now. His eyes still void of emotion and it pained her to see him like this. He wasn't in his suit as she had expected, he was in jeans and a leather jacket. It was then she looked around the Foundry and noticed that tables and equipment had been turned. Smashed.

"Did the people of the city get in and do this?" She enquired looking around

"No"

"Well what happened then?"

"Nothing... It doesn't matter"

"Clearly it does" she gestured around the room "look at this place"

"Why are you here?" He asked taking a step forward

"Because you left the wake and Thea..."

"I meant here in general"

"I've already told you. Thea asked me to, she was worried"

"I'm fine, I already told you, so you can leave..."

"But you aren't fine, and I am worried" she looked into his eyes again seeing nothing

"No need to be, just go"

"I'm not going anywhere, I'm staying right here" she crossed her arms. Oliver exhaled storming towards the steps. She stood in front of him arms raised to his chest, bringing him to an abrupt halt.

"Felicity" he said with anger

"No, you aren't walking away not like this..."

"You do realise YOU can't stop me" and with that he side stepped her and stomped up the stairs grabbing the door handle

"Oliver..." He stopped dead. It was the first time she'd said his name and it sound so desperate, pleading. He felt his heart aching again. He didn't turn, or reply so she continued "if you leave..." You'll never see me again he was expecting the words, presuming she'd go like before "I'll come
after you" that he was not expecting

"You don't know where I'm going"

"No I don't but if you go, I'll follow and I'll roam the streets looking for you. I don't even care if it's
night or day... I'll follow" he thought about her words. He didn't want her alone on the streets, but he
didn't want her here either, pulling her into the darkness. He walked back down the stairs and never
looked at her. Silence over took them, so Felicity started picking up papers and lighter objects

"Leave it" he said sternly, she turned her head to face him. Stopping and stepping forward

"Talk to me" he turned his back to her. He was not talking to her; he was not allowing her into the
darkness. She took a few steps forward placing her hand on his arm. He didn't pull away like she
thought he might "please Oliver" she turned to stand full in front of him. He looked in her eyes he
could see the hurt, the desperation. His heart started beating faster and for the first time in a week he
felt alive again. But he shook his head, with that would come all the pain and he'd rather darkness.

Felicity watched his eyes, his expression didn't change but she saw it, a glimmer of hope, but it faded
as he shook his head. He took a step back out of her grasp

"Why are you here Felicity? Really? Because I was awful to you in the hospital..."

"Yes you were" She held his gaze, he was presuming she'd have anger, hurt in her eyes "and it hurt
but sometimes, others have to come first and right now you need help" he saw the devotion flash
across her face, his heart was still hammering

"I don't need-" She cut him off

"Look at this place Oliver. You did this" he turned around again but she didn't care, she just carried
on regardless "I..." She took a deep breath "everyone is worried about you. This isn't healthy Oliver.
You can't beat or destroy your emotions away..." She took another deep breath stepping closer again
"I get that everyone thinks this is how you're grieving but I can see it Oliver. I can tell this isn't you
grieving. This is you burying your emotions so deep you become emotionless. I get it you see
emotions as weakness. But this beating up the bad guys, destroying the Foundry, pushing everyone
away... This won't help, this will only let the... Darkness in more" he span around then, meeting her
eyes. How could she know all this? How was it she was able to read him so well "I know you
Oliver, I know we haven't know each other for long but... I know the real you" she placed her hand
over his heart.

Oliver could feel the darkness fading, Felicitys words pulling him out. But with that came the pain,
the grief, the loss, the regret, it hit him like a tidal wave. His arms automatically wrapped around her
waist pulling her in for a hug, she wrapped her arms around his neck. He pushed the tears down; he
wasn't going to cry, not here, not like this.

They stayed this way for a long while, him pulling her in tighter never wanting to let go. She pulled
away slowly looking at his face. He had a few stray tears running down his cheeks and she wiped
them away with her thumbs. She looked in his eyes and for the first time all day she saw Oliver. He
was visibly pained but at least it was better than before

"It's okay to cry Oliver" she said so tenderly, his eyes fluttered closed

"Not here" he replied, then he opened his eyes "I am so sorry, for-"

"It's okay. I understand. Come on let's go home" she said grabbing his hand and leading him
upstairs.
When they got back to the Queen residence it was silent and dark. They crept in to the entrance hall, removing their coats

"So are we going to talk?" She said quietly, so it wouldn't echo

"No it's-" She crossed her arms, tilting her head, giving him *that* look

"Living room, my room, yours?" She said flatly giving him no option to say no again. He let his head drop in defeat

"Mine, it's private, it's bigger and I can get changed" she nodded and he lead the way. They didn't speak as they made their way upstairs but as they entered Oliver's room she looked around. The room, built in wardrobe, and en-suite were bigger than her entire apartment. Oliver locked the door behind them turning the side lamps on, causing her to jump

"So no-one surprises us" Felicity nodded thanking the lord her brain to mouth filter stopped any inappropriate comments about being locked in with Oliver Queen *especially* in his bedroom. He smiled at her trying to hide his amusement; she always had a knack of causing a grin, even when he was down. Her eyes went wide

"I did *not* say that out loud!" Oliver merely let out a little chuckle, before disappearing into his bathroom. Felicity took off her panda flats leaving them near his door trying to let the embarrassment fade, and looked further around the room. His bed was massive, clearly king sized. She stroked his bed sheets, evidently silk but oh so soft. She couldn't help thinking about curling up in them. It hit her then how much of a long day it had been and how tired she actually was. Oliver chose that moment to walk out, as she was mid yawn

"Felicity you can go to sleep you know we don't need to talk right now"

"No" she protested "I know you, you won't talk to me if we don't tonight"

"But you're clearly tired"

"You're just finding excuses. Oliver I told you, I'm here to help"

"Yeh, but how long for?" He could feel his emotions bubbling up and it came out harsher than intended. Her eyes shot wide

"I thought you didn't want me here?" She said keeping her voice level, even though she was confused by Oliver's apparent mixed up feelings.

He stormed off to his bay window, leaning over. Fists on the bay sill, head hung low trying to keep his emotions in check. Felicity looked at him; he'd taken the leg brace off and was wearing sweat pants and a T-shirt. She noticed without the brace he seemed to slump to the other side. Obviously in more discomfort than she even thought. She looked at him harder, this man was struggling with his emotions and hiding them away

"Oliver, I know you don't like to show emotions but it's okay, it's just *me*..."

"I thought I lost everything..." He blurted out not looking at her "I... When I was kidnapped things seemed bleak, and you met the boy I was on the bridge..." She didn't respond she needed him to open up "then well I left. And Yao Fei died, Shado died, I became a monster to survive. It was kill or be killed. Then I tried to kill Slade, thought I had" she was starting to realise all his emotions he'd bottled up for years were going to slip out "then I came back here and I was a killer again, it was all I
had known for so long" he took a deep breath "then Slade came back, he's destroyed the city, he killed my mum, my dad, hurt the people I care about and then I lost you..." His voice broke at the end, and he felt a hand slip around his wrist

"But you didn't lose me" she said warmly. He spun his head, blue eyes meeting blue. He couldn't stop the tears falling this time

"I did, you nearly died and then I pushed you-" He dropped his head again

"But I didn't Oliver, I didn't and I'm here now, look at me" she slowly pulled his clenched fist up to her chest. He looked up at her, she was smiling tenderly as he released his fist and she placed his hand over her heart "see still beating, still very much here" he could fell her heart beating strong and steady. Thump. Thump. She was alive, she was here. All the pain, hurt, devastation, and every emotion he ever hid throughout the years came back with a vengeance.

He dropped backwards sitting in the bay window with his bad leg stuck out, the pain worse than ever. He dropped his head letting the tears fall. It was like a dam had burst, he couldn't stop it even he wanted. His shoulders shook as he sobbed silently but uncontrollably. Felicity didn't even think or hesitate; she walked up to him and wrapped her arms around his neck. His head fell on to her shoulder, and his arms wrapped around her back pulling her closer. She didn't try to stop his tears; he needed to let it out. Instead she uttered soothing words and reassurances, gently caressing his back and arms.

Oliver never stopped crying, and when he opened his eyes again, somehow they were in his bed. His head was resting in Felicities lap as she gently rubbed up and down his arm with one hand, and caressed his hair line with the other. She sat with her back against the headboard, pillows behind her

"It's okay Oliver, I'm here... Everything's going to be okay" he let the words sink in as he still shook from tears. He felt his heart swell even more for her. He loved her. Here she was comforting him like no other person had. And yet he knew she'd still never be his. Never could be. But for tonight, for the pain, the hurt, the tears he needed her and so he'd let himself be vulnerable, let himself see how things could have been.

Felicity stayed there, she knew they wouldn't speak tonight. But that's not what he needed; he needed to cry, and to get his emotions out. All she was going to do was sit here and comfort him anyway she could. It was hours later before Olivers body stopped shaking and his steady breathes assured her he had finally found sleep. Maybe even a peaceful one. But she would stay here, till he didn't need her anymore and with that thought her eyes grew heavy till she found sleep too.

Chapter End Notes

Right I hope you guys enjoyed it, even if it was kind of "intense". I hope Oliver stayed in character here but I want to explain this, I used some of my own personal experiences to draw on how he grieved or well didn’t, so all those emotions, the way he acted, the way he snapped, hugged and cried well I hope they seemed real because they were mine.

Also additional news I was writing the ending to this whole story and well I haven't even finished it yet and it's over 6,000 words so I'm going to split the final chapter and so this story will be 40 chapters long :).
When Oliver woke up, his throat was dry and his eyes hurt. Then he remembered it all, the feelings, the crying, Felicity. He reached out but the bed was cold. He was alone. Had he dreamt it? He opened his eyes to see it was 1 in the afternoon. He jumped out of bed, forgetting about his leg, and then slumped back down as the pain hit. He took a deep breath and limped to the door. He pulled it open fast surprising the person behind it. There she was in an orange dress, hair pulled up, with a large silver tray in her hands. He just stared at her as she walked in placing the tray down on his desk. He didn't move or say anything.

"Are you going to stand there all day? Are you going to close the door?" He blinked then slowly closed the door.

"I... I wasn't dreaming" he said hazily.

"Oh... OH" Her eyes went wide as she walked closer to him "I'm right here, real, and not a dream... I didn't mean you to wake up with me gone but you know you were asleep and I had stuff to do..."

"I... I need to go see Thea, sort stuff out..." He went to move but Felicity put a hand to his chest. He looked down at it, then at her with a confused expression.

"Oliver... Last night-"

"Was nothing... No big deal" he side stepped her. Trying to walk as normal as possible but failing, to the bathroom.

"OLIVER JONAS QUEEN" she didn't shout but used her loud voice. He stopped dead, leaning on his good leg but not turning to meet her "Last night you needed to get those emotions out. Yes even macho blokes have to deal with emotions sometimes, but that's the thing with me Oliver, whatever happens in these 4 walls stay in these 4 walls. I don't mean like that, not that I was thinking that 'cause I have Daniel and you're injured, not that they are the only reasons and 3...2...1" Oliver still stayed facing away but couldn't help the grin that appeared from her babbles and innuendos "I just meant whatever you say or don't, won't leave this room. It will stay with me, only me" he knew she meant it.

He hadn't even noticed during her speech that she had walked closer to him. She put her arm around his waist and supported him as they walked to the bed.

"Oh, God, you're heavy. Is this really all muscle?" she questioned staring at him; he simply nodded, letting a small groan escape. She forced him to sit down giving him a dirty look "firstly Thea is out with friends today. Diggle has men with her. She wanted to get out the house and I thought it only healthy she speak to her girlfriends" he nodded "next stuff with QC and the club, well I'm helping sort it" he gave her a sorrowful look "and don't give me that look; you are not to worry about either right now... When the times right I'll talk about it okay?"

"Okay" he said still staring at her.

"Finally... And if you fight me on this I will make your life hell... Remember that" she raised her eyebrows challengingly he said nothing "I called the hospital"

"What? Are you okay?" He tried to stand but Felicity placed her hands on his shoulders.

"I am absolutely fine, all healing nicely" she saw his eyes glaze over remembering that night.
"Oliver" he blinked looking up to see her worried expression "they said you refused the scans for your leg... Well the ones they did do, plus the multiple doctors having examined you, they think you have ligament damage" he closed his eyes

"Right... I'll be-

"Don't you dare say fine!" She said testing him and he closed his mouth "they said you need bed rest, with minimal exercise, so I'm afraid you aren't leaving this room..."

"Felicity..."

"Nope, Diggles gonna hood up if needed but it's been pretty quiet, we both know why. You are to keep that leg braced and up, relax. People want to visit-

"I don't want to see anyone" he cut in

"I told them to leave it a few days... But they will be coming. Also hospital sent over strong painkillers and anti-inflammatories, they are on the tray" she pointed to it and he nodded "also as you've not been eating properly, yes Thea told me, I brought breakfast and lunch Raisa insisted. And no I'm not buying the I'm aren't hungry crap" he smiled a little then "oh they're bringing a TV up here for you later too, I mean you might as well get comfy if you're staying here right?" He rolled his eyes. Felicity walked over to the tray lifting it and carrying it back over to Oliver, placing it on the bed

"So the plan of action today Miss Smoak?"

"Well Mr Queen, medication and food, shower, change of clothes and leg brace" he nodded "then we talk" his face dropped then "oh and no excuses, we have nothing else to do, no plans, no interruptions, and I'm not going anywhere, no matter how much you push this time"

"Thank you" he practically whispered

"It's okay" she said placing a hand on his shoulder

"You joining me?"

"Oh I already ate" she smiled softly "all of that is for you"

An hour later; the TV had been set up. Oliver was fed, cleaned up; leg braced and lay on the bed. Felicity didn't want to force him into talking so instead they sat together watching films. Raisa brought them snacks, and they sat in relative silence. It wasn't awkward. It was actually a calm relaxing time.

After several hours Felicitys phone beeped, Oliver turned to her

"You can get that you know" she smiled

"It's not a person, just an alert" Oliver sat up on the bed from his leaning position

"For the Arrow?"

"No for you... The press" she wasn't going to lie to him

"The press?"
"I told you I'm handling and dealing with everything" he frowned "Oliver..."

"I know I'm resting" he leant back down on his propped up pillows "I just… what are they saying now?"

"As of this morning, that you have had a break down due to the tragic events and are in rehab" he closed his eyes sighing "but as of 5 minutes ago, they retracted those stories, instead posting due to recent events you are on bed rest due to injuries; that the family is still grieving and asks for privacy at this time. The doctor was even quoted saying you have minor injuries that need rest to heal" he opened his eyes then

"How'd you-"

"Oliver I've told you I've got it covered... Also remember computer whizz, not hard to access their mainframes, and mess around a bit plus Laurel and her legal prowess" she smiled "other people care too" he gave a sad smile

"I know. I just..." He stopped himself and looked away

"Just what?" She asked. There was a light tap on the door

"Come in" Oliver shouted. There stood Thea, boxes in hand

"I brought pizza... Thought we could all eat it together and I wanted to ask if I could stay over at a friend's tonight?"

"Which friend? Where does she live? How long-" Felicity put her hand on Olivers arm raising an eyebrow "sorry"

"I get it Ollie. Cassie, she lives just down the street. I'll give you her parents' number in case you have any concerns and if it's okay I'm going to spent tonight and tomorrow with her" she smiled softly "give you some time to rest and talk" She said slowly, not looking at him "I mean school opens again in a few days, it's been repaired so back to some form of normality" he nodded giving her a sympathetic look

"Okay" he nodded. She smiled wider "but... you have a body guard stay" she sighed

"Fine, just because it will make you feel better" he smiled softly then and she placed the pizzas in his lap, and then gave him a hug which he returned. Felicity sat watching and smiling to herself "now pizza time" they ate the pizza watching trashy TV, conversation flowed easily between the 3. For the first time in awhile Oliver felt whole again. He was happy with his baby sister by his side and the woman he loved too. But he knew this wouldn't last, Felicity would have to return to her life and he'd be left with Thea. He loved her but he knew he'd screw her life up as well. These thoughts made him go quiet

"Right thanks for the company guys but I should be going" Thea said standing up, she placed a quick kiss on Olivers cheek "love you Ollie"

"Love you too Speedy"

"Have fun Thea, see you tomorrow" Felicity added as the young girl exited the room

"Same to you too" she shut the door.
Silence fell and all that could be heard was the soft voices of the TV

"Want to tell me what all that was about?" She asked moving the now empty boxes to the floor

"What?" He enquired standing up

"Hey you're meant to be on bed rest" Felicity said following him up. Oliver ignored her and made his way over to the bay window. Sitting down with his leg up, just staring out watching the sun set.

She turned off the TV and joined him, sitting opposite

"What were you going to say before Thea walked in? And what happened just then? You seemed happy then that grrr face returned" he didn't look at her again, just watching the sun set instead

"Oliver seriously I know it's hard for you but talking helps... You've been through so much alone. I and Diggle, and others are here now, you aren't alone anymore" he closed his eyes

"People shouldn't care. People around me get hurt. They die" she passed a finger under his chin and forced him to look at her

"Everybody dies" she said automatically

"Yes but not everybody dies early because of me..."

"They are not your fault" she looked at him as he slumped back, head down with his eyes still closed "Oliver" he still didn't move. She stood up walked over and put her finger under his chin pulling his head up "Oliver please look at me" he opened his eyes this time taking a breath, his nostrils filling of Felicity's aroma from her close proximity "you can't blame yourself..." He reached up placing his hand around the wrist of the hand on his chin. He slowly pulled it away

"If I hadn't have gone away, Yao Fei and Shado would still be alive. Slade wouldn't have been tortured, wouldn't have come back and killed my mum, destroyed my city and helped Isabel kill my father..."

"Stop" she raised her voice slightly

"Why? Felicity I've ruined and destroyed so many lives" his hand tightened of its own accord round her wrist as she went to touch him

"Oliver!" He released her hand looking at the red mark he had left

"See I'm a monster! I drag everyone down and I will destroy your brightness too" he said turning away from her, pulling his knees up ignoring the pain in his leg. Instead staring out the window again, the sun having now set

"Is that really what you believe? That you're a monster?" He nodded not looking at her. She rubbed her wrist. She could still feel his fingers there but it didn't hurt her "You aren't a monster Oliver. None of this is your fault, if it is then it is as much my fault as well" he turned his head to face her, brows almost needing together in confusion

"None of this is your fault. You joined me long after I became the monster"

"No, I created the monster, the night on the bridge; I gave you the idea to leave. So if you are to blame, then so am I" he shook his head

"No you saved me that night"

"Like you've saved hundreds of people's lives since then, including mine?"
"But think of all those I've destroyed. All those who have missing family members... I killed so many I didn't know how to stop"

"But you did stop"

"Because of you" he said softly not meeting her eyes "I wanted to be a better man, be the hero you saw--"

"You mean see. Oliver I always see the hero... Even now, the broken hero trying to patch his life back up believing he can't be himself" how could she possibly know that

"I can't be Oliver Queen, owner of QC, owner of Verdant and the Arrow... plus my past before China. I can't have everything Felicity; I can't have a normal life"

"Normal life? You do realise there is no such thing as 'normal' these days right?" He rolled his eyes at her "Oliver you aren't all those things to me, I mean they make up who you are but I see Oliver, Just plain simple Oliver. You" she placed a finger on his bicep "if you were a cold blooded killer you wouldn't care, you wouldn't feel this guilt..." He looked into her eyes and he could see the honesty in what she said

"I just--"

"You cannot take the blame for the actions of people around you. You cannot blame yourself for Slade going crazy, for coming back and destroying this city. He had his own twisted thoughts you couldn't control them. He took your mother's life, and same goes with Isabel for your father. You weren't the one who killed them same with Yao Fei and Shado..." He could feel the tears at the back of his eyes but he didn't want to cry, not anymore

"But I still killed others"

"Yes and you will have to learn to live with that, but you aren't alone... I'm here to help you, remind you of the hero you truly are, the man who is making an amends for his actions. So are other people too. We all care about you" she placed her had on his shoulder, and he didn't pull away "I'm not saying it will be easy Oliver, living with all of this, being the QC owner, the club owner, the Arrow but we are all here to help make it easier for you"

"Thank you" he said tenderly "but I still can't lead a normal life not properly"

"I believe you can, but if that's how you feel right now then that's fine" he reached an arm out around her waist, surprising her slightly, as he pulled her in for a hug. His head rested on her chest listening to her heart. He found it calmed him. He knew he shouldn't be talking or letting her in even more or seeking her comfort. But he also knew he couldn't live without Felicity Smoak in his life any longer "Also Oliver" he nodded lightly not moving, as her arms were wrapped round his shoulders "we all have lightness and darkness in us, the good and bad, or whatever, but you see it's the decision you make as to what you stay in. I mean I choose to be light, and nobody, not even you or what we do, could drag me into the darkness. But let me please help you find the light in you, be the hero and man I see everyday" he squeezed her tighter now

"Please..." she pulled his head up again so blue met blue, both searching for something in the other "I want that" he continued "I don't want to be in the darkness anymore... I should have never made you go, I need you Felicity" her eyes shot wide he needed her. There was no mask, no lie just plain honesty in his features

"I'll help you, everybody will... And I told you, I'm here as long as you need me and I'll always be a
phone call away" he frowned then "I have to go back to Daniel eventually" it was like a bullet to the
heart. Oliver let go. Felicity saw hurt flash across his face then be replaced by his stern look. Oliver
knew he could never have her like that, and so he'd be happy for having the right here and now. And
he'd be happy with whatever contact he got after

"Hey..." He gave her a genuine smile. Felicity noticed it didn't reach his eyes but it was still a smile

"Sit with me?" He asked scooting away from the window. She nodded jumping over him, and sitting
beside him. They sat watching the wildlife and city quiet down, before eventually they both fell
asleep together.

The next day was pretty strange. Oliver found he was completely exhausted and slept on and off
throughout the whole day. But Felicity never left him. Every time he opened his eyes she was there.
Sitting at the desk on her tablet, in the bay window drinking coffee, lay beside him on the bed
watching TV.

She woke him periodically for his medication and to eat, but there was no real conversation. They
just simply stayed in the calm peacefulness of looks and touches. The day flew by for Oliver and
before he knew it, it was the next morning.
Chapter 35

Chapter Notes

Exciting news I finished writing the last chapter tonight, I've spent the last 2 days writing it... So that means because you are all so awesome, and the fact we have been given a photo of Felicity's apartment (go check it out if you haven't seen it!) I am updating right now AND I am going to give you 1 Chapter EVERY DAY till this is done, starting right now which means with my calculations you should get the last chapter on Wednesday (see what I did there ;) :P). Hopefully all this goes to plan! But yes this chapter is a little short but believe me later chapters make up for that... anyway I got excited and I'm babbling so enjoy the chapter and as always let me know what you think :).

When Oliver finally woke Felicity wasn't there again, he presumed she'd slept in her own bed last night. He felt refreshed, like he'd slept for years, which was a nice change. He slowly got up and made his way to the bathroom. He was going to have a nice soak in the bath, a relaxing bubble bath, to ease the tension in his injured leg. He eased himself in, when the door flew open

"Oliver!" Felicity said frantically

"Felicity?" Oliver said sitting up confused

"Oh, thank god I thought you'd gone..." She stared at him, then a blush appeared on her cheeks, steadily getting more crimson "I'm so sorry I didn't realise you where in here, naked... I mean of course you're going to be naked whilst having a bath, it would be weird if I walked in and you were sat fully clothed in the water, 3...2...1" she took a breath "I should leave you to it" Oliver grinned he couldn't help it. She was embarrassed at him being naked, even though she'd seen him semi-dressed a lot

"Felicity..." She stopped in the door turning, eyes focused solely on his and not his body "you can stay and talk if you want?" Her eyes shot wide

"But you're-"

"Naked? Yes. But the bubbles are covering the essentials plus you see my chest all the time and I'm pretty sure you have stuff to tell me with the frantic tone before" she looked down at the bubbles then back up, clearly admiring the view. She gulped then shook her head. She had a boyfriend so any inappropriate thoughts of Oliver Queen were to be ignored. But god you cannot blame a girl for admiring those toned muscles. Stop it Felicity

"Stop what?" Oliver asked in confusion. Crap she'd said that out loud

"Oh nothing..." She walked over and sat on the bathroom floor legs out straight and she could see Oliver's head and arms above the edge of the bath tub. Much better, less distracting "you have visitors today. Diggle says he has something important to tell us. Sara, Laurel, and Tommy are coming too. Not sure if they'll be one big group but yeh everyone wants to see you. And I thought now you seem brighter why not today? Plus then you won't be as bored" she teased. He flicked his damp hand in her direction wetting her a little and she squealed. Oliver laughed he hadn't laughed in
so long. Even Felicity noticed and her smile grew, it was nice to see him so peaceful and relaxed

"I'll see people and my leg is starting to feel better. But you are right I'm starting to go stir crazy..."

"Only a few more days" she smiled "well when the others arrive I have to nip out for a bit, I have some stuff to sort but you won't be alone"

"That's fine you do have a life Felicity, it doesn't revolve around me, I'll be fine" he smiled actually meaning it this time and she felt it too. They sat chatting for awhile till the bubbles started to disappear

"I'll leave you to it" she shot up not even looking in Olivers direction, he couldn't help the grin on his face at her embarrassment, he found it odd when she has seen him topless many times. He shook his head as he pulled himself out of the water. Felicity distracted her thoughts and went to fetch him breakfast.

When she returned Oliver was in a T-shirt and sweatpants. His leg braced again, as he sat in the bay window. The sun was shining in, and the window open wide to allow some fresh air in. She smiled. He looked at peace, and for the first time since all the Slade stuff he seemed genuinely tranquil. As if he wasn't carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. She walked over placing the tray in front of him. He looked at her then his lips curled up softly

"Thank you Felicity"

"No problem..."

"I mean it, you… you pulled me back"

"Good, you know I'm always here for you right? Seriously all you have to do is ask and I'll be right here" he nodded. Those words comforted him, even if she wasn't his. He still had her in his life. And right now that what enough because he wasn't going to steal away Felicitys happiness. They spent another hour just chatting when there was a firm knock on the door

"Come in" Oliver shouted and in stepped Diggle in his usual work attire grinning

"Nice to see you Oliver" Oliver gave him a sorrowful look

"You were right that night in the Foundry"

"Which part?"

"About killing myself... I just I didn't see a way out..."

"Of your downwards spiral?" Oliver nodded "is this your apology then?"

"I'd take it Dig" Felicity winked teasingly, causing Diggle to laugh. Oliver sat there head a little lower and they both noticed

"Hey man, it's okay. I'm just glad you've finally seen sense" he placed a hand on his shoulder and squeezed lightly before letting go "and apology accepted" Oliver looked up nodding a small smile on his lips

"How's everything at the Foundry?"
"Fine. No major incidents. Had to hood up for appearances sake and a couple of petty criminals but nothing I couldn't handle"

"Thank you John" he said with genuine sincerity

"Well even heroes are allowed time off"

"So, Felicity says you have something important to tell us?" Oliver asked

"Oh well. As you know I and Lyla are back together..." They both nodded "well she's pregnant, I'm going to be a dad" his smile beamed, he looked ecstatic. Felicity squealed with excitement running at him throwing her arms around him

"Congratulations! Daddy Diggle, having a little Diglet"

"Thanks and please don't call my kid that" he smiled and she laughed. Oliver stood walking over to them. So Felicity let go taking a step back, opening her mouth about to speak, but stopping herself when he extended his arm. The men shook hands and then Diggle pulled him in to a hug and both patted each other on the back

"You will make a great father" Oliver whispered stepping back "congratulations"

"I am so excited!" Felicity beamed "I can be Auntie Felicity; I'm totally going to spoil him or her rotten. It's nice to have some good news, not that I mean we aren't happy... Just..." Oliver chuckled and so did Diggle

"We understand Felicity and yes you will be Auntie Felicity and you" he turned to Oliver "will be Uncle Oliver" Oliver rolled his eyes "Making you broody Miss Smoak?" He teased Olivers eyes went straight to her

"Oh, god no! I mean kids are awesome, but right now I'm happy I can hand them back. Not that I can't take care of them, I totally can. Just I'm not ready to be a full time mum..." Diggle couldn't help his chuckle but Oliver just stared at her

"What about Daniel? Doesn't he-" The words escaped Olivers mouth before he really thought

"Oh we haven't really spoke about it... But I know me, and I'm just not ready. Plus we've not been together long enough for that kind of conversation" Oliver nodded. Diggle and Felicity carried on their conversation whilst he sat there, his mind wandering. He could picture Felicity pregnant, and then with two children running around, how good she'd look being a mother in years to come. Then it hit him, she couldn't be that and be by his side, neither could Diggle

"I... I think you should stop Diggle" Oliver stopped the pair mid conversation, both turning to face him, expressions full of confusion

"Stop what exactly?"

"Being in the field with me"

"Excuse me?"

"Diggle-"

"Oliver you'd be dead ten times over if it wasn't for me!" He shouted in anger straight at Olivers face, he didn't even flinch "I'm not Felicity, I don't do the technology, no offence" he said turning to
"None taken" she said still staring at Oliver

"You're going to be a dad Diggle"

"So what?"

"That changes things..."

"Of course it does, but it doesn't stop what we do"

"Diggle, Thea just lost her mother and father, so did I. I can't risk your kid growing up without you"

"Don't you think that's my decision to make Oliver?"

"Not when it comes to this... I bet you don't want Lyla working"

"That's different!"

"Why?"

"Because she's pregnant! She's carrying our baby! But we both know full well what could happen. We were both soldiers we know the deal, and we won't try to stop each other"

"Well I'm not risking it Diggle. I won't be responsible for yet another partner getting hurt, or your kid losing it's father"

"It's not your damn choice!" Diggle turned away too angry to look at him

"It doesn't matter you aren't joining me" Diggle sighed in frustration his jaw tight and muscles tense

"It was good to see you Felicity but I should be going I know when I'm not welcome" he leant in giving her a peck on the cheek then left the room slamming the door behind him. Oliver turned making his way to the bed, Felicity stood there staring at him

"What?" He snapped at her

"Was that really necessary right now? He just told you he was going to be a dad"

"Yes" he said angrily "it means he has more to live for"

"What and you don't with Thea? You're all she has left"

"It's not the same and you know it!" He couldn't help the bitter tone he had

"Oh whatever Oliver" she said rolling her eyes walking to the door "I don't care what you say, you didn't have to be a jackass about it" and she exited slamming the door shut too.

Felicity didn't come back like he had expected, instead Sara visited with lunch. They chatted about Slade being sent to a "special" prison in the middle of nowhere alone, how Sara was leaving at the end of the week but she'd visit. They chatted about her father, about Nyssa, and finally she thanked him for everything. As she left Tommy and Laurel took her place, they spoke about the city, Laurels promotion at work, what both were doing to help the city, about Felicity and how the Arrow was
being hailed a hero for his actions. Again both thanked him for everything he'd done.

By the time they left Thea was back and joined him watching films on his bed, eating takeout

"Roys coming tomorrow if that's okay?" Oliver raised an eyebrow, she looked away blushing lightly "he's taking me out"

"On a date?" Was his only response

"Yes..." Again she couldn't look at him

"Okay" she looked into his eyes then

"What?" He smiled

"I said okay..."

"But..."

"But what?"

"Aren't you going to get all..." she pulled a face, causing him to laugh

"Thea, I think Roy has proven himself enough. I mean he saved you that drunken night, he's been here for you over all this grief and he genuinely seems to care about you. I also don't need to scare him. I'm pretty sure he already knows what I'll do to him if he hurts you or tries anything" she blushed then "which brings me to my next point..."

"Oh god Ollie" she put her head down

"I know, but I just want you to be safe..."

"Stop" she smiled putting her hand on his chest "I already got the sex talk from mum, I've already seen it all at school and well Felicity said I could talk to her about anything, including girly stuff and boys..." His eyes went wide

"She did?"

"Yes, I like Felicity. She's great. She said she's always a phone call away, that she wants to be there for me, us" she smiled. Oliver couldn't speak. She was there for him and Thea

"I just..." His brain kicked back in "I don't want you to rush anything, okay?"

"Felicity said the same thing" he smiled to himself of course she did

"Have you seen Felicity?"

"Yes she's been sorting stuff out, and went out this afternoon. She was the one who ordered take out but said she had to talk to Daniel so that I should join you"

"Oh..."

"I can go get her if you want?"

"No, I don't want to disturb her" Thea looked at him and could see the sad look in his eyes; she leant over and hugged him. He hugged her back
"You know I love you right Thea"

"Of course, I love you too Ollie"

"And I will do my very best to keep you safe, to help you, to be there for you... I will try not to leave you" she frowned

"Oliver, all I need is my big brother to be exactly that" she smiled warmly "and as long as you and I try, then I am happy, sound like a good deal?"

"Deal" he said hugging her tighter. They lay on his bed watching more films till his eyes grew heavy and he fell asleep. Thea turned the TV off, got up slowly pulling the duvet around him and then slowly left the room heading for her own bed.
Chapter 36

I'm keeping to my promise :)... So here is another chapter for you lovely people :) honestly guys I really do like to hear what you think, it's nice to see you all enjoying this. This chapter is a little slower but needed because as I'm getting nearer to the end I need to tie up a few lose ends but I promise next chapter gets more interesting :P (well I think it does anyway :D) p.s I was going to post earlier but I got totally distracted by Doctor Who my bad! But anyway ENJOY!!!

There was a slight knocking on Felicity's door, she groaned in her sleep turning over. It happened again and without much thought she shouted

"Oh just come in" she didn't move she was hugging a pillow. Her head buried in the other with the duvet wrapped around her. She heard the door open then close gently. So she decided to open her eyes, when she did she was met by bright blue ones. Oliver. He was stood looking down at her sympathetically, she shot up

"What time is it?"

"It's 9am, I just... You didn't come back" Felicity frowned in confusion

"Didn't Thea tell you I was busy?"

"Yes but I don't like leaving things angry between us... anymore" She titled her head and could see the concern on his features

"Angry?" She asked slightly confused "oh, OH! Oh I didn't not come back because I was angry" her hand reached out for his wrist squeezing it lightly "I mean you were a jackass, you could have handled it better and definitely owe Dig an apology but I'm not angry at you" she gave him a smile but it didn't seem to lift his mood. She gazed at him "how come you aren't wearing the leg brace?"

"Because it doesn't hurt as much and I can walk-"

"Oh no you don't mister! You are still taking it easy today, plus I have paper work for you to go through"

"Paper work?" he sighed

"Yes that and some things that need your approval"

"But..."

"You've got to face things eventually hence why I'm going to go through it with you, so go get ready and I'll bring breakfast then after we can go through all this" she pointed in the vague direction of papers and her tablet

"No Raisa said she'd bring us both breakfast up to my room. And thank you Felicity. Take as long as you want" he said stepping away and heading for the door
"I'll be 30mins tops" he smiled

"Honestly no rush, I didn't mean to wake you"

"It's okay, and I will be 30 minutes" she repeated

"Okay, and Felicity..."

"Yes Oliver?"

"Thank you for being here, for helping... Not just me" he smiled sincerely

"It's what friends are for" she returned the smile "and I promised Oliver, I would be here no matter what"
everything. It is only a sug-
"Yes" He smiled
"Yes?" she questioned

"Do it. He deserves it; get the paperwork drawn up..." Felicity smiled a sparkle in her eyes as she pulled out a contract "you already did it didn't you?"

"Just in case" she smirked and he chuckled in response

"Thank you"

"You're welcome. You just need to read it all and sign it" She placed it to one side

"Right so that's Verdant?" She nodded

"I've updated all of Thea's emergency contact stuff at school and hospital etc, I hope that's okay"

"Of course it is, it saves us a job"

"Theas trust fund is locked until she turns 18, so it'll keep gaining interest but she won't be able to touch it till then" he nodded "All the bills for the house, I have had put in your name but I've created a different account one which will automatically take money from your QC profits. Also I've set up for bills automatically and the wages for the staff etc" she really had thought of everything, and all he had done was lie here for days "you just need to read and sign this pile of papers to clarify all these changes" she placed them with the others and Oliver nodded again. A little stunned at how much Felicity had actually done

"Okay..."

"If it's too much-" she gave him a sympathetic smile

"No, no I just..."he placed a hand on top of hers on the desk "thank you" he whispered but with so much sincerity it caught Felicity off guard. She looked into his eyes, they were bright and vast, even though he had whispered it she could feel the emotions behind it

"It's okay" she said softly back

"You have done so much" he returned squeezing her hand. She beamed

"Oliver seriously as I've said before if it makes your life easier, I'm more than willing to help" they sat staring at each other till Felicity pulled her hand out and continued with her paper work

"Finally Oliver..." He looked up from the vast amount of paper work "QC"

"It's my fathers legacy, my families. I want it continue to be a part of my family but..."

"You don't feel ready to be CEO?" She finished, he nodded slowly "that's why I thought about making Walter CEO and you still own QC with the board, you help make decisions and you are the face of the company... But you also train there, under Walter like your father planned originally" She smiled at him again "I mean it's you and Thea who own QC, with majority shares, but she doesn't have a say till she's 18, that's if she wants a say"

"I think that's a great idea" he smiled, cutting her off "Walter has made the company go from strength to strength, he's been in charge since my dads..." Oliver stopped looking down so Felicity jumped in
"Yes and he's done extraordinarily well"

"So are those contracts in there too?" He teased as she pulled some out

"I told you very organised" she teased "so now you're Oliver Queen, club co-owner, QC training CEO, and hero..."

"I'm not a hero Felicity"

"Tell that to the city" she said turning her tablet to face him, he flicked through the pages. There were all articles about the Arrow, as a hero, about what he did. There were online blogs, messages, pictures thanking whoever he was

"They want to build my statue in the park?" He frowned

"Someone may have pointed out that was a waste of valuable money, the Arrow wouldn't approve of using for something like that" he chuckled knowing full well it was her "they decided to use the money to build a youth centre, that's going to have a plaque though in your honour"

"Really?" He shook his head in disbelief

"Yes because like I say Oliver you are a hero" he kept looking at the stories of families he'd saved, the faces of children, grownups, everything. He felt lighter, as if surrounded by lightness rather than darkness. He stared at the blonde in front of him who was smiling back. She could see the look of hope, joy, and his soul in his eyes. She had to agree; whoever said the windows to the soul were the eyes was correct, because she could see Olivers in all its heroic glory. They spent the next few hours filling out paper work and making phone calls so that everything was official and set up.

It was mid afternoon when there was a knock at the door

"Miss Smoak, Mr Queen I'm here to take you out" Diggle said not looking in Olivers direction but still smiling

"Thanks John, we'll be down to the car in a minute" Felicity answered. He nodded exiting the room "come on then Mr Queen we best go see the Foundry" she grinned coyly

"What are you up to?" He asked slowly

"Wait and see" she winked, picking up all the paperwork and tablet heading out the room "meet you downstairs in 5" They all met at the car Oliver looked at Diggle trying to find the words but no matter how he played it he just kept seeing his child grow up without a father.

They drove to Verdant in relative silence. They went to the side entrance; Oliver punched in the code and headed into the darkness. Felicity flicked on the lights, Oliver froze in place

"You both did all this..."

"Well yes, Diggle did most of the heavy lifting" the Foundry had been transformed. The place had proper floors; it had an actual medical area with working equipment. The training area had new equipment too, and the salmon ladder was still in place. The computers all looked advanced, and several other pieces of equipment were dotted around. There was even a station for arrow making and his suit was hung up in a glass case
"Thank you" he said to both. Felicity walked over to the table, where a case was placed on top. She opened it and inside lay a sleek compound bow

"I hope you like it, I had it custom made. How'd I do?" he picked it up feeling the weight in his hand

"It's perfect" he said so softly, without thought he placed it down and pulled her into a hug. So close he had his face buried in her hair, the sweet scent filling him. People were fighting for him. Still. After all he'd done. He slowly let her go and turned to John

"Thank you..."

"But... I know it's coming man" Diggle said crossing his arms

"I just... I don't want your child growing up without you because of what we do..."

"That's the thing Oliver; I chose to be a part of this. I still am. Not just because of you but because of what we do. I believe in it. And yes it's risky, so is Lyla's job but we have spoken about it and it's something we understand. Like I understand what you are saying too" he uncrossed his arms "but I've made my choice Oliver. This is it and it won't change" Oliver nodded, smiling a little "oh and please don't blame yourself, it's all on me" Diggle walked over and patted him on the shoulder "but thanks for caring dude"

"I care about all of you" he smiled "always have. Always will because you're my family now"

"And you're part of mine, Uncle Oliver" he joked and Oliver laughed slightly. Felicity watched two of the men in her life grinning. She was happy they were happy. But a part of her gut twisted as she thought of not being part of the team again. Yes Oliver was no longer pushing her away, but she was about to set up home with Daniel. Move away, and carry on with her life. Part of her was happy to finally meet a guy who wanted her as much as she did him, who took care of her, who made her happy, but then there was this part, the one right in front of her. The one where she finally felt like she'd found home. She stopped the tears from falling instead she went and hugged both men. They stood in the Foundry that way for awhile, till they heard movement upstairs

"That's our cue to go give Tommy the good news" Felicity winked

"Can I do it?"

"Of course it is your business" she beamed handing him the paperwork.

When they got upstairs Tommy was there, trying to move boxes one handed. The club had been revamped the red was now a shining green, a bow and arrow had been drawn on a wall. Tommy span around smiling as he heard the footsteps behind him

"It's to thank the Arrow for saving mine and Laurels lives, well that's what we told the press" he winked "it's nice to see you out"

"It's nice to be out"

"So come to see if the clubs still in one piece" he teased

"Tommy, I have something to ask you" he frowned a little at his serious tone. Oliver walked over to him at the bar and slid the contract towards him. Tommy looked at it then at him still confused
"Are you firing me?" He tried to say light heartedly

"Oh god no, I'm promoting you"

"How can you be promoted past manager?" He teased

"By becoming my co-owner" His jaw just about hit the floor

"What? But I have no money..." He put his hand on his shoulder

"It isn't about that, you have proven yourself so much with the club. And you know about the other lives I lead. So I can't always be here, but you can and you deserve to reap the rewards for it. So please take the contract, get your lawyer to look over it and do this for yourself" Oliver smiled, Tommy pulled him into a hug

"Thanks man, seriously, I don't know what to say"

"You don't need to say anything" he grinned. Oliver couldn't help how happy he felt. He was doing the right thing, surround by the people he loved. The ones who continuously fought for him, he couldn't believe he'd been so lucky.

They left verdant and headed to QC, they had a casual meeting with Walter and the board. Who after being reminded that Oliver was technically still recovering and didn't have to be there, seemed to relax about his casual attire. The proposals went down without a hitch. Walter was emotional at being given a chance at the CEO position permanently, promising to help Oliver achieve his rightful place one day. The board, after all the Isabel fiasco, agreed almost instantly on the condition that Oliver made the announcement to the press tomorrow fully suited.

It was all done and dusted in a few hours, thus as promised Diggle drove them to a takeout place so they could get food, and headed home. They spent the evening in a relaxed ease all 3 of them, team arrow, together.
Felicity bolted up, the duvet fell from around her. She was struggling to breathe; sweat was dripping off her as she gasped for air. The next thing she knew the door had opened but without her glasses and the darkness of the room she couldn't see. She felt strong hands on her arms and she pulled away instinctively

"Felicity it's just me breathe, okay?" She heard him before she saw him and there he was sitting in front of her. He made no attempt to touch her again but instead he reassured her "you're safe, nothing's happening, it's all okay, I'm here" slowly his words calmed her, her breathing returning to normal

"Thank... You... How did you know?"

"I heard screaming, shouting"

"Oh" she dropped her head into her hands, he gently grabbed her wrists, and she didn't pull away this time which he was thankful for

"It's okay... You can talk ab-"

"No I'm fine" she jumped in

"Felicity what did you say to me?"

"But this is embarrassing and...

"And nothing, you've been here for me so let me do the same for you" he smiled tenderly "How long have you been having nightmares?"

"On and off since that night, but the doctor said it's normal. My brains trying to piece the whole night back together... I mean I remember most of it now"

"The doctor?" he frowned

"Yes I went to have my stitches removed yesterday when I saw Detective, well I should say Captain now, Lance..."

"Felicity" he said grinning as she went off on a tangent "you went to the hospital yesterday? I could have come"

"Oliver it's fine you can't always be there especially when I go back to... Gotham" he let go of her then, running a hand over the back of his neck
"I... I know, but you got that injury because of me I could have been there"

"Oliver seriously it's fine, I should probably get back to sleep" she said trying to pull the duvet back over her but Oliver grabbed it

"Felicity stop avoiding the conversation and talk to me. I know it's painful and it'll be hard for me to hear but talk about it... The nightmare I mean" she let her head drop in defeat

"It... It's all mix of real and not, I know that... But it's embarrassing. I don't think you wanna hear it"

"Felicity you have sat and listened to me theses last few days I'm sure I can handle whatever it is" he looked at her with honesty. She pulled her knees to her chest and wrapped her arms around them

"It starts the same. Slade's there, we think Daniels been killed but he hasn't and we're back in QC..." She didn't look at him, he just sat there listening, watching her "everything's the same up until he goes to stab you and I... I don't make it in time" he sees her screw her eyes up fighting back the tears and horrible images "he gets you and you... You're bleeding in my arms"

"Hey it's okay I'm here..." She looked up at him with a watery smile

"I tell you, you have everything to live for, to fight for. That you're going to grow old and be happy, I want you to be happy..." He smiles a little "then it changes and I'm in your arms, and I'm dying and I... I tell you I want you to carry on, I remember telling you to carry on"

"You did say that" he smiled at her reassuringly "and I'm trying to now because of you" he put his hand out squeezing her forearm wrapped around herself

"I... I remember you trying to stop the bleeding. I remember the tears. I don't remember the pain" Oliver stared at her trying not to think about nearly losing her "until you..." She looked away then

"Until I what?" He frowned "you can tell me anything"

"I remember it going dark and all I can hear in the darkness is you... You shouting"

"Is that a bad thing?"

"No but... This is the embarrassing part" he frowns, as she looks up "you... You shout I love you..." He felt his lungs tighten. She had heard him. He froze unsure what to say. In that time his expression went stoic, causing Felicity to panic and fill the silence "I mean I know you love me, not love love but just you know care and love me as a friend like Diggle, Tommy, Sara, and Laurel... I'm just someone you spend a lot of time with, who you have learnt to love and I'm the same with all of you. Hence why I miss you guys and I mean it's no big deal Oliver. It's just a nightmare, it's not like you actually said it..."

"I said it" he whispered, it was almost inaudible but it stopped Felicity dead in her tracks. His own eyes went wide as he realised what he had said

"What?" was all she could get out. Oliver didn't know how to respond. He loved her. But he can't be with her. After a few moments of silence Felicity's brain kicked in again "I did get stabbed, so makes sense that you say that in the moment. Especially that situation but like I said we're friends, we care about each other, right?" She was giving him an out, a legitimate out. He could easily agree with her and go back to how it was. But the other part of him wanted her, yet he knew she had Daniel. Then again why would this matter

"Yes but I really care about you"
"Yes like you care about John-" He cut her off

"I don't care about Dig like I do you, yeh he's like family but I care about you differently"

"Well yes cause I'm a girl"

"No I love you both, care about you both, but you... It's different" he was trying to say it without actually saying it. She stared at him. His features had softened, and then it hit her like a ton of bricks. Oliver Queen was try to tell her he loved her. Oliver Queen loved Felicity Smoak. Her jaw flew open in shock, how was she supposed to deal with this information? She had Daniel, she was happy with him, moving in with him. She stared into Oliver's eyes but she couldn't stop the anger building.

"Get out" she said calmly, he frowned

"What?"

"Get out Oliver"

"Felicity you do realise what I just told you?" He went to touch her hand but she pulled away standing up instead, to put more difference between them

"You can't just tell someone you love them, especially when that someone's in a relationship" She said with rage. Oliver stood himself, but did not step closer to her

"I... I just that wasn't my aim, I... I can't lie to you" she crossed her arms

"You can't just spring that on me and expect me to be okay with it Oliver" she was getting louder "I have Daniel, I'm happy with him. You know that, yet still you said it... What were you expecting me to do? Stay here, leave Daniel behind, or just leave with Daniel like it never happened? Because either way how selfish can you be" he frowned

"Felicity there is no intentions, I just... I need to tell you the truth. It wasn't said to make you stay or go, or to confuse or change things, because if we're truthful, I can't ever be with you. So there is no choice, no intention, nothing" he said it so calmly

"What do you mean you can't ever be with me?" it was the only thing that Felicity could think, it slipped from her mouth before it even registered

"You know why" She rolled her eyes "I... I'm sorry if I've upset you"

"Just go, Oliver..." She turned her back on him

"Feli... city?" He dragged her name out

"No, this changes things Oliver... And you know it! You can't say that and expect it not to" she could hear him let out a long breath

"Fine, I'll go back to my room but... I'm still going to be here for you, even with Daniel, because nothing has changed for me. Goodnight Felicity" she heard the door close. She stood there still shocked. Oliver loved her. How had that even happened? And worse there was no easy way forward now.

She closed her eyes trying to ground herself. Right now her heart was pounding, she was tired, she still felt the after-effects of the nightmare and she just wanted to sleep. So she crawled back in to bed, burying herself in the sheets. She would deal with this tomorrow, god knows how, but when she
woke up she'd figure it out.

Oliver didn’t sleep well that night, instead he found himself working out trying to drain away the adrenaline. But nothing seemed to work. Before he knew it, it was 9am and his press conference was in another hour. He got ready and there was a light knock on his door. He opened it and there stood Felicity in a smart navy dress, hair pulled back, glasses on and tablet in hand. She walked in

"Right breakfast before we go. Theas gone back to school, yes Dig arranged body guards. He'll pick us up and drive us to QC; we'll see Walter then do the press conference in front of the building. I have your approved speech here with me. The press aren't asking questions, well they aren't supposed to. Every ones going to be there to support you-"

"Felicity" he cut her off

"Including Laurel, Sara, Tomm-"

"Felicity" he said with more force. She stopped this time looking at him "are we going to talk about last night?"

"What's the point Oliver?" She said her expression blank

"Because clearly what I sa-"

"Stop. Just stop Oliver. It's unthinkable, you and me I mean" he opened his mouth to speak but she put a hand up before he could say anything "Oliver Queen, billionaire, playboy, businessman turned vigilante and me, IT extraordinaire, plain, simple, poor... It's just unthinkable, I can imagine the back lash from the press now" she turned away taking a deep breath "this is the thing Oliver, I'm with Daniel, and I'm moving in with Daniel, I'm leaving today..."

"Good"

"Excuse me?" She spun around to face him

"I told you last night, it doesn't change anything for me. I just thought you deserved to know..." He was letting her go; he loved her enough to give her the chance of a normal life. A happy life

"I..."

"You deserve the chance to have a happy, normal life and Daniel is that" She blinked. Her brain churning; not only did Oliver Queen love her, but he loved her enough to let her go, to be without him. She frowned about to speak when Oliver walked over to the door "so breakfast?" She nodded.

She knew that was the end of the conversation, knew he'd not want to bring this up again but Felicitys head hurt. Her brain couldn't quite figure out everything but she knew she wanted to be happy and Daniel made her happy, didn't he?

They ate breakfast Oliver reading his speech making alterations, and both keeping conversation business related. Diggle arrived picking both up and headed to QC.

They entered through the back due to the mass media presence at the front. Walter and some board
members were there to welcome them reminding Oliver of his need to change his public image. Whilst Felicity spoke to the board, Walter took Oliver to one side

"They'd be so proud of you Oliver" Walter said with tears glistening in his eyes. Oliver merely smiled "I know they gave you a hard time, in particular your father, but they always loved you... And they'd be proud of these decisions you've made"

"Would they Walter? Because I don't want to be them, work before everything, everyone" he glanced in Felicty's direction "And I didn't make these decisions alone" Walter followed his gaze

"Ah... That's the thing Oliver; you aren't your parents, so you have to do things your way... And that's a balance you have to find in your life" he put his hand on his shoulder "and we all need a partner in life to point us in the right direction" he nodded in Felicity's path letting go of his shoulder "good job she's a part of your life"

"I just think it will be a challenge. What if I can't be all these parts of me? And she isn't, not like that. She... She's leaving today actually"

"But the best things are hard and worth fighting for" he gave him a little smile "Oliver we all have various sides to us but we are 1 person, there aren't separate parts they're all you" then he frowned "Oh I thought Miss Smoak was happy here?"

"I know" he didn't want to think about that "She is, was... She's moving in with her boyfriend Mr Jones, in Gotham. She's getting her life back" he half heartedly smiled

"Oh, well I'll give her my best" he smiled taking a step towards her before turning back to him "and sometimes Oliver it takes time for the heart to realise what it truly wants but a little push doesn't hurt" he winked and turned back walking off in Felicity's direction.

As Oliver stepped outside QC it was manic, the podium for him was just before the steps, security all around and press below. Behind the press were people of the city gathering around probably to see the latest antics of Oliver Queen. He could see Tommy, Laurel, and Sara off to one side where some QC employees also stood. The police were there as well helping security.

Oliver froze he didn't move after he walked out and saw the mass crowd. Felicity was by his side in seconds as she saw his stoic face appear. She turned him to face her so his back faced the crowd

"All you have to do is read the speech and go" he nodded "I know this must be weird I mean you probably haven't done one of these since you were younger but I promise it's not that bad"

"I just... I've never done this without my parents guidance" he said so quietly Felicity could just hear him

"Well you have me for that" she smiled trying to get one in return but then she saw his eyes, the flash of sadness pain and loneliness, like the boy on the bridge all those years ago

"Not after today" he said even quieter. Without thought of the press or people around them, Felicity placed her hand over his heart

"Then follow what's in here... I know you'll need to use your head too but for this you need to be Oliver. The one I know who is everything and he, he uses his heart" she smiled and he looked at her hand on his chest. Then she pulled away blushing "plus everything is wrote down for you now. So
"go get 'em" she grinned. He smiled back, taking a big breath and plastering on his fake smile, the one Felicity hated so much. He walked to the podium pulling out his speech

"Ladies and gentlemen, the media, whoever else may be listening. I'm stood here today..." He looked around him all the citys press there for him, not for helping the city. He glanced around at Laurel, Tommy, and Sara smiling back at him. He turned to see Walter, Felicity, and Diggle stood together. Diggle nodded and Walter gave him a knowing grin. Felicity smiled at him, mouthing just read

"To read this speech" he held up the piece of paper and folded it neatly placing it in his jacket pocket "but someone once told me that the best things come from the heart so here goes" he took a deep breath "most of you will have seen me in the press, the irresponsible idiot who went missing for 3 years... Well that's the old me" he placed his hands on either side of the podium for support "after events recent and past, I have changed, I am continuing to change. So I'm here today to tell you all that I will not be the CEO of Queen Consolidated" some of the crowd gasped "instead I am appointing Walter Steele" he pointed to him "as the head of the company, his work over the years has proved he is more than capable so he deserves this" the crowd erupted into applause as Walter took a step forward waved and then went back "I will continue to own QC, to attend meetings, be the face of the company, and learn from Mr Steele so one day I can potentially take the head of the company my father built, to make him proud" he let his head drop then as he fought back the tears "but I am not my father. It might take me longer to get there and to juggle so much of my life"

"What about the club Mr Queen?"

"Is it true you were in rehab?"

"Where were you when your father died?" The press shouted various questions and Felicity walked over about to speak when he looked her in the eyes

"It's okay" he whispered

"You don't need to answer anything" he smiled and nodded as she walked back over to Walter and Diggle

"Are you and Miss Smoak involved?" Another member of the press shouted

"I co-own Verdant, Tommy Merlyn owns it too. We are a partnership, so my responsibilities are being spread but I have extra help which is good" he took a breath "because right now, my sister needs me more. We both lost our parents and we need time. I wasn't in rehab; my leg was injured the night my father was killed. He died in my arms just like my mother" the press fell silent as the crowd gasped "so I ask, for her sake more than mine, you leave us to grieve and you will see less of me in stupid situations from now on. I need to be more responsible" he took a deep breath to steady himself "I and Miss Smoak are not involved. She was promoted on her merit alone. She would probably be more adequate at running this place than I. She is my friend, and like my other friends, she's been here for me whilst I grieve. So I need to thank you all, all for coping with me, for helping me in this time of need and for Thea too" he looked around at all his friends giving them genuine smiles.

Then he turned to face Felicity whose eyes were wide at this point "I know you all probably think I'm lying about Miss Smoak but I'm not, she is too good for an idiot like me" he faced the crowd now "she has helped me more since my return than anyone, she has supported me through these hard times and she is leaving our company to pursue her own life so" he turned to her now "thank you" he clapped and the crowd did too. She blushed dipping her head in embarrassment.

When the crowd finally calmed down he turned back around "so thank you for taking the time out of your days to listen to me. But one final thing, this city needs helping, it is more important than gossip on me. So QC is going to support projects to help rebuild the city. And I, I'm going to throw a gala to
raise money to help further projects, in honour of my mother and father, not right now. Because well I and Thea need time but it's a promise I will make right here, I, Oliver Queen, will do *everything* I can to help this city. Thank you" he nodded stepping back as the crowd erupted louder than ever before. He walked back inside, the others following close behind

"Marvellous speech Oliver" Walter said squeezing his shoulder "honestly your parents would be so proud of the man you are becoming and I am always here for you" he smiled

"Thank you Walter" he nodded walking off outside. Felicity looked at him; he had just publicly acknowledged they weren't sleeping together. Even though he loved her, he was literally letting her be her own person, giving her, her identity back.

She was still angry about him admitting his feelings but she felt so proud and happy, she couldn't help herself. She wrapped her arms around his middle pulling him close. He was shocked at first but then hugged back placing his face in her hair and inhaling her intoxicating scent

"Thank you Oliver" she said pulling back

"It's the least you deserved... Honestly everything you have had to deal with"

"And I would happily do it *again*" She smiled at him "I'm so proud of you Oliver. See you can do it alone when you follow your heart"

"Let's go home, you have to pack" he said letting his smile fade

"Yes I do"

"When do you leave?"

"Well I have to sort some things out at the flat tonight and then leave first thing in the morning, why?"

"Because we all want to say goodbye, so how about one final meal together if you want?" He asked with genuine sincerity

"Whose all?"

"Me, you, Dig, Lyla, Sara, Laurel, Tommy, Thea, Roy... Our *family*" she choked back a tear then. *Family*. That's exactly what she felt, someplace she finally belonged. She couldn't answer she merely nodded in response.
Chapter 38

Chapter Notes

I'm still carrying on strong with a chapter a day so here's the latest one, as always it's nice to know what you think or if you have any questions/comment etc. There is a scene in this similar to a promo released (I'm not spoiling anything because it is different) but I did write that before the promo was released which made me chuckle, anyway getting side tracked again. I hope you enjoy this chapter :).

Oliver went all out for the evening; he ordered food from all different restaurants. He wanted to give Felicity the send off she deserved, especially after what he did last time, not saying goodbye at all. Plus it was a joint venture for Sara too, who was also leaving the next day.

Everyone was slumped around the living room; some sat on chairs, others on the floor, with plates and food on every available surface. The conversations came naturally, everyone was smiling. Oliver looked around the room, he'd never wished for one moment to last forever till now.

He stared at everyone around him. Lyla and Diggle snuggled together on the sofa, chatting to Sara who was crouched on the floor in front of them. Thea and Roy were sat on the floor next to each other, chatting to Laurel who was in a chair at the side. Tommy was sitting on her chair arm, facing Felicity who was sat on the floor both fully engaged in conversation. This happy bubble was all Oliver ever wanted, the people he loved and cared for happy, enjoying themselves and safe

"It's nice to see you happy" he turned to see Sara, who was now talking to him as Diggle and Lyla chatted among themselves

"It's nice to see everyone else happy" she laughed

"Why can't you be happy Ollie?" He rolled his eyes at her

"Because nothing lasts forever..."

"Yes that's why you enjoy it whilst you can" she smiled winking

"Anyway you're heading back to work, everything okay there?"

"Yes, I bring a bad guy like Slade in; it gives me more leeway" she joked "but not all my family know..."

"I won't say anything Sara, that's your secret to tell"

"Thank you" she leant over giving him a quick hug "I've been meaning to ask, how'd you know about me anyway?" He grinned

"I saw you in Russia, when I was in hiding. I recognised you taking down an opponent of Anatoli; he told me you were a MI6 agent... I didn't tell him who you were, and that was before the mask" she frowned

"You were there? That was one of my first jobs"
"Yes, I tried to find you but I couldn't risk the triad coming for my family here..." She nodded in understanding

"You've been through so much, you deserve to be happy too" she looked over in Felicity's direction and he followed her gaze

"Sometimes Sara we have to let go of what makes us happy so they can be happier"

"That's so selfless"

"I've spent enough time being selfish, it's the least she deserves, to be happy"

"But Ollie..."

"Yes" he turned to look at her

"What happens if she's happy here?" She raised an eyebrow "look at her around everyone, part of the team, part of the family, part of your life"

"Doesn't matter Sara, she's told me she's happy with Daniel, she's moving in with him"

"Oh..." She gave him a sympathetic smile "well at least someone's getting a happy ending" he nodded "thanks for being here for me Ollie"

"Same to you too Sara" they smiled softly. The evening was drawing to a close, especially when Walter came in from work and joined them too.

It was getting to the end when everyone found themselves in the entry way. Oliver was holding Felicity's suitcase, ready to drive her to her flat. She made her way down the line of people

"Miss Smoak you have been an asset to our company and if you ever want to return you will be welcomed"

"Thank you Mr Steele" she smiled, he leant in and hugged her

"No thank you Felicity" she blushed moving on. Thea jumped into her arms tears falling

"Hey I'm not going forever, I can come back, and you can call all the time"
"I know... It's just you brought my Ollie back. You have been more like a sister to me"

"I know, you're like my sister too Thea but you'll be okay. Though seriously I am a phone call away, you can call me whenever about anything, okay?" She nodded. Felicity gave her a tight squeeze then let her go turning to Roy

"You take care of her okay?"

"Yes ma'am" he said nodding wrapping an arm around Thea. Next she came to Sara

"Thanks for saving me, for saving all of us and him" She nodded at Oliver "seriously Felicity, you are more amazing than you give yourself credit for" she pulled her in for a hug

"Thanks Sara, you are marvellous too" she chuckled
"Take care of all of these for me"

"I'll try, a bit hard not living here though" Sara smiled

"I think maybe, maybe you need to really listen to your heart" she whispered in her ear pulling away, Felicity frowned in confusion "goodbye Felicity"

"Goodbye Sara" Next she was embraced by Laurel and Tommy

"Take care of yourself Smoaky and you best stay in touch!" He grinned

"What he means is we'll miss you. Thank you Felicity for changing these two guys into real men"

"They already were there, they just needed a little guidance to get them out" she winked and Laurel laughed

"Seriously though, I'm glad to call you a friend. You've helped so much and I know my dad cares about you too" Felicity was forcing tears down

"Thank you, say bye to him for me too" Laurel nodded

"Of course" she leant in hugging her "take care of yourself and visit us!"

"I will" she smiled as Tommy pulled her in for a one armed squeeze

"I am going to miss you Smoak" he said with a tinge of sadness

"I'll miss you too" she pulled back "thank you for being there for me" she smiled at him then spoke to them both "please take care of Oliver for me" her eyes glistening with tears

"We promise" Laurel smiled

"He's not the same without you Felicity but we'll look after him" Tommy grinned

"Thank you" she moved on to Diggle who automatically pulled her into a hug

"I am going to miss you girl" he said softly. She pulled back tears spilling over "hey. I am always going to be here for you, no matter what. So you best stay in touch, our babies going to need her godmother around" Felicityys eyes flew open as she stared between Lyla and Dig

"Really? Are you sure?"

"Yes of course we are Felicity" Lyla said hugging her tightly "you looked after my man, kept him safe and that means the world to me. So who better a godmother than you" she released her and this time she couldn't stop the tears

"That's if you want to of course? I mean you are Jewish so we aren't sure how it works" Diggle asked wrapping an arm round her shoulders

"I'd be honoured, We'll figure it out, thank you both so much" she wiped her tears away on the back of her hand

"I love you Dig"

"I love you too sweetheart" She leaned up pulling him into another hug and whispered in his ear
"Please take care of him for me and if he needs me let me know..."

"Felicity, of course I will" and then they let go "but he's never going to not need you, you know that right?" She frowned

"He's a grown man Dig, he'll be fine without me" she smiled "plus I don't mean that much to him" Diggle raised an eyebrow and crossed his arms "what?" She said

"Nothing" he shook his head in disbelief "just take care of yourself, okay?"

"Yes and you too" they had one last hug before Felicity turned to Oliver who held the door open. They walked to the car and Oliver helped her in, and then placed her suitcase in the boot. Everyone stood together waving and shouting their goodbyes as Oliver slowly pulled off

"When are they going to start seeing what we all see?" Roy said as the car pulled out the gates, everyone turned to him "oh please you all see it, those two are meant for each other" they all laughed

"Well this is one thing we can't force" Tommy said "we'll just have to hope they figure it out before it's too late" they all nodded in agreement.

They drove in silence. He carried her suitcase to her flat, she opened the door and they stepped in, all in complete silence

"So..." Oliver said placing the suitcase down, looking at her bare flat, mostly boxed up

"Thank you for tonight, for the proper send off" he ran his hand across the back of his neck sighing

"It's the least I could do after last time" He took a step closer to her "thank you"

"For what?" She frowned looking up at him

"For everything..."

"You have to stop thanking me for everything; you need to believe in what you do"

"I do because of you... Most people fail to see the real me but you, you do... You saw the potential in me"

"I still do" she said smiling

"I... I'll miss you" he felt the lump in his throat and closed his eyes briefly to hold back the tears

"I'll miss you too Oliver, I'll miss all of it. If I could stay I would" his eyes flew open and she could see them glistening with held back tears and saw the puzzlement on his face "Daniel makes me happy, and we both deserve to be happy, don't we?" He nodded, and a tear escaped. She put her hand up brushing away the tear with her thumb but leaving her hand on his cheek "you deserve to be happy Oliver. Promise me, promise me you'll carry on being the hero, the better man you are and promise me Oliver, you'll be happy... You deserve a happy ending more than anyone" he stared into her blue eyes behind her signature glasses; she believed he deserved love, happiness and joy. He loved her so much. His heart was pounding and his eyes flickered to her lips then back to her eyes.

He leant forward and Felicity wrapped her arms around his neck turning her head to rest on his shoulder. His arms wrapped round her waist pulling her in tight. He squeezed, turning his head to
smell her hair. Trying hard to remember the feeling of holding the woman he loved in his arms. They never moved only squeezing tighter

"I promise" Oliver finally said sounding deflated; she turned her head to face him pulling back a little to look at his face. They were only inches apart

"Good" she smiled wide and he returned it; he could see the tears forming in her eyes. Neither wanted to let go. Felicity knew as soon as she let go, the home she'd built with these people, the life she leads would be no more, and as much as she thought about how happy Daniel made her something in her chest ached.

Oliver was fighting hard to remain in control. Every part of him was saying to never let go, to kiss her and to not stop. He knew this was his only chance to say it, knew he needed to, without agenda just needed to

"What I'm about to say is because I'll never get to say it again, and I won't ever say it again... There are no hidden intentions. Only that I need to say it, just once... If that's okay?" She looked at him, then in his eyes. Her heart was hammering in her chest. She knew he was about to say it, a part of her wanted to never know but another part wanted the closure of it, to finally hear it. She nodded then turned her head, not able to look at him. Oliver let out a breath he didn't even know he was holding, he leant close to her ear and whispered so only she could hear

"I love you" he closed his eyes as his heart thumped. Felicity's own heart pounded harder, she smiled sadly realising she couldn't say it back. She was with Daniel. But she wouldn't take this moment from Oliver, he needed to say this and he needed to be able to feel love.

She squeezed tighter. She couldn't help the tears from flowing now. She felt the loss of something that never even began. All the, what ifs and could haves, all those moments together as friends, as partners but never as anything more. She was crying for the life she was losing, and her heart ached. Why? Why was she so sad when she was starting a new life?

Oliver pulled back slightly releasing the hold on her and her arms dropped from his neck. He put his hands either side of her face using his thumbs to wipe away the tears. She gave him a watery smile and he returned it his eyes still glistening with unshed tears. Her hands wrapped around his wrists feeling his pulse, letting it calm her and ground her. He leant forward placing his lips to her forehead, giving her a tender kiss. She felt the shiver travel all the way down her spine, and he felt electricity pass between them.

He pulled back slowly, as she let go of his hands, and he her face. They stared into each other's eyes. Oliver looked over her trying to remember everything about her, knowing he would never really forget. He smiled genuinely at her, and she returned it

"Sweet dreams, travel safe" he said heading to the door, she followed as he opened it and stepped out

"Goodnight Oliver" she finally spoke as he headed down the corridor, he span around

"Goodbye Felicity" he waved. He turned quickly forcing himself to leave whilst he still could

"Goodbye" she said closing the door. As it shut she looked around at her apartment and decided to throw herself in to packing up more stuff.
At 9am all of Felicity's possessions were boxed up ready to leave. There was a slight tap on her door; she opened it to find a delivery man. He handed her a package, passing her the machine to sign then left. She looked at the package confused. She hadn't ordered anything. She slowly opened it to find a white box wrapped with a green bow. She laughed, this had to be Oliver.

She slowly pulled the bow opened and lifted the lid. She cautiously pulled back the wrapping paper and pulled out the gift. She turned it around. It was a large photo-frame, the word **Family** beautifully crafted into the frame in silver. The frame itself was emerald green, hence the words stuck out even more. She looked at the photo. It was from the previous night, all of the group together smiling. She forced her tears down then saw the note sticking out. She placed the photo down and grabbed it

**Felicity,**

I hope you like the present. We couldn't let you go without a leaving gift. This is from all of us because well you are and always will be family, and I don't want you to ever forget that you are always a part of our lives... The girls helped with the design, but obviously I chose the colour. Anyway I wish you all the best in the future. I hope you have an amazing life, one day you get married, you have children, a family, and that you have a life full of joy, happiness and love. And you die a happy old lady because you deserve nothing but the best.

You're always a part of the team

Love forever and always

Oliver x

She stared in disbelief at the note. **Oliver Queen loved her, he loved her enough to let her be happy with someone else, to wish her a happy future, to let her make her own choices.** She stood there just staring between the photo and the note. There was another tap on the door which brought her out of her thoughts. She placed the note back in the box. She opened the door not even thinking who it could be

"Hey" she blinked at Daniels emerald eyes staring at her

"Hi..." She frowned "I thought you were at work"

"I took some time off to help you move" he smiled at her then leant forward giving her a quick peck on the lips. She stood there dumb founded as he walked in. She closed the door behind him

"I thought the delivery guys were coming later..."

"They are but I thought I'd help you pack but you seem to have that pretty much covered" he looked around him at the boxes sprawled around

"Yes I kinda just blitzed through it but seeing as you're here do you want to go get breakfast?" She smiled now trying to push the thoughts of Olivers letter away

"Of course!"

"I'll just grab my coat" she walked off into the bedroom grabbing her coat from the chair. She looked around for a second. She was leaving her **home,** she was leaving her **family** and she couldn't shake this nagging feeling as if something wasn't quite right.

She walked back into the other room, as she made her way to Daniel she saw him reading the note from Oliver the picture now stood up. He turned to look at her with a blank expression

"I can explain…" he looked at the letter then her then the photo

"What's to explain Fliss?"
"It was a gift… for leaving"

"I gathered that much" he smiled sadly

"I just-

"You don't need to explain, I know" she frowned

"You know?"

"Oliver loves you… he's in love with you" she froze. Her expression must have conveyed her mixed emotions. Daniel laughed nervously "the night you got injured, he told me as much. He… he said it didn't matter, that he couldn't be with you, that I made you happy… that he needed you to be happy and safe which meant being with me, by making you hate him’ she frowned unsure what to say "But that's the thing isn't it?"

"What?"

"He pushed you away, and you still came back. You still couldn't leave him because you can't hate him… no matter what he does you just can't…"

"I don't understand Daniel" she frowned

"This picture" he pointed to the group "I haven't seen you smile like that since the attack"

"I'm sorry" was all she could find

"Don't apologise for being happy Fliss, these are your family, this is your home" he pointed around the room "I can't take you away from all of this, from him"

"You aren't taking me away… I'm choosing to leave" she stepped forward

"I need you to think about this Felicity, really think don't just answer" she nodded "you make me happy, and I know I do you… but happiness isn't everything, not in a relationship, so I'm going to ask these questions and I want you to really think about them okay?"

"Daniel-

"Please Felicity" she nodded him to continue "Do you really want to live with me, in Gotham?" she opened her mouth then closed it as he continued "and do you love me? Or are you in love with Oliver?" Felicity's mouth flew open in shock. She stood there her brain and heart stood still. Neither of them moved and Daniel could see her trying to figure it all out. Her brain kicked in first, and started working in over drive; did she want to live in Gotham? Did she love Daniel? Could she give up all of her stuff? Why was this, such a hard decision? Why was her heart hammering so hard, Could she love Oliver? She stared into Daniels emerald eyes feeling the familiar sense of safety washing over her and then it hit her. She started laughing hysterically

"Fliss are you okay?" Daniel asked. She merely nodded

"Sorry" she got out between laughs. She had finally realised she was in love with Oliver bloody Queen. She had a lovely gentleman, someone who cared about her, someone who could have made her happy, right in front of her but all she wanted was Oliver. All she needed was Oliver.

He infuriated her at times, made her so mad but here she was looking into the emerald eyes of her boyfriend and all she could think about was how the colour reminded her of him. The safety she felt
in Olivers arms, with Oliver by her side. She hadn't used her head at all; instead for once she was listening to her heart. But then it hit her again she had to let Daniel go.

"I am so sorry" she started and his head dropped

"Don't apologise, I should have known. You bring out the best in each other"

"No, you made me feel wanted… and I will never forget that, I am truly sorry but I do love Oliver" she grimaced at the end as it came out as a whisper, he looked at her sadly "and thank you for finally making me see it"

"It was my pleasure" he said softly "I'll go…"

"I am sorry Dan, I truly am… I've been so blind which is saying something considering I have glasses to help me with my sight-"

"Felicity, stop! It's okay, I should have seen this coming and I'm not going to get in the way. I should go" Daniel walked to the door

"Dan please let me explain…"

"There is nothing to explain, you love Oliver, and you chose Oliver"

"Can we be friends?" he sighed as he opened the door

"I, I need time Felicity… I want you to be happy, I really do but I was falling for you" her eyes shot wide, instantly she felt guilty

"I…I…"

"There really is nothing to say Felicity" he gave her a half hearted smile "I just need time" she nodded in understanding. She felt guilty about Daniel but here in Olivers arms she knew, knew she'd never make another choice again only Oliver

"We broke up" She felt Oliver stiffen

She didn't know how long she was there, but all she knew was she was being pulled into someone's lap, arms wrapping round her. She hit their chest hard. She recognised the smell, the feel, the touch. Oliver. She wrapped her arms around his neck

"Hey, hey" he said quietly "it's okay…"

"I know it is…" she replied not looking at him. He pulled her chin up, so blue eyes met blue and he frowned "Why are you here?"

"Daniel called me… said that you needed someone…" she nodded in understanding. She felt guilty about Daniel but here in Olivers arms she knew, knew she'd never make another choice again only Oliver

"We broke up" She felt Oliver stiffen
"What?" he said looking at her face

"I'm not going to Gotham. I'm not leaving Starling. I'm staying right here with my family..." she pointed to the photo on the counter "if they still want me?" she sound defeated now

"Always" he replied "your job at QC is yours and you are the heart of the team" she smiled a little nodding as he squeezed tighter. He wasn't going to ask her about the break up. Clearly whatever Daniel had said had hurt her from having found her on the floor in tears. But a part of him was so happy to have her stay, to keep her close. He knew they would never be together because he would destroy her, or worse get her killed. So he'd just have this, her friendship and her partnership.

Felicity could tell Oliver wanted to know about the break up but she wasn't ready to admit she loved him, just yet. She'd tell him soon, but right now she just needed him here as a friend. Though she also knew she had a bigger problem, which was trying to convince Oliver they could work. That there love was enough, although that would wait because right now was all that mattered.

After a several minutes they both got up. Oliver spent the whole day helping Felicity unpack everything. They ate takeout and watched trashy TV, they avoided anything that lead to romance or Daniel, even avoiding any other small contact. Felicity placed the photo-frame by her bed, as a reminder everyday she woke up that she had people who loved her, who mattered.

After an exhausting day Felicity fell asleep on the couch. Oliver picked her up and placed her in bed, he placed a gentle kiss on her temple as she snuggled in the sheets

"I love you Felicity Meghan Smoak..." he said gently "and I will always be here for you but we can't ever be together" he let a tear roll down his cheek as he stood up and walked away, leaving Felicity to rest and headed home.

Felicity wasn't as deep in sleep as Oliver thought, as a tear rolled down her cheek as he walked away. She knew this was not going to be easy, but now she knew it was going to be near impossible. But she wasn't giving up, not now.
Chapter 39

One month later

"Oliver..." Felicity said softly he didn't even stop "OLIVER" she said forcefully. He froze on the spot spinning to meet her gaze

"What? Are you okay?" He stepped closer towards her, she put her hand up

"Stop okay? Just stop" he frowned "I am fine"

"You aren't fine Felicity you wouldn't be in hospital on this bed if you were" he said anger and despair in his tone

"No but your pacing doesn't help!" She snapped staring at him arms crossed

"I am not pacing!" He practically growled, Felicity groaned

"Just go, Oliver"

"Excuse me?"

"The gala starts in 30minutes you can still make it, maybe be a little late but you can still go"

"No"

"Why not?"

"Because I'm not leaving you here"

"Oliver this gala is important, your new image remember? And your parents' memory, plus the city-"

"Felicity no. It doesn't matter"

" I am perfectly fine, this isn't your fault!"

"But-"

"Don't you even dare! I am not some breakable china doll... It was my own stupid fault Oliver so just go" she turned to her side in anger then, as the door opened and Diggle walked in
"I'm not leaving you Feli-"

"OLIVER JONAS QUEEN" she jumped off the bed swaying slightly as her bare feet hit the ground. Both men shot by her side but she put her hands out in protest stopping them "get the hell out!" She pointed to Oliver then the door "Diggle can take you home then to the gala, then he can come back here just to put your mind at rest"

"But..."

"Oliver please... Just go, and don't feel guilty or anything" she smiled softly as she sat on the edge of the bed. Oliver sighed in defeat

"If you need anything call me okay?"

"Fine" she said rolling her eyes

"And Diggle will come back after I go home, and I'll have a different driver pick me up" he looked at Diggle who nodded in response

"Whatever Oliver" Felicity said curling back on to the bed ignoring the throbbing in her head, Oliver looked at her then Diggle and left "aren't you going too?"

"Yes but I'm also here for you too" he said placing a bag on the bed beside her "a change of clothes out of that" he gestured to her red gown now looking a little worse for wear

"I'm fine Diggle"

"You can say that all you want to him but I ain't buying it, so come on spill" she looked at him with teary eyes

"Tonight was meant to be special... But then I go and get injured. I see the way he looks at me" she sighed "especially after he beat up that guy..."

"Special?" Diggle frowned and Felicity blushed

"I was going to tell him how I felt" she was unable to look at him "show him and it was all planned then tonight happened and well, he looks like the world just got destroyed" she glances up then "and his eyes with that man, he didn't look like him" she sighed

"Hey, it doesn't need to be perfect... Just give him time" he looked at her "and that man, we both know what would have happened if Oliver hadn't had come, so just forget it" he tried to reassure her like it was no big deal

"I've given him nothing but time Dig" she sound slightly deflated, and nodded in acknowledgement of his statement

"I know it's frustrating but he'll get there" he squeezed her arm "that or just tell him the truth... He might need a reality check" she chuckled a little "I'll be right back okay?"

"Okay"

Oliver was outside by the car waiting when Diggle appeared

"Is she alright?"

"She's fine Oliver her wounds are superficial"
"I meant you were awhile"

"Just chatting she was looking forward to tonight" he sighed "oh that and the fact you beat the purp up badly no judgement man I saw what he did" Oliver dropped his head in shame; it was his fault she got hurt. But he couldn't help but defend her. They got in the car in silence as Oliver's brain wandered over the day's events.

"So what you're saying is this casino owner has managed to find the "missing" crate of vertigo?" Oliver asked

"Yes" Felicity nodded

"And he'd been dosing his punters with it to encourage them to gamble more?"

"Yes"

"And he's now deciding to sell it because he might have found someone to recreate the drug?"

"Yes... Are you okay Oliver? You have just repeated everything I said" she frowned slightly

"Yes I just… we need to break in tonight then?" he asked

"I didn't say anything about tonight; you have the gala tonight" she frowned

"But"

"I might sound incredibly selfish right now but don't go… The gala's important, this can wait" she smiled tilting her head

"I'm still the Arrow Felicity. I know it has been relatively quiet but we all know it's not going to be peaceful for too long" she closed her eyes

"Well if we infiltrate the casino, get the vertigo and leave before the gala even starts we get the best of both worlds right?" Diggle jumped in

"Exactly!" Felicity grinned looking his way from her swivel chair

"But how do we infiltrate the casino without being caught?"

"We send a man in" Diggle grinned "a distraction"

"Well I can't be seen in there, you know the image and all that. I couldn't get away with it" they both nodded in agreement

"I could always-" Diggle started

"I can go, I can count cards…"

"No, no I'm not allowing it"

"Oliver it's an easy job, it's all probability theory and mathematics. Have you met me?" She stood up "bottom line, I know my way around a casino"

"Felicity I'm not letting you walk-"

"Hey I'm in this just as much as you or am I a liability?" Oliver closed his eyes briefly remembering
that night in the hospital

"All right but we do it my way"

They stood just around the corner from the casino. Felicity was in a floor length red gown, contacts in and hair down but pulled to one side she didn’t look the same as she usually did. Oliver was hooded up and Diggle all in black

"So the plan is I go in get caught counting cards, whilst you two break in find the crate and leave. I'll get a minor telling off and kicked out"

"That’s the plan" Oliver nodded "the owner has no violent history so you should be okay but I'll be listen if anything happens"

"Okay"

"You don't have to do this" she gave both men a knowing look, before she span on her heels and entered the casino

"How can a casino have no slot machines?" Felicity asked absent mindedly. Diggle chuckled

"Stay focused please, we're making our way to the underground level. I'll be with you the entire time Felicity"

"Thanks; it feels good having you inside of me" Diggle stifled a laugh. Felicity closed her eyes "and by "you" I mean your voice and by "me" I mean my ear" she frowned to herself "I'm going to stop talking right now"

"That would be my preference" Oliver returned clenching his jaw at Felicitys impromptu innuendo, he tried to suppress the want in his chest at her accidental slip

"Good luck guys"

"We'll be fine, make sure you are too" Diggle answered as Oliver tried to compose himself. Oliver and Diggle easily by passed the security, finding the crate with relative ease. Felicity was still upstairs and her distraction was working as she was being taken to the manager's office

"Here you go boss" the man said pushing Felicity through the door and slamming it behind her

"What's your name sweetheart?"

"Meghan"

"Well Meghan I must say I'm a little disappointed" he stepped closer to her "tut tut tut such a pretty face" he stroked a finger down her cheek and she pulled back instinctively glaring at him "Meghan I am afraid you are band from this establishment leave your chips at the door" She turned on her heels and made for the exit but before she had a chance. He grabbed her hair pulling her backwards with force. As he did so her heel got caught in her dress ripping it and snapped her heel causing her to collapse. Smacking her head on the desk in the process

"Ouch" she said softly, Oliver and Diggle froze in place at the exit

"Felicity are you okay what's happening?" She pulled her hand to her head feeling a warm sticky substance she pulled it down to see blood

"Oh..." The owner pulled her up, forcing her back against a wall hand around her throat
"Felicity talk to us" Diggle added with force

"Well Meghan I must say most card counters work with a partner" he pushed her hair aside pulling out her ear piece and crushing it in his hand

"You aren't going to like my partner" she spat out. Without warning he pulled a small blade from his pocket placing it next to her face

"Well we don't want to destroy that pretty face of yours for your partner, do we?" He ran the blade down the length of her body, stopping at her now exposed thigh from the rip she had caused earlier. He pressed firmly and Felicity bit her lip, she could feel the drip of blood escaping from the wound but she wasn't giving him the satisfaction of her cries. He pressed a little firmer still, pulling the blade slightly down.

Just then the door sprung open. Oliver had kicked it down. He looked up to see Felicity, blood running down her face, the man's hand around her neck and his other hand near her thigh. He growled in anger as he released an arrow straight into his hand. He dropped the blade and Felicity. She fell to the floor in a heap, taking big breaths to focus her mind again. When she looked up Oliver had ripped the arrow from the man's hand

"You have FAILED this city" he said grabbing his bow and hitting him hard in the face. He dropped back but Oliver didn't stop, quickly spinning and taking his legs out from under him. He screamed in pain as there were several snapping sounds when he hit the ground. Oliver threw his bow over his shoulder grabbing the man by the collar, staring him in his now bloodied face

"Please, I'll leave her alone I won't touch her again" he punched him hard in the nose, crunching and more screaming followed

"You shouldn't have touched her in the first place!" He said angrier then Felicity had ever heard. She was taken aback at the situation, adrenaline now kicking in she pulled herself up. Oliver pulled his fist back and then he felt a hand around his clenched fist

"Enough" she said slowly, he turned to look at her and he saw it in her eyes the fear he had caused. He dropped the man and let his fist drop, he turned away until the man laughed and Oliver with one kick knocked him out "Really was that necessary?" He just growled in response as he went to pick her up "no I can walk" he frowned and slipped a hand round her waist to hold her up

"Hold on to me tightly Felicity"

"I imagined you saying that to me under different circumstances" both froze, had she genuinely just said that, she flushed in embarrassment "very platonic circumstances" she corrected herself, no longer able to meet his gaze. They left and Diggle met them by the car

"We need to take you to hospital..." He said. The adrenaline was now wearing off as she felt her head pound. Both men looked at each other concern edged on their faces as she wasn't talking or protesting

"Right, you get changed in the car" He said to Oliver as he placed Felicity in the front seat "I'll drop you off at hospital, go take your suit and Vertigo back to the Foundry then pick up some clothes for Felicity and come straight back, okay?"

"Yes" Oliver said jumping in the back and throwing on spare clothes as Diggle sped off "what's the story then?"

"I dunno head injury in that kind of dress?" Diggle frowned
"I broke my heel" Felicity said absent mindedly. Both men gave each other a look.

"Yes, but you have bigger things to deal with" Diggle said again looking at Oliver in the back, still very worried about her.

"No, that's the story..."

"Felicity..." Oliver said slowly placing a hand on her shoulder, she turned slightly to look at him causing him to move his hand.

"I was running late from work, rushing round ready for the gala. Lift was taking too long rushed down the stairs heel snapped, caught my dress hence the rip. Leg got snagged on a nail or something and banged my head. Called Diggle who was taking you home to get ready, so you came and got me, took me to hospital... But I was rushing because I wasn't sure on which dress and I left the one I really wanted to wear in my mini, which is actually true" both men smiled. She had thought of a plan, rambled and joked she was fine, maybe a little shook up but she was still Felicity. But Oliver couldn't shake the worry.

Felicity stood up from the bed, dress, and heels thrown away wanting to forget the disastrous event. They were now replaced by joggers and a T-shirt. Her leg stitched and bandaged. Her face and head wound cleaned, her hair pulled back. But the wound wasn't deep so it was healing by itself. When there was a tap at the door, and it opened lightly, Felicity was too busy sorting out to notice.

"Felicity?" She span around at the soft voice to see Thea was there holding various bags, wearing a navy blue backless gown.

"Thea? What are you doing here?"

"Well, the news reported my brother coming to hospital with a blond lady I naturally presumed you" she smiled softly "plus I asked Mr Diggle, who explained about your dress and heel disaster"

"Yep a bit of klutz me" she waved her hand.

"You don't look too beat up" Thea said placing bags on the bed.

"Well as I tried to explain to your brother it looked worse than it was" she smile sadly "but you still haven't answered my question"

"I'm here to get Cinderella ready for the ball" she teased.

"Cinderella isn't going to the ball... She kind of ruined it for herself"

"What did the doctor say?"

"No signs of concussion, superficial head wound that should clear up its self and my leg wound needed stitches, not to overdo it and not be alone tonight... Just to be careful" Thea grinned.

"So what stops you going to the ball?" She winked.

"Thea, I just..." she sighed.

"You were trying to impress my brother and feel a little embarrassed he saw you like this first" her eyes shot wide open "oh don't look at me like that, it's obvious to everyone how you two feel about each other"
"Everyone?" Felicity whispered

"Yep, they even started having a bet on when it would happen after the whole Daniel thing"

"What? And let me guess you have money on tonight?" She said crossing her arms defensively

"It was only a bit of fun, and actually Felicity I don't. I had it ages ago and all I want is to see you and him happy" she stepped closer "because I've seen how he lights up around you, since he returned you have brought him out of himself and this past month he's been grinning, laughing, even joking more so than he ever has. That's the thing Felicity he might not admit it but you bring out the best in him and I've seen the looks you give him... Like he's the only thing that matters" she smiled to herself "you both deserve to be happy"

"I know that, it's just convincing him we're worth it" she said looking down

"He knows you're worth it" she frowned

"Yes but is it worth destroying our friendship, our partnership? Plus your lifestyle, the press it scares him; me getting involved" Felicity lied unable to tell her about the arrow business

"See that's the thing Fliss his argument is invalid when you, as his EA, deal with all that anyway" Felicity nodded "so are you going to let me help get you ready?"

"Depends what you brought?"

"All of this was in your car, Mr Diggle said something about this was the outfit you wanted to wear but in a rush threw on some other stuff and fell down the stairs..." She nodded

"Yes the outfit in my mini was my first choice"

"Well then... Let's get you ready" she grinned as Felicity returned it lightly.

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Oliver was stood in the grand hall of one of Starlings most prestigious buildings. He stood at the podium, wearing his fitted tuxedo, with bow tie in place. He pulled out his pre-prepared speech

"Ladies and Gentlemen welcome, this evening is to raise money for the people in this city who need it most, who lost family, homes, small businesses, which need a helping hand. This evening is in honour of my parents, in their memories I want this city to be something to be proud of. So here's the catch this evening of dancing, entertainment, food and auctioning is all to get you to give money. Every penny we make tonight I will personally match" the crowd gasped "I've been helping build the new children's centre, rebuilding homes and I want to give back even more... So thank you for coming and I hope you enjoy your evening. But just don't forget what this evening is all about hence the photography, and pictures around the room" everyone started applauding and he took a step back before remembering something "I also apologise for my tardiness this evening, my associate Miss Smoak had an accident this evening, and I wanted to make sure she was okay first because well she made all of this possible" he gestured around the room as the applause grew, he bowed leaving the stage.

Oliver spent the next hour schmoozing the guests, board members, several large company bosses and even the richest of Starling's occupants, till he finally found Laurel and Tommy on the balcony overlooking the city

"What happened to Felicity?" Tommy enquired giving him a knowing look, Oliver rubbed his hand on the back of his neck
"She fell..."

"We all know that's not what really happened" Laurel smiled reassuringly "guessing it was something to with the night activities?" Oliver looked around to check they were completely alone

"Yes, she insisted on being a distraction and she got injured, it's completely my fault"

"What happened?" Tommy said patting him on the back now free to use both arms after having his cast removed

"One of her heels snapped causing her to fall and bang her head. She was in a vulnerable position which some purp took advantage of, he held a blade to her and sliced her leg a little to punish me" Tommy closed his eyes

"Well if one thing's for sure I'm sure she'd do it all again" Laurel said both men looked up at her with clear confusion "what?" She frowned "I'm sorry but we all know Felicity is stronger than she looks, she has a solid heart and great belief in you Ollie and what you do, so don't be shocked that she would willingly be in harm's way for you"

"But she shouldn't be, I should be able to protect her..."

"Yes but we don't all need protection, not all the time" she said crossing her arms "and you both know I'm right. Felicity is fine, and she would easily beat anyone with her skills, she could torture you both by her computer skills alone. So stop blaming yourself Oliver because I bet she isn't blaming you"

"I think my girlfriend here is right" Tommy agreed putting his arm around her waist pulling her closer and pecking a kiss on her cheek

"But..."

"No buts Oliver, as Felicity once told me she isn't a little girl, it's her life and I trust both her judgement and you" Tommy grinned at him "she is okay though isn't she?"

"Yes as far as I am aware, actually I should probably be calling Diggle to check" he still felt guilty about Felicity, and if it wasn't for their last conversation he would have left the gala without hesitation

"No need" Oliver turned his head to the balcony doors to see Thea making her way towards them

"I wandered where you were" Oliver said giving her a quick peck on the cheek "you look beautiful"

"Why thank you Ollie" she grinned

"And what did you mean by no need?"

"Oh, I've been to the hospital"

"Excuse me?"

"You aren't the only one who cares about Felicity you know?" Tommy couldn't help a chuckle that escaped and Oliver gave him a quick glance

"How is she?"

"She is absolutely fine" she smiled wide then
"Really?"

"Yes all superficial, and well to be honest she seemed more embarrassed than anything else..." Oliver shook his head "oh that and she was really looking forward to this evening" She winked at Laurel and Tommy, who knowingly grinned

"I don't know why? It's just the same faces of the high and mighty of Starling"

"They aren't all like that you know..." Oliver froze. He recognised her voice instantly he span around to see Felicity stepping onto the balcony. His mouth flew open then he closed it, tightening his clenched fists.

She was wearing a floor length green gown. His colour. He couldn't keep his eyes from roaming down her. The gown had a gold diamante encrusted band meaning the dress pulled in at the middle and flowed over her hips making her figure and curves stand out even more. The neck was cut low, down to the base of her sternum, revealing a little of the round flesh of her breasts. Oliver licked his lips still unable to look away, as she stepped even closer. Her hair was down and curled cascading over her bare shoulders, her glasses replaced with contacts so her beautiful blue eyes sparkled in the moonlight. Her makeup and gold accessories made her look completely classy

"Earth to Oliver" she said waving a hand in front of his face, he blinked finally pulled back into reality. He could feel Laurel, Tommy and Theas eyes on him as he smiled wide at her. She returned it "By all I mean you" she smiled wider "oh and Tommy of course“ she stepped passed Oliver to give him and Laurel a hug.

It was then that Oliver saw the back of her dress, well lack of. The straps from the front crossed linking to the fabric near her hips and all he could see was her ivory skin, shining in the moonlight. She looked breathtaking in this dress. He swallowed hard, resisting the urge to touch his partner. She wasn't his. She deserved so much better

"Well I think we'll go get another drink" Laurel said dragging Tommy along

"Yes and I should go schmooze some guests" Thea added chasing after them

"You-" Felicity started "don't need to go“ she finished quietly as the two were left in silence. Felicity leant on the balcony bars looking up to the sky. Oliver couldn't stop staring

"You look beautiful" he said standing by her side

"You have to say that... You're my friend" she said "and you don't look to bad in a tuxedo and bow tie either"

"I shouldn't say it because you're my friend... You look, graceful, heavenly, magnificent, honestly. And this" he gestured towards himself "is nothing compared to you" she blushed looking away and he watched as it spread across her chest hiding under the cover of her dress, then he felt a wave of guilt "I'm sorry about tonight"

"Please tell me you aren't apologising for me getting injured" she said rolling her eyes at him

"No, well yes that and what I did to that guy"

"Well don't, not for the injury... And it's okay to slip you are only human. Just you know try not to kill the bad guy especially not for me" he sighed she really didn't understand he'd always kill for her. He went to speak but she continued "isn't it striking?"
"What?" He said confused as she looked up at the darkened sky, swirled with purples, blues and the moonlight, with dark clouds circling and a few stars visible.

"The sky. The calm before the storm" she looked at him then "they have forecast storms tonight and it's always so peaceful before, so gorgeous. Then the storm comes in wrecks and makes things into a mess but in its wake it leaves more peace... More beauty" she smiled at him then with genuine sincerity. He looked up taking in the sky and for the first time seeing the beauty of the darkness, but it wasn't just darkness there was colour too.

"You're right, it is outstanding" he turned to her grinning so much it caused his eyes to sparkle and Felicity felt the butterflies in her stomach at how he was looking at her, it was now or never.

"Oliver, I-"

"Excuse me Sir" both turned their heads to see the auction master stood before them "the auction is about to start and we need you to do the introductions" Oliver stood up straight.

"I'll be there in a second" the man nodded before spinning around and leaving.

"Go, you have a job to do" she smiled softly whilst reaching up to straighten his bow tie.

"How do I look?"

"Like a hero and the man I love. She sighed thanking god her filter was working. He span around to leave then turned out placing his arm out for her to take. She smiled slipping her arm under his and linking them together.

"Promise me" she turned to look at him as they walked in "we'll get a dance together later" she felt the air rush out of her and the joy spread from her head to her toes.

"I promise" they both couldn't stop grinning as they entered the hall together.

The auction was done and food had been served. The tables were being cleared away as the band started playing music. Oliver had been dragged away by various guests never getting more than a sorrowful glance at Felicity. She was sat on a bar stool, non-alcoholic drink in hand.

"Miss Smoak" Felicity looked to her side to see Quentin and Sara stood smiling at her.

"Captain Lance! Sara!" Felicity jumped up hugging both.

"Call me Quentin".

"Then you call me Felicity" she smiled "you both look so good! And I can't believe you're back!"

"Well it's what a job promotion does to you" he winked.

"I told you, I'd visit, and well I couldn't miss tonight. Ollie's big gala event to show the world he's changed"

"And that he has" Quentin said, both girls looked at him a little shocked "what? A man can't change his opinion" Sara laughed.

"Of course he can but I mean considering the history, he broke both your girls hearts and then you know all the rebellious drunken antics-" they both looked at her trying hard to not laugh "I'm going to stop because well yeh..." She dropped her head briefly.
"All I care about is he doesn't break my other girls heart" Quentin said slowly. Felicity's head bolted up in shock and surprise by the entire statement, he knew they loved each other and she was one of his girls "yes Felicity, the work you do with our mutual friend, well it makes me care about you like you're my own. Oh and of course everyone knows. It just seems to be you two who don't..." Oh god she had said it out loud. She blushed with embarrassment as Quentin chuckled placing a arm round her shoulders and squeezing "take it from someone who knows, if you leave things too late they often don't work out" he sadly looked at Sara who nodded clearly thinking about his ex-wife

"Thank you Cap- Quentin" she smiled forcing the tears away

"Anytime sweetheart, just you know let me know if he hurts you and I'll have his arse arrested... I'll find a reason" he half joked before Laurel appeared asking her father for a dance

"Diggle told me about the incident earlier" Sara said softly grinning

"Urgh honestly it was nothing... I was more worried about the guy when Oliver started pounding on him"

"He's still fighting his demons Felicity"

"I know, I don't expect him to be perfect I mean god knows I'm not but he nearly killed the guy because he touched me" she sighed "but he won't even touch me..." Her hand flew to her mouth and Sara couldn't help laughing "I did not say that aloud!"

"Maybe you should tell him that" Sara winked

"Oh yeh, Oliver I want you to touch me"

"Excuse me?" Felicity closed her eyes at the tone of his voice. She span around to see Daniel stood there

"That was not how it sound" she cringed sliding further into the seat. He and Sara both laughed harder "what are you doing here?" She cringed again "that wasn't meant to be how that sound either, I mean it's nice to see you" Daniel smiled broader

"Fliss it's fine... I came as a representative of Wayne Enterprises he's made a donation tonight, anonymously of course but I'm to give it to Oliver or Walter personally"

"Oh..." Sara looked at the pair

"I'm just going to give Nyssa a quick call check everything is... Okay" she said sliding away from the pair

"How are you? I mean we didn't exactly leave things well last time... I mean totally my fault" she turned even more crimson

"Fliss honestly I'm great, works doing well and I met someone" he smiled wide his eyes sparkling

"Good. Good! You deserve happiness and I'm guessing she lives closer?"

"Yes she does thank you. And you two?" He gestured between her and Oliver the other side of the room

"Oh... Well" she shifted in her seat; he placed a hand on her shoulder

"Still complicated?" She sighed then
"More than I ever thought"

"I'm sure he'll come round" she gave him a sad smile

"Here's hoping"

Oliver was getting fed up of the never ending guests who were after his time. Not for the charity but to get QC on board. They tried sweet talking him, tried talking figures, offering various amounts of money for the charity. He shot each down reminding them he was not CEO. When he finally got a break he turned towards where Felicity had been. He felt his heart hammering as he saw her talking to Daniel then the pair slowly make their way to the dance floor.

Oliver was frozen in place, he thought he and Felicity had been getting closer, that maybe she felt something too. But here she was smiling and dancing with Daniel. He was no competition, Daniel wasn't broken or scarred and he knew it was too good to be true that they broke up and she stayed for him. He sighed to himself. He really did need to keep her away, if tonight had proved anything it was that Felicity was always in danger if she was with Oliver, even more so if anything happened between the two. But maybe his feelings were unreciprocated anyway. She was his friend yes, and clearly was attracted to him from the innuendoes and glances at him working out. However maybe that's all it was. He took a deep breath, needing some air to clear his head so made his way outside.

He stepped out front thanking the gods that the press were now nowhere to be seen. He loosened his bow tie and undid his top button letting the cool night air fill his lungs. He walked down the steps till he was on the street. He heard heels clicking on the marble stairs and turned to see Felicity heading his way

"Are you okay?" She said slightly out of breathe as she stood on the bottom step, holding the railing for support as the sky flashed with lighting and the thunder rolled on after

"I'm fine" he lied not looking at her "just go back enjoy yourself. I know you were looking forward to it" now he knew Daniel was the reason why

"I..." She frowned "it's not the same without you" she said softly

"I've been gone a few minutes, if that Felicity. Not much of an impact plus you were enjoying yourself" She frowned harder

"Well are you coming back inside so we can dance?"

"No, I don't think we should" he shuffled his feet not meeting her eyes. She placed her hand on his arm

"Oliver what's wrong? I can tell something's wrong, your top buttons open for a start that's never a good sign-" he looked into her eyes and she saw sadness, nothing like before but it made her heart ache

"I don't think we can do this anymore"

"What?" She said squeezing his arm tighter

"Why are you wearing my colour?" She looked down at herself in confusion, where's he going with this? When she looked up her eyes met his

"Isn't it obvious?" She blushed slightly
"Because of the Arrow, what we do" he whispered. She nodded about to open her mouth to explain how much more it meant than that, when he jumped in "I think we should stop"

"Stop what Oliver?" She said letting go of the rail and placing her other hand on his chest

"Whatever this is... Before we can't go back, before it changes forever" her hands fell to her sides in an instance. She felt her world crash in around her. He had said he loved her was it all a lie? Had he changed his mind like everyone else? She couldn't speak her voice seemed to stop in her throat as the sky once again flashed, not even the rumble of thunder broke her thoughts

"I can't be with you, look at how you get injured..." his words snapped her back

"I could get hurt being part of the team not just 'cause of being with you" she said softly staring at him

"Why do you think I wanted you to go! I don't want to see you hurt, I can't control myself when you're hurt" she said softly staring at him

"Oh cut the crap Oliver I have to see you hurt, I've seen you almost die and that doesn't stop me, actually it makes me want you more" Oliver froze then, she really did want him "because god damn it life is short! And control yourself? Oliver I'm not asking you to protect me"

"Life is short even more so with me, which is why I can't give you what you want... I have control apart from when you're involved. Tonight was the prime example, because you are my weakness Felicity and I can't have people exploiting that"

"You don't know what I want Oliver you aren't me! And they'll exploit how you feel about me if we're together or not" she shouted over the thunder that seemed to be getting closer

"No but I know what's best, I know what could happen. Tonight could have gone so different if I hadn't got to you or if you hadn't stopped me I would have killed that guy" he looked in her eyes then

"But it didn't and you didn't" she reached for him and he took a step back. She dropped her head before looking back up at him the tears forming in her eyes, she felt the words rising allowing her insecurities to show "I get it Oliver, you changed your mind… you don't want me and that's fine but stop giving me stupid excuses. I know okay? I've grown up with the harsh reality that I am not the one most people love, that I wasn't enough for my own father, that I am so unlov-" Oliver couldn't bear it. He couldn't stand the way she spoke like that and he stepped forward silencing her by placing his lips against hers with all the passion and emotion he could muster.

It took Felicity nearly 5 seconds to realise she was being kissed. But she didn't pull away instead she wrapped her arms around his neck, being stood on the first step in heels making her nearer to his height. She laced her fingers through his short hair as he tangled a hand in her locks deepening the kiss and his other hand wrapped around her waist pulling her flush against his chest.

They hadn't even noticed the sky darken around them and the rain fall hard. The warmth that spread through them both, made all their senses come to life. They could feel the rain on their skin but it didn't feel cold. It didn't even make them pause. Oliver pulled away first both breathing heavy, lips swollen and cheeks flushed. Felicity opened her eyes and looked into his. She saw it there the guilt, the regret. The warmth she felt disappeared in an instant as the rain beat down on them. Their clothes were soaked, Oliver stepped forward

"I can't be with anyone romantically ever, but if I could, It would be you Felicity, always you"
without much thought and with the anger bubbling away, she pulled her arm back and slapped him hard across the face. Oliver was shocked; it didn't move him or even hurt him. He just couldn't believe it. He turned his head back around to meet her.

"That is completely unfair Oliver you can't just kiss me like that and then say that" she didn't stop the tears from falling now, but with the rain already ruining her makeup she didn't care. She shivered and Oliver stepped forward to grab her.

"Come on lets go back inside out of the rain"

"No" she said taking the last step down and walking past him "I thought I could do this, I thought you'd understand we were worth it that you were it for me... That moving on doesn't work and that finally after this last month we might be able to become... something. But you don't" she sighed he stepped towards her as the rain started to steady slightly

"Felicity-"

"No" she raised her hand "I can't, I just can't... Goodnight Oliver" she span around and before Oliver had the chance to grab her she ran over to a nearby taxi jumping inside. He let his head drop to his chest and his shoulders slumped, as the reality of what just happened sunk in.

"Well he's an idiot" Thea said rolling her eyes. She, Roy, Laurel, Tommy, Sara, Diggle, and Quentin all stood under umbrellas on the balcony having had just witnessed the scene in front of them, even if they couldn't hear it.

"So much for them getting together eventually" Tommy sighed

"It's clearly my idiotic brother I don't see what his problem is!" Laurel, Tommy, Sara and Diggle all gave each other a quick knowing glance

"All I'm saying is I'm proficient in firearms if that boy doesn't sort this" Quentin said shaking his head and proceeding to go back inside.

"Some things are complicated" Laurel said turning to face Thea "look at you and Roy, you come from two different worlds but you both took a leap of faith, Ollie's just not sure if that jump is worth it because it could destroy a lot of things"

"That's all excuses..." Roy said softly. They all turned to look at him "it might destroy things but it could also create some glorious things too, like memories, friendships" Roy dropped his head slightly embarrassed as Thea gently placed a kiss to his cheek

"Kids right" Diggle said

"Maybe it's time we gave them a gentle push" Sara said softly

"I think with my brother it'll have to be an almighty shove"
Chapter 40

Chapter Notes

Here it is guys... the final chapter! I'll leave another note at the end for you :P ;) but I have had a rough day today so I hope this goes down well...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After awhile Oliver walked back into the hall water dripping from his now ruined tuxedo. He headed for the men's bathroom to attempt to dry himself in some way. He pulled his jacket off, leaving it on the counter near the sink. He dried off his face and hair with the paper towels provided, he was staring at his reflection in the mirror

"Ollie" he spun around to see Thea stood with her arms crossed over here chest glaring at him

"You do realise this is the men's room right?" he said absently

"Oh shut it Ollie, I saw what happened"

"What?" he frowned, grabbing his jacket off the side and ramming it under the hand dryer. She walked over to him and grabbed the jacket out of his hands. He turned looking at her a little bewildered

"Stop!" he frowned at her "I don't know what you said to her, but take your head out your arse and fix this"

"There is nothing to fix Speedy"

"Oh stop with the bull Ollie, I saw you. You don't kiss a girl like that and it not mean something"

"I can't Thea" he said looking down

"See that's the thing isn't it Ollie, it's not can't it's wont" she placed his jacket on the side "I'm sure there are things I don't understand… but I do see how you two are around each other, how much you mean-"

"No Thea, you don't understand" it came out firm and stoic, he was not getting a lecture from his baby sister

"You know what Ollie, screw this… you deserved that slap. All we want is you two to be happy. But if you can't pull your head out from whatever hole you've had it in, to see what's right in front of you then be alone, be miserable. Because if you can't see how she has helped make you better, then you don't deserve her" Thea stormed off slamming the door behind her leaving Oliver a little dumbstruck. His baby sister had just shouted, telling him exactly the reason why he'd never be with Felicity, because he didn't deserve her. He sighed heavily fighting the tears, before he returned to attempting to dry himself.

30 minutes later still damp Oliver stepped out the bathroom, he needed to change his suit. He was glad he had remembered to bring a spare one. He made his way down the hall way, walking straight passed anyone that attempted to talk to him, he was too angry, too upset to hear anymore business
talk. When he stepped in the room, it was grand like the rest but this was smaller, clearly an office of sorts from the desks and computers around. His spare suit was hanging to one side. He peeled his wet suit off, and slowly got changed he didn't want to attend the event anymore. All he could feel was Felicity's soft lips on his, then the look in her eyes at his words, the tears falling down her face because of him.

He was just pulling his suspenders over his shoulders when the door opened. He turned to see Laurel and Tommy walking in, he sighed. Clearly another lecture was coming and he just couldn't be bothered anymore

"If you guys are here about Felicity-"

"We're here for you both Ollie" Laurel said giving him a sad smile "we understand what you do is dangerous but-"

"That's it Laurel, it is dangerous. There are no buts. If me and her…" he closed his eyes pinching the bridge of his nose "she'll be in more danger and I can't allow that, I… I care about her too much for that"

"But… what about her?" Laurel asked giving a sympathetic look

"What do you mean?" he frowned

"What does she want" he sighed again

"It doesn't matter what either wants, it's about doing the right thing…" Tommy stepped forward

"I don't believe that's the real reason for all this Oliver" Tommy said giving him a knowing look, Oliver dropped into the seat beside him

"I was mistaken…" they both frowned at him "this past month with everything, I thought I could be, be normal…” he looked up then "I was wrong to think that I can do what I do and still have a normal life with anyone, tonight proved that"

"But if you are alone, you are never going to be happy" Tommy said staring at him compassionately

"It doesn't matter my happiness takes a back seat"

"But what about hers?" Laurel asked gently

"She is better off without me, the people who get close to me get hurt… you're both prime examples of that and so is she" he placed his head in his hands

"But that's the past Ollie" Laurel frowned "you aren't that man anymore"

"No I'm not, but this life" he gestured to himself "is too complicated I can't be Oliver Queen and the Arrow, so I have to sacrifice Oliver so the city is safe…"

"When you believe in something Oliver, you find a way to make it work, because when someone comes in and sees the real you" Tommy turned to Laurel smiling "it doesn't matter how hard things get as long as you do it together" Tommy wrapped his arm around Laurels waist squeezing tightly

"But-

"That's it isn't it Ollie?" Laurel said slowly "you just keep using excuse after excuse to be unhappy… but maybe if you allow yourself you can be ecstatic like you never have before" Oliver stood up
pulling on his jacket, adjusting his bow tie

"I appreciate what you're trying to do guys but I'm not what Felicity needs, she deserves so much better like Daniel" he lowered his head as he walked out the room

"He is so stubborn" Laurel added shaking her head

"I don't think he's being stubborn, I think he's scared…" she frowned looking at him "scared of what will happen if he lets her in and he loses her, or he damages her like himself" Laurel sighed

"Sometimes I wish you guys would just tell us all this rather than just make up excuses" he chuckled lightly

"I'm trying, I love you"

"I know you are and I love you too"

Oliver headed straight for the bar. He could feel Thea's intense glare on the back of his head, knowing full well if looks could kill he would be dead ten times over. He didn't even glance in her direction because he was most definitely not in the mood for her. He sat on the bar stool staring into his whiskey, gently swirling the glass. He tried not to think about what his friends had said. He wanted Felicity but she clearly wanted Daniel, he ended the relationship. He presumed he had anyway, because Felicity never wanted to talk about it. Now he was back and she would want him, because why would she want scarred, broken Oliver Queen ex-playboy whose secret identity could get her killed. He closed his eyes trying to fight the feel of her body against his. She fit so perfectly like no other woman and he couldn't stop the feeling in his chest.

A hand on his back brought him back into the room; he turned to see Sara sitting beside him wine in hand

"If you're here to give me advice or yet another lecture just don't Sara okay?" she nodded they both drank in silence, the music and people around them seemingly forgotten

"Someone once told me…" he turned his head giving her a look but she didn't stop "Love is the most powerful emotion" he dropped his head taking a big breath, of course it was he knew it was. It was the reason he was sat here now, trying hard fighting every instinct to go to her because he didn't deserve her. Plus she didn't love him, why on earth would she? He looked up at her then she stood up about to go then turned to him leaning in "We need people in our lives that don't wear masks Ollie, to remind us that there is more to life than what we do" she walked off slowly leaving him with his thoughts. He wanted desperately to have a normal life but he knew, knew he could never have one. Yet he wanted to try with her. But he couldn't risk taking that leap when he loved her so much and she didn't.

Oliver stood up plastering on his fake smile and made the rounds, trying to forget about all the looks his friends and Thea were giving him. The charity donations were coming in, giving Oliver a sense of pride but it didn't last long when all he pictured was Felicity's face as she ran away from him. He wanted to make it up to her but he knew if he did there would be no turning back.

Oliver found himself on the balcony looking at the beautiful sky now that the storm had subsided. Felicity was of course correct the storm that had rampaged on, now had left beauty in its wake. It was a mix of purples, blues and blacks all fighting to make the sky dance. The moon was slightly hidden by clouds but the light peaking through was glorious

"Hey man" Diggles voice snapped him back, Oliver sighed yet again as Diggle stood next to him
"Not you too"

"You know me, I don't like to get involved but…" Oliver looked at him "we all need a little nudge"

"Diggle we both know-"

"We don't do feelings and talking but right now, you need it"

"Diggle-"

"Oliver, I'm no expert but I don't think love is about changing or saving a person, I think it's about finding somebody who is already the right fit" he clapped a hand on his shoulder "and we both know who that is, and after everything you've been through, the way you've grown, you're ready for her" Oliver shook his head

"I… I can't Diggle, she doesn't love me… I'm her second choice. She was going to leave with Daniel before he broke up with her"

"Oliver man, you two kids have been dancing around each other since the first time you met and you know it" he closed his eyes "and love you? Damn Oliver that girl adores you, she would do anything for you, what do you think the dress and everything tonight was about?" Oliver opened his eyes wide she was wearing his colour to show him she was ready, that she wanted to be with him. Diggle could see him finally starting to see the truth "Oh and second choice… I think maybe you should speak to Daniel before you start down that road"

"Daniel…"

"Yes go talk to him Oliver, because you know what, it's been great to see you and her getting closer this past month but god damn it, if you two don't sort this out soon I will lock you in a room together" Oliver gave him a half hearted smile "I'm not even joking man, you two are so miserable without each other so just take the leap… and I promise it will be worth it" he turned around to leave

"Thank you Dig" Oliver said turning to face him "But I can't do all that I do and be with her" he sighed heavily 'I can't be Oliver Queen and the Arrow-

"Stop it dude, you can be whoever you want to be… will it be easy? Probably not but damn will it be worth it. I mean look at me Oliver I have Lyla and a baby on the way and I'll still be part of the team because I will make it work, it's all important to me. You'll find a way to make it work, I promise that. So stop with these excuses and please just talk to her"

"Thank you" Oliver whispered

"No problem just sort it out, for all our sakes"

___________________________________________

It took Oliver another drink to finally talk to Daniel, not in fear of talking to him but more of finding out he was Felicitys second choice. He couldn't understand why it was bothering him so much

"Daniel can we have a word?"

"Of course" the younger man said as the two stepped onto the balcony "is this about the donation Mr Wayne gave?"

"No, it's about Felicity"

"Oh, well is everything alright? When I spoke to her earlier she seemed a bit disappointed that you
were busy, so I danced with her to try and cheer her up" Oliver frowned "good job my girlfriend isn't here"

"Girlfriend?" Oliver couldn't help the puzzlement in his tone

"Yes back in Gotham" Daniel frowned "are you okay Oliver?"

"What happened?"

"When?" Daniel said still a little confused by the whole conversation

"Between you and Felicity… she hasn't told me and I don't want to ask because she seemed so cut up about it" Daniels eyes went wide

"She didn't tell you?" he shook his head, as Daniel let out a little chuckle rubbing the back of his neck "I saw the gift and note"

"Oh…"

"She looked so happy, and she never smiled like she did on that photo with me. So I asked her what she really wanted and to really think it through" Daniel smiled at him

"And…"

"She did what I thought she'd always do… she chose you" Olivers eyes went wide and his mouth dropped open in shock, she chose me?

"What?" Oliver managed to stammer out

"It's obvious how much you mean to her and in the end she followed her heart and chose you… we broke up because her heart belongs to you and only you. Much like yours belongs to her"

"I'm sor-"

"Don't apologise, it was inevitable with what you guys had been through. I should have seen it earlier but yes don't doubt her. She will always chose you" Oliver looked at him then and couldn't help the smile that spread across his face. She had chosen him. He was her only choice

"I have to go Daniel but thank you for the money, for this" he stuck his hand out and both men shook each other's hands firmly but with genuine warmth

"No problem" Oliver made his way back inside looking for the exit. He was about to step out when a hand slipped round his wrist

"No you don't" Thea said "you don't get to run away from this" he turned back around unable to stop the smile from spreading over his features

"Thea I'm sorry I was a jackass but I have somewhere… no someone else to see, to apologise to. I've been such an idiot I need to make it up to her"

"Oh thank god! Finally you see sense" he turned giving her a quick peck on the cheek "I'll hold the fort down here. Tell them Felicity wasn't feeling too well and you wanted to make sure she was okay"

"Thank you and you were right though I don't deserve her…" he said slowly his head dropping a little
"Oh Ollie I said that in anger. You deserve someone who makes you happy more so than anybody else right now… so go!" he nodded stepping out the building. As she turned Diggle, Sara, Laurel, Tommy, and Roy had joined her "You guys all owe me £50, told you it would be tonight"

"Isn't that cheating though seeing as we all did help" Tommy teased

"Oh shut it Merlyn, you know we all just want them to be happy… but that doesn't alter the bet" she winked, as the rest laughed around her.

Felicity was sat on her sofa knees pulled up to her chest and arms wrapped around them. Her green gown lay on the floor in the corner of the room in a soggy pile. She had gotten back and headed straight for a shower, trying to feel the warmth she had from Olivers touch and kiss. But it didn't work. She wanted to forget what it was like to have his lips on hers. But all she could think about was the passion, hunger, lust and those damned lips.

The lamp in the corner was providing enough light to chase some of the darkness away, but not enough to illuminate the whole apartment. Her hair was down and damp. Her contacts removed and glasses back in place, she sighed resting her head on her forearm. A gentle tapping on her door brought her head back up. She didn't care who it was she wasn't answering it. The tapping turned into a louder longer knock. She turned her head further but still didn't want to answer

"Felicity" she frowned at the sound of Olivers voice, now she definitely didn't want to answer the door "Felicity please…" she sighed letting go of her legs "You do realise I can knock this door down easily" Felicity shot up "Felicity please… I'm sorry, I just want-" the door flew open and he was met by Felicities blue eyes behind her trademark glasses he loved so much

"Don't you DARE break my door"

"Fel..icit…y" he dragged her name out

"What Oliver?"

"Can I come in?" she sighed heavily, his eyes never left hers

"Oliver I'm done okay?"

"Done?" he frowned

"I've had enough, I'm done arguing, done fighting… just forget tonight ever happened and we'll go back to how it was" she dropped her head then gently pushed the door to. His arm came up stopping it

"I can't" he pushed the door back a little; her eyes flew wide open

"Oliver…” he stepped in through the door

"You promised me a dance" he grinned coyly

"Oliver…” she said sadness in her eyes that Oliver saw spread across her face

"Please dance with me" he pleaded this time sticking out his hand

"No, there is no music" he raised an eyebrow "I know we've danced without music before but I'm not even wearing a dress…” Oliver looked down then and was completely surprised by her attire. She was wearing his shirt from the night she got shot; it came to her mid-thighs showing her
gorgeous legs. She also was wearing a suit jacket, a little too big for her but not by much

"I wanted you to listen to a song… for me…" she closed her eyes sighing

"No Oliver, I'm done tonight… I can't keep doing whatever this is" she gestured between the two opening the door wider for him to leave

"You're wearing my shirt…"

"And your jacket" she said absently when his eyes went wide, eyebrows raised. She realised what she had said "oh it's from the first time we met, not that you don't know that but hey it was awhile ago and I never got it back to you…” he grinned at her and she stopped talking slowly closing the door, but not locking it just in case he decided to leave, to run and he had easy access

"I'm not running anywhere" he said slowly. She closed her eyes crap she'd said it out loud

"What do you want Oliver?" she sighed facing him

"To dance, to talk…”

"Then talk" she snapped a little

"That night on the bridge" he started "I… was so different"

"We, because I was too"

"Yes but I was so lost, so alone, so confused" he looked away from her "I still am sometimes, I still find it hard to believe people fight for me, want me"

"Oliver I never told you…”

"Told me what?" he was hoping it would be an admission of feelings

"About the night we met" okay he wasn't expecting that

"Okay…”

"It wasn't a friend… the reason I was wearing those clothes and no glasses"

"I guessed as much, a guy?" she nodded sadly

"And you were right, I didn't have to change me to be with him. He wasn't worth losing who I was. You made me see that Oliver, even as the old you…” he closed his eyes, and then opened them slowly. She even saw the good in the younger him. She really was remarkable "And…” he looked up at her with sympathy as she hesitated slightly

"and what?" he said slowly

"The day after, when you went missing. I… I went to your house, I wanted to help. I met your dad…”

"What? Why didn't you tell me?"

"You never seemed to want to talk about this but let me finish okay? I need you to know this” he nodded for her to continue "I told him about you the night before, he thanked me for coming and handed me a cheque. He told me he didn't want the press or anyone finding that out about you. He
said he was leaving the search to the authorities because they knew best" Olivers mouth flew open she had tried to help him even then "I ripped it up Oliver, I told him I wasn't after his money, or the presses I was looking out for you and I walked away" he couldn't help the smile on his face at the thought of Felicity having cared about him even then "I spent 4 weeks searching for you, I found a hidden CCTV image of you catching a plane, you were smiling. And that's when I stopped the search I realised you had gone yourself. You were changing your life and that's when I became this" she gestured to the hair and glasses "if you could do it, so could I" she smiled but it suddenly faded "untill obviously now I know what really happened, well some of it and I… I just I could have found you but then your Dad helped you go so-" he placed his hand on her shoulder squeezing lightly

"Felicity… I've told you that none of that was your fault but… you searched for me? Even then?"

"Yes Oliver, you were so broken that night…” he sighed dropping his head

"I still am" she reached up pulling his head so there eyes met and she smiled. A genuine smile at him "I can't offer you what Daniel could, I can't offer you a future without pain, or a future with a family because my life is so uncertain, anything could happen… and I could never forgive myself for it-

"But I don't care about that Oliver, Daniel wasn't you"

"Yes but what if one day, I get hurt, killed or worse you get killed? Or one day you wake up and realise you can't cope with all this" he gestured towards himself taking a step back from her

"I'd be devastated, but I'd rather have memories with you then without you, wouldn't you agree? Plus if I got killed it wouldn't be your choice it would have been mine, because I chose Team Arrow. I've been doing it for so long now Oliver, I can't go back to being plain old Felicity Smoak IT girl because you changed it for me… you made me see how much more life had to offer and I wouldn't have it any other way" Felicity took a step closer, Oliver could feel his heart pounding from her reassurances

"But if you died Felicity-"

"OLIVER!" he looked directly at her, her angry voice making him jump "I will die. Everyone dies eventually, but surely it's better to make great memories right now, whilst we can and the future…” she smiled softly thinking about the fact he had thought about the future, their future "well what happens, whatever, good or bad we face together" she smiled yet he couldn't, he let his head drop down

"I'm… I'm broken Felicity, there are things that happened, things I can never talk about. I am the darkness and I will only drag you down with me… I'm not ready for this; I don't think I ever will" she closed her eyes for a second, she hated the way he sold himself short with everything

"You aren't broken to me…” she said it softly "but you have to remember you aren't the only one with a history” he looked up then to her beautiful eyes "you are not darkness, you are every colour of the spectrum. All the different parts of your soul, all the different faces you show the world, the vigilante, the billionaire, the training CEO, the playboy club owner, the man who suffered, the survivor, the fighter, they all make the man I know, the man I see everyday… the real Oliver Queen” she stepped closer resting her hand above his heart, he placed his hand over hers "and if we wait until we're ready, we'll be waiting for the rest of our lives….” Olivers heart was hammering, she truly did want him. It might not be love yet for her, but she wanted something with him. He couldn't help feeling comforted by her words; they'd do it all together. His grin spread until he looked at the jacket on her again

"Will you take it off please?" she frowned
"What?"

"The jacket, that was the old me. The guy who didn't care about anything or anyone, not really and I don't want you wrapped up in that"

"Fine" she pulled her hands from his chest letting the jacket slip off her shoulders and to the floor "Oh I want to clarify I didn't take or get offered the job at QC because of that talk with your dad, I really did earn my place there"

"I know, I never even doubted that for a second" he slowly pulled off his own suit jacket and placed it on Felicitys shoulders. She stared at him as he lovingly placed it on her. She pulled her arms through the sleeves this was larger than the other, which made sense seeing as he was a lot more muscular. She rolled the sleeves up slightly to her elbows but pulled the jacket around her closing her eyes and sniffing. It smelt of Oliver. A hint of leather, his expensive cologne and then something she couldn't quite decipher but was all him. She liked this jacket better and sighed.

When she opened her eyes Oliver was stood there his bow tie discarded, and top few buttons open. He looked a vision his white shirt showing his toned muscles underneath with his black suspenders in place. Felicity licked her bottom lip he looked damn sexy. Olivers laugh pulled her back "Please tell me I didn't say that-"

"Not as sexy as you do in my clothes" his voice went husky and deep, and Felicity blushed dipping her head slightly. He stepped closer pulling her head up to meet his gaze "hey no need to be embarrassed you always look beautiful" he stepped back slightly pulling his phone out "will you dance with me please? I want you to dance to this song with me“ she nodded; she couldn't refuse him after that talk.

He hit the play button, stepping close taking her hand in his and the other went to her lower back pulling her in close. Her free hand wrapped round his neck. Due to her lack of heels, the height difference was more evident, so she had to stretch slightly.

Felicity wasn't angry anymore, she felt hopeful that this was a step in the right direction for them.

What would I do without your smart mouth? Drawing me in, and you kicking me out. You've got my head spinning, no kidding, I can't pin you down

They swayed gently from side to side, doing small circles together never letting go. Felicity listened to the entirety of the song. Her arm dropped from his neck, wrapping round his back so they were even closer. She rested her head on Olivers chest, with his chin leaning on her head just so she could hear his heart beating. They held each other tighter with each word. Felicity felt her chest tightening, the song, the words, the emotions in this moment all become suddenly too intense.

'Cause all of me, Loves all of you, Love your curves and all your edges, All your perfect imperfections. Give your all to me, I'll give my all to you. You're my end and my beginning, even when I lose I'm winning, 'cause I give you all of me and you give me all of you

I give you all of me and I give you all of you, ohoh

When the music stopped so did they. Felicity pulled her arms back to her sides pulling away a little and turning her head to hide the tears. Olivers hand came to pull her head back in his direction. Her eyes looked like the ocean, but the tears broke his heart. He brushed them away with his thumb, gently cupping her face whilst his other hand was still around her waist. He frowned "I'm sorry I didn't mean to ups-"
"The song, the words, *this*" she gestured between the two "did you mean it?" he went to speak "because I... I can't keep doing this back and forth, pushing me away thing" she let more silent tears fall. He gave a little smile

"I meant all of it" he leant a little closer "Felicity Meghan Smoak, I am utterly and hopelessly in love with you" she felt her breath catch in the back of her throat. All the emotions she had been trying to hide threatening to spill out "and as much as I want to keep you safe by pushing you away, I just... I can't anymore. All I ever want is you to be happy" Felicity saw the devotion in eyes and also the doubt at knowing what makes her happy

"You make me happy Oliver, not Ollie, not the Arrow, but YOU" Oliver couldn't help the grin that spread across his face, *he was enough for her*

"I love you so much Felicity, I should have said it long ago before Daniel, before the last time I did before now" she could see it in his eyes. He was being so open and truthful but she could see it. That little bit of doubt, that part of his soul that believed he couldn't be loved. That he would never be good enough and even that doubted she loved him. She opened her mouth thinking really hard before she spoke. He brought his other hand up to cup her other cheek. She placed her hands on his hips trying to steady herself to get her mind focused

"I thought me and you were impossible. So I moved on to Daniel, he made me happy" she saw the sparkle in his eyes fade a little "but not like you, not like you ever could. Which is why..." she stared into his blue eyes that seemed to be searching her face "I chose you. I realised something the day he and I broke up, and I have been trying to tell you ever since. I couldn't leave Starling, my home because..." she took a deep breath closing her eyes briefly and then she was met by his intense gaze, his thumbs rubbing her cheeks tenderly "I'm in love with you Oli-"

Before she had time to finish talking, his lips were on hers so gently. His nose nudged her glasses slightly and she closed her eyes as her hands travelled up his arms to wrap around his wrists. She kissed back, both trying to show all the love and devotion in this single kiss. It wasn't like when he had kissed her earlier; this was intensity of a different kind. Their lips moved in sink, their tongues caressing, both losing moans into the others touches. They smoothly pulled apart, his forehead resting on hers. As they slowly opened there eyes, they both grinned at each other. They stayed that way awhile till Felicity pulled back slightly, his hands falling from her face

"Where do we go from here?" she asked tilting her head

"The bedroom" Oliver winked

"Sorry mister but I don't put out on the first date, well actually *this* doesn't even count as one" she playfully hit his chest

"Felicity"

"Yes?" she smiled looking up at him her hand still on his chest

"Would you like to go out to dinner with me? Tomorrow evening?" her eyes sparkled, he was trying really hard for her "I want to do this right. I want it to be normal. I know it's hard with the Arrow work and everything else-"

"Oliver" she placed her other hand on his chest "we can find a normal in this abnormal world of ours" she beamed "Yes I'll go to dinner with you Oliver" he grinned like never before and she loved it. *She loved him* "And we'll make it work, all of it. You can be Oliver and the vigilante because both are my hero" his eyes glistened with tears. *He was her hero and she was his.*
"I want that" She wrapped her arms around his neck, standing on her tip toes and pulled him down slightly. When their lips were a hair's breadth away she whispered

"I love you Oliver" she pushed forward into a searing kiss. His hands wrapped around her back pulling her in closer. Their bodies seemed to meld into each other, they fit perfectly. One hand went to the back of her head gently tugging at the hair at the back of her neck. She moaned against his lips allowing his tongue to slip in. He tenderly explored her mouth as both fought for control. Every emotion they had for each other went into this kiss, devotion, passion, lust, anger, upset, hurt and most importantly love.

Oliver pulled away first gaining some control, both were completely breathless

"I… should… go" he said walking towards the door. Felicity’s hand grabbed his stopping him

"Please don't" he saw the hurt on her face

"You have to recover and it's been a long day"

"I just got you Oliver I don't want you to go just yet" she entwined her fingers with his. He looked at their hands joined together and instantly he felt like he was home, just as she did too. She started pulling him towards the bedroom "Oh and no funny business, I just want to lie in your arms" Oliver couldn't help the laugh that burst out of him

"I want that too, I just want you forever and always. As long as I can, to hold, to kiss even argue as long as it's you" she turned her head slightly giving him a watery grin, as they entered her bedroom turning the lamp off.

Felicity opened her eyes slightly to see the sun creeping in through her curtains. She turned her head around to see Oliver topless staring at her, their legs entwined. She grinned he’d stayed

"Of course I did… I told you I'm done running, done pushing. I'm here to stay as long as you want me" she'd clearly said it out loud again damn filter

"Forever?" she grinned up at him with sleepy eyes

"Forever works for me" he leant down giving her a tender kiss on the lips. She curled in closer resting her head on his chest and spread an arm around him. He caressed her arm as he held her tighter to him with his other hand on her hip. She glanced over to the photo on her bedside cabinet, smiling at the family and home she had now. She gently ran her hand, tenderly over Oliver's scars and tattoos wishing her touch could take away the bad memories with them. Little did she know that Oliver loved how she caressed them with such love, and not detest making him feel like he wasn't broken.

The magic that existed between the two finally seemed to be coming together; individually they were tough, capable. They had both survived life so far, and had their own flaws but together none of it seemed to matter. It was as if their souls had fought hard to find each other, finding something in the other that connected them as one. Both smiled blissfully, as they lay wrapped in each other, not knowing where one ended and the other began.

Neither regretted this decision, because even through with all the bad and tough times to come, and they would, they had something that no-one else did. Love. The kind of love that lasted a life time. That rare one in a million variety, that couldn't be ignored or squashed, it only grew with time. It consumed everyone in its wake, and showed the world a glimpse of something so true, it made the suffering more bearable. And they both knew that whatever happened, whatever the future held they
would always do it together

"I love you" Oliver whispered into Felicity's ear, imaging a future with her, a life of joy, happiness, maybe even children

"I love you too" Felicity returned gently, picturing the same as both held each other tighter smiling blissfully.

Chapter End Notes

Firstly I want to say a massive THANK YOU to everyone because honestly you guys have kept me going! It's sad this is coming to an end :( BUT I hope you guys enjoyed this and that I did the end justice, as always I LOVE to hear what you think :) so please drop me a comment. You can even message me on tumblr after this story is done and ask me anything :) I don't mind...

Also I have no plans for a sequel however, never say never because in the future and once season 3 starts you never know :) :) BUT I will continue to write I just don't know when and what :)... Oh and the song was All of Me by John Legend, yes I was listening to that and just had to add it somewhere. But anyway thank you ALL so much :,), I can never say it enough...

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