The Firebird

by SuperSillyAndDorky06

Summary

Felicity Smoak stumbles upon a man dressed in black about to kill someone. The man takes an interest in her and she does not realize who he is. He is Al Sah-Him, the best assassin in The League, the crown jewel of the brotherhood, who is known for his lethal focus and killer instincts, brought up in the League itself. What happens when he is taken completely with the blonde? Assassin AU. Basically a what if Felicity met Al Sah-Him and not Oliver Queen story. Stuff will happen. Enjoy!

Notes

Those of who who are familiar with The Phoenix know how much I love me some fiery beasts. This idea has been circling around in my head for a very long time and I had decided to actually wait to finish my other works before writing it. But then I read this article about Firebirds and it clicked in my head how this story is the perfect idea of two halves of a firebird moving to being one.

For those of you who are not familiar with these beautiful mythological creatures, here is an
Although the name firebird immediately brings the Phoenix to mind, the firebird is an all together different mythical creature of fire that originates from many mythologies. It is said to have a plumage of brilliant warm colored feathers that emanate bright light. A single feather of the firebird is believed to cast a bright light in a large and dark room. It is popular in Russian mythology for bringing either doom to its captor or showering blessings upon the person who frees it from harm. In Armenian mythology, the firebird is described as having the ability of rejuvenating the land, making it bloom with lush grass and spring flowers by singing in a musical tune.

Well, I am not very sure of how this will go, so I'll know whether to continue this or not from your response, peeps.

I hope you enjoy this. This first chapter is comparatively short.

Leave me your thoughts. Kudos and comments, guys!

Happy reading!!!
Watching

She had to get out of here. Felicity could feel eyes upon herself as she mingled in the crowd in the club, trying to discern who was looking at her but there were too many people and she knew there were more than one pair of eyes. That creeped her out.

Her friend Katie, whose birthday party this was, was plastered and too out of it to notice her missing if she left, and she knew none of these other people so she doubted anyone would miss her gracious presence. Yup. The hair on the back of her neck was still on alert like small antennas sending her strong creepy signals.

Nodding to herself, she made her way in her sort fuschia dress along the edge of the club, inching towards the door, and at last, she was outside. Breathing in the cool, fresh night air heavily, she clutched her purse in her hand and started walking towards home, which was only two blocks away. She felt content now, her antennas resting.

The night was not creepy anymore, despite that she was walking on a secluded road in the middle of the night, the houses asleep, hardly a vehicle or two passing by.

There were not a lot of things that freaked Felicity Smoak out. Well, if you didn't count kangaroos. Kangaroos gave her the heebies. Their beady little eyes and their pouches were a constant in her nightmares, and although she knew that geographically there were better chances of her falling in the Niagara Falls and dying from a broken neck than there was of a kangaroo pouncing on her to death, it was absolutely undeniable that they were on her Freak Out Stuff List. As were teddy bears. Weird, she knew.

She remembered the first time she had seen a teddy bear in an aisle of the local supermarket in Vegas she had hidden behind her mother's legs, unable to look at the cute ball of fluff with the creepy eyes that seemed to be following her. Her mother had been confused since most kids her age loved teddy bears. Not her. Nope. She had loved circuit boards and computer parts, tinkering around with the stuff her dad had left behind till she had finally had a light bulb moment and built her first computer at seven. When she had shown it to her mother, Donna Smoak had smiled and hugged her and proceeded to buy her her first teddy bear. No point getting into how that one went down. Except anyone close to her now knew she had a thing with beady eyes that followed her.

And that was the reason she had bailed on her friend's party so soon. Well, friend was stretching it a wee bit. Katie and she had bonded over being the only two girls in early twenties in a neighborhood where all women were above forty. The reason Felicity had bought a townhouse in this quiet part of Starling was because well, she could, and because after living in the loud, glare-y lights of Vegas for the better part of two decades, she had wanted something serene now that she could afford it. Graduating early from MIT, she had gone on to open Smoak Panacea, or SP, and for a one-woman cyber company, it had thrived faster than she had expected, with clients pouring in one after the other. So, all in all, she was a satisfied, well-settled woman who lived a boring, routine life in a calm neighborhood.

And sometimes she freaked out. Like she had at Katie's birthday party tonight, when she had felt at least three people constantly watching her. And not the hey-I-think-you're-cute-we-should-talk stares but I'd-like-to-do-nameless-stuff-with-you stare. She shuddered, wrapping her arms around herself and walking one more block to home, in the middle of the night, on teetering heels. But she wasn't scared. This was a calm neighborhood, obviously. Nothing ever happened here, not like in the Glades.
Humming happily to herself, she walked on the sidewalk, the moon a happy crescent in the sky, street lights lining the empty streets. Pondering over whether to binge watch the new Suits episodes that had been gathering in her DVR or the new sci-fi movie, since she had already brought two pints of mint chip and a bag of popcorn at the store near the club on the way over. While her internal conflict over Harvey Specter and Hollywood went on, she walked leisurely, enjoying the cool night wind when suddenly, a muffled sound reached her.

She stopped in her tracks, wondering if she had imagined it. A breath went, then two, then three, and she was about to move on when she heard it again, coming from the alley she had been about to cross. She blinked, her heart starting to race. Maybe it was just a cat, trapped or something. Well, not likely since cats didn't grunt with baritone, duh. Maybe it was a couple being adventurous. In an alley? Well, people did do weird things to spice up their sex lives. Not that she would know, since she didn't have one. Hadn't had one since Cooper in College. And sex even then had been okay, nothing to spice up really. She didn't even understand what the whole fuss was about.

The sound came again and she cringed at her own thoughts, shaking her head at herself. A man seemed to be strangling less than twenty feet away and she was thinking about sex? Seriously? Timing. She would have slow clapped at herself had her hands been free, and well, a man wasn't strangling less than twenty feet away. He might not feel appreciative that she was clapping at his dying moment.

Shaking her head at herself, and repeating to herself that this neighborhood and her life were boring, and did not feature adventures like strangling men and midnight rescues to herself she slowly, careful not to make any sounds, which was hard considering, hello, heels on sidewalk, she inched forward, holding her breath, wondering if she was going to be traumatized for life. Well, her brain did need some trauma. Maybe not too much trauma. Just a little. Giving herself one final nod, she peeked over the wall and still, goosebumps erupting on her arms.

There were two men in the dark alley. The older, good looking, well dressed man, whose suit looked alone like it cost more than her mortgage, was on his knees, making the sounds she had heard. But it was the other man who drew her eyes. He stood behind the man on his knees, his body clad in some bizarre black costume from head to toe, with a hood and a cowl, maybe a mask, covering everything but a small sliver of skin and his eyes, which were trained on the kneeling man. The kneeling man was in a headlock, a tight headlock at that, and slowly, she watched, as his eyes closed and he lost consciousness, crumpling to the ground in a heap and the man in black straightened to his full height.

Sweet baby jack, was he big or what!

She was almost ten feet away and she could still see how broad his torso was, how tall his height was, how there seemed to be no ounce of fat on him, just pure muscle, and how that black costume did nothing at all to alleviate those huge muscles. He was gargantuan!

But it was more than that. It was this, this, well, aura that he had. Cold. Hard. Intimidating. Commanding the air around him to the molecular level. Uh-huh. This was not a guy she would want to face at midnight, or well any other hour of the day, at all. She knew she should pick up her heels and hightail it home as fast as she could run. This was not a man to cross. But seeing the crumpled form of the man on the alley floor would not let take that step away, and she cursed her inability to listen to her instinct and run.

And like every other thing she did, she couldn't keep it in her head, the words tumbling out of her mouth without realization. She had thought previously he had been still but boy, did he do still now. He had heard her. Frack.

Clapping a hand holding the popcorn bag to her mouth, she saw his head swivel up to where she
stood at the entrance to the alley, away from the shadows, and suddenly the breath left her body. He had the sharpest, bluest eyes she had ever seen, the clarity in them astounding, the power in them pinning her to the spot. She could see nothing but his eyes, beautifully shaped eyes, as he stood to his full height and took a smooth step towards her. Her heart stuttered, adrenaline kicking her body, the option of flight out because of the unconscious man and option of fight out because, well, duh.

He took another step forward and she swallowed, and without realization, she ducked a pint of ice-cream right at his head. Eyes widening in horror, she saw, almost in slow motion, as the box flew in the air, careening towards his head and about to hit when faster than she could blink, his hand swatted it to the side. It broke open and the dingy alley floor tasted her precious ice cream. Good thing she had bought two.

The man tilted his head, his eyes narrowing, almost in consideration, before taking another step forward and she opened her mouth, going in her default mode.

"Look, I'm just in the wrong place at the wrong time. Or maybe the right time, depending on how you look at it. And I swear I didn't mean to throw that at you. For a moment my brain and my arm disconnected. Because well, obviously my brain was telling me that it was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. Not that I'm calling you a bull. Well, you're a man. Metaphorically, I don't know you well enough to know if you're a bull."

She took a breath, his piercing gaze not helping matters. She thought back to what she had said and her eyes widened more. "And I did not mean bull as a euphemism or a sexual thing. No. No. Absolutely not. I can hardly see behind that costume since I don't have x-ray vision. Not that I would check you out if I had had one. Well, maybe I would. You look like a guy who has abs. Great abs. And I didn't mean to objectify you. I don't even know what I actually meant to do, to be honest. Well, talking your ears off might certainly work. That's like my default setting. Talking, I mean. Not sexually objectifying big bad guys in black in the middle of the night. Or day. Although I don't think big bad guys come out wearing that costume in the day. Except on Halloween."

A sudden giggle left her. "Isn't everyday Halloween for you?"

He just stood still, looking at her with those crystal clear blue eyes. "You have really pretty eyes. And I was..."

A groan from the man behind them had her stopping her tirade and the man before her getting tense. He was about to turn back towards the other man when her hand shot out, catching his sleeve and his gaze swung to her, surprise the first evident emotion she could see in him.

"Please don't hurt him."

He reined in the surprise, looking at her evenly, before his gloved hand came up to her wrist, and she looked down, gulping at the contrast of his huge hand wrapping completely around her small one. This man could snap her bone before she could even say a word. Heart pounding, chiding herself for getting this close to this crazy guy, she slowly waited to see what he would do. His thumb stayed on her pulse, obviously knowing how hard her blood was pounding, and with deliberate movement, he put her hand back beside her, his eyes locked on hers, scrutinizing and intense, her heart thudding like mad as she looked back at him, unable to remove her eyes, before he turned and went away and hauled the man up onto his broad shoulders with a smoothness that was admirable. And his strength was hot, she had to admit.

Without sparing her a glance, he disappeared into the shadows and she stood still, one limp hand holding the grocery bag and the other tingling from where he had touched her. And he had been wearing gloves, for goodness sake.
She was so lost in thoughts that the ringing of her phone suddenly made her jump, an embarrassing yelp escaping her before her heart calmed down and she picked up the call.

"Where did go you?"

Katie's slurred voice and jumbled words reached her. She sighed, pinching her nose. "I wan't feeling well, so I came back home."

She started walking again, trying to erase the image of those stark blue eyes from her head, calming herself down.

"Well," Katie slurred. "I saw Greg run afterrrr you."

Greg was Katie's neighbor, a decent enough guy, and she was so not interested. Shaking her head, she spoke, "Katie, get back home safe. I'll see you tomorrow."

She hung up on her giggling and completely buzzed brunette friend and continued walking. When sober, Katie was actually quite a brilliant woman, who owned her own event management firm. So, parties and socializing was totally her thing. And she looked the part- tall, curvy, beautiful. How on earth she became friends with her was beyond felicity since they were literally opposites. Biting back a smile, she turned a corner to her house and bumped into a man, his hands coming up to hold her straight. Greg.

She sighed and took a step back. "What are you doing here, Greg?"

He smiled, his good looking face lighting up, but her skin crawled a little and she took another step back.

"I saw you leave so I thought I'd walk you home," he said, shrugging. He was tall and well muscled and not subtle at all, and she would have gone out with him once had her gut not rebelled at the very prospect. But since he was a neighbor, she pasted a smile on her face and walked around him, her house only two doors down.

"Well, as you can see I am already here," she said, speeding up, feeling him following her, "there's no need. You can go home."

She was almost at her doorstep when his hand shot out and grabbed her, whirling her around. She looked up in surprise at his crazed eyes, a sliver of anxiety seeping her.

"I need to talk to you, Felicity," he said, and she could smell the alcohol on his breath now. Nuh-uh. This was bad news.

Calling for calm, she replied coolly, pulling back her hand. "We can talk tomorrow. You need to leave, now!"

"No," he gripped her hand tighter, his fingers hurting her now, and she closed her eyes, anger burning through her and kneed him in the groin, hard.

He doubled over in pain, yelling. "You bitch!

Taking her chance, she was almost at the steps of the house when he grabbed her again, pulling her back flush against his chest. She was about to scream her throat out, wakening the entire neighborhood, when the weight suddenly disappeared from behind her and she whirled around, teetering on her heels, her heart pounding, to see Greg unconscious on the ground and the man in black, from the alley, standing over him, his eyes on her shaking body.
Chest heaving, she looked at him in disbelief, not knowing whether to thank him or to be mad for making another guy crumple to the ground, so she stayed silent, eyes locked on his. Who the hell was he?

Now that he was in the street light, she could see that his costume was not plain black, but detailed with a few buckles and weapons, mixed with cotton and leather and different fabrics. The only thing not black was a locket around his neck, an arrowhead. Once her perusal was complete, she looked back up at him, seeing nothing but those brilliant blue eyes.

Biting her lip unconsciously, she saw his eyes flicker momentarily to the movement before coming back up to her eyes.

"Thank you," she whispered quietly. "For now. And not crumpling me to the ground since that seems to be your thing."

He did not speak or acknowledge in any way that he heard her, just stared at her with laser focus that should have been disturbing but for some reason it wasn't.

Their eyes remained locked for minutes, long silent minutes, completely blank with no questions and no answers, just being, while the douche bag of a neighbor remained on the ground.

And then the guy took a step forward, closing the distance between them and her breath hitched, as she tilted her head back to look at him. Despite of her heels, she just reached his shoulder and she didn't know why that made her heart flutter. His hand raised, his eyes still vacant, as he brushed her cheek with the back of his gloved fingers, very slowly, like he could actually feel her flushed skin. His fingers traced her cheeks and her jaw, tentatively touching the line of her lips and her eyes fluttered shut of their own accord. She could smell him, something woodsy and musky and all natural. The leather of his glove felt smooth against her skin and she ached to know what his hands would be like. Would they be smooth or rough? Hairy or clean? Was he dark haired or light?

She had absolutely no idea. The hand pulled away from her face, and she inhaled deeply, opening her eyes. He was gone.

She blinked and looked around, seeing nothing but sleeping houses and empty streets around her. In a daze, leaving Greg on the ground, she went inside her house, putting the groceries on the shelf and turning the lights on. She entered her bedroom, slipping her heels off, her aching feet thanking her, and went to the window to close the curtains. And suddenly she stopped. The hair on the back of her neck rose, her antenna telling her she was being watched but she couldn't see a thing outside except trees and shadows.

She knew it was him. He was a part of the shadows. She knew it was him with a certainty she did not understand.

But what she did not understand even more was why she did not mind his gaze on her when she generally could not stand it. Must be those eyes. Non-beady, beautiful blue eyes.

He was watching her and it disturbed her that she was not disturbed.

With a sigh, she closed the curtains, shutting his view, his eyes out.
Hey, everyone!

I'm absolutely stunned by the fantastic response to the first chapter of this story. Like really my jaw was gracing the floor most of the time. I had not expected, in my wildest dreams, how enthusiastically this idea will be received. THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH!

And since so many of you wish for me to continue this, here I am with the next chapter. This is my normal 5Kish chapter.

IMPORTANT NOTE- Also a schedule for this. THIS STORY WILL BE UPDATED EVERY SUNDAY. Once a week. At least till The Phoenix or Free Fall are still going on. Then, I'll let you know if any changes come. Till further notifications, EVERY SUNDAY.

Also for the purpose of this story, and I know it's hard considering the entire LOA connection, but let's pretend Batman is not the same universe as them and allow our girl some pop culture references, okay?

Do drop me a line with your thoughts. Kudos and comments, guys!

Happy reading!!!
His scent had been too real around her. His danger had been too real in the alley, as had been his rescue from her creep of a neighbor, who she had punched once she had seen him sober too. And sprained her wrist with the force. But at least his nose had bled. That counted for something, right? Sprained wrist be damned.

When she had told John tonight about that night (no, not the mystery man in black part, only the weird neighbor who had tried to accost her) and how she had sprained her wrist, he had shaken his head and smiled that amused smile he did at her. John Diggle was like the older brother Felicity had never had in her life. He looked like Hulk but actually was the biggest teddy bear she had ever seen. She actually had met him two years ago when she had just started her business, at 20, as a client seeking top-notch cyber security for his firm. He was ex-military, Special Forces, to be precise, and co-owned one of the best security companies in the city with his equally badass wife, Lyla, whom he had met on his tour, fallen in love and married. Felicity was not one of those sappy romantics, but looking at John and Lyla together, with their cute little 5-month old nugget of a baby, Sara (also her Goddaughter) made her hope for it. Hope that someone would look at her maybe even with half the intensity of the way John looked at Lyla. Then she shook her head and focused on the delicious dinner, with Sara making those cutesy, gurgly noises that only babies could get away with.

But she didn't lie to herself. It was one bad habit she had gotten rid of after her father had left her mother and her alone and never returned. She had stopped lying to herself and started accepting things for what they were. That certainly had made her life more simple. So, she knew that the reason her heart picked up slightly when she thought of intense looks was because she had seen intense looks directed at her. Intense. Way more intense than Digg's to Lyla's. Those beautiful but haunted blue eyes had pulled at her in a way she had never felt before in her life. It had made her feel that intensity. And throw ice cream at him.

She slapped her hand to her forehead, still unable to believe she had actually done that, to him, and then proceeded to make sexual innuendos. The government should probably weaponize her for how to talk the enemies ear's off. But she wasn't really sure he was the enemy. She wasn't sure who he was. He fit the checkpoints of How To Be A Villain like those had been made for him. But if he were a villain, why had he not hurt her? Why follow her to her home? And save her from Grotesque Greg? Those were the checkpoints of either a stalker, or a knight. A dark knight. She had to marathon Batman as well. Huh.

But well, it was fruitless to think of him anymore. They had just been ships passing in the night. And if he were a ship, he would be a glorious one, with black sails, dark wooden boards, and sleek. An aura of mystique and danger hovering just on the rails. Ooh, he would make a great pirate. He already had the costume. But what would his accent be like? She couldn't imagine him pulling a Jack Sparrow. Nah, he was too intense. And she had to marathon Pirates of the Caribbean too. So much marathoning.

Well, she was not going to ever see him again, so no point fantasizing of rogue roles he could play. Not that she wanted to play any roles with him. Not that she would mind. Nope. She had to stop. Thinking. About him. Now. It had been a week and this was just ridiculous. She knew she wasn't seeing him again and her popcorn was done.

Taking out the bowl from the microwave, she turned to go towards the living room when her phone rang and made her jump slightly.

She picked it up with her free hand to see Digg's smiling face look up at her and smiled.

"Yo, John," she greeted brightly.

"Hey," his warm voice came back. "I just wanted to check if you had reached fine. It's pouring bad
outside."

Touched by his concern, not really used to it from anyone, she smiled. "Yeah. I reached a while ago. And I'm on my way to my TV now."

He chuckled. "Don't let me keep you from your marathons. Good night."

"Thanks for checking in. Good night!"

Cutting the call, she was about to move when a small movement outside her window made her still. The hair on the back of her neck prickled. Great time, antennas.

She stood at the spot, waiting for it to move again, before realizing how stupid it was. It was raining and windy and things were obviously moving outside. Must have been a shadow. Nodding to herself, she was just about to walk back when it moved again. A shadow. Definitely not of a tree. Google help her, if it was Greg, she was going to drown him in rainwater.

Furious at whoever was lurking outside, she put down her bowl and walked to the door, pulling it open and looking out at the sheets of rain coming down, splattering on the ground, the scent of wet earth filling her senses. She looked around, trying to see something but it was dark and the street lights were useless against the water. Putting her glasses inside on the table beside the door, she shut it and took a step on the porch, looking around and out, squinting hard to see something, anything. And then she saw it, again. Behind a tree near the window.

Gritting her teeth in annoyance, and forgetting to take an umbrella with her, she walked down the three steps and was attacked by the cold droplets on her skin, drenched to the bone before she could spell her own name. Which she obviously wouldn't do standing there. Shaking her head, she marched forward, across the grass, to behind the tree, pretty sure she looked like a drowned rat, but who cared what she looked like.

Turning the corner of the trunk, she opened her mouth to talk down whoever was there and stopped, blinking in surprise. It was him. Him. In his black costume and the weapons and the arrow pendant and the mask and the hood. And the eyes. Him.

She opened her mouth once, before closing it, and opened it again, doing a gold fish imitation, which was too close an analogy considering the water. Gaping at him, she raised a hand, pointing a finger, finally her rational mind allowing her some words.

"Why are you lurking behind my house? At this time of the night? In fact at any time of the day? And why now? In this rain? After a week? Unless you've done this before?"

Her eyes widened comically. "Oh my sweet jack, have you done this before? How many times? This week? This entire week? Are you crazy?"

His face remained hidden beneath the hood and he stayed silent, letting her vent out. Well, she was very close to hyperventilating. And she couldn't see his eyes beneath the hood and because of the raindrops. And that was pretty inconvenient considering she at least wanted that much if she was getting drenched. As a consolation prize.

"Have you been here since that night? That night as in the night we met? Well, not met met, because you are not very polite on the whole name thing, or even the face thing. But well, you get my point. Have you come here since then? Are you stalking me?"

His silence was loaded, and even a little guilty, and she had no idea why she could feel that when she couldn't even see him properly. This was crazy.
"Don't you have a, like, Halloween hotel or something where you could stay? I'm pretty sure you do. But if you do, why are you out here getting drenched?"

Well, wasn't he a talker. She pushed her hair out of her face and looked at him. A sudden thought struck her.

"It is you, right?" she asked, shivers wracking her small frame now. "And not some one else? I can't tell because of the whole..."

His gloved hand was up and brushing her cheek in the exact manner he had before, a different shiver going through her spine. She sighed in relief.

"Yup. You, definitely you. And you're not deaf either," she pointed out. "That might not be a very good thing around me. But whatever."

Now that she knew it was him, she just stood there, staring at his frame, his huge frame, contemplating. On one hand, she had no idea who he was, except he had been stalking her apparently for a week and for some reason it did not smell the dangerous, creepy kind. More like curious. He could literally kill her with one twitch of his little finger. But on the other hand, he held her face so tenderly, had saved her from the actual creeper stalker she had had, and her gut just somehow was telling her that he could be trusted. Biting her lip for a minute, she finally groaned, shrugging.

"Oh, dang it!" she raised a hand to his sleeve, and his other hand shot up, like it had that night in the alley, to grip like a vise. She looked down at his hand circling her wrist and rolled her eyes, despite the pounding in her chest. "Jeez, calm down, gorilla. I was just pulling you to the house."

At his trademark silence, she explained. "See, not that you have to be told, but it's raining cats and dogs. Well, more than that. It's raining the entire zoo. Sadly, not men. I wish it would rain men sometimes. Hot, broody intense men. Who would rain down without hurting me, or dying. Because gravity, duh."

Her eyes widened again as she stood holding his sleeve. "I wasn't coming on to you. I don't want you raining on me. Well, that's not true. I'm pretty sure I would love me some you down on me."

His fingers tightened slightly around her wrist and she gulped. "Yup. Taking that as a yes. I know you might be some crazy guy who can kill me in a second but for some reason I really don't want to die. And I'm nice so I'm offering you some warm conditioned air and a hot cup of cocoa. Are you coming? Inside the house, I mean. Not the other kind of coming. Not that I would mind that kind of coming. Yours or mine. Oh frack! Stop me please."

His hand squeezed hers once, stopping her verbal torrent, and let her wrist go, waiting. Swallowing, and ignoring the lessons she had learned marathoning every serial killer movie, she jogged back towards the house, letting him follow her. She quickly opened the door to the house, side stepping, allowing him space to enter.

He stood on the threshold, hovering and she rolled her eyes again. "Seriously? You have no issues standing outside my house for god knows how long, but your moral police puts out the sirens when I actually invite you in? What logic is that?"

His hand almost went to the back of his neck, as though to rub it, and he entered the house, just standing in and she closed the door, the roar on the rain suddenly muted outside, wrapping them in...
the sudden quiet. The light in the house finally allowed her to see his eyes, his blue, blue eyes and she grinned at him, shrugging at the butterflies she could feel assaulting her tummy.

His eyes roved over her face, making her realize how truly drowned she must be looking, and she awkwardly shuffled her feet, her hands going behind her back to pull at her hair in a natural nervous tic. His gaze suddenly moved to her chest, heating a little, and she looked down, frowning. The rain had made her light purple shirt see through and since she had been home, she had been without a bra. And the cold had her nipples peaking. She suddenly crossed her arms over her chest, hiding them from his eyes, biting her lip because she really needed to change. Thank the lord she hadn't gone commando down or he'd be getting an eyeful. And the way he was looking at her, she may have given him a lot of other fulls too.

A shiver ran down her spine and she looked down at the floor where they were both dripping.

She took a step back, and saw the trail of water, which was becoming a puddle.

"You need to get out of those clothes."

As soon as the words were out of her mouth, she clenched her eyes shut, shaking her head. "I just had to do it, didn't I? Ignore the gutter that is my mind, I swear I'm not that desperate for sex. At all. I just talk like this. But the point is that I have a point. You need to change and I don't have anything for you to change into."

She looked around, pondering, when her eyes landed on the warm, fluffy pink blanket she had kept on the couch for her marathon night. Going over, she picked it up and returned, now completely shivering as the cold set in, holding out her hand. He just looked at the blanket, not taking it and she was getting annoyed because her teeth were starting to chatter.

"Look, I'm not asking you to take your mask off or anything," she reassured him, and his gaze swiveled back up to her. "I'm just asking you to not get pneumonia and die on me, okay? So take the blanket and change while I go to my room and get changed."

She thrust the blanket to him once, and when he didn't take it, she sighed and draped it over the chair, retreating towards the stairs. Suddenly, a thought crossed her mind and she pinned him with her gaze, speaking in a warning tone. "Don't move a muscle while I am gone, well, except to change. You don't seem like a thief but then thieves don't hang a neon boards around their necks claiming they are thieves, do they? Anyways, no moving."

With a stern last look, she climbed the stairs quickly, and whipped the pajamas away, changing into her old (and very opaque) MIT t-shirt and shorts. She had flashed him enough for one evening.

Picking up two towels, she ran back downstairs, her eyes flying to him. He stood exactly at the same spot, in his bizarre costume, shaking just slightly. His head came up when he heard her coming and she sighed, shaking her head at him.

"Why haven't you changed yet?"

He question was met again with silence and she pinched her nose in frustration, just locking eyes with him. "Look, you need to communicate with me. And I can't believe I said that corny line. Anyways, the point."

She narrowed her eyes, trying to discern if he ever smiled by counting lines at the corner of his eyes. There were hardly any.

"I know you aren't deaf. But you won't talk to me, so. Just shake your head for no and nod once for
yes. Cool?"

He looked hesitant, examining her face with shrewd eyes, before curtly nodding. She fist pumped in her triumph, grinning at him.

"Yay me. Okay. Yes and no questions," she muttered, before tilting her head up at him. Her neck was craning more than it ever had to keep their eyes together.

"Do you have to go somewhere?"

Nod. Okay then. He was playing along.

"Right now?"

Shake. Hmm.

"Later? Like in the morning?"

Nod.

"So you can stay the night? Platonically, I mean."

Hesitation. Nod.

She breathed in relief, smiling at him. "And you don't want me to see you, right?"

His eyes bored into hers, without any movement for long seconds before he nodded softly.

Alright then," she spoke softly, careful not to spook him, which was a weird thought considering how intense he was. Unspookable. But something was telling her he was slightly scared.

"You can just remove the clothes and wrap this blanket and leave the mask if you like," she offered, not knowing what else to do.

He just stared at her, blinking once, and the intensity in his eyes was making her heart pound frantically, making her warmer than the conditioned air could, and her breathing changed. Biting her lower lip, she saw his eyes drift to it before slamming back into hers and her breath hitched. Inhaling deeply, knowing this was a little foolish and fast, she took a step back, vaguely gesturing to her left.

"I'll just be in the kitchen making some cocoa," she informed him. "You like cocoa, right? With marshmallows? Who doesn't? Anyways, you get changed and I'll give you some privacy. Just tap on the table or something so I can come out without scandalizing either of us for life."

With an awkward shuffle, she walked back to the kitchen, getting the ingredients out and busying herself, closely listening to the soft sound of rustling and a thwap as the wet clothes hit the floor. She swallowed, imagining all that naked muscle. What did he look like? Tanned? Pale? Blond? Did he have abs? Tattoos? The questions whirled around in her mind, as did the images. She could see him peel away the black, the corded muscle flexing with each movement, his big hands removing the glove...

The beeping of the microwave broke her daydream and she shook her head at herself, forcing herself to focus and get the beverages ready. Once she was done, she waited, almost about to call out to him when a soft rapping on the wood made her smile, and she went out with the two mugs. He was listening to her instructions at least.

She entered the hallway and stopped. His boots were placed beside the door neatly, four metallic
things that looked like a sword and knives put on the table, and his clothes in a wet heap on the ground. Her eyes went to his feet, his bare feet, and she looked at his skin. Tanned. Bronze. This was a man who worked in the sun, and worked hard. His feet were huge and she swallowed, remembering the myth about the size of a man's feet being proportional to well, his manhood. If the myth were true, this specimen had one big manhood. The thought made her blood heat and she shook it off, moving her eyes up from his sexy, yes sexy, feet, to where the hem of the blanket started, to up, up, up. He stood, his mask covering the lower half of his face, the upper portion completely bare for her to see.

His head was almost shaven, and from the shade of his thick eyebrows, she could tell he was dark blonde, more towards dark brown. And his eyes were so luminous, and so haunted now that she could see them clearly in the light.

She looked at him again, standing there in her pink, fluffy blanket wrapped around his gargantuan body and a black mask on his face, and a giggle escaped her throat before she could stop it. He just gazed back at her, hiking the blanket over his wide shoulders and she lost it at the image he made. Putting the mugs on the table, she let the loud peals of laughter escape her body, the sound high, before calming down, looking at him again, and promptly losing it again. She laughed like that for five minutes straight, her face flushed, bent over her stomach, before finally she did not have it in her anymore.

Wiping the tears from her eyes, she saw him til his head curiously, before she chuckled again. "You look really nice."

And giggled again. Going forward, she picked up the wet heap of clothes from beside him and tilted her head in the direction of the living room. "Go make yourself comfortable. I'll just throw this in the drier."

She went to the washer and dropped the clothes, commanding it for spin and returned. He had not moved. Another chuckle left her at his tenacity and she picked up the mugs, moving towards the couch, knowing he was following.

"Well, I was going to get me some Harvey tonight but you have a bad habit of coming between the two of us," she muttered, seating herself on the couch in front of the television and watching him as he hesitantly sat down on an armchair beside the couch, perched on the edge, his body on alert.

She rolled her eyes. "You have that mask on and you remind me of Bane. Do you even know Bane? Nope. Relax, jumpy."

His eyes flew to hers and she grinned. "You look like a Game of Thrones type of guy. Oh yes. We are watching that piece of brilliance tonight. Yay marathons."

With a decisive nod, she switched it on and pressed play for the first episode, switching off the lights from the special switch she had installed beside the couch. The room was plunged into darkness, the sound of rain heavy but muted from the outside, only the light from the television lighting the room.

Pressing play, she glanced at him, smiling at his untouched mug as she sipped at hers. "I haven't poisoned it, if that's what you are thinking. You can remove the mask and drink. I won't peek. I might be tempted to, but I won't. Promise."

With that, she drowned back in the cushions, letting her mind go to the Starks as they came on the
screen, her body buzzing in a way it never had before from the proximity with him. Felicity knew that even though this was the most insane thing she had ever done, this felt right for some unknown reason. And her body buzzed even more, her mind still not completely on the show, but the guy naked beneath her blanket five feet from her. He was naked in so many ways. He was masked in so many.

Covertly, feeling movement from the side, she stole a glance, breaking her promise and her breath hitched. No, she couldn't see his face, only his silhouette, and no she had no idea what he looked like, although he seemed to be on the prettier side judging from the features she had seen, namely his eyes and head. No. Her breath hitched because she saw him holding the mug in both his hands, seeking its warmth, and leaning back in the cushion.

Her breath hitched because she saw his mask lying on the side of the couch, innocently winking at her.

She gulped and turned back to the TV, ignoring the way her heart hammered and her pulse skyrocketed at his gesture.

No she had not seen him, but he had removed his mask.

It mattered.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Hey, everyone!

I'm back with the next chapter! Yay Sunday! #Firebird

Thank you so very very much for the amazing enthusiasm you have shown for this story. That is the only thing giving me the strength to write it! Thanks!


Stuff happens. This chapter is longer than the last one. Enjoy!

Don't forget to drop me a line! Kudos and comments, guys!

Happy reading!!!

The constant, annoying ringing of her alarm clock woke her up suddenly, and she put out her hand, sleepily turning over and banging the dang thing shut, burrowing into her pillows and covering herself with her blankets, purring in pleasure. Just five more minutes. Mmm hmm. Just five more sleepy, drowsy minutes in her warm, comfy bed. And her eyes blinked open at that.

She sat up on the bed, looking around, frowning, trying to remember how she came to her bedroom, let alone get in her bed, last night. She scrounged inside her head for memories, but the last thing she remembered was Jamie Lannister pushing the poor Stark baby boy down from the window ledge after getting caught. And then she remembered nothing. Nada. Zip. Zilch. All blank.

Pushing aside her blankets, she hopped down from the bed, her fuzzy slippers getting onto her feet as she ran down the stairs to the living room, coming to a stop. It was empty. Well, what could she have expected? He, whoever he was, was a creature of the night, of the shadows, of the darkness. Although she didn't think so. Not completely anyways. And right now, the morning light was filtering in through her drapes, basking the entire house in soft light, the smell of rain still lingering and drifting in through the windows on the wind.

She turned around on the spot, taking in the room. Her TV was switched off, something she did not remember doing, like walking to her room. And getting in bed. And she so did not want to think he did that, like he actually carried her to bed, and she missed it. Dang it!

Her eyes fell on her pink blanket, neatly folded on top of the couch and her eyebrows hit her hairline all on their own. My, my, what a nice man! He actually folded the blanket he had been wearing around him. Who did that? She went forward and picked it up, feeling the soft fabric under her hand, and brought it up to her nose. And she smelled him. That woodsy, outdoorsy smell. The smell with a hint of musk and so, so natural. That scent that she realized just now that she really liked.

Keeping the blanket with her to her nose, inhaling deeply, she walked around the house towards the washing machine and opened it. And then proceeded to giggle at herself. Obviously he had taken his clothes with her! He wouldn't walk out of the house naked, would he? Oh boy, did he go commando
under all that black? He might. It would be hot and stifling. And now she was hot and stifled, thinking about it.

Shaking her head at her own wayward thoughts, she went to the kitchen, putting the blanket on the stool and pressing the button for coffee, her eyes falling upon two mugs kept upside down, drying, beside the sink. The mugs they had used last night. She smiled seeing it washed. Well, well, well. Guess who learned how to be a gracious guest in whatever school he went to? She was actually very surprised by the arranged manner he had left the house in. He had taken his clothes, washed her mugs, folded her blanket, and locked the door on his way out. Without robbing her.

And it really surprised her. Not that he hadn't robbed her blind. She had known instinctively he wouldn't do that. No, what surprised her had been how easily she had succumbed to sleep in his presence, feeling not threatened or on guard, but weirdly safe. What surprised her was how instinctively and instantly she had trusted him when she wasn't as easy to trust people, especially not the ones she had seen do suspicious things in suspicious alleys and suspiciously thrown ice-cream on. Oh, her brain would never let her live that one down.

Sighing, she went up to the bathroom, hating that it was a weekday, and getting ready for her back to back meetings in town.

-----------------------------------------------------------

Felicity's feet hurt. Fashion was a bitch on the feet and they hurt like a bitch and she was in a rotten mood. Her day had started all good, with her getting up happy and remembering her stranger (yeah, he was her stranger) in the morning and then she had left for meetings. Two out of the three meetings had been a complete waste of time. The men had been pompous, rich spoiled people who looked at a woman and saw something that started with a B. And no, it was not B for Brain. They had literally looked down upon her for the hours, which had gone by painfully, and finally she had had enough so she had slammed her foot down and left, telling them to shove it up with another thing that started with a B.

Jerks.

Her other meeting, with a sharp businesswoman and her partner, and old middle-aged man, had been wonderful. They had given her the project on the spot and she finally got in her car by the time it was dark. And dark in the Glades was not a good time to be alone. So, she had high-tailed it out of there as soon as possible and gotten in her car and been on the road. And then, her baby had hiccuped and stopped on the side of the road, and the humidity had her clothes sticking to her body. She had cursed and called a mechanic and gotten it repaired, which had taken almost two hours, and now it was almost 10 PM and she was so, so very done.

She took off her heels, holding them in her hands, and unlocked the door, wanting nothing more than a good, long bath and ice-cream she had stored over the weekend in the freezer. Oh yes. Just the thought of mint chip heaven was enough to soothe her.

She turned the knob, entering and turning on the lights beside the door, putting the keys in a bowl on the table, and turned to go up. And stopped in her tracks. And yelped. And threw her heels. Right at her stranger, dressed in his trademark black.

Heart pounding, she saw him duck the heels swiftly as she put a hand on her chest, trying to calm her
breathing down.

"Seriously?!"

Her exclamation got no response from his eyes, his deep blue eyes that for some reason seemed amused. She rolled her eyes, her mood slightly lifting.

"You need to stop sneaking up on me. And how did you even get inside? The doors were locked!" she remarked, watching him closely. His eyes remained blank, just taking her in from head to foot and she sighed. "I look like a mess. I know, right? It's just one of those days."

She started moving around him, keeping her bag aside and motioning him up the stairs as she started climbing. He stayed on the spot and she huffed. "Look, I know you have been in my room so you can stand and brood there just as well. Or sit. Your choice. But I really need to get changed and I'd feel really bad leaving you here like this when you have been such an amazing guest. C'mon," she added with a little wave up.

He hesitated, but slowly took a step forward and Felicity turned, ascending, knowing he would follow now.

She went to the bathroom, opening the tap and filling the tub, talking. "Well, come in."

Turning around, she saw him gingerly taking in the room. "Well, you are already in. I mean how much more in can you get?"

His eyes flashed to hers and she smacked her forehead. "Just rewind that. I did not totally make a pass at you. Again. Not that you shouldn't be hit upon. Oh, you're very hittable. If that's even a word. And not like violent, bam bam hitting. More like wham bam hitting. And it sounds similar. You know what? This is so pointless."

The sound of the tub filling came in the room as she just looked into his eyes, blinking up at him. "Just give me a few minutes to freshen up, okay? I feel icky. I'll be with you in a while."

She went to enter the bathroom and stopped, back tracking. "And by 'be with you' I meant..."

She saw his eyes crinkling for the first time at the corners, and she stopped herself, just admiring the way it completely changed his eyes. His eyes were lethal. She gulped. "I'll just go inside. Yeah. Okay."

Closing the door behind her, she leaned against it, trying to catch her breath for a minute. He was here again. Of his own accord. She didn't drag him but he had come willingly. Was he going to stay the night? Or leave?

Wanting to know the answers, and not wanting to spend a minute longer away from him than necessary, she took her bath in record ten minutes and dressed in her Flintstones pajamas, toweling her wet hair dry and walking out. He stood exactly where she had left him and a smile came unbidden to her mouth at that. It was kind of adorable. Although she was pretty sure he would jump off a roof before having that word be associated with him.

Picking up a bottle of moisturizer, she went out the door barefoot, walking down, feeling him follow her and stopped at the bottom of the stairs, turning to face him.

"Would you like to change again?"

He remained still, stoic and she sighed. "We did the nod and shake thing last night remember? As in
we figured out a way for you to tell me stuff. So are you staying?"

His blue eyes honed in on her face and he nodded curtly, inspiring a small fist pump from her that she quickly tamped back, shuffling on her feet.

"Okay. So you want to change?"

He stopped, his eyes going to the blanket that was still on the stool, and he nodded again. She smiled wide at him, something bubbling inside her, and bounced, quickly getting him the blanket.

"Alright. You know the drill," she said, pointing to the kitchen. "I'll be in there getting ice-cream, and you change and tap the table when it's decent for me to come out. Or well, decent for you. I mean all round decent."

Without waiting for a response, she floated literally to the kitchen, pulling out two small bowls and spoons, and the pint of ice-cream, scooping a hefty amount on both and waiting. The rustling noises from last night came again, along with a zip going down and then there was a quiet tap on the wood. Smiling, she went outside, with the ice cream and another burst of giggles left her, watching him as he stood there looking ridiculous and delicious in the pink blanket that barely reached his ankles and his mask, his intense eyes trained on her.

Shaking her head, she handed him the ice cream bowls and pointed to the living room, swooping to pick up his clothes. "Go in there and make yourself comfortable. I'll be back in a sec."

She ran back to the washer, dumping the clothes inside and putting it on spin like last night, and ran back out. He was still there. She didn't know whether to be exasperated or amused.

"You'll seriously be doing this every time now, right? If you come here another time that is. I'm not pressing you or anything. Just commenting. Offhandedly."

She turned on her heel and went to the TV, looking at him from over her glasses as he stood near the armchair with the ice-cream.

"You want to watch Game of Thrones?"

He just looked back at her evenly and she got the feeling he would be shrugging now if he could. Well, obviously he could. He had amazing shoulders. Wide and broad and currently under fuzzy pink. She bit the inside of her cheek and spoke. "So, I'll take that as you don't care either way. Okay, then. We are watching something fun tonight. A movie. Hmm. How about Iron Man? Yeah, that's a fun movie. Oh, I love me some Robert Downey Jr."

She sat back on the couch, huddling in the cushions and took the bowl from his hand, careful of not touching him yet. Switching off the lights, she clicked on the movie and saw from her periphery as he sat down on the armchair, comparatively more relaxed than he had been last night, though still tensed. Five minutes into the movie, she saw the mask on the arm of her couch and bit back a smile. He was eating mint chip. The same mint chip she was eating. And he was relaxing. That felt like a big victory for some reason.

---------------------------------------------------------------------

And so it continued.
She had woken up again in her bed, with no memory of when she had fallen asleep and when he had carried her upstairs. But he had come in again that night, while she had been in her study, just waiting out in the living room for her to be done with he work. She had taken out popcorn this time and put in another movie, and he had watched, eating in the dark, watching the movie with her, carrying her to bed again when she had fallen asleep.

It had become a ritual for them each night. He would come, change, wait. She would fix something to eat, watch a movie. He would leave before she woke up every morning, blanket folded, utensils cleaned, clothes gone. And he would return again, almost around 10 each night.

It had been a week of this routine. She had no clue who he was, no idea of what his name was, and he didn't know hers, but for some reason, it didn't feel needed. For some reason, she didn't mind his need for privacy, didn't mind that he came to her each night looking for some sort of reprieve she was only too happy providing.

It had been a week of her stomach turning into a butterfly prone zone every time those eyes pierced hers, every time his scent would envelop her, every time his eyes would crinkle, like they and more and more, when her mouth ran away with her. And so she didn't mind. Something told her those crinkles were very rare, and very precious, and if her babbling mouth inspired that, good.

Seven nights he had been at her house, and she had grown used to him, adapted her routine to keep her nights free, so she could spend them with him, bonding in the oddest kind of way but the silences not awkward but comfortable and slightly loaded with sexual tension. Oh, yes. She had felt it. The woman in her had felt it very well. But she hadn't reacted because he was skittish. One move out of the ordinary from her and he would flee. So, she had let him adapt too, let him get used to it.

But she wanted to hear his voice once. The questions were killing her. Would it be masculine? Raspy? Gruff? Soft? Low? Hard?

She looked at the clock on the wall, tapping her feet. It was 2 AM and there was no sign of him. And she didn't want to admit to herself, but she was worried. What if something had happened to him and she had no idea about it? What if he got caught up in whatever he did? She needed to get him a cell phone. But he hardly said a word in company. What would he do with a mobile? Breathe? Heavily? She had seen too many movies to be comfortable with that yet. But who knew? For his heavy breathing she just might.

Speaking of movies, he was missing out on their unspoken thing, whatever it was. And she was worried, so she was in the kitchen, making herself stress food. Pasta.

And unbidden thought knocked on her head. What if he was tired and had left? But she dismissed it almost as soon as she thought of it. No. He may not say much but she was getting pretty good at reading him. And the last few days he had been enjoying, well as much as he could enjoy broodily, himself. And he wouldn't bail on her without telling her. For some reason, he had been the one to repeatedly seek out her house and seek her out and she was very certain he wouldn't run away without telling her in some way first. He wouldn't leave her waiting like this. No. Something had to be wrong.

A sudden knock on her back door startled her and she rushed to it, knowing that tap by heart by now. She opened the door wide without any preamble and stared at him as he leaned heavily against the doorjamb, clutching his arm. His arm. Which was bleeding.

She looked at the tear in his black fabric, right over the bicep, and the red was seeping through it. It was a very deep cut and she knew he had been in some sort of a knife fight.
Wide eyed, she took a hold of his other arm and pulled him inside, closing the door behind him and pushing him to sit on the kitchen stool, bumbling about, finding clean cloth and water and first-aid kit, all the while talking.

"I knew something was wrong when your broody self didn't show up," she muttered, switching off the stove and standing before him. "God, I hate it when I am right! I'm not even going to ask what happened but you better listen to me mister if you want to get that patched up."

She looked intently at his pained blue eyes and he nodded once. Good.

"Take off your shirt."

He leveled her with a look and she rolled her eyes. "Trust me, not the circumstances I imagined as well. But you need to take it off. I swear I won't jump you. You are injured. Take it off."

Hesitating, he maneuvered his free arm out of the sleeve somehow, opening the buttons down the front, and she assisted, pulling on the bloodied sleeve to get it off. Definitely not the circumstances she imagined.

Shaking off her thoughts, she finally had it off and it hit the ground with a plop. But she didn't notice. Her jaw was dropped, her eyes trained on the torso she had revealed. It was golden, the muscles cut and assembled together in hard lines, the strength sitting coiled in every tendon. He was huge, she had known that, but he looked much more bigger like this, looming even though he was sitting at eye level. Her eyes traced his torso in wonder, seeing the countless ugly, jagged scars on his body, from the three inch stitch marks in his abdomen to the arrow branded on his back, and the hundreds in between. And then his pecs under the scars, his abs under the scars, his skin under the scars. Holy ducks, he was a beautiful man.

Of their own accord, her eyes raised up and locked with his, seeing the stiff way he held himself, like she would be judging him for these. Did the man not know a thing about her? She knew he was not a white picket fence guy. He was not the guy you got home to your mother. No. He was a different breed. And his body did not deter her attraction one bit. In fact, it magnified it. Because it spoke of his strength. He had survived many crucibles and he had beat them. He had triumphed over pain and death so many times and these were his awards for those victories.

Smiling widely at him, her heart bursting with something she could not name for him, she got to cleaning his wound, feeling him flinch slightly.

"Shh," she muttered softly, trying to soothe some of the pain away. She knew her talking distracted him, so she opened her mouth. "I take it back, by the way. I would totally jump you right now, you know. But you are injured. So, some other time maybe. And now that you have spent almost a week of nights with me, platonically, with me watching movies and eating stuff, I think you have earned this. I am Felicity. And I know you don't speak and stuff but I'd just like you to have my name. And this is no pressure for you to tell me yours. I'm floundering between two names for you in my head. I'll tell you which one I decide upon."

The wound cleaned, but feeling his intense gaze boring on her, she quickly took some antiseptic cream and wrapped gauze around it, thankful she didn't have to stitch him up. That would be bad. Because needles and her? Nuh-uh.

Finally done, she pat his arm once, smiling, looking at something unspeakable in his eyes. "Are you hungry? I made some pasta. We can forego the movie obviously. But at least we can eat. I promise it's not that bad. You won't have to think of your life insurance at all. Wait, do you even have life insurance? Or family? Actually don't tell me. You're obviously not in a talkative mood. But if you
want to crash for a few hours, I have a very comfortable guest room and you can get some uninterrupted sleep. It...

The pain in his eyes gave her pause, stopping her in her words. It wasn't physical pain. It was something else. Something gut wrenching. And that agony in his eyes, as he looked back at her silently, made her realize how much he wanted to share with her, but for some reason could not. Her heart ached for him, for whatever had put that look in his eyes, caused that tenseness in his brows, and without thinking about it, before she could stop herself, she stepped in between his legs and wrapped her arms around him, careful of his wound, burying her face in his shoulder.

He stilled under her, completely, unmoving and motionless. It seemed like he didn't even breathe but she knew in her gut how unhinged he was at the moment, and he needed her. And she would be there for him, in whatever way possible. After a few minutes of him not moving, she kept her face in his neck, inhaling him, his scent so much stronger so close to him, and unwound her arms.

She took a hold of his hands slowly, gently, so as not to startle him, feeling the rough skin and the firm muscle under her fingers, and put them around her, returning her own hands to their original position, holding him tight. His muscles under her were hard and firm, and because she was pressed to him, she felt the small shiver that traveled up in body before he softly turned his head, his mask still on, and inhaled deeply, right into her hair.

She stayed still, letting him adjust to this, letting him take his own time, and felt, after moments, as he buried his face in her neck, heaving once deeply, his arms coming around her hesitantly, but more firmly, like he was still unsure if she wanted to be there.

She did.

She tightened her arms around him, pressing him closer, whispering softly. "It's going to be okay."

He froze for a second but she continued, repeating the same words, not understanding what would be okay but not needing to.

And then, she felt him hold her completely, pulling her into him with the strength she knew he was keeping under control, his hands wrapping over her waist almost completely as he burrowed deeper into the crook of her neck, taking the comfort she was so willingly offering.

He inhaled deeply, right against her ear and a soft exhale escaped.

But it was not the exhale that made her heart stutter and her arms tighten around him.

It was something else that made her pulse race and her eyes close, feeling him so solidly against her.

It was something else on that exhale that made her realize this was almost sacred.

It was his voice, soft and low, only for her ears, speaking through his mask.

One word.

"Felicity."

Chapter End Notes
So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: [supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com](http://supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com)
TWITTER: [@dorky06](http://twitter.com/dorky06)
Masking

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!

I am so very sorry I could not update on Sunday according to the schedule. Something unavoidable came up and I am late.

Anyhow, without further delay, here is the next chapter. Thank you so very much to all of you who have supported this story with so much enthusiasm. You guys literally feed my Muse and encourage me so much I cannot even explain it. Thank you!

I hope you enjoy this one.

Do drop me a line with your thoughts. I love to hear from you! Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Felicity woke up on the bed again, with no memory of how she got there, but by this point, she really didn't care much. What she did care about though, was that he had finally spoken. He had said her name, albeit so softly she would have missed it had she not been pressed so close to him. But she didn't miss it. Neither did she miss the way her heart had raced when he had hugged her back, whispering her name in a tone she had never heard before. Her heart had raced.

They hadn't watched any movies, but stayed that way for hours, with his shirtless on the kitchen stool and she holding him, and she had probably fallen asleep on him. Well, in her defense, his skin had been warm and his arms had been so inviting. And she was a mere mortal with truckload of ovaries. You really couldn't blame her.

Her phone buzzed and she looked at the picture of Katie smiling brightly up at her. With a small smile, she picked it up.

"Hey, neighbor," she greeted their normal greeting.

"Hey, neighbor," Katie chirped back.

"Any reason you are calling so early? Do you need some sugar?" Felicity teased.

"Ha ha," Katie said and Felicity could imagine her poking her tongue out. "I'm calling because I need you free tonight. We, my dear, are going to welcome the new year with a bash."

It was the new year tomorrow. She had completely forgotten. Felicity's heart thumped. "What time?"

"Around 10-ish."

Oh no. That was her meeting time with her stranger. Before Felicity could say anything, Katie continued. "Okay, so this is also the 50th event I am organizing for this club that's hosting the new year. It's a masquerade party, and it would really mean a lot to me if you came, Felicity. And since it is Sunday tomorrow, there won't be any issue with us staying late."
Oh, there would be issues. For some reason, Felicity did not want to step back from the routine she had created with her stranger, who was finally starting to open up a little. What if this clammed him back up? What if this made him stop coming to her? But she couldn't refuse Katie as well. But it was a big day for her and she was her friend and .

Sighing, she nodded. "Alright. I'll meet you at your place at 10. That okay?"

Katie all out squealed and Felicity could hear the grin in her voice. "Absolutely! And dress for a club. See you, neighbor!"

"See you."

The call cut and Felicity buried her face in her pillow, groaning loudly. Ugh. She would have to figure out a way to get out of there sooner. And leave him a note. Yeah, that could work.

With a nod to herself, she pulled the blankets over her head, and took another hour in her bed.

This club wasn't so bad, Felicity could admit. It was in the industrial part of the Glades and was actually really spacious with good music and good crowd.

Felicity sat on a bar stool, sipping her drink, watching over the dancing crowd. More like grinding crowd. Well, she couldn't blame the hot blooded people for taking hot blooded opportunities.

That evening, she had worn a green backless dress that fell to her knees in waves, the sleeves coming right to the center of her rib cage and knotting there, leaving an ample amount of cleavage on display, with golden heels and her hair in a messy up do that left the entire line of her spine on display as well. Thanks to the mask, she felt more daring. Her mask itself was a thing of beauty, green and gold with swirls of black in between, covering the upper half of her face completely, giving her lined eyes a more exotic look and leaving her blood red lips bare. She felt good.

Felicity had spent her Saturday out in the mall, shopping. She had brought herself the mask when her eyes had landed on a masculine mask on display. It had been black rimmed with dark blue spreading out from the corner of the eyes in swirls, the design Italian, to cover the entire upper half of the face. Seeing the mask, an idea had formed in her head and she had bought it, leaving the store and going to the men's store at the corner. The friendly man behind the shelves had helped her when she had roughly explained the sizes to him, and she had brought a bunch of clothes, varying from casual to formal, along with shoes for him. It had been a little expensive but something told her it would be worth it.

Getting ready, she had waited for him to come till the last minute, but her stranger had been late again, and she felt disappointed at not being able to catch him before she left. So, she had quickly left out the suit for him on the table along with the mask, and scribbled a note that had gotten longer than she had originally planned and stuck it to the table where he kept his weapons, hoping he'd read it, and had left.

Katie had whistled when she had seen her, standing herself in a long white gown with pink streaks and a silver and pink mask. They had arrived at the club around 10.30 PM and Felicity had taken a seat at the bar, allowing her friend to mingle with her other colleagues, knowing how important tonight was for her. It was like the equivalent of her having written her 50th program, which she had
done a long time ago, but still, she understood. Plus it was New Year's Eve. Yay her.

She crossed her legs and kept looking around, waiting, hoping for him to come. Though given the crowd, and the fact that everyone was wearing masks, would she recognize him? Obviously, because of the mask she would. But what if he didn't show up?

Confused, she just sat there and observed the overflowing bodies, grinding and humping against each other, taking liberties that they normally wouldn't take, the mask and the booze emboldening them. She saw girls with barely any clothes dirty dancing with guys, not an inch of space between them. It was like a mass orgy, only the dance kind. Not that she would be a part of the other kind of orgies. Oh no, she very much liked her sex life to be private, thank you very much. Not that she had a sex life. And she wasn't interested right now, except with him. Oh, yes. He would make her very, very interested. In fact, she would let him keep the mask on if he agreed to get naked. Although how they would kiss then would be problematic. She'd have to figure it out because she really did want to kiss him.

Her head bobbed with the loud beat and in sync with the bodies, her eyes suddenly landing upon a man dressed in her stranger's costume, in the exact black bizarre costume with the black mask. Exact everything. But Felicity looked at him and knew in her bones that he was some one else and not her stranger. This man was cold and dangerous. And he was looking for someone, turning his head from his spot in the shadowed corner of the room.

His gaze stopped on Felicity and she quickly darted her eyes away, not wanting to be caught staring at him, not even wanting to acknowledge him. Her heart beat quickened and the hair on the back of her neck rose up in discomfort. He was watching her but his gaze was unwelcome, unlike her stranger's. Who was not a stranger per se. But she didn't really know him. Except looking at the man with that same costume made on thing certain to her- he was a part of some sort of group and that was their uniform.

Slowly sipping her drink, she covertly glanced at the man from the corner of her eyes and adrenaline suddenly filled her as she saw him inching along the wall towards her. And the gut that made her trust her temporary house-guest was screaming at her to run away from this guy as fast as possible. Flight. Definitely that option.

Heart pounding wildly with the music, she kept her glass on the bar and looked around, considering her options that were nil. Going out of the club was stupid because it would be deserted and this man could do whatever he wanted to her. Staying in the club was stupid because the crowd was drunk and the music was too loud for anyone to hear her or notice if she made a commotion. And she didn't think any bouncers would be able to help.

Not really knowing what to do, she looked back towards the man, who was closer than she would have liked, and listened to her instinct of at least getting away from him. She started for the other corner of the room, looking back at him, seeing the man closing in, and her heart came to her throat. A bead of sweat rolled down her back and she frantically pushed between gyrating bodies to get away, her pace slowed by the people and men whose hands she could feel going over her. But right now, she didn't even have it in her to be offended. Priorities. A guy copping a feel was the lesser evil. And the bigger evil was closing in.

She reached the other wall, and suddenly the lights in the club started flickering and changing with the music, casting dark shadows and rays in motion everywhere. She whirled around to face the room, pressing her back to the wall, and saw the man come up to her, his hand on his waist. Felicity's eyes drifted to what he was holding and from the glinting of the alternating colorful lights, she knew it was some kind of a knife. Her body started pulsing with the need to run and her heart sank
knowing there was nowhere she actually could.

The man stood a few feet from her now, his eyes dark and dead, so unlike the beautiful blue eyes she had come to read behind the same mask. She looked at him with wide eyes, plotting something that she could do to evade him, anything that she could do. Maybe she could jam her heel in his eyes. Or she could knock over everyone so she'd have their attention. Something. Anything.

She tried to move towards her left but the man took one final step, lifting the knife to her abdomen. She felt the cool, metal blade against her stomach and felt the blood leaving her face, her heart stopping, eyes growing big. She didn't even dare to take a deep breath lest the knife slip in. Why was this man after her? Who was he? And what did it have to do with her stranger?

Before she could take another shallow breath, she suddenly felt the knife leave her side, and she looked down at the man's hand and gasped. Wrapped around the man's hand was another hand, embedding the knife deep inside the man's stomach.

She raised her hand involuntarily to her mouth as the man slumped to whoever was behind him and shut her eyes, clenching them hard, standing frozen on the spot.

She had just seen a man die. Albeit a bad man who had been about to kill her. But he had died.

Swallowing, she felt the adrenaline slowly leaving her body and felt it start to shake violently, feeling cold seep into her bones. She didn't know how long she stood there, looking like a loony bin with her eyes closed and nails digging into her palm, but the next thing she felt was a hand on her face. Her eyes flashed open and she gasped again, seeing him standing so close to her, his hand touching her cheek in the way he always did, except his hand was bare and she could feel his skin on hers.

She searched his blue eyes, feeling the rough callouses on his fingers and palms as they cupped her face, looking her over as though searching for any signs of injury. And then her eyes moved to his mask and she looked him over, seeing the way the suit fit him, the black hugging his muscles and making him seem bigger. He had decided to forego the tie and she could see his Adam's apple for the first time and just a hint of his pecs through the open collar. Her eyes moved up and for the first time, she saw the lower half of his face. The blue and black mask hugged the upper half, fitting him like it had been designed for him, leaving his lower portion bare. And what a lower half it was.

Felicity unabashedly checked out his brilliant, chiseled jaw sprinkled with light scruff that just added to his dangerous and mysterious aura. It fit. Clean shaven wouldn't have suited him. And his mouth. It was a beautiful mouth, with slightly full lips that looked soft and delicious and Felicity's mouth watered. And there was a small mole beside the corner of his lip that just urged her to bite it, winking out at her from under the scruff.

She mentally put what she had seen of his upper face now with his lower one and the result, albeit blurry, made her heartbeat race. He was one good-looking guy. Very good-looking guy. Not that it really mattered to her, since it were his eyes, and he who held her attention, but she had to admit this didn't hurt. At all.

The elation she felt looking at him, knowing that he had come here for her, was marred by the fact that he had killed a man, whoever he was, who had been about to kill her. She didn't know whether to chide him or thank him. And remembering how she had met him for the first time, combined with the cool expertise with which he had slipped the knife in the man with so much discretion made his occupation very clear to her. He was a hired gun.

And it bothered her that she was not very bothered by that. She should be.
Inhaling deeply since the first time after seeing that other man, she bit her own lip, seeing his eyes follow the movement and she rose on her tiptoes, supporting her balance on his biceps that she could feel like stones under his suit, lining her mouth with his ear.

"What did you do to him?"

He pulled back, his eyes neutral and looked down at her. Despite her heels, she just reached his shoulder. And again, the size difference should have intimidated her but for some weird reason it did not. It made her feel safe.

When he didn't answer, she went near his ear again, asking. "Why did you?"

This time he didn't pull back. This time, he turned his neck so that his mouth was lined next to her ear, and she wondered for a second what they would look like to the other people. Two lovers in a shadowy corner standing close to each other with faces in each others necks. Like vampires feeding mutually. Which was a very odd thought and she had read too many romance novels.

She felt his warm breath on her lobe and a shiver traveled down her spine. Was he going to say something? Finally?

He exhaled softly and his voice carried over to her ear over the loud music, it's husky timbre making her toes curl.

"You are mine, Felicity."

Her heart stuttered and her hands tightened on his biceps of their own accord, heat pooling in her body at his claim, and she knew somehow that it was stemming not from the creepy possessive place that it generally did with other people but from entirely somewhere else. She just didn't know where.

She gulped but didn't pull back, not sure she would be able to look him in the eyes just then. "You can't say that. What if I start dating someone else? And you go back to wherever you are from? And all this is just temporary reprieve for both of us? Claiming someone like this is not done, mister. Especially me."

He looked at her, and she saw the way his lips tilted up just infinitesimally, and it was so tempting. He shrugged slightly and leaned over again, his rough whisper brushing her ear, his stubble rasping over her skin.

"Mine."

A laugh burst out of her at his 'sorry not sorry' attitude and she shook her head, looking at the clock in the center of the room. 11.45.

She looked back up at him, her hand raising automatically to his mask. She traced the swirls and saw his eyes close, as though he was savoring that touch on his skin, and she realized it. The slight difference she could feel today between them had more to do with the hug last night than it had to do with costumes. That long hug, his first word. Things between them had shifted somehow.

Her hand went down to her own side and his eyes opened, the blue in the mask starkly contrasting with his own, the shade not icy but fiery, and he stared at her with a piercing intensity that she was still not used to. She looked away, unnerved, and felt his finger turning her chin back to him softly. They looked at each other, the music, the people, everything else seeming far away.

Suddenly, the music stopped and the lights stilled. She looked up towards the small stage where a young man stood, grinning.
"Thank you, everyone," he began in a smooth voice, looking at the people, raising his glass of champagne. "This celebration has been a huge success because of you and we are going to welcome the New Year with a bang. Only a minute left now. Countdown with me!"

Felicity grinned as she heard everyone countdown together, and she joined in, the energy catching up with her, her eyes going to her stranger. He was quiet, as expected, but looking down at her with what she assumed was curiosity.

And then they were down the seconds and Felicity's heart thumped, wondering if she should go for the tradition with him.

10

She looked up at him, and bit her lip, conflicted.

9

The room was buzzing with the energy of the people, their enthusiasm.

8

She was excited too and she looked around, seeing people partner up, getting ready for their kisses.

7

Well, it was considered a good omen to begin the new year with a kiss. Not that she believed in omens. But at least she had an excuse.

6

She looked back at him, shuffling on her toes.

5

What if he actually backed off if she came on to him? Would it seem too desperate?

4

But she could keep it chaste. No, she couldn't. The moment she would touch those lips, she knew whatever little control she would have would evaporate and she would delve in for the taste.

3

Curiosity was a bitch. Sexual attraction was a bitch who knew she was a bitch and rubbed it in her face.

2

Oh boy. She was not ready. She was so ready.

1

She inhaled deeply and straightened her spine. She could do it.

Exuberant shouts of "Happy New Year" rang out everywhere and she saw people kissing everywhere around her, and she stood there, just staring at him. Taking another deep breath, she
went on her toes again and realized she couldn't do it. She was chicken. No, she was the chicken that ran around in circles.

At the last second, she changed direction and touched her lips to the mole on the corner on his mouth, feeling him still completely, and hastily pulled away.

"Happy new year," she said, feeling her face flush under the mask.

A drunk guy collided into her from behind, turning to greet her, his intention obvious. Before he could even step into her personal space, she felt herself being pulled right against her stranger, his arm a vice around her waist and she felt him tense looking at the drunk guy.

They had to get out of there. The drunks would only get bolder as the night grew and it would not help either herself or Mr. Broody Blue. Quickly pulling out her phone from her bra, she typed a text to Katie, telling her she was going home, and tapped him on his arm. He looked at her and she nodded towards the door.

Understanding her intention, he took a step forward, clearing the path with his arm and pulled her behind him by the arm, shielding her from any prying hands. One hand got past him and Felicity watched in fascination as he gripped the wrist, applying so much pressure in a second that the man was on his knees. Not sparing him another glance, he continued forward and Felicity followed, finally out of the door and into the night air, her ears still buzzing in the musical inertia.

The alley they exited in was occupied by a couple who were making loud noises and humping against each other, not even looking up at the sound of the door opening. Felicity quickly averted her eyes, her cheeks warming and started walking towards the main street, feeling him fall in step beside her, matching his stride with her smaller steps.

They walked into the street, watching the fireworks going of somewhere, the spot outside the club occupied by people making out or taking a smoke. She felt a few eyes turn to her and before she could glare back at them, he stepped in between, once again going overboard.

She continued walking, looking sideways at him.

"So, you have a thing with protecting me," she started as they continued their stroll into the Glades. She wouldn't have been caught dead here alone at this time of the night, and she'd have called a cab had she indeed been going back alone. But he had come. And he was walking her back, without her asking. And for some reason, she was not scared to be walking in the Glades with him in the middle of the night with him. He was strength personified, and she wasn't just referring to physical aspect of it.

The chilly night air sent a shiver down her spine and he noticed. Obviously he did. He watched her more than he did the road. Without missing a beat, he shrugged off his coat, wrapping it over her shoulders and her jaw dropped in surprise.

"I wouldn't have pegged you down for a gentleman," she said, pushing her arms through the sleeves that drowned her, his warm, musky scent wrapping around her.

He didn't say anything but pushed his hands in his pockets, his shirt stretching taut over his shoulders and chest that she knew were exactly as muscular as they looked. Better actually.

The moonlight shone upon them and they continued.

"You know," she began conversationally, knowing he was listening to every word, "I'm really happy you came to the club tonight. Not just because of the whole getting rid of the guy who was
going to skewer me. And that by the way reminds me, he was wearing your uniform so i am assuming he is a member of whatever little or big league you have going on."

His eyes flashed to her for a second before he looked ahead again. She frowned but continued. "I am happy because I wanted to celebrate new year with you. Do you celebrate it? I don't think you do. Well, we used to have big celebrations before my dad left us. We as in my mother and I. After that it was just the two of us, so we did celebrate but just on a mini level. Then it was just me so it was nothing big. But, I liked that you were there tonight. And I apologize if that almost kiss made it weird for you. Like I know the hug was still okay and to be honest, I was going to go all out and kiss the lights out of you but I chickened out because I am a chicken. Well, not literally of course. And that mole looked kissable. Plus, I am glad you are wearing this mask so it leaves your mouth accessible. And you have an amazing jaw, by the way. And the scruff works for you too."

She paused to take a breath and looked at him. He was looking ahead but his lips were doing that 'just there' smile thing again and she relaxed, starting again. "Oh, that reminds me. I got you other stuff too, you know, for whenever you are at the house."

He turned to her, his eyes neutral and passive and she shrugged. "You're welcome. I thought you might be tired of the blanket. So, when you decide to stay, you'll have some clothes to change into. I had a hard time guessing your size though. But the guy in the store was super helpful. I just waved my hands in the air with your tentative sizes and he got all the stuff out and hey, if the suit fits, the others would too. Knowing a guy's size is really important."

Her eyes widened and she shook her head. "No, not that size. Although that size could be important too. I mean a girl has needs. I'm not really biased that way. But it shouldn't be too small, you know. And though you don't look like yours will be, I won't mind. And I totally did not say that I even think of your size. I don't have anything to mind. For the reason that I won't have anything to do with your size at all. Nope. But you do look like a sizable guy. If your hands or feet are any indication. And can you please stop me before I dig a deeper hole for myself?"

Felicity looked up at him, to see that same look on his face and sighed. She just could not filter it, could she?

They turned right towards her residential area and a jeep passed by, the boys drunk and wolf whistling at her lewdly. She felt him tense and without thinking slipped her arm through his, linking it, and resolutely looked forward. They walked in silence for a while before she heard his deep inhale and glanced at him.

They reached her house and she opened the door, feeling him following after her.

She put her clutch away and slipped out of her heels, kicking them to the side, removing her mask and dropping it on the table, all the while listening to him pick up his clothes and weapons and put them in a small gym bag she had brought him. So, he wasn't staying.

Finally, undoing her hair, she brushed her fingers through it and turned back to face him, slipping the jacket from her shoulders and handing it to him.

"So, you aren't staying?" she asked, knowing but still hopeful.

He shook his head and she tamped down her disappointment.

"Does it have anything to do with the guy at the club?"

He hesitated before nodding once. Alrighty then.
Before she could say another word, she felt the air between them shift, and her heart hammered in her chest, watching those blue eyes latch onto hers. He slowly raised a hand, a rough hand, cupping her jaw, his thumb slowly rubbing over her blood red lips.

Her eyes stayed on his, locked, and her lips parted with a rough exhale, but he continued to feel the texture of her mouth, his thumb running round and round on her lips, her pulse spiking, her blood getting fevered with just that one simple motion. She peeked out her tongue to wet her lower lip and touched his thumb. It froze, hovering on her mouth, and her chest heaved, just looking at him with heat pooling everywhere in her body.

He leaned forward and her eyes fluttered close, her breath hitching, waiting with baited breath.

After long seconds, she felt his soft lips against the corner of her mouth, touching her skin the way she had touched his, that one touch firing her body like the best kiss of her life had not.

He pulled away, and she opened her eyes, clashing her gaze with his, wanting nothing more than to pull his head down and plant one on him, a big smacking one on him. She swallowed and bit her lip, fisting her hands to resist the urge, resist the hunger gnawing in her body.

"Happy New Year, Felicity," he said softly, making her heart race faster, before turning around and leaving out the door, closing it behind him.

She walked forward, stunned, her brain cells completely fried, and locked the door.

She didn't know his name, didn't know his face, didn't know exactly what he did but just had an idea, and knew a friend of his had tried to kill her and he had killed him instead. She had ten words, one stake of claim, two almost kisses and one mother of hugs from him.

The man hadn't even kissed her and she had walked the Almost Orgasm Boulevard.

They said whatever you did on the New Year's night, you did for the rest of the year.

If that were true, she didn't know if she would survive the next year.

What a happy new year, indeed.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Hey everyone!

With my roadtrip last Sunday and late this Sunday, you guys have been so super patient with this story. Thank so much for that!!!! And I hope this chapter was worth the wait. It does not have any babbles and you'll see why. But I hope you enjoy it nevertheless.

Do drop me a line with your thoughts. Kudos and comments, guys!

Happy reading!!!

Five days.

New Year had been five days ago. Felicity’s best almost kiss, better than any actual kisses she had had, had been five days ago.

Five days. And he had disappeared.

With a murmur of her name, he had vanished back into the darkness and never returned.

Five days.

Felicity stared at the space in her cupboard that she had assigned to his clothes. New clothes. Clothes that he had never worn. Not once.

And the suit that he had worn, he had taken with him. Like he had taken himself into the shadows outside her house. And he had not returned.

Had she not been absolutely certain of her sanity, she might have believed that she had conjured him up. After all, what evidence of his existence did she have apart from her own memories? He had come to her in the middle of the night, and he left before daybreak. He had done so for weeks.

And now, it was like he did not exist.

And she was pissed.

She jerked the closet close, and in the same jerky movement that was the theme for today, she put on her running shoes and tied her hair back in a tight, angry ponytail. If ponytails could be angry, that is. But she was pretty sure hers pulled it off. Ready in her tank top and tracks, she bounced on her toes, and looked at the time on the clock.

4.30 AM.

Yeah, well, sue her. She hadn’t had a decent night's sleep in five days, waking fitfully at every little noise in the house, waiting every night for him to come, and she was so angry at herself now.

Shaking her head, she locked her house, pocketing the key and looked at the semi-dark
neighborhood. It was still dark, just with the hint of the dawn that would break through soon. It was quiet, except the occasional sounds of critters.

She knew it was an unlikely time for a run but right now, she was beyond caring. After laying in her bed for the sixth night in a row, tossing and turning and waiting and finally realizing with that sinking feeling that he was not coming, yet again, she had pushed herself off and decided to burn off the excessive energy. Timing be damned.

Pushing her earphones in, and playing the loudest music she could find (she was done with the sad, longing tunes she had listened to previously), she started jogging at a slow pace, heading west, liking this semi-dark state. And she let her mind wander.

After her hunk had left that night, leaving her gobsmacked and leaving a residence of butterflies in her tummy, she had changed and gotten in bed, smiling. The New Year had been better than she could have thought. And things between them had shifted, but she was curious to see where it would lead (apart from any flat surfaces; they were a given). She had woken up the next morning and done a lazy kitty impersonation, rolling in her bed for hours, enjoying the feeling. Then she had spent the day calling her mother and wishing her, and chatting with her for a long time, catching up, after which she had called Digg and then a few other college friends, receiving calls from clients and having an all round happy day. In the evening, she had taken up boxes of chocolates and gone around the neighborhood, visiting the old couples and wishing them a happy new year.

One couple in particular, Italian, Mr. and Mrs. Ambrogioli, were her favorite. When Felicity had moved into this neighborhood, Mrs. Ambrogioli had knocked on her door that first night and taken her, despite her protests, to her house across the street, and sat her down while she made the most amazing garlic bread she had ever tasted while Mr. Ambrogioli regaled her with his stories of his time in the Army and their house in Italy. And then they had had dinner with mouth-watering lasagne and salads and red wine while asking Felicity about herself and telling her of their two daughters who were married and lived in Italy and California respectively, and their grandchildren. Since Felicity had never had grandparents, she had enjoyed their company immensely and made it a point to visit them as much as she could, even for a while.

That evening, she had given them chocolates and stayed for dinner again, but had left quickly when she had realized it was nearing 10.

She had gotten home and put in some popcorn, put in a movie, and slowly started waiting. And hour had gone by and she had hardly watched the movie, her mind on her nightly house guest. When he hadn't shown up by midnight, she had started getting worried. The last time he had been late, he had had a long gash on his arm. A long bleeding gash. And despite the hug that it had resulted in, and his first word to her, she did not want him hurt at all. The night had slowly gotten darker, and Felicity had given up on all pretenses of watching a movie, just sitting and staring at the clock, watching the minutes tick by, her heart sinking to the bottom of her stomach. She had not been used to feeling like that for anybody. And yet, she had welcomed dawn with gritty eyes and her butt on the couch and no sign of her stranger. That night had been worry.

She had spent her day cleaning the house, burning of energy, trying not to think since her brain was very helpful in building worse case scenarios, especially when the man who had come to her without fail for nights did not show up. She had gone out, brought groceries, done a gazillion things and the next night had been the same. Except the worry was gone. It had been replaced by gut-wrenching fear. What if he hadn't come because he couldn't? Because it was physically impossible for him to? What if he had been injured severely? Or worse? Who would take care of him? The questions, borne one after the other, haunted her and she had not slept again. That night had been fear.
The next night had been less welcome. Her eyes had been burning due to lack of sleep and she had felt drowsy but as she had stayed on the couch, with a throw wrapped around her, sleep had evaded her. She had dozed and woken up and dozed and woken up a million times that night, alternating between two emotions. That night had been worry and fear.

The next night, after a day of lethargy but still working on a project for a high-profile client, after a day of looking and feeling like absolute crap, she had shifted to her bed and lay down, staring at the ceiling, another thought coming to her. What if he had stopped coming of his own will? What if he had not come because he had gotten bored or found someone else who brought him clothes and made him watch movies and hugged him? What if he liked that someone better than he did her and he had decided not to come to her anymore? She had not ignored the way her stomach had roiled and her throat had tightened at the thoughts. She had not ignored the way her chest had compressed in itself after her epiphanies. That night had been heartbreak.

And then it had been last night. Last night had been pure rage, at herself and him. As she had lay in bed, she had felt so very angry at him for stringing her like that, for making her get more used to him than she had realized and sucking her in with his brood and gruff and stares. And then she had felt mad at herself for getting sucked in when she didn't even know the man. Why had she even trust him, without her own realization? Why had she let him have this hold over her? It was her own fault and like everything else, she would learn and move on and not make that mistake again. No more trusting random strangers who wore masks and made her heart flutter. They were unreliable. And the fact that a part of her had still been hoping for him to show had made her angrier, her blood boiling till she couldn't lie down anymore and finally got up and out to run away from her own head and mull things over.

The mulling was not going very well for her as her anger had not abated one bit. She was cranky, running on fumes, and she felt like a neurotic on crack. Which was saying something because her disposition was generally sunny. Nope. Not today. Today it was semi-dark. Yay new year.

She ran around the corner, officially entering the Glades, which she probably shouldn't be doing alone at this time, but she was feeling dangerous. And angry. And no, she wasn't PMSing.

The early light of the morning was streaking the sky purple now, and she had Linkin Park (whom she reserved for her dangerous and angry moods) pounding heavy electric guitar and drums in her ears. Her calves were burning and her tank top was getting sweatier, her breathing heavier. And she ran. And ran.

And she ran in the industrial area, around completely abandoned buildings that would have looked creepy had she not been so angry. But she was.

She was just crossing a building when an arm shot out, grabbing her waist and another clamped over her mouth, muffling her surprised yelp. Heart beating wildly, fear pulsating through her, she struggled against her captor, dislodging her earphones in the process, the sudden sounds of only breathing hard on her buzzing ears. Her captor had too much strength for her liking and his hand was huge on her mouth as he silenced her forcefully, dragging her inside the abandoned warehouse, the inside of the cavernous space completely dark, with just a ray of light wafting in through the open window high up.

She felt her captor's muscular body behind her as she tried to move away, but her hands were pinned beside her by the arm that spanned her waist and her legs were swinging since he was almost carrying her with one hand inside. And as dangerous and angry she had been, she realized what an awful idea it had been running in the Glades at this time. Now, she was about to be raped or killed or both and she had no one to blame but herself. Lordy, this was so not how she wanted her last
moments to be. And they won't be. She'd fight as much as she could. Which was not a whole lot, but at least it made her feel slightly better which in turn made her feel more frustrated at her inability to get free.

Her captor stopped suddenly, pressing her front into a stone pillar, and leaned in. She felt him pressing into her back, felt the cool stone on her front, and realized she was completely trapped between the two. No escape. His hot breath came on her ear and her heart thundered, not knowing what was happening.

"Do you have a death wish?"

The low, harsh voice against her ear made her freeze completely, made her stop mid struggle. It was the voice she had hoped to hear for five long, torturous nights. It was the body she had hoped to see for five long, torturous nights. It was him. Not injured or dying as she had feared earlier but very much alive and strong. Accosting her at a warehouse pre-dawn after being a no show for five long, torturous nights.

The fear fled in face of the fury that took over her blood, firing her veins. Opening her mouth on his slackened hand, she bit, hard and heard his rough exhale as he pressed her into the pillar, removing his hand from her face and using it to hold her down.

"Let go of me," she spit out, mad beyond belief, struggling.

And suddenly, his weight was gone and she turned around, glaring at him as he stood a step away, in the dark. And now that he was there, seeing him after five days, she realized she wanted to just go home. She did not want to talk to him. Or see him. Gritting her teeth, she stepped to the left, intending to get out of his proverbial hair and shove him out of hers. She had never felt this intensity of anger, had not thought herself capable of it, and it scared her. It was an unknown and she did not know how far her reactions would go. What she did know, however, was that she did not want him to witness it.

The moment her feet shifted to the left his muscular arm shot out, clad in a grey jacket, holding her waist, keeping her in place.

The bloody audacity of him!

"I said," she said in a high voice, as menacingly as she could, "let go of me."

He stepped in closer and she realized he was not wearing a mask but the hood of his jacket kept his face in the shadow, especially since it was already dark, and she was so raving furious that she didn't even mind that she could not see his face. She wanted to go.

She moved to the right but his hands were like iron bands on her his, keeping her pinned on the spot with infuriating ease and she glared back at him, deciding to give him the silent treatment till he let go.

"What are you doing here?" he rasped in his gruff voice that totally should have made heat pool in her belly but did not. It did escalate her pulse though, but she was in denial for the moment.

She stayed silent, just looking back at him, giving him a taste of his own medicine. For a person who loved to talk, she was realizing how adept she was at keeping quiet with the right incentive.

He leaned in closer, his mouth going to her ear and her heart pounded with a vengeance in her chest. Traitor.
"I asked you what you were doing here?"

His words brushed the shell of her ear, right over her piercing, and blood rushed to the spot, like he had physically caressed it. Another traitor.

A choice of not so nice words were on the tip of her tongue but she stayed quiet, with effort.

He pulled back and she felt his eyes bore into her face for long moments before his hand came up, touching her cheek at his spot in his way, and she snapped, the last five awful nights and lack of sleep and rioting emotions bombarding out of her. Putting both her hands on his chest, she pushed at him, hard, just wanting to get away. That was as useful as pushing the wall and hoping to displace it. She was no X-Men. Sadly. Being a mutant with super strength would be super helpful at the moment.

She beat at his chest with her fists and he just stood, unmoving, observing her. After four strikes, when he remained unaffected and she did not feel minutely better, she slumped her hands down and took a deep breath.

Yes. She was an adult (mostly) and she could handle this like an adult (even if she didn't want to).

"What do you want from me?" she asked, keeping her voice and face neutral.

He stayed quiet before speaking in his low voice. "What are you doing here?"

She raised her eyebrows and crossed her arms over her chest, ignoring the tiny spark his voice created inside her.

"I was running and you pulled me in here."

Silence. Then, "You should not be running alone at a time like this."

Felicity scoffed. "Yeah, and I shouldn't be letting a stranger come to my house every night too."

Her sarcasm made a low growl erupt from him. "Do you not have any idea of the kind of danger this is?"

"Actually, no, I don't. And while you are in a verbal mood, you mind telling me why you dragged me here?"

Another low growl followed by a solid step, right into her personal space. "Because you are so unaware you don't see who follows you."

Felicity had always dealt with anger by either being in denial, or being a smartass. Neither of which were healthy or working in the present scenario.

Nevertheless, she spoke. "Apart from you, you mean? And what were you doing following me at this hour? Don't you sleep?"


He exhaled deeply and her eyes drifted to his mouth, just inches away and she moved her gaze away. She didn't need the distraction, the full, soft, inviting distraction that was his mouth and that danged mole.

Shaking her thoughts off, she inhaled deeply. "Why am I here?"
And he had reverted back to silence. Great. Not.

Not caring (she did, but she was in denial) she turned her face away and started struggling again, wanting to just get home.

Suddenly, the pressure on her waist intensified and she realized that till then, he had been holding her lightly, and not using any strength. Now he was. Her gaze swung to his shadowed face, which was suddenly very close, and she gulped. This was dangerous. He was dangerous. He could snap her like a twig and leave her undiscovered for months. Or he could use this weird power he had over her and make her do things she might regret later.

A tremor traveled down her spine and she stilled, feeling his breath on her face.

"Listen to me very carefully," he growled, an edge to his voice that she hadn't heard before (in the little that she had heard from him). "You don't run alone in an area like this at night. You don't make yourself an open target for anyone. You. Don't. Die."

The emphasis on the last words made her breath catch, a whisper escape her before she could stop it. "Why do you care?"

He stayed silent, apparently done with his piece and she felt the anger which had been subdued by surprise, come back. She pushed at his chest.

"Say all this to whoever your new night host is," she ground out, letting the thoughts festering in her for days out. "Share blankets and movies and hugs and food and drag her to wherever you want but you let me go."

She felt, more that saw, his surprise. And then, after seconds of watching her, he did something she had never seen him do.

He chuckled.

She heard the soft sound, felt it against her face, mingling with his musky scent. She stared at him in surprise.

And she snapped.

"For five nights," she began, her voice low, stopping his smile, "I have been swinging like a pendulum between worry and fear and anger, for you. And do you even know how crazy that is? I had started questioning my own sanity because I wasn't even sure if you'd existed or you were a figment of my imagination. And now, I don't care. You exist which means I'm not crazy and you are fine, which means you didn't come of your own accord. And I've accepted that and it's fine. You found someone who made you watch better movies perhaps."

"Don't mock what we have," he spoke softly and she felt hysterical laughter bubble up inside her.

"That's the point," she said, her voice getting louder. "We don't really have anything."

"Don't lie," his voice came in the same soft tone, the tone people used to calm down spooked animals. She wasn't a spooked animal. Was she? And he started rubbing her waist softly, soothingly. Well, he thought she was spooked.

She sighed, closing her eyes. "What would you have done if I had disappeared for five nights and you could only wait? If you didn't know my name or who I was or had never seen my face?"
"I would have torn this city apart looking for you."

Felicity's heart stopped at his words, at the certainty in his voice and she felt her anger abate, biting her lip.

No. This was not healthy. This was a wake up call and she needed to open her eyes to the harsh reality. The harsh reality that he was a stranger whom she had given way too much power over herself and who could hurt her and abandon her to never be heard from again. Like her father. She couldn't live her nights like she had been for the last five days, listening to every howl of the wind and tick of the clock, waiting for him, and feeling her heart break over and over every time he didn't and she let herself hope again.

A pressure started building in her chest and she shoved him away frantically, needing to get out. The walls seemed to be getting closer to her and he was too big, looming over her and she had to leave.

"Tell me to leave you alone," he growled out. "Tell me."

She tried. The words came to her throat and her tongue got stuck to the roof of her mouth, not allowing the words to leave, too scared he would comply, too worried he wouldn't. Heart thudding, she stepped aside, and for once, he let her, constantly watching her.

"Whatever it is, it's done," she said, her voice on the verge of hysteria she felt. She took steps away towards the door, feeling her heart break into pieces. "This is not working for me anymore."

"Felicity."

She heard him whisper, like he had that night with his arms around her and his face in her neck, his body seeking comfort in hers. Her name. His first word to her. How could her own name become a traitor?

Swallowing past the lump in her throat, knowing this should be easy, since she had known him just a handful of days and didn't know him at all and whatever they had was, well, it just was, she started sprinting towards the door, exiting out into the morning light, blood rushing in her ears as her muscles burned, demanding that she stop to take a breath but she didn't. She pushed past the need for oxygen and kept running when she heard something over the rush in her ears.

"Felicity!"

Her name. Not a whisper but a shout. A loud shout in a masculine voice, loud enough for anyone in the vicinity to hear, loud enough to make her stumble over her own feet. But it wasn't the volume which made her stop. No. It was the tremor in that loud baritone that halted her in her tracks, when nothing could have. A genuine tremor.

Heart pounding for multiple reasons, she panted, putting her hands on her knees and bent over, looking at the ground, the concrete blurring as her breathing evened out slowly.

She saw a pair of legs, dark jean-clad legs with big running shoes, enter her field of vision.

He had run after her. He had come after her.

She froze, the implications too much, her eyes glued to the shoes, afraid to look up. It was broad daylight now, and he was in a jeans and hoodie, without a mask, standing beside her.

Her knees shook but she couldn't look up. She had wanted to see his face for such a long time. Fantasized about it. Dreamed about it. And now, when he stood out in the open for her to look, she
couldn't.

She felt his hand come to her chin, making her jaw tremble, and tilt it up as she slowly straightened, closing her eyes. She couldn't look.

It was too much. Everything about him was too much. And yes, she was spooked out of her genius mind which was a pile of goo for the moment. Fried.

"Look at me."

His voice, commanding softly, said something she had never thought he would say to her, while he still held her chin in his hand.

Her eyes opened and she looked up slowly, seeing his muscular shoulders and the hood of his jacket down on them, up his thick neck and the Adam's apple and the veins, up his scruff and the mole and the lips, to his blue, blue eyes.

For the first time, Felicity saw his face.

He had showed her his face.

He had showed her himself.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Hey everyone!

The response to this story is really flooring me. Completely. Utterly. Thank you so much! I hope you continue enjoying this!

Here is the next chapter for you all.

Do drop me a line with your thoughts. I love to hear from you!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She was stealing covert glances at him. She didn't know why she was doing that when she could have stared outright with her jaw dropped and drooled a little, but she figured since she had already done that, she'd try something different. So, covert glances it was.

She had done the whole jaw-dropped-drool routine when she had seen him properly, for the first time in the light. He had stood there, his fingers tilting her chin up lightly, making sure her eyes saw him, his own eyes somber, awaiting her reaction. She had blinked. The opened her mouth. Then blinked again. Closed her mouth. And when words had failed her, after the emotional turmoil of the last few days, she had swallowed and started walking towards her house, feeling him fall silently in step beside her.

And now they were walking silently, his hands shoved into his jacket pockets, his body alert and lithe in its grace, the hood down over his shoulders, exposing his face to the pale sunlight. And that was the reason she was stealing covert glances at him. She could not get over how good-looking he was.

If she saw it critically, she could not find a single fault in that face. It was symmetrical, perfectly formed, with beautiful features. His skin was lightly tanned, telling her that unlike to what he'd like her to believe, that he was a creature of the night, he did spend a lot of time in the sun, shirtless (since she remembered his torso being tanned as well) without his mask. His jawline was beautiful in profile, peppered with dark brownish scruff that only let his mole and perfect bow of a lip peek out. His nose was straight, not too full and not too long, just the right length for his face and his eyes. She sighed inwardly. She had spent enough time in the last weeks just waxing poetry, really bad poetry, but poetry nonetheless, in her head about the brute power of those eyes. Those blue, blue eyes that looked even bluer in the sun.

He was a beautiful man, and she knew it was an odd word to use for him but he was. Whoever had made him had taken his time, sipping cold coffee and very much awake while forming those features. He was a painter's muse personified. And she was going into poetry again.

But Felicity knew, even as she stole glances, still disbelieving that he was real and exposed and walking with her, that his handsomeness was just an added thing to his entire appeal. She was pretty sure she would not have cared much had the scars she had seen on his torso extended to his face and
it had been distorted too. Well, she would have cared for the pain he had been through, like with his body, but she knew deep down that she was already so in deep with him that nothing physical would have changed how she felt about him. Which was a mystery to her even now and she was not touching that one with a ten foot pole, especially after the last five days. They were proof of how deep she was.

She stole glance number 564 perhaps and her eyes clashed with his, as he was very overtly watching her, and she blinked away, flushing under his naked stare.

"You are unusually quiet," he spoke softly as they just entered her neighborhood.

She turned right towards her house, inhaling deeply. "Trust me, there is a whole jumble of words up here," she said, pointing to her head. "I just haven't figured out how to get it untangled. I will though. And I thought you zoned me out half the time, given how much I talk. I wouldn't have blamed you. I have met me."

She saw his lips twitch a little, and she was struck by how truly handsome he was, right in broad daylight, half-smiling. "I always listened."

Making a non-committal sound, she stepped on her porch and took out her keys, feeling him coming up behind her on the last step. Taking a deep breath, she closed her eyes and turned to him, facing him again.

"Look," she began, feeling her stomach clench at what she was about to do. "I am not mad at you anymore. Actually, scratch that. I am. But I am not as mad as I was an hour ago. Yeah. That's about right."

She nodded and blinked up at him. He was really very tall. "I know I ran away and then you showed me your face and all and I really appreciate it. Trust me, I appreciate it because it is a *crime* to hide that good a face. Seriously. But the thing is that it doesn't make what I said before any less true. And I don't..."

"Don't," his guttural whisper stopped her words in their tracks.

She opened her mouth to talk over him but his hand, non-gloved, bare hand, came up and brushed her cheek in the spot he had marked for his own, his blue eyes intense upon hers. "I have to go right now."

She closed her eyes as disappointment flooded her. Her lips curled. "Of course you do."

His hand gripped her jaw tightly and pulled her face up, making her eyes open and lock on his. "I am coming back tonight, no matter what," he said, his words sounding more like a vow to her than anything else. "Untangle your thoughts. We will talk then."

"There is nothing to..."

"We will have that talk, Felicity," he said insistently. "Even if I have to tie you to a bed to do it."

Her jaw dropped at his audacity even as her heart started to pound at his words. "Are you serious?"

"Very," he said unequivocally, no hints in his entire face that he was joking. She doubted he even knew what a joke was, much less how to make it.

Narrowing her eyes, she grabbed the hand holding his wrist and tugged, trying to pull it away to her utter failure. Fine. He was strong. Point proven.
"Listen to me," she spoke slowly, enunciating every word. "Whatever dinosaur age you have escaped from, know this. Lay one hand on me against my will..."

His lips curled again as he leaned in, the space between their faces minimal, and whispered. "Who said it will be against your will?"

Holy expletives! His words heated her blood up and she knew, even as she tried to step back, that she was still very, very deep in.

And as he left her on her doorstep and walked away, his muscular back retreating, she was not sure she would ever be able to get out now. She was not even sure she wanted to.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

She was frustrated.

Felicity sat on her haunches in the darkened kitchen, rifling through the cupboards, searching for the danged candles she could have sworn she had brought only last month for Hanukkah but could not find. And she was frustrated because her entire neighborhood was suffering some kind of black out since the storm had hit an hour ago, and her back up was out. So basically, she had been ruffling through every drawer in the house with a flashlight, the battery of which could die any second, trying to find candles. And the storm outside was bad. Much, much worse than what had hit weeks ago. The wind was howling like a crazy wolf looking for its lost mate and the air was heavy with the impending threat of really bad rain.

She had a right to be frustrated. Because if the rain hit, there would be no one to come out this side to repair anything, and who knew how long the black out would last. And she needed candles.

Shaking her head, she threw the tool box down and stomped to where her phone lay on the table, picking it up. She'd have to make a run to Mrs. Ambrogio at the candles and get back fast.

The doorbell rang and she frowned, making her way towards it. It must be a neighbor wanting help. Oh, she hoped it wasn't the Simpsons from the corner. Both of them had bad knees and they really shouldn't be walking about in the weather. Plus, the did have her phone number in case of emergencies. She just hoped they remembered that part.

She went to the door, turning the knob and opened it, just as a bolt of lightening shot through the sky and she saw her visitor.

"Digg?"

The hulk of a man smiled at her, engulfing her in a tight hug which she returned and stepped in, closing the door behind them.

"What are you doing here?" she asked, truly surprised to see him.

Digg shook his head. "You have been MIA for five days, Felicity. You don't call. You don't text. Lyla and I got worried."

Felicity looked up at him, her heart melting at the concern this amazing couple had for her, and she felt a pang of regret for getting wrapped up in her own bubble. But in her defense, she was not used
to anyone looking out for her. She had been on her own, taking care of herself, answering to no one but herself, for longer than she could remember. And having someone drive for miles and come all the way to her house in this awful weather, just to see if she was alright, touched her in ways she could not even comprehend.

On an impulse, she gave Digg a tight hug, feeling his own huge arms envelop her much smaller body. If she had ever had a brother, she suspected he would give her Diggle hugs. Those were the best kind. Her stranger's hug had been a different kind of best. But Digg's were Digg's.

"I am fine, Digg," she spoke softly into his chest. "You know how I get when I am working on something big. I just kind of zoned out."

Digg pulled back and scrutinized her with those warm, chocolate eyes, then hummed.

"That's okay, but just drop a text once in a while so we know you are okay."

She nodded, smiling and he returned the smile just as thunder rumbled in the sky. Digg looked out her window with worried eyes then around her house.

"Why don't you come home with me, Felicity?" he suggested quietly. "This whole area is out and the storm is just going to get worse. You shouldn't stay here alone."

Felicity hesitated, thinking. Digg was right. Going to his place would be the better option. There would be electricity, company and her gorgeous goddaughter. There would also be safety, since whoever had tried to kill her would not find her there and Digg and Lyla were both badass enough to take anyone down. And if she truly wanted her stranger to leave her alone, she should go with Digg.

But he had vowed that he would come tonight. And curiosity, the bloody thing that actually got her deep into this in the first place, and something she did not want to define, made the words stick to her throat and made her not budge from her spot.

"Nah," she told Digg, in a deliberately light voice that totally said how she was not freaking out. "I'll be fine. Thanks for the offer though."

She was so going to kill him if he didn't show up tonight.

Digg considered her in that Digg-y way of his for minutes and she barely resisted the urge to fidget under his gaze (and she would so have to teach Sara that when she grew up and got on the other end of her father's piercing looks) before he nodded. "Alright. But call me at once if you feel like coming over."

She relaxed, breathing in relief. "I will."

"I just want you safe," he muttered, hugging her again.

She hugged him back. "And I love you for it."

Digg smiled and then pulled the door open, jogging to his SUV parked in front of her house. She watched it pull away and waved him off, before sighing and closing the door.

She was so going to kill him if he didn't show up.

Now, candles.

She moved to the kitchen counter where the flashlight was and picked it up just as it died in her
hand, flickering once before plunging the entire house into utter darkness. Traitor.

Felicity blinked, trying to acclimate her eyes to the dark but unable to. She had never, ever seen this kind of darkness. The kind of darkness where you could not see at all.

She heard the rumbling of the thunder in the sky crack the clouds wide open and sheets of rain started to pour down in a torrent, the droplets hitting the glass on her window like little bullets, making her pulse quicken with fear that it would break in the onslaught. She closed her eyes, and opened them again, feeling her way around the counter, her eyes completely useless against the dark she could feel press on her.

It had been dark and raining the night her father had left. She remembered standing inside the window, looking out in the rain, and watching him leave, drenched, his back retreating to her. She remembered going on her toes to keep him in view for as long as she could, as the dark had swallowed him, wondering why he was leaving without saying goodbye when her mother had been sleeping. She remembered.

And standing there, absolutely alone in the house, after years of that, she still remembered.

And the darkness pressed upon her and panic welled inside her as she frantically tried to see but couldn’t, her other senses heightening, her ears twitching with the sound of the water hitting the glass. Again and again and again. Little bullets trying to penetrate into her haven. Loud claps of thunder just rumbling but not giving her any light. The chill in the wind that crawled up her spin and made goose flesh erupt on her body. The smell of wet earth and house freshener mingling together in a nasty concoction. The rain kept coming down and she heard herself gasp and gulp in lungful of air but she could not see. She needed to see. She needed to see, damn it!

She was not a creature of the dark. And she had never been. Her house was full of lights. She needed a candle, anything. And she could not even find her phone. She could not see.

Suddenly, she felt the air shift behind her and without thinking, she turned around, a scream leaving her throat as she realized, her blood running cold, that someone was inside the house.

"Felicity."

She pushed at the intruder, hard, and tried to get away.

Strong hands gripped her arms and shook her with a loud "Felicity!"

That pierced through her panic-induced brain. That voice. Those arms. He had come.

The relief she felt, knowing that he was there, right in front of her, made her throw her arms around him, burying herself into his chest. She felt his body go rigid in surprise a second before he relaxed, his arms coming up and around her, pulling her into him harder, cocooning her in a kind of safety she had never felt in her life. The darkness pressed on her and she pressed into him, knowing in her bones that he would keep it at bay.

He didn’t say anything (she had realized he did not speak unless he absolutely had to) but she felt his arms flex around her, keeping her close to him, one hand coming up to hold the back of her head, rubbing it softly. And slowly, her panic ebbed away, leaving her pulse still a little high but only because of their proximity. Her logical mind decided to wake from its very long slumber and she pulled her head back slightly (and he let her), and tried to peer up at him, with little success.

She could feel his warm muscles pressed into hers, the feel of the fabric telling her he was in his costume/uniform again. And that meant he was wearing the mask again.
It was utterly dark, and she could not see, but she did not feel that scared anymore. She was not that girl in the window anymore. She was a grown woman standing in front of a grown man who had trusted her with something precious. The man who had made this darkness his own. He commanded it. And as long as he did, she knew it could not touch her.

"You came," she murmured softly, her voice low, the loud noise of the rain seemingly quieter now. God, she hated her panicked brain. It had the bad tendency of blowing everything out of proportion.

"I said I would," his voice came slightly muffled from behind his mask. His hands were still holding her on her waist and the cradling her her. He didn't move. Neither did she.

She took in a deep breath, feeling the words press on her tongue.

"I am kind of, sort of afraid of the dark," she whispered again and felt him chuckle like she had in the morning.

"Then, you are with the wrong man, Felicity," he whispered back in that muffled voice.

"I am not with you, except well, literally, since I am standing here with you. I was talking about the other kind of 'with'."

He stayed silent for a very long time before just asking, in a very blank tone. "Are you with the man who came here?"

Felicity felt her muscles freeze, her brain catching on with the implication that he had already been in the house when Digg had been here. She wracked her brain, trying to remember what all had been said and almost face-palmed. Digg had asked her to come over, she had told him she loved him. Da da da da. And the hugs. And he had seen it all and heard it all.

She wanted to tell him it was none of his business, after the way he had left her stringing for five days. She wanted to tell him Digg was a great guy and nothing about his family. She wanted to make him feel what she felt when she thought of him visiting some other woman at night. She wanted so many things but she stopped herself. Because he may have strung her up for five days but he had come tonight, and shaken her out of one of the worst panic attacks she had ever had. He had held her and made her feel safe and though he deserved her a boat load of explanations, he deserved her honesty at least.

So, she sighed and said a soft, "No."

And because she was pressed into him, she felt the minute way his muscles relaxed- something she would never have caught on had she been standing away even in bright light. His entire body was like his eyes. Eyes that expressed so much. Eyes that concealed so much.

And for the first time, she could read him. In that utter darkness, she could read him better than she had in the light. She could read his concern for her in the way he had held her when she had been shaking in his arms. She could read his tenderness in the way he cupped the back of her head in hands she knew were more than capable of destroying her smaller frame. She could read his amusement in the way his chest had heaved just once at her words. She could feel his stress, closer to anger, at the thought of her being with a man other than him. She could read his relief at her denial.

In the light, she had read his eyes. In the dark, in was his body.

"I should let you go," he murmured quietly, and she knew he was talking about more than him physically holding her.
"You should," she murmured back.

Neither of them moved.

And the darkness that had been her adversary, that was his friend, suddenly became her own, giving her the courage she had never had before with him. Hesitantly, with tentative hands, she felt her way up his broad, muscular shoulders, feeling the fabric under her fingers, the warmth of his flesh. Her heart started pounding harder, her blood warming as her skin made contact with his neck, feeling the veins, the blood pulsing through them, feeling the musk of his scent surround her. She tilted her head back, trying to see him, but still unable to, even at this close a range. But, as it always was with him, it didn't matter. She could feel him. That was more than enough. That was everything.

Her hands softly went under his hood, feeling the closely cropped hair rasp over her skin for the first time and her hearthammered at the sensation, her fingers moving and colliding with the string of his mask. She hesitated, waiting for any reaction from him at all but he stood like stone, completely motionless, neither stopping her nor encouraging her. Well, she took that one as encouragement and swallowing once, pulled it down, pulling his mask to around his neck.

She felt the moment it left his face, his warm breath hitting her right over her face, making her heart beat faster with every little exhale of his. Her breath slowly fell in sync with his. She let her tentative fingers come around to his jaw, feeling the scruff she had fantasized about right against her fingers, making her palms tingle. And then, completely by accident, her thumb brushed over his lower lip.

It parted.

She froze.


So she made the darkness her pillar and took the strength from it, and encouragement from the fact that he hadn't pulled away or let go of his grip on her.

Slowly, giving him enough time to pull away if he wished so, she went up on her toes, supporting herself on him, and aimed for where her thumb was, touching the corner of his lip, right on the mole, like on the New Year's night. That night, she had pulled away. Tonight, she didn't.

She stayed on her toes, feeling her calves start to grow uncomfortable but he didn't move. She would have thought it were a statue had she nor been feeling the life in his flesh and his own muscles flexing infinitesimally against her own.

She turned her head just a little and pressed her lips fully to his, feeling his own soft ones part, his breath hitting her face completely. He didn't move and her mouth started trembling, right against his, her blood racing though her body, her stomach clamping at the sensation.

He didn't respond, and mortification filled her so fast, it made her mind reel. Closing her eyes, thankful for the darkness, she started to pull back.

And then, his grip on her head tightened, holding her in place.

One breath. Two breaths. Three breaths.

Her mouth was trembling again and she was ready to push away when she felt him respond. Oh boy, did he respond!
The hand holding her head angled it to the side, settling his lips more fully on hers and the hand on her waist pulled her into his body. The wave of relief at his response made her courage light back up and she gripped his face more solidly, closing her eyes and just feeling.

She had wanted to feel this for so long.

She let her lips capture his, pulling the lower one between hers and instinctively tug on it with her lips. His breathing grew harsh and she felt his tongue peek out, parting her lips with a lick, exploring just the inside of her lips, never venturing deep. She wanted deep, dang it!

Climbing him like she had wanted since she saw him in the pink blanket, she pressed herself more fully into him, her toes throbbing and her spine curving to get as close as possible while standing, pushing his hood down and away and pulling his head closer, her blood fevered. She opened her mouth completely to him, inviting him to taste, needing him to, and with slight hesitation, he took it, touching his tongue to hers and a spark shot down her spine at the first touch, her mouth swelling under his.

His hands were holding her tightly, their mouths meshed together now, weeks and weeks of pent up tension coming to fruition in the best kiss of her life, right in the dark with a nameless stranger whom she knew more than anyone else she suspected. He was not the kind to spend the last five nights with another woman and kiss her like this on the sixth night. Wherever he had been, it had only been because he could absolutely not come to her. And this knowledge made her kiss him harder, their tongues tangling and untangling, his taste like her favorite red wine.

It was an unsophisticated kiss, slow and sloppy at first, wild and uncoordinated later. She wouldn't have had it any other way.

They came apart for air, both of them breathing heavily, and Felicity felt a grin forming on her face, pressing her head to his neck.

"I really hope you don't have to kill me because I have seen your face," she mumbled the first thing that came to her mind, and felt his chuckle again more than heard it, feeling his lips press on top of her head softly.

And suddenly, his body stilled, every muscle stiffening completely on alert. She pulled away and felt him put up the mask and the hood, the gears in his head shifting as he changed modes and she blinked in confusion.

Just as she was about to open her mouth to question, she felt his gloved finger press on her swollen lips, quietening her down.

He took a hold of her hand and tugged on it, making her stumble blindly into the dark.

And then she heard it, over the noise of the rain and the rumbling thunder. The sound of her locked window upstairs opening. The window that always creaked and she had tried to fix multiple times. Someone was inside the house and she was pretty sure she would not be putting out the welcoming mats for them anytime soon.

As quietly as possible, knowing he had heard and sensed the intruder way before her with his ninja skills (she was pretty sure he could see in the dark too), she stepped after him, letting him guide her since he probably knew the ways in and out of her house better than she did.

Minutes ago, she had been afraid of the darkness. It had been stifling. It had been a foe.

And here she was, stepping right into it with him because she knew the darkness was his friend, and
he trusted the dark and she trusted him, despite everything, because of everything. And letting him guide her to safety made her realize two things, two life-changing things.

A. He was doing everything in his power to keep her safe. She was not the only one in too deep in this.

B. And she would always fear the dark, but not if she had a ray of light.

And with sudden clarity, she knew. Unlikely as it seemed, he was that ray of light.

She walked right into the dark with his hand holding her.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Hey everyone!

First, I was going to reply to all the comments on the last chapter today but since I wasn't well, I just got to writing this chapter and I'll get to it as soon as I can. Promise. :)

Second, thank you so much for the staggering response this story has garnered in such short a time. I cannot tell you how grateful I am for it.

And here is the chapter. Finally. You will have questions. Ask them to me and be patient. They will be answered. Hope you enjoy it!

Do drop me a line with your thoughts. I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

Felicity felt the wall behind her as Big Guy (and that was the name of the day for him) covered her from the front, his broad, big back (hence the name) pressing her into the wall, standing like a shield in front of her.

The darkness and the silence were heightening her senses to alert. She could smell the wet earth outside and his own earthy, masculine scent. She could hear the sounds of the rain hitting the glass, her own soft breaths, the ticking of the clock somewhere in the silent house. She could also her the very soft sound of footsteps on her carpet coming down to the hall. And her blood pounding in her ears.

He stood on sharp alert, his body poised, ready for a kind of movement she knew she would have never seen coming. And looking at his back, she thought about it. This man, whoever he was, was some kind of a trained fighter. His entire stance and confidence screamed that. He was also some kind of a killer. She had witnessed it with his own eyes. She didn't know his reasons to kill, just like she didn't know his name. What she did know was that she had kissed him and he had kissed her back, in a way that made her toes curl and fantasies explode in her head. Yes, he was a physically attractive man but this attraction between them surpassed the physical. Till a day ago, she hadn't even known what he had looked like. And she would have wanted to kiss him just as badly had he been scarred even on his face, as she had said before.

No, the attraction between them stemmed from their guts. Or at least her gut. Her gut which trusted him even knowing the kind of weapons he had stashed on his body.

She blinked up at his wide back.

She trusted him because somewhere in her gut, she knew. She knew she was somehow, inexplicably something to him. Just like he was something to her.

A little creak made her blink away her musings and focus on the moment.
She saw the silhouette of a man right in front of them and suddenly, before she could inhale, Big Guy was moving and engaging the other sneaky guy into a combat which she could not totally see. In fact she could see nothing at all and she had no idea who had the upper hand. There were not even grunts as they fought. Who didn't grunt? She grunted even when she stubbed her toe. That reminded her she had to move that coffee table away from the door.

And like the sneaky man had read her mind, which creeped her out on a whole new level of creep, he grunted before her coffee table crashed and she heard his voice come from the ground. Which obviously implied that Big Guy had overpowered him, in the dark. Holy crap, she should not be finding that hot.

The man whispered, in a clear tone, not at all laced with fear, "It is useless."

What was useless? And why was it useless?

Felicity stayed at the spot, confused.

"That is for me to determine," Big Guy said in his low voice, muffled slightly by the mask. And a shiver ran down her spine at the lethal quality his voice had. And suddenly, she knew what was going to happen to the intruder.

She wanted to speak but held her mouth tightly shut. He had asked her to stay quiet. She would. But she swallowed.

The silence stretched for too long before suddenly, she felt warm breath hit her face and a shriek left her before she could stop it.

"It's just me," he said softly, taking a firm hold of the hand she had clasped over her mouth.

"Give me a few seconds," he said in that same soft voice. "Don't move, for any reason at all. I'll just be back."

She stared where she assumed his face was, the dark completely obliterating her vision and nodded. Then realizing he may not have seen it, she whispered a soft "Okay."

His hand squeezed hers once before he left his grip and was gone.

Felicity stood alone in the dark, like before. But like before, she was not as scared. Maybe a little. But not as much since she knew he kept his promises and he would be back in a jiffy. She told herself that as she leaned against the wall quietly, playing with her hair, closing her eyes. Her fingers slowly went to her lips, her slightly swollen lips, and a small smile came over her face. It had been a really good kiss. She just hoped they'd have more.

Suddenly, she straightened. Her stomach sank as the air around her changed. Something was wrong.

She slowly lowered down on her haunches, crouching in the darkness and trying to make herself as small as she possibly could while waiting for him to return.

A footstep creaked in the house and her heart stopped before pounding with a vengeance. She clapped a hand on her mouth and tried to control her breaths, to make as little sound as possible while straining to hear anything that would alert her to the other intruder. The old one had had a partner. How obvious! And she had been too into herself to see it. Shucks.

She stayed on the floor, breathing as softly as she could, wishing she had her gaming night vision goggles that were stashed in her bedroom.
The footstep came again, this time from near the crushed coffee table.

She gulped but stayed quiet.

Suddenly, she heard an arrow whoosh and embed itself into the wall above her, right where her head had been.

She bit her tongue to control the stunned yelp but a heavy breath left her and she stayed frozen on the ground, staring in front of her with wide eyes. Her body shook and she looked at the space in front of her.

Someone, it seemed, was seriously pissed, enough to want to kill her. And she could not remember any incident in her life that would warrant that.

But the question glaring at her was whether she should move and try to get away in the darkness that her intruder could obviously see and aim into or whether she should stay low on the ground in the darkness that her intruder could obviously see and aim into? And he was armed, like really armed.

Being a sitting duck did not seem like a good option. If she was going to die, she was at least going to die trying to run away from whatever was going to kill her.

Decision made, she estimated where her back door would be, and slowly inched towards it, keeping low, hoping that the intruder not see her. She inched, just a little at a time, and stopped to breathe and listen, before moving towards the door with a singular purpose.

"Come out," an accented voice whispered into the darkness and she shivered at the way he spoke. "I will not make it hurt at all. I promise."

Yeah, and pigs could fly.

Determined, she felt her kitchen wall and knew the door would only be a few feet ahead. Just a few feet.

The muscles in her legs were burning from walking in the crouch but burned muscles were way better than oxygen deprived lungs or a dead heart. Or so she was telling herself as she kept moving towards the door. She heard the intruder's footsteps head towards the door as well and stopped in her tracks, adrenaline coursing through her body and her heart pumping wildly.

The intruder opened the door and she could see from his silhouette that he was a big man. He peered out into the night, possibly thinking she had already fled, and she crouched deeper into the shadows, wanting him to move.

She took a soft breath, then another and the man turned, and walked back into the house, somewhere into its darkness. And Felicity knew it was now or never.

She increased her pace and headed to the door that was ten feet away, open and beckoning her to escape, and saw her phone glinting against the little light from the outside on the kitchen table as she moved past it. She reached up a hand to take it, and pocketed it swiftly, all the while moving.

She had just reached the door when she felt the man behind her and she looked up just a second before her frantic mind kicked him in the balls. The seconds it took to surprise him were all she needed to wreck the door open.

She ran out into the alley, getting drenched withing seconds, heading towards the more public street and when another arrow whooshed past her head, halting her in her tracks.
"Stop or you die," the man warned and Felicity turned, her heart beating frantically and faced the man in the same costume as her guy, unable to believe this was actually happening.

The man kept coming forward and while every instinct in her told her to run, she stayed put, knowing he had been serious about the threat.

His arrow was notched on his bow and he stepped close, close enough that the arrow pierced the skin on her cheek in a long, deep gash that had her hissing in pain. She felt the blood trickle down her cheek and fall on her shoulder but she didn't move and neither did the arrow.

"What does he see in you?" the man said harshly, looking her up and down and the arrow went in a little deeper, making her whimper in the complete pain.

Suddenly, the man turned and fired and she saw her guy's hand shoot up in such a blur that he stopped the arrow from even touching him. The intruder leaped forward in a smooth motion and took out another arrow and her guy took the arrow in his hand and cut the other one away. Felicity clapped a hand to her bleeding cheek as she saw, mesmerized, the fluidity of his movements, despite being such a huge guy. The lightness with which he moved and got closer to the intruder made it seem like he was toying with the man. Toying like a predator toyed with its prey.

This was the first time she could see his movements, see him in action, and it was lethally beautiful to watch, horrifying that one man could control his movements and his body so much, but fascinating that he could. The man moved and moved around her guy and she finally saw as he got closer, her guy disarmed him, and engaged him in a hand to hand combat. Her heart in her throat, she didn't even dare to blink as she watched them go through hits and kicks and ducks and she realized he was not just trained, he was very trained.

The intruder got his hand out towards her guys face and she saw him take a hold of the hand and twisting it ghastly, the snap loud in the alley, and the intruder fell to his knees, laughing. And her guy, she watched, broke his neck before picking him up and disappearing down the alley.

She stood horrified, her body shaking as she realized what had just happened. Another man had died tonight because he had been protecting her. She had seen the man she had kissed minutes ago kill someone else. There had been too much going on. For five days she didn't see him. Then he pulled her in a warehouse and talked and showed his face. Then she kissed him. Then people tried to kill her and he killed them. Like that night in the club.

It was too much. She was just a normal girl with a high IQ and a boring life. These things did not happen to her. No. No.

She felt herself disconnect for a moment from whatever had happened in the last few hours, hell days.

And then she heard sirens. The normal patrol. She could just walk out and hail them. She could go back to her boring life. But for some reason, she couldn't move. Her feet were stuck to the alley floor and refused to listen to her brain and work autonomously.

She blinked up suddenly as he came to stand in front of her, taking a hold of her arm, his blue eyes neutral on hers.

She just blinked up at him.

"We have to leave right now," he spoke quietly. "More will be coming soon."
She kept her hand on her cheek and just blinked, not understanding a word she was hearing.

He shook her slightly but it didn't break her daze.

"Felicity, we have to go."

She didn't get it. Why did he do what he had? Why disappear on her then reappear then kiss and then kill? Why?

She suddenly felt him pick her up in his muscular arms, her world tilting as she held onto him with her free hand, and he started moving forward, deeper into the alley. She kept her eyes up ahead, watching as he took a right and went into the streets she had not even known existed, carrying her like she weighed like a feather which she did not, just moving ahead and cutting through streets, taking a right here and a left there.

She slowly realized that they had left the neighborhood, because she could see lights in the streets now, and though she was drenched and weighing on him, he didn't say anything. How could he even see in the harsh rain?

After minutes and minutes of walking, she saw as they entered the back gate of a building, and he went to the elevator, completely bypassing the guard at the front. The elevator looked old but well maintained, and she saw him press 14 on the console with his gloved finger. Her wet body started feeling the cold, shivering a little and she kept her gaze ahead as he entered an empty lobby, going towards a door with 143 written on it. Seriously? He lived in an apartment?

He opened the door after entering a code beside it, and entered, closing the door behind him with a foot.

And he set her down, switching the lights on.

She looked around the place in surprise. This was not at all what she had expected. The apartment was small, a studio basically, with large windows looking at the city, done in warm cream and brown. The bedroom area was just an extension of the living room, as was the open kitchen and just one door beside it which she assumed was the bathroom. It was sparse, with only a medium sized bed and a couch. No television. No other personal items. Nothing. The kitchen was open but there were hardly any utensils there. Just a mug. It hardly looked lived in.

Her teeth started chattering suddenly, the cold from the outside seeping into her as she wrapped her arms around herself, trying to rub some heat into her frigid skin. And she realized she was only in her binary shorts and an old MIT tee and flip flops, completely drenched to the bone.

She saw him move forward into the apartment and head towards the only cupboard in the room, pulling it open and taking out a towel.

He headed back to her and she stared at him, still disconnected from what had actually happened, what was still happening. No. She needed to take some control over her own life. And she had just seen him kill. Again. The fact that it did not bother her as much as it should was a deeply disturbing thought in itself.

She took a step back.

She took a step back and saw him stop in his steps, his brow furrowed and hand limp by his side with the towel.

"Why didn't you tell me about the cut?" he asked in a low, dangerous voice, eyeing the deep cut on
her cheek that she had exposed by lowering her hand. What, had he thought she had been holding her cheek because her teeth had been aching?

She swallowed. Okay. Control. She had to take a mental step back too.

"Look," she started, biting her lip and looking at his arrow head pendant. "I appreciate you saving me and all, but..."

"Why didn't you tell me about the cut?" he interrupted in a lower voice, taking a step forward and she took one back simultaneously. She trusted him but she didn't know him at all. And it was scaring the daylights out of her.

"It's not a big deal," she replied, still looking at his pendant.

He removed it. And then he removed his jacket and his weapons and his mask, throwing it aside, standing in his black t-shirt and those pants and those boots.

She shifted her gaze to his Adam's apple. He couldn't remove that now, could he?

Clearing her throat, she began again. "As I said, I appreciate you saving me and all but I think it's best, for both of us, if..."

"Don't finish that sentence."

His husky voice commanded and her eyes flickered to his, before she looked down again.

He took another step and she took another back.

"We don't mix," she said softly, her heart beating like crazy in her ribs. "Our worlds are completely different."

He didn't reply, and she looked up his handsome, handsome face into his blue, blue eyes, seeing the intent in them, the focus, so primal, so basic. Her heart stuttered.

He took another step and she took another back, her back hitting the door. There was no more running back for her. And he was just a few feet away, the towel forgotten on the floor with his other clothes.

She swallowed again. "I just feel it's better if we go our separate ways into our separate worlds now. End this..."

He was in her personal space faster than she could blink, his hands beside her head, completely caging her in between the door and himself as he locked their eyes together, leaning down.

His eyes were intense, burning, and his breathing heavy.

"Don't say that, Felicity," his guttural whisper made her shiver as she looked up at him, her own desperation to get away from it all getting the better of her.

"I have to," she replied softly, her voice shaking. "We have different worlds and they are not mixing together at all. I saw you kill that man today. I saw you kill another man that day at the club and it's just... it's too much."

"I'm sorry you had to see that," he said evenly, still gazing at her.

Felicity snorted. "But not sorry you did it?"
He sighed. "This is what I do, Felicity. I kill. And I have killed more people in my life than you should know. That was how I have survived." His eyes suddenly got harder. "And I'd kill many more if that meant keeping you safe."

She closed her eyes, her insides getting even more frantic now. "But that's exactly what I don't want!" she yelled, unable to control it. "I don't want you killing in my name, for my sake. Which is why I need to leave and you need to let me go. We cannot see each other again."

His hands were suddenly on her jaw, tilting her face up as he looked down at her with a ferocity she had never seen. That fierce look in his eyes made her tremble.

"This started the moment I saw you in that alley throwing ice-cream at me, Felicity and we both know it," he said forcefully, his face so close she could feel his breaths on her face. "You were marked the moment I came back for you and I knew the kind of danger it would be. I am that danger. But there is no man on earth who would fight for you the way I would. Not a man on earth who should get that one laugh from you that I do. Your leaving will not change a thing."

"Why?" she stuttered, her heart beating in a dangerous way, mesmerized by his darkened irises.

"Because," he whispered, "there is no other man who would do to keep you with him that I would do."

Her breath faltered. He looked deeply at her, his expression intense, firing her blood.

"I have been yours the moment you opened your mouth in that alley. I kept coming back because for the first time in my very long, very dark life, I saw some light. Something worth fighting for. So you may leave here now, Felicity. But I am not going anywhere. Because people out there want to hurt you."

"That man didn't hurt me," she whispered.

"I wasn't going to let him."

She closed her eyes, biting her lip. "You can't kill anyone for me."

"You're the only one I'll kill for anymore."

Her eyes opened at that, and she looked at him, conflicted. He was everything she had been warned against. Dark, dangerous. He killed. Yet, she wanted to be nothing more than where she was. And she hated herself for this weakness.

He spoke again, softly. "But once this is over, I promise you, I won't kill. I want to leave this part of my life behind."

A hysterical laughter burst out of her. "What part of your life? I don't even know you!"

"You know me better than anyone in my life," he pointed out something she had already known.

This was too much.

She pushed at him, her hands pressing against his hard chest, and just like this morning in the warehouse, he didn't budge.

"Let me go," she said loudly, pushing him again. "I need to leave. We can't see each other anymore."

He kept her pinned. "Felicity."
She thrashed. "I said let me go! God damn it, you jerk. Let go!"

He didn't move. "Felicity," he whispered soothingly.

"I can't," she shook her head, her body trembling. "Please."

He slowly pulled her forward, into his body, rubbing at her arms, his warm muscles making her tremble even more, the coldness stark in her bones.

"Shh, Felicity. It'll be okay," he murmured soothingly into her hair and she lost it.

Big, fat embarrassing tears rolled down her cheeks, stinging on the cut as she heaved and sobbed into his body, holding onto him as she let the frustration, the emotions of all the days out.

"W..why can't y..ou jussst lett mee go?" she hiccuped, sobbing.

She felt his lips come to her ear, slowly pressing a soft kiss into it that warmed her to her toes, and whispered. "You will not understand the answer right now, Felicity."

He pressed another kiss right on her lobe. "All you need to know is that you made a man who had not spoken a personal word to anyone in years, speak. You made the man who had not shown his face except a handful of people in his life show you him."

Another tender kiss. "You made a man who had been fighting for no cause find one. You have become my cause, Felicity. My cause for a future that I am seeing for the first time in my life. I like who I am with you."

He slowly pulled his face back, looking down at her with those gorgeous eyes. Like he hadn't smothered her heart with those words. She was just a normal human with ovaries.

He leaned down, hesitating, before pressing his soft lips to hers, wiping her tears. Her mouth trembled but she pressed her lips back, letting him taste her lip, tasting his, softly.

He pulled back within seconds.

"Don't talk about ending this, Felicity. Please," his voice shook on the last word and that convinced her to stay.

"What is this?" she asked on a whisper.

He stayed silent for a long minute, thinking, before his lips curled, just a little. "This is us."

Why? Why did he have to say things like that and completely slay her?

Her heart trembled in her chest as her mouth trembled, looking up at him. "I have a lot of questions."

His eyes closed at her assent, and he took a step back, allowing her to move into the apartment. She walked over to his clothes and picked up the towel, looking back at him as he followed her.

"I will answer all that I can."

"Will you be honest about them?"

"Yes."

Just one word. But such an important word.
Something in him had snapped at her saying 'no'. Something in her had trembled at her own 'no'.

She didn't know what this was. But she wanted to. And the answers were tonight.

Tonight. All that mattered was she had said yes.

So had he.

She walked deeper into the apartment.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Felicity woke up with a sudden jerk.

She blinked at the semi-dark room, a room that was not hers and looked down upon the not-so-soft bed, also not hers. She glanced around for long moments willing herself to stop dreaming whatever surreal thing she was. But slowly, as sleep faded away, so did her confusion and memories flooded her. Memories of running outside her house away from a bad man and memories of him killing the bad man and picking her up and then coming here, wherever here was. Memories of their confrontation. The soft kiss. His willingness to talk.

She pushed at the blankets draped over her and got down from the bed. Her naked feet touched the cool marble of the floor, sending a little shiver up her half-naked body, and with another thought, she picked up the blanket, wrapping it around herself for warmth and stood up on wobbly legs to go towards the huge windows, to look at the cloudy sky which was still pouring. Was it morning already?

Her hand went up to her throbbing cheek, right where the bad man had been cut it last night, and her fingers came in contact with the bandage on it. She frowned. She did not remember putting a bandage on it. Which implied her stranger had taken care of it. When had he taken care of the wound? And how had she not felt it?

Watching the empty street below, she tried to remember things with more clarity.

She remembered walking in towards the living area, or whatever little there was of it, picking up the towel and drying her wet hair, her skin drenched and her body shivering in the cold. She remembered him offering her a t-shirt while ushering her towards the bathroom for a hot shower quietly, just watching her. She remembered sighing and going to the surprisingly spacious but functional bathroom and taking that hot shower, leaving her wet clothes to dry on the rail and
donning his t-shirt, which drowned her. She remembered coming out and sitting on the bed while he moved in the kitchen, preparing something hot. And then she remembered nothing. At all. Nada.

Felicity sighed. It was not a long shot to assume she had fallen asleep while he was in the kitchen. It was not really surprising anyways. She had not had a decent night of sleep since he had disappeared on her for five nights and with the recent adrenaline combined with that, she was not at all surprised she had crashed. She was, however, surprised that she had crashed in his presence without any inhibitions, especially after wanting to run away from him earlier. Not that she was scared of him. She wasn't.

The only thing she knew for certain right now was that he would do anything, literally anything, to keep her safe.

It was that intensity of his which disarmed her; the reactions this intensity inspired within herself which scared her.

It was not him she wanted to run away from. It was from herself in his presence.

But he hadn't let her run away. Deep down, she hadn't wanted him to.

And she was battling with herself over it, even now.

She did not know who he was, yet she did. And they needed to talk.

But he was nowhere to be seen. How long had she been sleeping anyways?

Turning away from the window and the raining view, she looked around the apartment. In the little light from the outside, it looked almost vacant, with no sign of habitation whatsoever. Frugal. Sparse.

Felicity sat down on the bed again, cocooned in the blanket, and looked at her phone at the bedside table. Unlocking it, she looked at the time in shock.

It was 5 in the evening.

She had slept for more than twelve hours. Holy frack.

Shaking her head at herself, she quickly texted Digg to tell him she was staying over at a friend's place for the night and not to worry. Last thing she needed right now was him showing up at her house in all his brotherly concern and her having to explain to him what was going on. He had a family and she so did not want to drag him into this. So, him coming to her house, not a good idea.

Her house.

She closed her eyes, trying to keep the panic at bay. She had left her house unlocked, with two bad men taken care of and god knows how many other crawling in it. Anyone could invade the home she had built for herself even now. She had everything over there. Everything of her new life. And that panic she had felt last night, the one he had pushed away, returned.

And the door to the apartment opened.

Felicity swerved her neck up to see her guy enter the apartment, shutting the door behind him. His grey hoodie and jeans were slightly drenched and he was carrying two gym bags, which he dropped on the couch. She gazed at him, still not over how handsome he was, still taken aback by the sheer masculinity in him. His gaze came up to her and he saw her sitting there on the bed, huddled in the
blankets and she saw his lips curve a little before his face went blank again.

"Did you rest well?"

So, he was speaking. Okay. She nodded and crossed her legs, watching him as he made his way to
the cupboard in front of the bed, unzipping his hoodie and throwing it in a corner.

Her breath hitched.

For the first time, Felicity saw his back. His glorious back. His extensively scarred back.

Over the flexing, amazing muscles, his flesh was covered in scars- thin, long scars; deep, gouged
scars. There were scars over his shoulder blades, along with a brand mark- an arrow, embedded deep
into his skin. There were also burn marks running along his waist line, brutal.

Felicity's breath hitched because she had cut her cheek last night and it throbbed like a bitch. She
could not imagine what kind of pain this man must have survived, over and over again, to carry these
scars on him. She could not imagine how he had survived that pain, how he had come out the victor
and live to tell the tale. Proverbially. Because he still hadn't told her a single thing. But for the
moment, she did not care. Her eyes were glued to his scars and her heart glued to the strength in his
entire being. For some very odd reason, she felt proud of him, of that strength in him, of the stories
these scars told about him.

Seeing all of them, her cheek felt inconsequential. It should have been. Yet, she remembered his
genuine concern about something so small as a cut on her. And it staggered her already staggered self.

He toweled himself before donning a black t-shirt, turning around to face her.

She turned her face down, feeling off-kilter, unsure, uncertain whether she wanted him to see
whatever was in her eyes at the moment. Picking at the blanket with her fingers, she cleared her
throat.

"When did you bandage my cheek?" her voice came out throatier than she had intended, her sleep
still evident in it.

She could feel his piercing eyes on her, but she didn't look up, staring down at the plain blanket,
trying to discern a pattern into it.

"While you were sleeping," he said in his low, raspy tone.

She would have laughed at the movie reference had it come from any other guy. She highly doubted
he even knew it.

"When did I sleep?" she asked, less throaty this time.

His gaze was drilling her body. She could feel it. "While I was in the kitchen."

She nodded, her heart beating wildly at his scrutiny, and bit her lip. "Where did you sleep?"

The question was out before she could stop it. She closed her eyes for a second, berating herself. Not
the time for another freak out. Not at all. But if he had slept beside her, she could feel a major freak
out coming on. It was no big deal, sure. But at this point, she was not sure she could handle it. It was
"You slept alone in the bed, Felicity."

Her gaze flickered to his at the softness in his voice, like he could understand exactly how spooked she was, and she looked back down at the blanket again, taking deep, deep breaths and fighting the flush threatening to take over her cheeks at his knowing tone.

Suddenly, she saw his feet move and saw him walk into the kitchen, opening up two take-out bags and bringing them to the bed. The smell of Chinese hit her nostrils and her stomach grumbled, making her realize for the first time how truly famished she was.

She watched him as he set down one box in front of her, her favorite noodles from the Chinese place she had told him about one night. The fact that he had remembered and brought her food from there touched her in a very odd way. And then he handed her a hot foam glass of coffee and she drooled.

Sipping the hot beverage gratefully, she let it warm her insides, closing her eyes and opened them slowly.

And blinked in surprise.

He was sitting on the floor, barefoot and cross-legged.

While she sat on the bed, he sat down on the floor.

And with sudden clarity, she knew it was deliberate. He wanted to give her as much space as he could, in as non-threatening a way as he could. He was making himself less intimidating by sitting below her on the floor. And this touched her again.

She sipped her coffee and watched him sip his, silent for long moments.

"Ask me," he said softly.

Her brows furrowed slightly. "Ask you what?"

"Whatever you want to know."

She raised her eyebrows, considering him skeptically. "And you will answer?"

"Everything I can," he replied earnestly, and for some reason she believed him.

She gulped down another sip of the coffee and cleared her throat, looking down at him, into his clear blue gaze. She didn't know where to begin.

"Please say something," he beseeched in that low tone and Felicity inhaled deeply, not sure if she was ready but knowing she was.

"What's in the bag?" she started off, with the first thing she could think of.

He blinked, like he had been expecting something else.

"It's some things from your house," he spoke quietly. "I thought you might need some clothes."

She was taken aback by his consideration and felt herself softening even more at the gesture. And took another breath.
"Did you check my house and lock it?"

He nodded.

She put the empty coffee glass down and dug into the noodles with relish, not caring for any answers for a moment, the taste exploding on her tongue. They ate in silence for a while and finally, when she was full, she got up from the bed and left the blankets, taking his finished carton with her as well and dropped them in the waste basket in the kitchen, washing her hands and returning. On her way back, she saw his eyes peruse and linger on her bare legs for a split second before he looked away, as though she may not welcome that look at the moment. Had it been anyone else, she may not have. But with him, for some reason, it was very, very welcome. Even now.

She sat back under the blankets on the bed, and leaned back against the wall, gazing down at him.

They looked at each other for long moments, bound in silence, a silence thick with unspoken questions and unknown answers, before she broke it with her curiosity.

"Tell me about yourself," she said, not putting him on the spot for answers and giving him a wide berth of questions. To be honest, she did not know which questions to ask. Not yet.

He stretched his long legs in front of him and leaned back on his hands, looking up at her silently, the semi-darkness in the room actually very cozy, wrapping itself around them.

She raised her eyebrows. "Will you have to kill me if you tell me?"

The corner of his mouth twitched a little at that, probably because he should. But he inhaled deeply instead. Her pulse picked up speed as she saw him get ready to answer, unsure if she wanted to hear this. But she did.

"I was orphaned as a child," he began quietly, looking right into her eyes with stark honesty, letting her know he was speaking nothing but the truth. "I do not remember where I came from and who I was born to."

'Born to'. Not 'parents', Felicity observed.

He stayed silent, weighing something in his mind, before beginning again. "I was taken in by a man into a group soon afterwards. I do not know how he found me, he just did. And I became, since that day, part of a very ancient sect."

Okay. This was a little scary shit. She bit her tongue and stayed quiet, not wanting to interrupt him.

He continued. "I was trained since that very day, groomed, and slowly rose within the sect. The man who had taken me in is the leader of that group. And I have been his warrior for years now, his very best."

Felicity saw the trepidation in his eyes as he spoke looking at her, and she realized- he feared her judgement of his past.

She was a little apprehensive, yes, but she was more curious than anything else.

"What do you mean 'warrior'?" she asked, fiddling with the blanket.

He blinked at her before sighing. "It means I am a soldier."

Felicity swallowed, shaking her feet. "You fight."
He nodded. "That's what I did. I fought."

Felicity leaned forward, questions bursting out of her. "Okay, but fought for him? Who is he? Is it political? And why the costume? Is that like your army thing?"

He let her pause and take a breath before shaking his handsome head. "No, it's not political. I cannot explain what the group does exactly, but it is not political. We fight for a cause, and that cause is told to us by him."

Felicity frowned. "But isn't that too much power for one man?"

"Perhaps it is," he spoke, something flashing in his eyes before he blinked it away.

"And the costume?"

"It is what we wear," he spoke neutrally, shrugging.

"When you fight?" she prodded.

He nodded. "And when we are in the compound."

She tilted her head, pondering that. "Where is the compound?"

He stayed silent, shaking his head. Okay, so this was a no-answer.

Then something else struck her. "Did you go to school?"

He shook his head, stretching his arms and rotating his shoulders. "Not your regular school. We had schooling for children like myself there."

Okay. Focus on the words, not the muscles. "And where is 'there'?"

He hesitated before shaking his head again. She sighed. He wasn't budging on that.

"Do you have money?" she asked as the sudden thought came to her.

His lips curved slightly. "Yes."

"But how?" she asked baffled.

He shrugged. "We get paid."

"For killing people?" she asked, the concept still foreign to her.

He looked at her, lips pursed. "Yes."

She sighed, her fingers going to her forehead and rubbing in unconscious habit. His voice drew her eyes back up again.

"You have to understand, Felicity," he spoke in a hard voice laced with something dark. "I was not brought up with the morals of your world. I know it is not an excuse but it is the truth. I was brought up trained to kill, and everyday of my life I have fought to survive, because our training is kill or be killed. Had I learned not to kill, I would not be sitting here today. I know it is wrong in your world, but in mine, it is pure survival. Nothing more."

Felicity let his words seep inside her, let herself feel for the young, orphaned boy who had to learn
how to kill in order to keep breathing, and she could not imagine the pain that had become his natural state. She bit her lip, keeping their gazes locked as her heart ached for him.

"I don't understand one thing," she spoke quietly.

"What?"

She looked around the apartment and then back at him, seeing him so open yet so closed off, so far out of reach.

"If you have been alright living like that for so long, why this? Why me? Why now? You said just now how different our worlds are and yet this? Why?"

His gaze softened at her questions and he leaned forward, close enough to touch yet not enough to invade her space, his eyes so, so deep and so, so earnest that her breath hitched.

"I don't know, Felicity," his guttural whisper made a shiver go down her spine, his eyes deep pools of blue luring her in. "I don't know."

She breathed in heavily, her hands fisting the blanket. He looked down at her hand and spoke quietly. "I was trained to avoid feeling anything since I was a child. I was trained to be with women but only for the physical release. I was trained to suppress my desires and my emotions for my work. It was how I had lived my life and I did not want to change it."

His eyes came back to hers and locked and the turmoil in them, so raw, so brutal, staggered her.

"I don't know why now or why anything, Felicity," he spoke in a low, hard tone that was making something happen low in her belly. "What I do know is that you made me want. You made me desire. You make me feel."

Felicity's heart pounded in her chest, looking down at him, seeing him so unhinged. She was slowly understanding where he was coming from, and the fact that he wanted to change, for her, moved her in a way she could not explain.

Of its own accord, her hand left the blanket and cupped his jaw, her thumb brushing over his scruff, seeing him close his eyes and tilt his head into her touch.

"Who wants me dead?" she whispered, needing to know as his eyes blinked open.

"The leader," he replied quietly.

"Why?" she whispered again.

He turned his head slightly, pressing his lips to her palm, making it tingle and heat shoot up her arm. "Because he knows he is not my cause anymore. You are."

Her heart stopped for one second before picking up with a vengeance. Was this man even for real? She shook her head, trying to focus on her breathing. "You can't give me that much importance."

"That's for me to decide."

She snorted, pulling her hand away. "Yeah, right. Basically the guy that trained you has sicced his entire army on me and you actually expect me to live through it? Like a hundred yous?"

He blinked at her. "Yes."
She rolled her eyes, and the knowledge of her doom slowly sank into her, making her heart thunder in her ribs. Oh frack. Frackity frack. She had an army of assassins out for her neck.

Her eyes widened and she suddenly felt his hand catch hers, squeezing it. "Felicity, look at me."

She looked at him, and the panic worsened.

He spoke, his voice firm. "No one, and I mean no one, is touching you. Not as long as I have a breath left in my body."

Okay. He was hot with the protective stuff. "But..."

"I am their best, Felicity," he stated simply. "None of them could better me when I fought for them and they sure as hell cannot when I'm fighting for you."

She gulped, closing her eyes and inhaling deeply. "If I were to die..."

"You're not," he interrupted and she ignored him.

"Would you go back to that life?" she finished, hanging on for his answer. His very important answer.

He pondered for long minutes, keeping his eyes on hers, before finally speaking. "No."

Good. That was good. She didn't need to ask him where he saw this going. Frankly, she didn't know herself and she was not bothered. They had better things to be bothered about.

She took in a deep breath. She was taking lots of those. "If you are not going back, then why does he want me dead?"

He simply looked back at her, without speaking, and she got the feeling she was not understanding something very obvious. Brushing it aside, she looked around the apartment and asked him. "And what is this place?"

He looked around too, before coming back to her with his eyes. "Just a rental."

"With your money?"

"Yes."

"Since when?" she asked.

He looked at her again with that simple look. Okay. This one she got. So, he had been renting this place since the night they met. Got it.

She nodded. "But why rent this place if you were spending the nights at mine?" She closed her eyes shut and backtracked. "I meant platonically. Watching movies and eating stuff. And wearing blankets like I am now. Except I am not naked like you were. Well, I am if you don't count the t-shirt but... yeah."

His lips curved a bit at her ramble as he replied. "I needed a contingency."

Hmm. Her mind wandered again and she bit her lip, wondering weather to broach the subject. She looked at his eager face and inhaled.

"When did you kill for the first time?"
She expected him to look harder, purse his mouth, clench his jaw, something. He remained as he was. Unaffected. And it bothered her. His indifference to something so cruel.

"Eight."

She gasped, a hand coming up to her mouth in her shock. That was when his eyes softened. "It was a long time ago. Do you want to know?"

A part of her did. The part which wanted to know the extent of this man's brutality, the extent of the brutalities he had been through. But another part of her did not. She remained quiet for some time before giving a tentative nod.

He nodded. "It was my initiation into the group. As a trainee. And the fights were fought to death. The man against me was much, much older than I was."

She was taken aback by that, her heart panting as he went on.

"He came to the ground, knowing he would kill me. He had been more skilled, more trained. Everyone knew he would win. I was only a small child to them. A small, young, new child. When the fight began, I knew I had none of what he did. But I was small. And I used that to my advantage and stabbed him. And I was a child no longer."

He finished the memory quietly, looking at her hands again and she stayed silent, absorbing the horrifying tale, the gruesome details of which she knew he had purposely left out. But she had an imagination. She could imagine everything he didn't tell her. The gut-wrenching fear of that boy, all alone in the world, as he fought an older man of reputation. The thirst to live and breathe and survive, even by the grips of his sweat and blood. The loss of something with that first stab would, that first fatal blow, that first lethal kill. She did not know what urged her, whether it was the bleak look in his eyes, or whether it was something else entirely, but she got up from the bed and saw his eyes flicker to her as she slowly knelt beside him on the ground. Keeping her eyes locked on his, seeing him, for the first time, in all his strength that had only been hinted upon earlier, she leaned forward and wrapped her arms around his neck, pulling him into her. She felt his surprise at the gesture a moment before his own arms came around her tentatively, and then he pulled her more solidly against him, pulling her over his lap and holding her tightly.

She did not say a word, nothing, but just held him, offering him an embrace she now knew he had never had, offering him the comfort that had never been a necessity or a luxury to him. She rocked against him, just holding him and offering him whatever he needed for his scarred soul. His breath ghosted over her hair as he just exhaled, not speaking anything, inhaling her scent, understanding her. She inhaled his, letting it wrap around her.

After long, long moments, he whispered in her ear, his lips brushing against her lobe and scruff rasping over her skin with his voice.

"You heal something that I never knew needed healing, Felicity."

She tightened her arms around him, her mouth trembling for the pain he had intrinsically made his own over the years.

Changing the subject, she asked softly into his neck. "How old are you?"

"Too old."

She pulled back slightly and looked at his face carefully, not remembering any wrinkles whatsoever. He almost smiled at her scrutiny. "I am twenty-eight."
Her heart clenched as she buried her face in his neck again. Two decades. He had been killing people for two decades to survive. It was wrong in her world, as he had said. But the same way she had been taught it was wrong, he had been taught it was necessary. For his own life. For two decades he had lived with that choice and let it scrape him. Two decades that he had internalized the agony. When people got off on love and sex and life, he had been fighting everyday for his. Two fucking decades.

She was about to open her mouth to address him when she paused, realizing she still didn't know what to address him as. In all the questions, she had not asked him his name.

She smacked her face with her hand and shook her head at herself.

An almost giggle came to her. "What is your..."

Suddenly, he stilled.

She frowned as his hands tightened on her and he straightened, tilting his head to the side, listening to something.

"What.." she began but his hand came up to her mouth, covering it, shushing her down. Her pulse started racing as he stood up and placed her on her feet, pushing a pair of pants at her from the closet and pointing to her shoes. She pulled them on with shaking hands, watching him the entire time as he pulled a mean-looking dagger from god knows where and inched towards the door without making a sound.

She rolled the hem of the pants and put her feet in the slippers she had been in last night, her pulse racing faster as she strained her ears to listen to what he was hearing. The apartment was dark now, completely, and the rain outside had let up, leaving only heavy clouds that looked like they could burst at any second. Felicity tried not to make a single sound even inhaling.

He got to the door and waited beside it, the dagger held with practiced ease in his hand and tilted his head again. He listened, for long, silent minutes, before exhaling and moving quickly with lithe grace, picking up the bags, and pulling out another one from an overhead compartment she hadn't noticed before. Handling the three in one hand, he strode up to her and whispered quietly.

"We need to leave now."

She opened her mouth to question him, but snapped it shut immediately seeing the focused look in his eyes. He knew better than anyone what was happening, and she trusted him with her life. So, she nodded and took his big, rough hand as he led them to the door. Checking the corridor, he leaned out for a moment, looking everywhere, and then stepped out, pulling her along. He locked the door silently behind them and pulled her to the elevator, hitting the button for the ground floor. Just as the doors closed, the door of the stairwell opened, right on time for her to see some men.

Heart hammering, she looked up at him as the elevator went down but did not dare to ask anything for the moment, seeing him completely in his mode. Her own tongue was glued in her mouth.

The elevator opened down in the lobby and he walked out briskly, keeping himself in front of her the entire time, and out into the parking lot. They encountered nobody since it had been raining.

He headed towards an unassuming black sedan and pulled out the keys, opening the door for her and she blinked in surprise that he owned a car.

"Another contingency?" she asked before she could help herself.
He nodded briskly, his eyes scanning the entire area as he ushered her in the passenger side and threw the bags in the back. The car was sturdy and smelled of freshener that she was pretty sure whoever he had gotten it from had installed. She saw him round the car swiftly and get in, reversing within seconds and pull out onto the wet asphalt, away from the building.

Apparently, they had taught him driving at whatever barbaric school he had been to too.

She gazed ahead at the empty roads, having no idea where he was driving to, and not having it in herself to ask him. Not at the moment.

Her mother had warned her, cliched as it was, about tall, handsome, strange men. She had told her never to invite them in, told her never to talk to them, told her never to go with them. And she had done all of it.

Sitting there, in the passenger side, not knowing where they were going but intrinsically trusting him somehow, she realized her life had become a cliche.

But as she glanced sideways at his profile, seeing his fingers clench and unclench on the steering wheel, seeing his jaw clench and unclench slightly, seeing the way his eyes came to hers momentarily before going back to the road, she realized her mother had never told her about the strangers who would put her in danger and then give up everything to protect her, strangers who could make her trust them without uttering a word, strangers whose one glance had her calming down in throes of panic and inspired her to throes of passion, strangers who would worry about a small cut on her cheek while carrying numerous scars of their own, strangers who remembered her favorite food from her favorite restaurant.

She had never been told that such strangers would become hers.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :) 

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
He had left.

Felicity peeked out from under the blankets and looked around the cabin, finding no signs of him anywhere. The couch where he had slept was empty. Only the cushions bearing the imprint of his body even indicated to the fact that he had been here.

A buzzing noise had her looking towards her phone on the kitchen counter, where she had left it last night, and she groaned at herself. With a heave, she pushed up from the bed, letting the blankets fall away and trudged towards the kitchen. Though she had slept for more than twelve hours only a night ago, her body was still recuperating and demanding the sleep she had denied it for almost five nights.

Last night, when they had run away from the apartment, when they had just been driving for hours in the inconspicuous car (which she had to give him credit for choosing), she had been pretty accepting of the fact that she had been on the run. Excited even. It had been, after all, a complete one-eighty from her normal, boring life (and she had completely discounted the fact that assassins were after her neck). The rain had started up again and finally, after driving in absolute silence, which had been consensual at that moment because they had both been engrossed in their own thoughts, till it had been completely dark outside, almost zero visibility to her, he had turned a left down a dirt road and pulled in at a secluded cabin in the middle of the woods. How he had even known about the place, she had had no idea of.

He had parked the car behind the trees, hidden from the view, and they had made a run for the cabin in the rain. But it hadn't been like it usually was in the movies, all laughter and flirtation. No. She had slipped and fallen on her butt, to her utter, utter embarrassment, and he had helped her up with a strong arm and by the time they had reached the door, they had been drenched (which had basically become the theme for every night now). They had entered the cabin and he had turned on the lights, which basically comprised of two over the ceiling and one lone lamp beside the bed, but enough to light up the dark.
The cabin had been like the apartment. Frugal and functional with one small bed at the far end of the room, a small fireplace in front of a big couch and a small kitchen which was sparse. She had not known whether it had been another of his contingencies or if they had crashed open someone's vacation cabin. But as she had watched him light up the logs in the fireplace, and felt the warmth slowly seep into her chilled bones, she had not particularly cared for it.

She had picked up the bag he had gotten previously from her place and sifted through it, seeing for the first time what all he had brought from her house. There had been two pairs of jeans and a few t-shirts, a pair of shorts, her toothbrush and underwear. She had blushed furiously at that one, imagining him going through her drawers to find them, and his face when he must have seen the polka dots and swirls and stripes on her bras and panties. She had quickly pulled out a t-shirt and shorts and a pair of panties, figuring that he had seen her braless long enough that it didn't really matter anymore, when her eyes had fallen upon her tablet, which he had stashed under the clothes. She had blinked at that small device and looked up at his hunched figure kindling the flames, moved in a way she could not explain. Touched, because on his third or fourth night at her place, right in the beginning that had seemed so long ago then, Felicity had talked about how she was into technology and talked his ear off about how fantastically she had connected all her devices to each other and blah blah blah and had basically told him that if she ever had any device of hers with her, she would be happy. And at that moment, she had sat there, in that cabin, looking at his back because he had taken the time to find her tablet in her study and kept it in the bag. Because she had said it would make her happy.

Overwhelmed with emotions she had felt welling inside her but she had not been able to put a name to, she had quickly made her way to what she had assumed was the bathroom and shut the door behind her, leaning against it and taking deep breaths. The man could not have been real. Men like him did not exist anywhere except in really overactive imaginations. But she had proof that he did, indeed, exist and it should not have shaken her, but the fact was that him keeping her tablet had not been the first thing to completely throw her off-kilter that night.

She should have, in retrospect, seen that being off-kilter had only been the beginning.

And the hot shower, which had cleansed her physically, had done nothing to calm the turmoil she had felt churning her from the insides. She had had Digg's number. She could have called him and she knew he would have taken her in without the bat of a lash. And the fact that she had not, despite knowing it, the fact that she had chosen to be with the nameless stranger over her non-blood brother, had only made her turmoil worse. She had not understood what she was doing, because as she had dressed in her clothes and gone back out, she had known she had no clue. And she had felt less like herself, standing in that strange cabin's bathroom. The biggest proof had been the fact that she had not made one sexual innuendo in almost six hours. Shaking her head at herself, she had gone outside just in time to see him pulling a fresh t-shirt over his head. The slight feeling of disappointment at having missed the show had reassured her somewhat. That had been familiar.

It had been wordless after that. He had switched the lights off and lay down on the couch, the flickering firelight illuminating the small cabin in shadows and half his huge frame in muted light. He had closed his eyes, and Felicity had silently taken the bed, getting under the warm blanket and had stared at him, just seeing his frame relax. The question which had been on the tip of her tongue had faded and she had let him have his peace for those few minutes, figuring she could wait and had closed her own eyes.
Walking to the kitchen now, she looked down at the phone which had stopped buzzing and saw a few missed calls from her mother. Sighing, Felicity put the phone aside and looked around the now-completely sunlit, small cabin, seeing the sunlight filtering in through small windows beside the kitchen. She swooped down and looked inside her refrigerator for any supplies, finding just some packaged lasagna and a few other stuff she doubted was from this year, by the looks of it. Wrinkling her nose, she shut the door of the fridge with a sigh, realizing that they had to go buy some groceries if they were to eat. And speaking of them, he was missing, like he usually was during the day and whenever she woke up. She admitted she had harbored the thought that he was a vampire, once upon a time, but since he hadn't burned when he had showed her his face in the sun, she figured it had been a long shot anyways. But he did have the predatory tendencies that vampires in popular lore did.

Shaking her head at her thoughts, she took out a fresh pair of jeans and a simple yellow t-shirt along with fresh underwear, heading for the shower and to get started on her day doing... well, she had no idea what she would do but since she had her tablet, she was sure she'd figure something out. Or maybe she'd just think and get some perspective on things.

Quickly, she freshened up and came out, to see still no signs of him. Wondering where he was off to, she slowly headed for the door, and stepped outside onto the small porch. The scent of wet earth and grass surrounded her. There was no sign of the car except faint tire tracks on the ground.

And for a second, looking at those track marks, a small thought came to her. Could it be possible that he had left her alone? That he had decided it was too much trouble, she was too much trouble, and gone back to his sect? Was it possible that he had looked at her sleeping last night and thought it would be better for both of them to part ways and left, deciding she could find her way back? Could he have abandoned her too?

Felicity closed her eyes and breathed in deeply, shaking her head and trying logic. Yes, logic was good. But what her logic was telling her was not.

Knowing as she knew him, which was a lot in a way, and absolutely nothing at all in another, she couldn't completely put it past him to do something like this. He had, after all, disappeared for five days completely. He had come back, yes. But could it be possible that it was more permanent this time?

She was broken out of her strangely depressing thoughts by the sound of running water. Puzzled, she looked around and then focused on the sound, tilting her head towards the right. Definitely running water.

Feeling a little better at the thought of taking a walk, she quickly went in and picked up her tablet and her phone, tying her hair back in a messy bun and put on her shoes. Shutting her door behind her, since she didn't have a key and she doubted any robbers even knew of this place, she headed into the woods, following the sound that grew louder and louder.

And she walked on, completely entranced. She had never been somewhere like this. The only woods Vegas had thorns and the city was a concrete jungle. And living the way she had, she had never gone camping like most of her once-classmates had.

She took in the area as she walked. The trees were thick and tall and the sunlight filtered in through the green leaves and coming from behind brown trunks, casting an image she had only seen in pictures. Taking in the beautiful view, surprised that she had never even known this existed so close to the city, she walked closer to the sound and saw the trees part just a little, enough for her to see a small stream flowing over rocks. Breathing in the fresh, crisp air, Felicity smiled and sat down on a boulder, seeing the stream dance across the rocks that cut it, and took her phone out of her pocket.
She dialed her mother's number and heard the ringing, while taking in the different and vast hues of nature that she could. For a person as passionate about technology as she was, she had never thought she would be as much of a nature lover as she was in that moment, feeling the warm sun on her skin, breathing in the scent of the trees and earth, seeing the woods surround her, almost cocoon her and the stream.

"Hey, honey," her mother's voice brought her back to the moment.

"Hey, Mom," Felicity began, smiling at her mother's chirpy, usual greeting. "You called?"

"Yes, I did. You have been so busy lately, it feels like we never talk," Donna Smoak said and Felicity could almost see her pouting.

She sighed. "It's nothing, Mom. Just work."

"You need a man to keep you from drowning into your work," her mother stated.

Felicity's mouth twisted. Last thing she needed right now was another man. The one she had was a handful. And there was no way her mind didn't go into the gutter with that one. He probably was a handful.

She stayed silent and suddenly, she heard her mother inhale sharply. "Are you seeing someone, honey?"

Oh frack. "No, I am not."

"Oh my, you totally are!" her mother squealed on the other end. "Who is he? Tell me the..."

"Mom!" Felicity interrupted before she could go off a tangent.

She heard her mother sigh. "Okay, okay, I won't ask. Just, live your life, honey. I just hate to see you be so alone. You are so young. You deserve everything."

Throat closing up, Felicity's hand tightened on the phone and she closed her eyes, feeling so young for some reason.

She stayed silent for a long moment before speaking softly. "It's confusing, Mom."

"The best things in life always are, honey," her mother told her in the same tone she had always told her any hard truths. "I am no expert at love, never have been. But if its confusing a girl like you, it might just be worth it."

Inhaling deeply, she nodded once and changed the topic. Her mother took the hint and steered it to her work and life in general, Vegas and her old neighbors. They talked for a while before Felicity finally cut the call, confusion still reigning over her.

She did not know how long she sat there, basking in the warm sun and listening to nothing but the sound of the stream, lost in her own head. Things in her life were changing, spinning at a speed faster than she could spin. And that resulted in her confusion. All her life, she had listened to her instincts and it had worked out pretty well for her. Until now. Now, her instincts were a mystery to her. They were torn. One minute they'd be telling her to stay put and stay with him and the next they'd be screaming at her to run as far away as possible. And the dilemma was draining her. She needed to decide which way she was going to swing and soon. Given, of course, that he hadn't made the decision for both of them and left for good.

She'd just have to find out.
Sighing, she got down from the boulder, her butt completely numb from sitting on the stone for so long, and brushed away the small twigs from her jeans, heading back towards the cabin down the straight path. Now that she knew of this place, she was sure she would come here again. Definitely.

The walk back seemed shorter than it should have been. The sun was still high and she entered the clearing where the cabin was, just in time to hear a loud, very loud crash come from inside. Taken aback by the sound, her gaze swung to find the car hidden behind the trees. Heart beat picking up, she raced to the door, not knowing what the crash meant but acting instinctively, not knowing what she expected to see inside.

It wasn't this. The door was open and she walked in, letting her eyes roam over the area to measure the damage. The couch was completely overturned and the small table that used to be before it was crashed to the ground, its two legs splintered away. So, they weren't under attack. This was a fit of rage. Her eyes moved over to see him.

He sat on his haunches, his face in his hands, breathing heavily like he had run a marathon. Confounded at this, she took a step inside and froze in surprise as his entire body tensed, and his gaze flew to her, a wildness in his eyes she had never seen before. He stared at her for long seconds, before standing up smoothly and walking towards her with lethal grace she could not help but admire. But it wasn't the fluidity of his movements which was making her heart pound. It was that frantic, unhinged look in his eyes as he closed the distance between them in a few strides. And boy, was her heart pounding.

Before she could even blink, his hand was in her hair, cupping the back of her head, tilting her face up to his wild scrutiny and the other one was pulling her forward from the waist.

Her pulse was beating with a vengeance everywhere in her body. She could feel the tension in his body pressed against hers, feel the tension in between them. Keeping her mouth shut, she just looked at him, not knowing what to expect as he clenched his stupid, square jaw tightly, drilling her with his stark, furious, blue eyes. He gripped her hair, not painfully but firmly, and kept her head tilted, looking down into her face.


His low, rough voice ground out, the emphasis on each word strong enough to hold just a hint of wildness and Felicity raised her eyebrows at him silently, not really knowing what she had done exactly.

He pulled her closer, his voice deep and firm, his breath on her skin as he growled. "You don't disappear on me, Felicity. You don't do that. Never. Do you understand that?"

She blinked at him, processing everything and suddenly, it clicked. She understood. Oh, she understood just fine.

"So," she began with forced casualness, trying to rein the anger rising inside her, "you can gallivant off to wherever you want to, and I cannot even go for a walk?"

His eyes narrowed slightly at her tone, like he was measuring her and he spoke again. "Not when you are in danger."

Was he dense? Pushing at his chest, she forced him back and walked into the cabin and he let her. She knew he let her, and she put distance between them, turning around to face him, her blood simmering. He was pinching the bridge of his nose like she was being particularly difficult.
She didn’t speak, waiting him out.

"Do you have any idea what I would have done had you not walked in right now?" he said in a low, deep voice, raising his eyes to her. "Can you even fathom what I would have done?"

She could. Vaguely. But that did not help with the rising agitation she felt.

"I wanted to go for a walk. I did. And I damn well will again," she grit out, crossing her arms over her chest. "Just because I am here does not mean you are my master. I answer to no one and I will not answer to you. Understand that right now."

She saw his jaw clench at that as he bore his gaze into hers and suddenly, realization dawned upon her, pieces falling into place in her head with outrageous accuracy.

"That's what this is about for you, isn't it?" she asked, trying to mask in her voice the hurt she didn't know why she was feeling. The kind of past he had had, she was somehow not surprised at this. "You feel like I am yours."

"You are mine," he stated firmly, his face stoic.

She shook her head, her new knowledge only making her heart ache. "You mean like that dagger you carry is yours? Or that arrowhead you wear around your neck is yours? That way?"

He stayed silent, considering her words and his denial only pinched more. She breathed in heavily.

Their gazes stayed locked, the air between them changing, growing tenser with his silence and blankness in his eyes, and her own emotions bubbling to the surface, spilling over inside her. For long minutes, he just stared at her wordlessly and she didn't say anything either. Finally, tired of the weight of this thing, she turned to the fridge and felt him staring a hole into her back, for long, long seconds, before he walked towards the bathroom.

She heard the shower start a minute later and the breath she had been holding left her body, making her lean back against the counter.

Her heart was pounding roughly as a myriad of thoughts raced through her head, the emotions piling up inside her, threatening to tear apart at the seams.

What was she doing? Really doing?

She was on the run. Her house was empty and probably a hub for visiting assassins. Her quite life was thrown into the wind.

She was freaking the fuck out.

As much as being on the run had excited her, it was not who she was. She did not live on the run with a strange man who barely spoke a word to her. She did not have assassins after her because of the said strange man's interest in her. She had a fucking sect of assassins out for her head because she had run away with one of their guys, the man who had hooked her. He had pulled her in from somewhere so deep inside her, and she didn't deny that he felt a pull too. But for what? She was a possession to him? He was probably just as protective about his weapons as he was for her.

She was freaking the fuck out even more.

She remembered the first time they had met, remembered when she had pulled him into her house and remembered every time that he had returned. Closing her eyes, she remembered their first kiss.
He cared for her, definitely. He was attracted to her too. And he did trust her.

Felicity knew all of this, but for some reason, her body was trembling and pulse was racing and her heart was breaking.

She was nowhere in the vicinity of logic as she leaned against the counter and listened to the running shower.

She had to get away.

Somewhere. Anywhere. She needed to leave.

The open door beckoned her and slowly, picking up her tablet and her phone, she made her way towards it.

The sun was not as bright anymore, the wind chillier. She knew the highway was just a little further up, she knew. And he might have a tracer in the car. Inhaling deeply, she started sprinting away from the cabin, down the path towards the highway which was five minutes away, keeping to the trees, feeling her calves start to burn and sweat roll down her back. It was blanking her mind and she pushed herself harder, ran faster.

And for the first time in her life, Felicity felt what being in her father's shoes felt like. What abandoning someone felt like.

It sucked.

And she closed her eyes once, imagining his face when he came out of the shower, when he realized she had just done what he had asked her never to do.

She had left.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Hey everyone!

Thank you for the amazing response to the last chapter! I am so happy you are so excited for what's to come. I hope you like this chapter. It is longer than the others so far.

Also, it gets a little smutty-ish. Be warned. ;)

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts! I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

One full day.

She had survived, hidden successfully from him, for one full day.

Once she had ran like a bat out of hell, her only thought had been escape and going someplace safe. Upon reaching the highway, she had opened her tablet and thankfully traced a motel not far from where she had been standing, just a mile ahead and off the road. So, she had ran again. It was a good thing she ran sometimes in the mornings because she was pretty sure the stitches in her sides would have been much worse by the time she spotted the motel than they had been.

Felicity had entered the small, dilapidated building, and finally had taken the time to catch her breath, her chest heaving like a mad woman, and the old woman behind the counter had given her a funny look. Felicity had just given her a semblance of a smile and called a cab to the motel, which had arrived in almost 15 minutes, and finally left, going right along the highway, to the outskirts of Starling, to a hotel she had stayed in when her house had been renovated.

It was a tourist resort actually. The Orange Umbrella, though she had no idea where the name came from, was a small tourist resort right outside the city limits, with a set of cottages spread far and wide in the area, allowing the guests whatever privacy they could.

Felicity had arrived there, all crazy hair and wild breaths, and transferred the money online into their account for three nights, picking out the cottage farthest from the main resort. A bell boy had shown her to her door and she had thanked him, finally locking the door and shutting the windows and collapsing on the bed, staring at the floor.

She had not been able to believe what she had done.

She had done the very thing she hated the most in the world, become what she hated the most in the world.

She had run.

She had abandoned him.
Felicity had closed her eyes and taken deep breaths to calm her nerves, unable to believe even then that she had evaded him.

Then, she had gone and soaked in the semi-luxurious bath for hours, starting at any sound, drifting in and out of sleep, and watched some television before finally going to bed.

The next day was almost spent in the same fashion, with a little work added via her tablet and the resort's WiFi.

But now, as she lay in bed in the dark, the shadows of the tree waving creepily in her room through the drapes, she let herself do what she hadn't done for more than 24 hours.

Think.

One day.

She had successfully evaded him for one day.

And the odd part was, at this point, now that she had calmed down, Felicity didn't know whether to be relieved or disappointed.

Questions raced through her head, presenting two scenarios in the end.

**Scenario One**- he was looking for her. This scenario made her sad, especially in the knowledge of how she had left, the guilt eating her up alive. For the first time in her life, Felicity understood, in the last day, what her father must have gone through, how much worse it must have been for him to abandon the woman he married and the child he made with her, the people he had loved so much. For the first time in her life, while she did not forgive him for it, she understood her father- not his reasons, just his actions. She had always thought leaving them must have been easy for him, the way he had done it. But every step away from the home he had made, after tucking in his daughter to bed with soft kisses to her head, knowing it was the last time he did so, that must have been so fucking harder than what she had done.

But back on the issue, if her stranger (and she still felt weird calling him that especially given he was not a stranger and also not hers in a lot of ways) was looking for her, that implied that his sect of super freaky assassins were too. Which further implied that she was a dead woman on her own, something she hadn't given a thought when she had been sprinting away from him. Boy, those ninjas could have skewered her anytime, careless as she had been. And she had no idea how they hadn't found her then.

**Scenario Two**- he was *not* looking for her. After the stunt she had pulled, after abandoning him when he had opened up to her like he never had to anyone, she would not blame him for giving up and just forget her, going his own merry way. And this scenario depressed her something fierce. The thought that while she was hiding herself, he had decided that she was not the worth the effort, not that she could blame him, was killing her softly in her own head. It also gave her a time to understand and put in perspective what had happened.

He had lost it when he had found her gone and told her, with that same intensity of his, that she was his.

And in her already freaking out mind, she had heard what she had wanted to, never giving his history much context in the matter except the way she had wanted. Maybe, she should have let him find the words and explain. Maybe, she should have stayed and waited for him to get out of the shower. Maybe, he had calmed down enough to actually explain things to her.
Or maybe she should have done exactly what she had.

Felicity sighed and hugged a pillow to her chest, watching the dancing tree shadow, getting more and more depressed at the thought that he was not looking for her at all.

Who would blame him? Being what he had been through, slowly trusting her and opening up to her the way he had, she had literally slapped all that back in his face and hightailed it, telling him silently how worthless he was.

Felicity clenched her eyes shut on that thought. He was not worthless. And she hated herself for making him harbor that thought for even a second. Would he ever open up to anyone again the way he had to her? Would he ever trust someone else again with himself the way he had with her? Would he ever even try?

And what if he did? What if he found someone else to trust and talk to and show his face to? What if he found another woman, a woman who did not run and fight him, like she had? What if he made someone else his?

The knot in her chest tightened at the thought, making her curl tighter around the pillow. She heaved in a loud breath, aware of some moisture in her eyes, and tried to loosen the knot.

She wanted him to be happy. God knows, he deserved it, after everything, even knowing everything he had done in the past.

But she wanted him happy with her.

And she had run.

And now she was fucking depressed.

He had never done a single thing to her that had been against her wishes, not unless her life had been in danger. Not a touch or a word had ever meant to disrespectful of who she was. For all his upbringing, he had been the perfect gentleman to her. She had been the one to pull him in, to initiate their kiss, to run away.

And lying there, with her eyes closed, thinking of him, she realized that she didn't know his name.

She realized more that she didn't care.

She missed him. And knowing his skills, some firsthand, some through speculation based on those firsthand, she knew it should have taken less than an hour for him to find her. He had found her once when she had been running in the Glades, for goodness' sake.

And it had been one day.

And he hadn't found her.

Scenario Two was becoming more and more probable by the minute.

And she realized she was not relieved. She was anything but relieved.

--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
Something woke her up.

She didn't know what it was, only that suddenly, she was wide awake, her senses on high alert, as she stayed completely still, her eyes slightly open on the shadow of the tree.

Another shadow joined in. The long shadow of a man. Standing right in front of the window.

Heart pounding, she slowly readied her limbs for action, ready to run like she had been for the last day, her eyes darting to the locked door before going to the lamp. Yeah, that could work.

The shadow came closer and her hand slowly inched to the lamp, her breaths getting heavier and the thud in her ears loud, adrenaline crashing over her body in torrential waves, as she saw the shadow step around the bed.

Suddenly it was all motion. Her hand shot out to grip the lamp handle just as the shadow moved and the figure of a man stepped closer to the bed, right to her side.

And she paused.

She knew that figure. She knew him.

Her eyes closed as her heart thud even harder now, basking in the knowledge that he had come.

He had come for her.

Even after she had run out.

She let go of the lamp and sat up on the bed, keeping her eyes on him, as he came to stand right in front of where she was sitting, his attire casual and his face completely in the dark. She wasn't even thinking about how he got inside the secured cottage.

And another thought hit her head. What if he was here to tell her he was done? What if he had found her only to reinforce Scenario Two? Frackity frack.

Swinging her legs down the high bed and putting her glasses on, she sat at the edge, looking up at him in silence, willing him to say something, anything.

He just stood there for one long moment, just staring at her, his gaze heavy on her. She could feel that gaze even though she could not see it.

She gulped, biting her lip, her hands curling into the sheets beside her thighs, trembling slightly, her heart pulsing with a vengeance in her chest.

The words sat on the tip of her tongue, ready to tumble out completely unchecked, ready for her to just open her mouth but for the first time, she kept it really shut, waiting with bated breath to see him do something. Whatever he had come to do.

Her breath came and left her rapidly as she waited for him to act, feeling herself ready to explode from everything, needing him to dump her now if that's what he had come to do. But at least do something!

As though sensing her rising desperation, finally, he did something.

He kneeled.

Right in front of her.
Felicity blinked in surprise as his hands came to rest beside hers on the bed, close enough to touch but not really touching, and he kneeled in front of her legs, which had spread slightly on their own to accommodate his torso. And then he knocked it out of the park and bowed his head in her lap, burrowing it in her stomach.

Felicity felt his warm breaths, slightly rapid like hers, across her flesh as she sat there with his head against her stomach, and closed her eyes, finally breathing in what seemed like too long. Her hands came up to his head, feeling his buzz cut across her palms. She held it there, brushing her fingers across his ears and over his skull, tracing the few small scars she could see there.

His hands, at her touch, came up to her hips, holding her sides in his huge grip as he slowly regulated his breathing.

They didn't speak at all, and Felicity did not need for him to. He had told her, in the way he always did, that Scenario Two was a no-go. And she was so, so thankful that it was.

He murmured something against her t-shirt, so softly she couldn't catch it and she frowned, pulling his head away, to look down at his face.

He let her, and looked up at her, his face visible in the light coming from the outside, the shadows dancing even now behind him. He gazed up at her, the intensity on his eyes, the turmoil so acute it made her breath catch.

She saw him inhale deeply and look up at her, wordlessly, his eyes tracing her face like he hadn't seen her for years rather than a day. Hers were doing the same. In such a short time, which still seemed like forever, he had become so integral to her.

And looking at him...

"I would give it all away," he whispered quietly, his words breaking her thoughts and making her brows furrow.

She blinked in confusion. "What?" she whispered back, her hands still on his head.

His eyes looked up at her, the seriousness in them staggering. "Everything, Felicity. I would give away everything I have ever owned, everything that I have ever possessed, if that meant I get to keep you."

Her heart stopped.

She looked at him with wide eyes, her mouth open but no words coming out, the intensity of the moment making her breath catch in her throat completely. This was huge. Huge. Knowing what she knew about him, knowing how little he had had in his life, how little he had possessed, this was very, very huge. And looking at him, she knew he meant every single word.

A trembling breath escaped her as she opened her mouth again. "But... it's not... what..."

Floundering for words, she stammered. What did you even say to something like that?

She saw his lips twitch just a wee bit but his eyes remained somber.

"My dagger," he began in that same low voice that sent a shiver involuntarily down her spine, their eyes glued to each other, "my arrowhead, my first weapon, the only thing I have of my mother, everything I have earned, everything I have owned, all my money. All of that combined still does not come close to you. You are not a possession to me, Felicity. You never were. You are everything."
How the hell did the man expect her to survive that?

His earnest eyes, his unwavering gaze, his steady voice just slightly shaking at the end— it all just screamed genuine at her. And she knew he didn't lie. Not to her.

She swallowed. "Did you practice that perfect delivery?"

"Yes."

She blinked at him in surprise at the admission and he looked up at her, his hands tightening on her waist. "Words are not my strength, Felicity. I don't find them easily. So, yes, I had to practice this because making you understand this was important. Important so you wouldn't leave again."

Felicity looked down at her lap, her cheeks burning with her own guilt. "It was a shitty thing to do."

She heard his sigh before one hand left her waist and cupped her jaw, pulling her eyes back to his own pained ones. "I know I can be... overwhelming, Felicity. And once I cooled down, I could understand why you did it."

But his eyes didn't. Even though he understood, she knew a part of him did not, would never. What had he thought when he had come out of the shower? What all had gone through his mind?

She swallowed, whispering quietly. "I am sorry."

"I am too," he whispered back, his eyes tracing her face with something she could not place but it made her pulse throb.

She took a deep breath, breaking the moment and nudging his head with her hand. "You, all mighty you, I thought you'd find me in five seconds and you couldn't in an entire day? What does that mean?" she teased lightly.

His eyes didn't lose that intensity but his lips twitched again at her teasing tone. "It means you don't notice things and you definitely are not safe to run away alone."

Felicity frowned at that in confusion. "What do you mean?"

He sighed softly. "I found you the moment you hit the highway."

Felicity looked at him stunned, before gasping. "And you didn't come get me?"

He scoffed a bit. "Oh, I was very tempted to."

"Then why didn't you?" she demanded, remembering how awful Scenario Two had made her feel, and all the while he had been watching her.

He looked at her, with a slight smile, and spoke softly. "A lesson I leaned in life was to never corner a spooked animal."

Felicity frowned and he elaborated. "You are not like the women I have been used to, Felicity. I always knew it and I just realized it more when you ran away because you got scared. Cornering you right then would only have made you run harder, and I never want you running away from me. So I let you for now, knowing you would be safe as long as I was watching you. I knew you would come to a decision when you stopped. And I couldn't stay away longer."

He was surprisingly astute for someone who was not very social. She would have run away harder if he had stopped her.
"And what decision have I made?" she asked softly, her gaze lingering on his face.

"You tell me," he answered softly, his own gaze piercing hers.

Felicity breathed in deeply, her heartbeat increasing in its pace, feeling the warmth of him, of his flesh, of his muscles pressed against hers, feeling his woody scent wrap all around her, feeling his own breaths in between them. She looked down at his face, her hands holding his head, looking at the man who had stayed away to give her space, even then keeping watch and keeping her safe. This was the man who turned her into a raging mess and the man who soothed her like no other.

The man who had come for her, who had not given up on her.

Chest heaving, her gaze flickered to his lips, to that mole, and came back to see his own eyes heat up, and how he tried to rein it in.

Her control dwindled, and she leaned forward, her hands going to his neck, gripping the solid muscle there and he waited, waited to see how far she'd go.

She stopped, right before crossing an inch barrier, her eyes closed, and waited for him to close the space between them.

And waited.

He didn't and she opened her eyes, to see his, the expression on his face so pained she was taken aback.

His hand gripped her head before she could pull back, the unhinged look in his eyes just like what she had seen when he had thought she'd left.

"Don't leave again, Felicity," he spoke in a low, rough voice. "Please. Don't. Stay. Talk to me. Fight. I can take it all. Just don't leave again."

Her jaw trembled at the raw emotion in his voice and she just nodded, unable to say a word.

His hand urged her face higher. "Tell me."

"I won't leave," she whispered, stunned by the emotions she could see in him.

He looked up at her for a few heartbeats, before closing the gap between them suddenly and crushing their mouths together in a bruising kiss.

Felicity gasped in surprise at the suddenness of it, unprepared, and he wasted no time, taking the opportunity to lick the seam of her lips with his tongue, opening her to his invasion. She welcomed him, her eyes closing completely as she lost herself to the sensation of having him kiss her, of the sensation of kissing him back.

He got up from the floor, their mouths still joined, sounds she never made escaping her throat, and she felt the world tilt as he laid her back on the bed, their lips parting for her to catch her breath.

She looked up as he loomed over her, leaning on his hands beside her head, just looking down at her with heated eyes that made her heart pound wildly in her chest and blood rush to her core, her entire body fevered with lust, and something else for him. She pulled his head down again, spreading her legs to let him settle in between them, their hips right against each other through a few layers of clothing, and she felt him right against her center, hot and hard and from the feel of him, big.
He settled his weight on one elbow in a move that spiked her pulse like crazy, his other hand brushing her hair away from her cheek with a gentleness belying the wildness in his eyes. He pulled her glasses away from her face, dropping them to the bedside table, and his hand dropped to her waist, right on the hem of her tank top.

"I don't know what I would have done if I hadn't found you," he murmured in the space between them, and Felicity understood he meant more than just yesterday.

She pulled his mouth down again in reply, letting him feel everything she did in that one kiss, letting her hands slip under his t-shirt and feel the hot, flexing muscles for the first time like this. She felt the muscles clench under her touch, her hands traveling over the multiple scar tissue, feeling the ridges and the burnt flesh against her, caressing them, letting her touch soothe him like his did her. His own hand went under her tank top, his huge palm settling over her ribs, just underside of her breast, his fingers stroking her skin, inflaming her even more, her nipples hardening at the close proximity of his touch, needing him to touch them.

He pulled his head back, his mouth a little swollen, her own burning from the scruff rubbing against her skin, tingling.

He looked down at her, the primal need she saw in his eyes her undoing, and she ground her hips against his, feeling him push back into her, gasping slightly for air, her gaze never leaving his. He looked into her eyes, keeping their gazes locked, and very deliberately, his hand traveled up her ribs, settling over her right breast, cupping it in his entire palm. He head lolled back into the pillow as pleasure streaked through her body sharply as he pulled on her nipple, a moan leaving her before she could stop it.

He continued playing with her breast as she gripped his back, pulling him closer, his mouth laving soft kisses and little bites on her neck, his scruff rasping over her tingling skin, making sensations shoot over her body and going straight to her core.

Slowly, taking her lobe in between his teeth, he tugged it, right as he tugged on her nipple, and her body arched into his, a whimper leaving her as she looked at him in surprise.

"Did they actually teach you all this?"

She felt him still suddenly above her, freeze completely at her words, and she kicked herself for ruining it.

Pulling back, he looked down at her, a contemplative look in his eyes. "Yes, they trained me to pleasure a woman."

She gulped, looking up at him, rubbing his spine in a soothing manner. "You learned well."

That contemplative look did not leave his eyes and he stared at her wordlessly for a long moment, his hand still on her breast, making her squirm. "What?"

"You are not those women, Felicity," he stated softly.

Taken aback, she nodded. "I know that. You've shown me that enough times."

He shook his head slightly. "No. Even like this. Even in bed. I want you to know that whatever I do is to bring you pleasure and not because I have been trained to do it to women. It is me. For you."

"Okay," Felicity mumbled. The man shocked her speechless way too often.
He shook his head again. "I mean this is different."

She so did not get what he was trying to say. "I know."

He looked down at her, slightly frustrated, and squeezed her breast once, making her breath catch sharply, his control teetering. "When we are in bed, Felicity, when you bring me pleasure, I want only your name on my lips. And I want mine on yours."

Her heart stopped for the second time in a matter of minutes, before it started hammering away.

"They call me Al Sahhim," he spoke quietly between them and Felicity blinked at him in surprise before she narrowed her eyes.

"Seriously? Forget it," she shook her head, huffing slightly. "That's a deal breaker right there. I am not screaming out that in the throes of passion. Nuh-uh."

She saw his lips twitch again and his eyes become a little amused. "I don't want you to. I am not that man with you." He took a deep breath. "I want you to call me what no one has in more than two decades."

Felicity held her breath, the enormity of this moment right then hitting her square in the chest. "Tell me," she echoed his previous words.

He waited for a few seconds, looking down at her with that intensity which made her tummy fall every time, before pressing his lips to hers, murmuring softly against them.

She closed her eyes, pulling him closer, and spoke against his own mouth, as he moved against her again, the word feeling like home on her mouth, rolling off her tongue in a way she had never thought it would as she pulled him closer, sighing because he had told her his name, finally.

She whispered his name right after he whispered hers, their names mingling together, completing each other.

She whispered, and for that moment, everything was right in their world.

"Oliver."

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Hey everyone!

The response to the last chapter literally had my jaw on the floor. It was phenomenal! Thank you so much for that! I had absolutely no idea it would connect so well with you guys. So, thank you!

Here is the next chapter.

PLEASE NOTE - THE RATING CHANGES TO EXPLICIT THIS CHAPTER ON. Some stuff happens. Enjoy!

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts. I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

The thunder outside woke her with a jolt.

Felicity blinked open her eyes, looking around the darkened room, occasionally lit with the thunder as sheets of rain pelted against the glass windows, the sound of the raindrops splattering on the wet ground with force, droning out all other sounds.

Her gaze stopped on him, as he stood at the window, looking out into the night, completely still, completely lost in his own mind.

Felicity looked at his shadowed profile, at his muscular back under the t-shirt, a small wave of tenderness for him washing over her. It had only been a day since he came for her, a day of just talking and being with each other, the newness of it both thrilling and frightening. A day full of small kisses and small make-outs that never escalated beyond that, even though she had climbed him like a tree more than enough times. But he always pulled back, always pressed pause, always telling her that he didn't want it to be out of the thrill and the rush. It was different. Who would have thought that the guy who made grown men shake would be such a romantic at heart?

And while she understood that, understood how different this was for him, the fact was that she was a healthy, sexual woman with a very sexy man who played with her ovaries like ping-pong balls, in very close confines and it was slowly chipping and chafing at her control like crazy.

They had stayed in the cottage for the day for most part. She had worked from her tablet for a while, answering all the emails, thanking the lord that she didn't have any projects pending or any clients in need of immediate assistance while he had gone out for a while, back to the cabin to get their stuff and to check the safety around the cottage. He had returned in a few hours and they had ordered room service, then watched a movie, enjoying their old sense of normalcy, even though he slept on the couch last night to keep himself under control. And like every time when they watched a movie together, she had drifted off in the middle, not even realizing when he settled her in bed like always, waking up only now, after hours.
Felicity blinked again, clearing her head, and focused on his silent figure.

She got down from the bed quietly, unsure if he heard her over the sound of the rain, her old oversized t-shirt hanging loosely on her frame as she walked barefoot to where he stood, his huge figure seeming even more large in her naked feet, the set of his shoulders tensed. Taking a small breath, she slowly put her arms around his waist, and felt him stiffen instantly, right a second before his muscles relaxed and his hands came up to her own around his hard abs, sighing.

Felicity nuzzled his back softly, inhaling his masculine woodsy scent that she identified with him now, pressing her cheek to his back, offering him comfort from whatever thoughts were darkening his mind.

"What's wrong?" she asked softly, just so he could hear and his fingers tangled with hers as he stayed silent.

She waited for him to speak for a long time, and when he didn't, she ducked under his arm to stand in front of him, her arms still around his waist, her head tilted back to look him in the troubled eyes. He still didn't say anything.

Felicity took a deep breath and looked back at the high window ledge. Craning her neck was making it ache and sitting on the high seat would definitely make it better.

She took a step back, taking him with her, and tried to jump on it. And failed. Huffing slightly, she tried again. And failed again.

She saw his lips twitch a second before his hands were at her waist, picking her up like a sack of potatoes, and depositing her on the seat in an effortless move that was very, very hot. And distracting.

Putting off her very frequent yet inappropriate thoughts for later, Felicity pulled him closer, their faces almost at the same height now, something for which her neck was very grateful, and rubbed his back soothingly, asking again, keeping her eyes on his beautiful blue ones. "What's wrong?"

He took a deep breath, and she knew he was picking the right words for her sake, making the effort for her sake, a fact that was actually so sweet it made her melt a little.

"I have never thought beyond one day of my life," he began softly, his eyes so bothered it made her heart clench. "I have never given a thought beyond today for any day for so many years. Every day has just been life and death and I never had to think beyond the moment."

Felicity nodded, waiting.

He opened his mouth, hesitating, before he spoke again. "For the first time I am thinking of more than a day, Felicity. So much more. And I don't know how to do it."

His rough confession, the vulnerability on his face made Felicity's breath hitch as she gazed into his eyes, seeing all the helplessness he felt bare for her to see, his slight fear so palpable. How daunting would it be to someone who had a history like his, how absolutely uncertain would the thought of any certainty make him?

Feeling her heart go out to him, she came to a decision of giving him what he gave her- the truth.

"My father left my mom and I when I was seven," she spoke, her heart pounding, telling him what she never told anyone, baring herself to him because that was the only way to make him understand, let him see her vulnerability. He just looked back at her, his hands at her waist, moving in a soothing,
circular motion the only indication that he understood.

Gulping, she nodded. "My mother and I, well, we love each other and she gave me the best childhood she could, but it was never the same after he left. And I didn't let anyone get close enough after that, so that if that someone left, it wouldn't affect me. I planned everything I wanted to do with my life and it was all going so well until I met you."

He just looked back at her and she smiled a little, her hands caressing his jaw.

"Oliver," she spoke softly, marveling that she could call him by that name, by his name, by the name no one had called him in over two decades, by the name that had been extinct for every one. The entire day she had called him by his name every chance she got, enjoying both the feel of it on her mouth and the slight surprise in his eyes every time he heard it.

"This is new for both of us," she began, carding her fingers though his hair, the rain beating violently against the window at her back. "You gave my world a shake that maybe it needed, I gave one to yours. But what's important is that we are both trying to give and take."

His eyes looked at her cautiously, like she was going to have another episode of pulling back, searching her face for long minutes, his eyes still troubled and Felicity suddenly had a thought. "Are you thinking far ahead because you think that's what I want?"

"Don't you?" he asked, the doubts in his gaze making her pull him closer.

She looked him right in the eyes, completely serious. "I want you, just you," she spoke, seeing his eyes darken a bit at that. "But right now, it's your one-day-at-a-time approach that's going to keep us safe. So, let's delay the planning till we are out of the woods, okay?"

He searched her face again before a loud exhale left him and he pressed their foreheads together, his thumb rubbing her hips. "I just don't know what to do in situations I don't understand."

"You don't have to do anything, Oliver," Felicity murmured. "Just live them."

Oliver just looked at her. She sighed dramatically, trying to break the tension.

"It's ironic if you think about it," she huffed a laugh. "You have legions of men who would die for you that you don't want and I don't have one."

"You have me," he stated quietly, his voice husky and rough and his words making throat tighten up, her tongue glued to her mouth. For a man who had trouble with words, he sure rendered her speechless a lot.

She bit her lip, seeing his gaze flutter down, her tummy in turmoil over the fact that he had basically admitted to dying for her, which she did not want but it was big. He liked dropping bombs like this on her when she was unsuspecting.

"Listen to me, very clearly," she spoke, overwhelmed. "I know we are in a really messed up situation but I don't, at any point, no matter the circumstance, want you doing something stupid and dying for me, got it?"

He looked at her intensely, before giving her a nod.

Surprised at his immediate consent, she furrowed her brow. "You got it?"

Ho nodded again, his eyes intense like before. "Yes, Felicity," he enunciated. "I got it."
She nodded suspiciously, when he spoke again, so softly it was just a whisper. "That does not mean I won't do it."

Crazy bull-headed man.

He overwhelmed her. So, so thoroughly. She leaned her forehead against his, knowing that fighting him right now was pointless.

They breathed in sync, their breaths bushing over the other, their lips with scant breaths between them, just breathing in together. Felicity felt her heart beat thrumming, the tension in the space between them electrifying like it always did, his hands slowly inching under the hem of her t-shirt, their gazes locked, both of them aware of the licentious waves overtaking their senses. She felt his huge hands on her lower back, his fingers abrasive in a way that stimulated her skin, and she spread her legs, pulling him closer, the hand on his face going to the back of his head and the other one gripping his t-shirt at the back, fisting the fabric.

His lips hovered over hers, mere breaths away, so close she could almost taste them, and her heart yearned in need for him to close that space between them, the sounds of raindrops and their heavy breathing so, so erotic in the room, the shadows dancing over their bodies making their need even more voracious.

He brushed his lips over hers, just once, and pulled back a bit, his eyes the fiery blue of a flame, burning him, burning her. Waiting for a few heartbeats, he brushed their lips again, swiping his tongue across her lower lip this time and pulled his neck back, making her arch a bit, chase his mouth. She could feel her own ardent desire burning low in her belly. She could feel her own arousal swirling through her blood, feel the ache pulsating between her thighs, feel the heaviness in her breasts as her nipples pebbled, feel every brush of the cotton against her overheated skin.

She could feel her arousal in a way she never had before, feel her senses acutely, feel his woody scent and his rough hands and his own hardness, pressing just a bit into her.

There were words on the tip of her tongue but they did not want to get out, did not want to break this moment, knowing how well the silence connected them sometimes.

Gripping the back of his head in one hand, she tugged on it and closed her eyes. His lips came to hers again, a little chapped but soft, so very soft, taking a hold of her lower lip and sucking on it, using teeth and tugging on it, making a whimper leave her before she could stop it.

The moment the sound left her, he pulled her across the space, right to the edge of the seat, and thrust his hips into hers, his jeans clad erection hitting her right on her cotton clad core, his mouth slanting over hers with an ardor she had only glimpsed at, barely, his hands low on her hips and grinding them into his.

The sounds of their mouths coming together, slanting, nipping, of their tongues teasing, finding each other, teasing again, were loud in the room, and so erotic Felicity felt like she would burst from the heat running through her veins. She felt like a live wire, ready to cackle, on the precipice of becoming a furnace in heat. Gripping the edge of his t-shirt, she whipped it over his head, their mouths unlocking for a second to let her throw it on the floor before their tongues were mating again, in a sloppy, unrefined kiss that completely set her ablaze, her breasts crushing against his hard chest, her nipples rubbing over his pecs, making her squirm with need.

Her hands explored his warm muscles, his taut pecs and yum abs, tracing the lines where the muscles were cut with years of back-breaking hard work, his many scars, mottled and raised on the smooth skin, speaking of years of pain that he had survived and come out of, a slight sheen of sweat on his
body pitching her need higher. She wanted him. For him. For who he was in this moment, and for who he wanted to be in the future that he did not know how to think of, and for the man he had been, brave and strong and so determined. Oh, how she wanted him.

She pulled back for air, her chest heaving, and looked into his eyes, telling him all that and more, their gazes locking together, and raised her hands, giving him the permission to take it to another level. He paused, searching her eyes for a minute, as though asking for more permission and it struck her again. For a man capable of so much violence, he was so capable of gentleness.

And it only made her want him more.

His hands stayed on her hips, still, and she sighed. "This is the part where you remove my clothes and ravish me against the window."

She saw his mouth curl up a bit, his hands rubbing against her lower spine, but he stayed silent, breathing heavily.

"I am very willing to be ravished, for the record," she stated, the ache in her groin humming, the throb in her core a glaring reminder of how on edge she was.

Oliver looked at her for long minutes, hesitating, before she saw a determined look enter in eyes and he leaned in, his mouth trailing from her ear to her jaw, planting soft kisses on her skin, inflaming her with every touch.

Felicity tilted her head back, giving him more access, and gripped his neck, closing her eyes, arching her body closer to his. His lips paused at her fluttering pulse, kissing it almost reverently, and her heart clenched at the tenderness in the gesture, hearing her own name spoken softly against her skin. He kissed her pulse again, with the same reverence, her heart melting even as her body fevered, before moving lower.

His hands traveled over her hips, tracing the edge of her panties, moving over her outer thighs, and she felt him hesitate for a second before she felt his fingers trailing over the inside of thigh, their destination evident but giving her enough time to stop him. Like she would. She was horny, not crazy.

She spread her legs a little more, the invitation open for him, and felt him kiss her upper breasts, just as his hand cupped her completely.

A mewl left her as she gripped his shoulders, feeling his hand push her underwear aside, his fingers just playing with her nether lips, teasing her, not fully diving in and not completely leaving either.

"Oliver," she moaned, planting a wet kiss on his neck, tasting his flesh, the warm, corded muscle against her tongue, slightly salty with his sweat, and suddenly, his control snapped. Both his hands were against her panties, ripping the fabric away as he took a hard nipple in his mouth, over the t-shirt, pulling on it hard, leaving her breathless in surprise at that move. Fuck, that had been hot.

As sudden as that was, his mouth was on hers again before she could blink, his tongue pushing in just as he slipped one long finger inside her, his thumb rubbing over her supernova nub of a muscle, and she felt herself get wetter, the hunger gnawing in her core glaring more the more he fed it, the damp spot from his mouth on her t-shirt rubbing over her aroused breasts, overwhelming her senses from everywhere. He pulled his finger out, entering her again, this time with another one, making her walls stretch around him as his tongue meshed with hers, making muffled noises leave her throat, her
entire body on fire with need.

"Please," she muttered, pulling back, her eyes closed. "Faster."

He pulled back and dived in with force, the pace of his fingers increasing, and she spread her legs more, feeling wanton, the pumping movement making her clench and unclench around him with increased frequency, her desire wounding tighter and tighter in her belly as a loud whimper escaped her, making her grab onto his arms and lean her head back against the cool window, her eyes closed as the blissful feeling just built up, her body pliable to his skilled hands manipulating it.

His fingers moved even faster now, hitting her harder inside, making her claw at his arms, her toes curling high above the floor.

She felt his other hand hold the back of her head as he gripped it, making her eyes flutter open to see his blazing ones on hers, just looking at him while he pumped his fingers inside her making it feel more intimate somehow, making her writhe even more against him.

His fingers curled a bit now on each thrust, grazing her elusive spot, her body shaking as her orgasm built up inside her to monumental levels.

"Say my name," he growled suddenly, his words a bare inch from her face and she felt her walls clamp around his fingers at his voice, at the rough demand in them.

"Oliver," she panted, the other noises from her throat drowning her whisper.

"Again," he commanded, and she realized how good he must have been in pleasuring women if only his voice made her clench around him.

"Oliver," she cried louder as his fingers curled even more, her nails digging into his arms.

His mouth came down on her neck, his tongue softly laving the spot between her shoulder and her collarbone, and he spoke roughly. "My name, Felicity. I want my name on your lips. Only mine."

Holy expletives, possessive him was hot like this. She closed her eyes suddenly as he curled his fingers hard, pressing onto her clit, and bit her shoulder simultaneously, her entire body exploding in one of the most powerful orgasms of her life, a cry wrenched deep from her chest along with his name, her hips bucking into his hand, spine bowing into his torso, her neck completely curved to bites that didn't stop, her orgasm extending as his fingers kept pumping her furiously clamping walls, prolonging the pleasure, her cries slowly quietening to whimpers and mewls, and slowly, as his fingers stopped moving, the orgasm subsided, leaving her trembling wildly in the aftermath, small after shocks hitting her.

Her parted, swollen lips exhaled a heavy breath as she opened her eyes to look at him, her body sated for the moment, her limbs completely limp.

Gaze drifting to his obvious erection, she reached out to take care of him when his hand stopped her, shaking his head.

She frowned in confusion, blinking up at him as he looked down at her with still heated, but somehow soft eyes. "This was for you, Felicity."

"But.." she began and he shook his head.

"Only you."
Felicity looked at him carefully, then kissed his jaw, to thank him for his generosity and felt his lips twitch. "Do you feel ravished now?"

A giggle burst out of her and she shook her head, looking intently at his erection. "I think you can do better."

"I can assure you I can."

Felicity raised her eyebrows at that and shrugged. "I'll believe it when I see it."

She started to get down from the high window seat when his hands framed her head, making her look up at him, his eyes so heated and dark they made her breath falter.

"When I get you in bed, Felicity," he spoke softly, the softness in stark contrast to the heat in his voice, "you won't be leaving it for days. You won't be able to walk without remembering what we did, without wanting to do it again. When I get you in bed, Felicity, what I just did will look like nothing. Absolutely nothing."

Felicity's heart faltered too, the traitor body he had just sated becoming ravenous again at the hunger in his eyes.

"Then why don't you?" she whispered on a shaky breath.

"Because when I do, I don't want the threat of having to run hanging on our heads and I sure as fuck don't want to think about how it feels to be inside you when I am supposed to be fighting," he ground out, gripping her head firmly. "I have a set of mind when I am fighting, and taking you to bed is only going to distract me from that. We cannot afford that right now."

Felicity swallowed, nodding. "So we make out till then and you throw in a few orgasms here and there while I am not supposed to wander to your male parts?"

"Precisely."

"And what about you?"

"I can control my baser urges just fine, Felicity," he spoke, slightly amused.

The situation, for some reason, made her giggle again. And then, a yawn surprised her.

He picked her up in his crazy strong arms before she could utter a word, and deposited her on the bed, straightening over her as she lay down.

She looked up at him as he stood, confused.

"I have never slept with anyone," he told her quietly, and Felicity looked up at him, her heart aching for him.

She saw his breath leave in a loud exhale and extended her hand to him, willing him to take it.

He looked at it for a long time, then whispered. "I get aggressive in my sleep sometimes."

And he didn't want to harm her. She knew in her bones, for some reason, that even in his sleep he would not.

"Sleep with me, Oliver," she murmured softly, keeping her hand out, beckoning him to come, silently telling him she trusted him.
He decided for long minutes, before slowly, tentatively sliding in behind her for the first time, completely shirtless and warm and cuddly. Who would have thought.

She pressed her back into him, and felt him press a soft kiss behind her ear, his hands coming around her waist hesitantly, but slowly finding their way. This was new to him. New to her as well.

A wave of peace washed over her just as her eyes fell on her ripped panties and she blushed, which made her roll her eyes considering the man had just been inside her. In a way. With his fingers. She still had to get a glimpse of his penis. She wondered what it would be like, how big would it be. Not that it mattered. Well, it did a bit but not much.

"What are you thinking?" his voice murmured in her ear and she flushed.

"Just about your little Oliver," she blurted out before she could stop herself and clenched her eyes shut. "Not that I am saying it's little by any means. It didn't feel little but what do I know? I want you to know that I won't mind at all even if you are, well, little. I don't think you would be considering you have huge hands. But that's a sexual myth that's not been corroborated by scientific facts as far as I know. Plus given your training to pleasure a woman, I am pretty sure I got the lucky straw. Even if you are little. Which I don't mind..."

She felt him trembling behind her and turned her face to look, only to feel his face buried in her neck as his body shook.

She blinked in surprise before she realized.

He was laughing.

He was actually laughing.

Stunned, she lay there as he laughed silently, only his breath hitting her neck telling her he was actually chuckling, and then he pulled back a bit, looking down at her with surprised eyes, like his laughter had taken him aback too, before that look turned into something so, so soft it made her breath hitch.

He trailed his finger over her cheek, just like he had done that first night outside her house, before dropping his lips to her head, pressing a kiss on the crown, making her realize no one had kissed her on her head since her father.

"Felicity?" he whispered against her forehead, making her bite her lip at the fact that he was the first one to kiss her there. It was a night of firsts for both of them.

"Hmm?" she replied, not trusting her voice for the moment, touched somewhere deep inside by his gesture.

"I am not little."

And just like that, she burst out laughing, making him smile, and still giggling, wrapped in his arms, she went to sleep.
The thunder did not wake her up this time.

She didn't know what did. But suddenly, Felicity was wide awake, her eyes taking in the room, lit in the low morning light that indicated a cloudy sky but no rain for now. It was like the perfect early morning to cuddle back into Oliver's warm, sleeping body and let the day fly.

But something was off. She could sense it. The antennas she felt when someone watched her stood on high alert, even though every inch of the room was lit and there was no one in there except them.

She kept her breathing calm as her heart pounded wildly in her chest, pressing back into his chest, keeping her eyes on the door and around the room when she saw it. A shadow. Outside the door. From between the gap.

The shadow lingered, motionless, before slipping away, making Felicity's heart thud as she put her hand on Oliver's arm around her waist and squeezed softly, hoping for him to wake up, knowing his crazy spidey sense won't make it hard.

She felt him tense behind her as she tapped at his hand, catching his attention, not removing his gaze from the shadow, pointing towards the door.

Oliver stilled and she could almost feel him switching modes inside his head, as he squeezed her waist once, asking her to stay put silently and left the bed, completely noiselessly.

She saw him walk to the door, without any weapons on him, just as two shadows moved off.

Felicity held her breath, her heart in her throat, hammering hard, as he waited on this side, not looking once towards her, waiting.

Waiting for chaos to break.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think?

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Clashing

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!

Thank you, firstly, for the very awesome response to the last chapter. It made the change in rating so worth it :)

No cliffy because you have all been so super. This chapter is sort of important in the grand scheme of things, and you might have questions, but be patient. Enjoy!

Do drop me a line with your thoughts! I love hearing your thoughts!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Felicity had been a little girl, she had watched an old movie with her mother that she didn't even remember the name of. It had been black and white with actors having side-parted hair and that vintage drawl. There had been a scene in the movie where the lead had been walking in a long, narrow, dark corridor, towards a door at the end. Loud, pronounced heartbeats had been the background music. As a little girl, she had burrowed into her mother's side while peeking, enthralled, at the scene out of the corner of her eyes.

Felicity didn’t remember the movie as such but she remembered that scene.

That heartbeat.

Thump. Thump. Thump.

Rhythmic.

Pounding through the speakers, right in her ears.

Sitting on the bed now, her breath trapped in her throat, she felt it pound just like it had in that scene. But she didn’t have anything to burrow into this time, not as she kept her eyes glued to Oliver’s muscular, scarred back as he moved noiselessly to the door, still in anticipation, his muscles tensed tight right on the precipice of motion. At least he looked better than the movie actor had. And without the hideous parting. Not that he had enough hair to part. She liked the hair he did have. Probably just a little longer would be better for her to pull on.

And she could not believe her thoughts were off in la la lane again while assassins were possibly right outside the door, wanting her head on a platter.

Halting her thoughts right before they could spiral, Felicity swung her legs off the bed, careful not to rustle the sheets, and looked at the shadows outside the door, barely visible in the early morning light.

Her eyes strayed to his rigid form, crouched slightly, ready to strike at the drop of a hat. The man from last night, from minutes ago, the man who had tentatively slid in beside her on the bed before
pulling her to him with surety, was completely gone, replaced by the hard warrior she had seen kill people.

Felicity swallowed, hoping no one died. Not today. Not by his hands. He had enough blood on them.

The shadows didn't move. Felicity's heart thumped, louder and louder as the seconds, suspended in time somehow, passed, so loud that she was certain everyone could hear it. It was like when eating a biscuit- you heard yourself munching so loud that people around you did too. She'd have some biscuits too if she lived through this.

The door suddenly burst open, and three men, clad in the black attire she knew was the sect's uniform, entered, weapons drawn.

Everything was motion all of a sudden.

Felicity gaped as the three dressed men fought a shirtless Oliver simultaneously, with weapons while he was unarmed, and yet could not get the upper hand.

He turned smoothly and blocked two men with his hands while kicking the third one hard in the knee, making him fall to the floor, then, in a pure display of strength that left her stunned in the little light, he brought the two men in front of him together quickly, making them collide into each other head first, like rag dolls, bashing their faces together. The time it took for them to orient themselves, he was on top of the third guy, doing a move stunt artists would pay to learn, maneuvering the downed man's neck with his muscular thighs and flipping over before the man even had a chance to react.

Felicity heard the man's neck snap in the flip and saw his body slump back to the floor while Oliver took on the other two, disarming them and hitting one over the head with his elbow, making him unconscious, and gripping the other by the neck with one powerful arm, the slightest trace of tenderness she knew he was capable of wiped from him.

Seeing him fight in light, seeing his skill, his strength, unleashed in such a way, his words from days ago came back to her.

"*I am their best, Felicity. None of them could better me when I fought for them and they sure as hell cannot when I'm fighting for you.*"

He had just taken out three armed men without a stitch on his torso, without even letting them get within ten feet of her.

Felicity gulped, her heart racing just as the window shattered and two more assassins entered the room, making her jump in surprise.

One of them headed to engage Oliver while the other came at her, his steps quick and sure and Felicity, in her panic, did the only thing she could think of. She picked up the lamp from the bedside table and chugged it right at his head, seeing the glass shatter and fall on the bed as the assassin halted in his tracks before coming at her again.

Getting down from the bed swiftly, she picked up the bedside table and threw it at him, and heard his little grunt of pain but he still kept coming.
What the hell did they feed these guys?

Frightened and frustrated at the man's inability to drop to the ground, Felicity eyed one of the glass pieces from the window and quickly picked it up, ready to do some damage if the need be. But the man suddenly stopped, swerving to his right and joining the fight with the other assassin and Oliver, leaving Felicity standing beside the bed with the glass cutting into her palm, her heart hammering like it never had before.

Oliver hit one of them in the neck with his elbow, dropping him and engaged with the one who had been after her swiftly.

"Return, and we shall let her live, Al Sah-him," the assassin spoke while trying to jab at Oliver with a wicked looking sword, his voice muffled from behind the mask.

Oliver did not respond, just snapped his wrist, disarming him, and pushed him to the wall, twisting this arms behind him.

Oliver spoke then, his voice low and so lethal, it made a shiver travel down her spine.

"Tell him to leave us alone or I will bring the war to him and burn him to the ground."

Felicity took a few steps closer to him, standing behind him at arm's length as he loosened his hold and the assassin ran out the door.

She saw Oliver breathing heavily, his back moving as he inhaled deeply and exhaled.

About to take another step, she stopped when she saw him tense again, and before she knew it, he had her by the throat and against the wall, his fingers wrapped tightly around her neck, ready to squeeze life out of her in a second.

The piece of glass dropped from her hand as she gasped for air, clawing at his arm, her eyes watering at the lack of air in her lungs, and she flapped against him frantically, trying to get him to loosen his hold. She saw his eyes, his pupils dilated, the look in them so cold and brutal it made her heart stop for a second as she choked, his one arm pinning her to the wall on her toes.

She saw the realization dawn upon him then, saw his eyes widening as he took her in, saw the panic in them just as he pulled back his hand as though seared by her skin and she collapsed against the wall, heaving in gulps of air as he took a few steps back, the expression on his face horrified.

Felicity touched the skin at her neck where she could feel the blood rushing, and knew his fingers would leave marks for a while. Looking at him, trying to get her breathing under control, she saw him retreat back slowly just as she felt something warm, wet on her neck and looked at her hand, seeing the deep cut the glass had left on her palm, feeling the twinge of pain as her body cooled down from the adrenaline and the rush.

"Oliver," she spoke softly, seeing the way he was creating distance between them, withdrawing into his own mind, knowing she had to stop it before he damaged whatever intimacy they had achieved.

His jaw clenched upon hearing her voice, and he straightened, his eyes shuttering completely, keeping her out and keeping himself in.

Felicity watched carefully as he went to the bathroom and returned with a first-aid kit, taking her hand silently and making quick work of cleaning and wrapping it, impersonally, like she was just another person with just another wound.
She waited for him to speak, to take his time, to glance up at her, but he finished with her hand and
turned away, picking up the t-shirt they had thrown away last night in passion, and shrugged it on.

Last night.

It seemed so far away now as she watched him lay her clothes out on the bed, wordlessly telling her
to get dressed while he got to binding the unconscious bodies.

Swallowing, her throat hurting from the movement, she picked up her clothes and got dressed.

He was being absolutely, idiotically ridiculous!

They had left the cottage as soon as she had been dressed, and gotten in the car. He had driven them
to yet another apartment in the city, and escorted her up without a word. Felicity had assumed it was
another one of his contingencies and tried asking him. He hadn't responded.

That had been the theme of the entire day. And it had hurt. Not the wound. His behavior.

"Look at me," she had whispered softly at one point. He hadn't.

She had tried firm. He hadn't.

She had almost shouted. He still hadn't.

And now she was pissed.

He had retreated into himself, going mute on her like he had been in the beginning, except then he
had always looked at her at least. The only way she knew he was even aware of her existence was
because he just was. But he was brooding in his head and she knew she had to snap him out of it
before he did something stupid. More stupid.

He had attacked her under the false assumption that she had been one of the assassins. Okay. It
sucked. But he hadn't done her any major harm and she got it.

He didn't apparently, and so he had ignored her the entire day. She had tried distracting herself with
work on her tablet, dropped texts to Digg and her mom, telling them she was out of town on a
business trip, and basically given him a lot of space to process.

His time was up now.

Felicity looked out the window of the diner they were sitting in, her mind racing with ideas to get
him to step out of the angst hole he had dug for himself. It was not raining for a change but it was a
moonless, dark sky, the street outside littered with a few streetlights, bathing the almost empty streets
in a soft glow. Suited the mood. Turning back, she let her eyes rest upon him as he devoured his
burger and fries with devotion, not looking up towards her at all, and she sighed, picking at her own
fries.

"How long are you planning to behave like this?" she asked, just off chance he decided to grace her
ears with his voice.

No reply.
Alright, then. Screw him.

She got up from her seat and slid out, heading towards the back exit, needing to get away from him before she smashed his face with food.

She heard a guy at a passing table wolf whistle at her and ignored him. Just as she passed it though, the guy, in his late thirties by the looks of him, blocked her path.

"Where are you heading off to, sweetie?" he asked in a sickening sweet voice.

Creep.

"Get out of my way," Felicity warned in her loud voice, her anger brimming inside her.

"Now, don't be like that," the man spoke and before she could reply, she saw him gulp and knew, just knew Oliver was behind her.

She grit her teeth.

The guy nodded to a spot behind her. "He boyfriend of yours?"

Felicity tightened her jaw, and looked the man up and down.

"Nope, he isn't," she spit out, leaving through the back exit.

The anger was bubbling inside her as she exited into the back alley, breathing in the cool, crisp night air, trying to calm herself down, knowing he would follow her out if she was correct.

She was. She heard the door open again and heard him come out behind her, his presence evident to every fiber in her body.

"I am not your boyfriend?"

Seriously? That was what he decided to break his silence with? Seriously?

Felicity pivoted on her heels, glaring at him, giving him a taste of his own medicine, and did not utter a word.

She saw his eyes narrow on hers as he came forward, stepping right into her personal space, his eyes blazing, the shuttered look he had tended the entire day completely gone.

"Tell me, Felicity."

Her anger bubbled and she looked away from him, towards the random brick on the left, and pursed her lips together. The tension coiled thickly between them, stretching the coil inside her taut, ready to snap any second.

She felt his hand come up to her jaw and turn her face to his, making her look at him.

"What happened to the man who came after me when I ran away?" she demanded angrily. "Tell me, Oliver. What happened that was so drastic that you have behaved like a complete ass the whole day?"

"That man almost got your blood on his hands," he replied quietly, his eyes pained and went silent.
And she snapped.

She pushed at his chest forcefully, turning away from him and saw the momentary surprise on his face right before his arm shot out and he pinned her against the back wall of the diner.

"You don't get to drag me into you and push me away when it suits you," she spoke loudly, pushing at him. "You told me I am not a toy. Then stop fucking playing with me!"

"You think I am playing with you?" he spoke in a hard voice. "Playing with you would not make me feel as miserable as I do, you wildcat."

"Screw you, Oliver," she spit out, her veins flooded with red, her eyes seeing red.

"Be careful what you wish for."

Disbelieving at his behavior, especially after the day she had had, she punched at his chest, shoving at him. He didn't budge an inch. She shoved again. Nada.

Crying in frustration, she hit his hard chest over and over again, and he didn't move, letting her vent it out as his arms caged her against the wall.

"You ass," she spit out, mad at him, so enraged because of the power he had over her emotions, so enraged because he didn't even know it.

He took a step closer at her curse, his own chest heaving and took a hold of her wrists in one hand, effortlessly pinning them over her head, trapping her completely against his body.

Narrowing her eyes, her breasts pressing into his chest with every inhale, she glared at him, ignoring how his touch on her was firm but not forceful.

His eyes roving her face, his free hand holding her ribs, he muttered quietly. "You burn me with your fire, Felicity."

Yeah, well, he burned her too.

But standing there, completely in his hold, she suddenly realized how well this was for him to understand and get over whatever hangups he had had this morning. Determined now, she struggled against his hold, testing him, seeing how far he would go.

His grip tightened a little on both her hands and on her ribs but she kept it up, keeping their eyes locked together in a battle of wills, the duel firing her blood to impossible levels.

"Why don't you stop me, Oliver?" she needled him, keeping her tone deliberately light. "We both know you can in a second."

She felt him still completely at her words, his gaze intense on hers, as he growled her name in warning. "Felicity."

Blatantly ignoring it, she smirked. "Am I wrong? I am pinned against a wall, after all. Totally at your mercy, right?"

He kept her pinned, his breathing heavy, his eyes scorching in their intensity.

"So," she struggled harder, "why don't you stop me? Why not use all that strength? Why not crush
"me like a little bug?"

"Felicity." Another low warning.

"That's what you have been thinking all day, right?" she prodded him even more, pushing him, getting him to react. "How you almost crushed my windpipe? Almost killed me? How your hand almost..."

Her words were suddenly lost against his mouth, trapped between them in his bruising kiss that pressed her head into the wall, his hand holding her wrists above her head, the other on her ribs mauling her breast in his huge palm.

Felicity raised one leg to wrap around his hips, tugging him closer to her as he opened her mouth with his tongue, demanding, claiming, his tongue clashing with hers as he ground their hips together, the hand on her breast settling under her butt to hike her up. She took the hint and wrapped both her legs around him, letting him support her weight with one hand while he kissed her mouth in punishment for pushing him, sucking on her tongue before melding it with his, her heart thrumming at the way he tilted his head to kiss her deeper, her pulse throbbing because frack he was hot like this. Very hot.

The hand holding her wrist traveled down over her arms, making her skin tingle with goosebumps and sent a shiver right to her molten core, the hand settling over her neck in a gentle hold, his thumb caressing the skin she knew was marked there by his very fingers.

The kiss lost the urgency, his lips pulling back as he kissed her softly, once, twice, before letting them travel down her chin, his eyes looking at his own fingers around her neck.

Her heart beat wildly as she tilted her head back, her body humming with pleasure and anticipation, her mind racing to see what he would do, whether her pushing him had worked at all.

He stayed that way for long moments, supporting her with a hand under her butt and one around her neck, just looking at the spot, not moving, not even breathing it seemed.

Then she felt it. His lips, ghosting over her neck, and relief washed over her, making her close her eyes and a smile take over her swollen lips.

"I'm so sorry," he muttered into her skin, kissing the finger marks again and again, almost as if he could heal them like this, his voice pained and soft and beseeching.

"I'm sorry," he murmured again, his lips brushing her neck making her skin tingle and her heart melt.

"So sorry. I'm so sorry," he repeated, over and over, interspersing each word with a kiss and Felicity inhaled deeply, tugging his head up with her hands.

Their gazes locked for long moments, the air between them heavy with words he had trouble finding and words she had trouble speaking, his blue eyes so earnest in his apology, so genuine, she melted all over again, pulling his face back to hers, letting her lips accept his apology against his, letting him know they were alright by slanting her mouth over his, their kiss not going deep but just remaining, soft, intense, together.

She knew they would have to talk later. She knew they couldn't keep running from place to place for long. She knew they had a lot of issues to work over.
But right there, in that dark alley, in that moment, against the wall in his arms, their lips slowly getting hungrier, mouths opening and closing over the others, sharing breaths and stoking the fire between them as he held her closer and she pulled him tighter, she knew, unlike this morning, that they would be okay.

And that was the most important thing for now.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Hey everyone!

Here is the next chapter. Slight smut so you're warned. Enjoy!

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts! I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

Digg was getting suspicious.

Felicity could feel the suspicion flowing through the phone, in that one "hmm" of his- that "hmm" which basically meant, as Felicity had learned, 'I can smell something fishy but I am not going to tell you I can, only indicate so you get nervous and tell me.' It was reverse psychology at its best and she didn't know how Sara was ever going to get away from that "hmm" of her father.

Right then though, as Felicity sat back on the comfortable bad, with Oliver's head burrowed in her stomach and planting soft kisses over her ribs, so soft they were tickling her, she swallowed and shoved his head away, giving him a glare and silently telling him to get his mouth and his irresistible face away from her. His lips twitched at her fierce expression and he raised his hands in surrender, getting down from the bed and heading towards the shower, whipping his t-shirt over his head on the way.

Felicity's throat dried as she looked at his back, not surprised by the scars or the muscles, but fascinated by them and she tucked her feet under her, pushing her glasses up her nose.

"So, how long are you staying away on this business trip?"

John Diggle was nobody's fool, certainly not a pathetic liar's, like her.

"A few more days," she said, trying to make her voice sweeter, and apparently overdoing it because Oliver paused mid-step, turning to give her a dry look with raised eyebrows.

"Look," the silence on the other end made her antsy, and she started speaking, tired of the lies. "I'm not out on a business trip, okay?"

"Didn't think you were," she heard Digg's dry tone and sighed. What was it with men and dryness?

She gulped. "I've been sort of seeing someone for the last month," she began, feeling like a ten year old telling her big brother she had kissed a guy. "And we are keeping it private."

"Is he married?"

Felicity narrowed her eyes at the question. "No. He happens to be very much a bachelor. And I am not giving you any details."
"Trust me, I don't want any except his name."

And that she couldn't give. Pinching her nose, she spoke. "We are taking some time to figure some things out. This is a trip for us. So, I don't want you to get worried okay?"

Digg stayed silent, and then she heard him sigh, his warm voice coming through. "Just stay careful, alright? I'm just a call away."

Her heart melted, and she knew she would have taken a Digg hug right then had he been there. She smiled. "I know. I'll be back in a few days."

"Have fun," the smirk in his voice made her flush as the call cut, her eyes lingering over the muscles a few feet from her. Oh, she was so ready to have fun. So much fun, in so many ways. Her brain had never been as in the gutter as it had been the last week, ever since that hot argument outside the diner, when he had shut her up with that kiss and got her back to the apartment.

The apartment. It was different from the previous one although it was kind of sterile too. The living room was small, with just a small couch and television, done in cream and brown overtones, and it parted into a corridor, that led to the kitchen on one end and the spacious bedroom that they were occupying at the moment.

Felicity looked around the room, taking in the light beige curtains covering the windows that filtered sunlight during the day and darkness during the night, taking in the cream walls and the brown, wooden furniture. This was in no way a cheap rental, but Felicity never asked him about his financials except for that one time, and he never mentioned it. But the way they were living, the way he had contingencies in different places, Felicity knew they weren't cheap, which implied that he had money. Blood money.

That was one thing that still made her heart still.

She had seen him kill, seen the way he killed, seen the precision, the skill, the decisiveness. She had seen his eyes when he killed, cold, vacant, brutal. He had been brought up to be a killer, nurtured in blood and metal and earth, molded by cuts and bruises and scars.

All of it, sometimes when she thought about it, overwhelmed her. And then she remembered the other things she had seen.

She had seen the way he had panicked just at the thought of hurting her, seen the way he had withdrawn into himself when he had, seen the remorse in his eyes that were haunted by demons she would probably never understand, seen the softness, the gentleness, with which he looked at her everyday.

Over the last week, she had seen something else too, something she hadn't even known he had hidden in his arsenal- his smile.

He had smiled more in the last week, with soft twitches of his lips and wide grins that showed his even teeth, than he had in the entire time she had known him. His smiles, at first, had been a little hesitant, as though he had feared that putting them out in the world would invite something bad, and Felicity's heart had ached every time at his tentativeness. But she had smiled back at him, every single time, and slowly, like a new colt taking it's first tottering steps, he had returned it, from deep, deep inside, his blue eyes glinting and beautiful, so beautiful they had made her breath catch.

Felicity had also discovered that he had very unfair dimples on his cheeks when he smiled, dimples she loved poking because it made him truly grin. He had chuckled and laughed and snorted at her,
with her, over trivial things that shouldn't be funny but were, and she had discovered how unsophisticated, how raw his laughter was, and how much she loved the sound of that pure joy deep from his gut.

Yes, they were on the run. Yes, they were hiding. Yes, they were taking things slow with each other and fighting and making up.

But every time she saw that one curve of his lips, that light in his eyes, for that one thing, it all seemed worth it. After so many years of pain, he deserved that happiness.

He especially loved smiling against her skin, and she loved feeling that curve of his lips, mostly when they lay in bed together at night. Apparently, she had discovered to both her amusement and arousal, that he was one man who enjoyed cuddling, relished it even, without the goodies.

For the last week, she had witnessed it in detail. His body clock had him waking up way before dawn but he never left the bed, never left her alone. She always woke up pressed against him, his legs entwined with hers, his hand softly tracing her face if she faced him, or tracing her shoulders if she didn't. She had never thought she'd be the type to crave a man's touch, not in a sexual way, like she did his, but the fact was that after one week of waking up with his breath on her skin and his rough, dangerous hands holding her gently, his body curved around her, almost like a shield from anything except him, she needed that touch, the flutter of her stomach the moment sleep left her, making her realize she was with him.

Everyday, they got up after that and freshened up, and then had breakfast, which he cooked. He was a surprisingly good cook, and feeding her made him very happy for some reason. When she had asked him about it once, he had just shrugged, flipping the eggs in the kitchen while she had sat on the island, her legs high above the floor, dangling.

"I've never cooked for anybody. Seeing you eat something I made..." and he had shrugged again, melting Felicity's heart and she had turned him, kissing his cheek to his surprise and had told him that she loved it when he cooked. He had smiled, a shy smile she had never seen on his face, and had gotten back to the eggs. That smile hadn't left his face for a long time.

The routine between them had come just as effortlessly. Felicity usually got her tablet and worked on a few projects, even though she had a hefty nest egg to sustain both of them until this all went away. But working gave her a sense of normalcy, of doing something, and what she really appreciated was how he never bothered her when she worked, just went and worked out and sharpened his weapons and what not. For those few hours, they did their own things, completely with each other in amicable silence. The rest of the day usually went by interspersed with kisses and movies and talking. A lot of talking.

When they had returned that night from the diner a week ago, she had told him clearly that they would have to talk things through. And he had agreed.

He had talked a lot since then, sometimes taking his time to something, sometimes just coming outright with it. But he had told her things. He had told her never to approach him again if he had just fought, never to come near him from the back if he had any weapon in his hands, and never to touch him if he had a nightmare. He had explained things the best he could, and with every word, Felicity had realized just how truly deep his scars lay.

She had pulled him to bed that night a week ago, pulled his head to her chest as he had wrapped himself around her, kissing the bruise marks on her neck again, and they had slept like that.

Being with him like that, for reasons, had felt more, much more, intimate that sex.
Not that she had remotely forgotten about that. Nuh-uh. Her brain was very much wired to her groin.

He might be a damaged assassin but he was one hot damaged assassin and all those muscles, right within reach but still not, always did things to her. There had been a few more explosive orgasms for her in the week, but never more than that.

Felicity sat on the bed, putting the phone aside, looking at him as he stared back at her expectantly, waiting for her to explain. She had told him in detail about Digg and his family, about precious baby Sara and how she was her godmother, explained how much it meant to her. He had looked at her that day, and told her he was glad that she had people she loved and who loved her, and he would never want to get between them in anyway. Felicity had just hugged him and smacked him once on the head, rolling her eyes and changing the subject.

But she had called Digg tonight and basically told him she was dating someone and it was serious because she was on a trip and Oliver was waiting for her to explain.

She looked at the abs, licking her lips and heard his low growl, in warning.

"You do know that excuse won't hold either of us much longer, right?" she asked shamelessly, crossing her arms across her breasts, seeing his eyes flit to them for a split second before coming back to hers. "As long as you keep flaunting those glorious muscles in my face, you are going to get some, mister."

He shook his head on a deep, regretful sigh and went inside the bathroom, shutting the door but not locking it.

Felicity sat quietly, thinking.

Another thing she had realized about him made her chest tight every time she thought of it. Oliver never initiated physical intimacy unless she provoked him. No matter what, he held himself back, held himself under control, and Felicity knew it was not because he didn't want her- he did. It was that small twinge of fear she saw in his gaze sometimes, fear that he would initiate something and she would reject him, fear of what that rejection would do to him. For all his strength and control, this small fragile part of him, the part that was so vulnerable to her made her heart ache, because she knew that every time she initiated a touch, he knew he would never refuse her, and so there was no fear he had to face then.

He feared she would reject him, even after a week of absolute trust in him, and staring at the closed door, letting her mind run over the last week, the last month, every memory of every touch and kiss and caress, Felicity nodded to herself, coming to a decision.

She was ready.

She got down from the bed, pulling her shirt over her head and tossing it aside and pulling her shorts down, her heart pounding because even though she was going to initiate this, a part of her stayed vulnerable too, wondering if he would not accept her advances as she stood in her underwear, biting her lips.

Shaking the depressing thoughts away, she straightened her spine and marched forward, focused on him. Felicity Smoak had never been a wilting flower and she'd be damned if she started now. She wanted him, knew he wanted her more than anything, and she was going to get him.

Reassured by her own mind, she pushed open the door and entered the bathroom, locking it behind
her, seeing his naked body from the back in the shower, the water cascading down over hard sinews of muscles, his scars extending below the burns on his waist, over his tight butt and thick thighs. A shiver ran down her body as she unsnapped her bra, dropping it to the floor, just as he stiffened and turned towards the door, his eyes coming to her half naked body, his eyes widening and heating even as he clenched his jaw. Felicity kept her eyes on him, her own insecurities pushed to the back of her mind when faced with his, and shimmied out of her panties, finally standing there completely naked for his eyes.

His gaze, darkened, hungry, roamed her body in a slow perusal, from the tips of her toes to up her thighs to her core where she could feel herself getting wetter by the second to her navel to her heaving breasts and hardened nipples to finally, her own eyes. Their gazes locked, electricity singing between them as water pelted over his skin and cool air wafted over hers, the lights in the bathroom low and muted, casting shadows over their bodies that somehow added an eroticism to the moment she hadn't felt before.

Taking in the hunger in his eyes, in the way he held his tensed muscles, in the rapidly hardening erection he was not hiding from her curious gaze at all, Felicity felt an odd kind of feminine power flush her blood, flush her system with the realization that this virile, gorgeous man wanted her and was affected by her and he was honest about it. Heady with that sensation, along with the small coil that started winding low in her belly at the way his eyes devoured her, Felicity sauntered forward, adding an extra sway to her hips, initiating a seduction that was going to culminate in one way or another tonight.

She entered the stall, closing the curtains, assailed by the sudden sensation of having hot water wash over her and his big, broad body right in front of her, enclosed in the small bubble she had created just for them.

He didn't say a word, didn't have to, his eyes speaking everything, his conflict, his desire, his affection for her.

Keeping her eyes on his, Felicity slowly extended her small hands, letting them brush over the tight line of his abs, feeling the muscles tighten beneath her fingers, wet and slippery from the water. She slowly traced the scar on the right of his abdomen, a long scar she didn't know the story of, and let her hands wander over the warm, solid expanse on muscles, muscles he had earned surviving every day, making them even more beautiful to her, making his body a temple of strength that she admired so much in him. She leaned forward, placing a soft kiss right above his heart, then another, feeling his chest stop mid inhale at her gesture as she slowly kissed his pecs, leaving open mouthed kisses on the skin stretched taut over the muscles, her hands exploring his torso, slowly going below his waist.

He stood completely still, his eyes blazing as he just watched her and Felicity smiled a bit at his rigid control, wrapping her fingers around his hot, thick length, hard and proud just as she flicked her tongue over his nipples, raking her teeth slightly over them, her hand feeling the weight of his erection in her palm, just the thought of having him inside her someday making her heart pound and her knees shake slightly.

"Felicity," he ground out in a tight voice, looking at her with a muscle in his jaw ticking and she raised herself on her toes, kissing the muscle, feeling it relax under her lips, his skin warm under her tongue and his stubble rasping over it.

"Oliver," she whispered, looking deep into his eyes, seeing the way his pupils had dilated, and she gave him a squeeze, feeling a wisp of air leave his lungs.

She didn't move any closer, neither did he, as water cascaded over both of them, the warm temperature spiking their arousal even higher, his breathing getting heavier as he kept looking at her.
Her hands worked over him, tentatively at first, then with boldness, gripping him in her palm as she pumped him in that grip, her thumb swiping over the head of his erection that got even harder in her hand, the vein running right under it feeling soft and contrasting so much with the taut skin. She brought her other hand down, cupping his balls and saw his breath stutter and eyes flicker close for one second as pleasure washed over him. Seeing that pleasure on his face, feeling that pleasure in her hands wound her up even tighter, her veins on fire in her body and her senses acutely aware of him, of the smell of soap he had washed off and his own musky scent, mingling with the smell of her own arousal.

She alternately tightened and loosened her grip on his erection, her thumb rubbing the head on each upward motion, her other hand caressing the base. The muscles in her hands started twinging in discomfort from the repeated motion but she ignored it, taking his face in as, finally, his eyes closed, his own huge hand wrapping around hers and increasing the pace as he surrendered himself to the pleasure, stroking himself through her fingers harder, faster, the mad pace and small noises coming from his chest driving her higher and higher, so high that the ache in her breasts and the throb in her core became acute, in need of relief, but she kept her mind and senses on him, doing this for him.

He suddenly pushed her back against the shower wall, his hand never leaving hers as she continued stroking him at a mad pace. His mouth came down on hers, his tongue spearing her lips before she could even gasp, brushing their tongues together in a heated, passionate caress that made her groin clench emptily, her free hand coming to support her weight and anchor herself to his bicep as he slanted his mouth harder over hers, the speed of his movements over her hand quick and brutal.

His other hand cupped the juncture of her thighs her boldly and her legs spread of their own accord, seeking relief from the ache that had taken over her body, humming in her blood and throbbing right where his hand was. He plunged his fingers up inside her without warning as she arched on her toes, a loud moan ripping from her chest but drowned against his tongue, their hands moving together on his hot length and his fingers penetrating her needy walls.

Mewling noises escaped her throat as she hooked a leg over his waist, opening herself up even more and he rewarded her with a nip on her lips right before meshing their mouths together again, his fingers pumping inside her in the exact same pace their hands were pumping his erection. Molten heat radiated out from right behind her small nub of nerves, spreading out fire over her body as her fingers instinctively tightened both on his hand and his hot, hard length, her heart beating erratically and hammering as blood rushed through every part of her wanton body, her walls clenching and squeezing around his rapid fingers, his palm pressing on her clit and shooting electricity down her spine, making her whimper as his hips bucked into her hand.

Their movements were so carnal, so raw, their tongues sloppy and bodies mad in the heat, that Felicity slowly felt her orgasm build up, felt the cool tiles of the wall behind her back and the his hot muscles at her front, the contrast driving her crazier as he pulled his mouth back, his eyes so feral it made a shiver go through her core, their gazes locked in the knowledge of what their hands were doing to each other, making this more intimate yet more crude somehow.

"Come with me, Felicity," he uttered savagely against her lips, his fingers never stopping, curling on every single plunge as he head tilted back and his hips bucked into her hand.

"Don't stop. Oliver. Yes, yes, yes..."

The crescendo started in her toes, slowly traveling up her body, the coil in her belly stretched taut like a rubber band, stretched to the breaking point, making her curl her leg over his wet thigh as water beat down on them sideways, making her nails dig into his solid bicep as her back bowed, her breasts pressing into him completely, and on a strangled scream, she felt the coil snap, her body
exploding into nothing but sensation, pandemonium of colors assaulting her closed eyelids as she felt her walls quiver and squeeze his fingers inside her, something warm hitting her stomach as his own garbled groan reached her ears and she felt his hand tighten on hers, his orgasm hitting hard as her hand pumped him completely, thoroughly.

She let go of him, gripping his hip with one hand and his bicep with the other, her lithe limbs sapped of energy to even stand as her knees bucked. His hand shot out to her hip, holding her upright while he breathed though his mouth, his other hand braced against the wall beside her head.

They both slowly cooled down, catching their breaths, still pressed against each other.

Felicity felt his hand on her hip move to the back of her head and tug, pulling her into his chest, his lips pressing into her hair, making her heart flutter, the gentleness of the gesture in complete contrast to the primitiveness of a moment ago. She pressed her cheek into the warm muscle, relishing the closeness.

They stood for long moments like that, not moving, letting the water wash away all the evidence of their heated orgasms, cleansing them.

Oliver pulled away after long minutes, shutting the water off and plucking the towel from the stand, drying her almost tenderly, before drying himself. He picked her up swiftly, making her yelp as he headed back into the bedroom, depositing her gently under the covers.

He sat beside her as she lay down, brushing her wet tendrils away from her face, his eyes soft on hers. "Why did you do that?"

Felicity blinked up languidly at him at his quiet words, her muscles in their happy place, and shrugged. "I never made a secret of the fact that I want you."

He shook his head. "Not that, Felicity. You could have asked me to take you against that wall and I would have in that moment. You know it. Why didn't you?"

Biting her lip, Felicity took his hand in hers, looking at his fingers, and spoke. "You told me it wasn't the time for going all the way and I trust you on that. But that doesn't mean you deny yourself any pleasure."

He just tilted his head, considering her. "Have you ever thought I did that not to tempt myself any further?"

She had. She shrugged again. "You can't tempt me and expect me to just twiddle my thumbs. I'd rather be twiddling you."

The corner of his mouth twitched at her phrasing and he shook his head in exasperation before climbing in beside her, pulling her back into his body like he did every night but for the first time, neither of them had a stitch of fabric on.

She felt his lips press into her neck, his arm wrapping around her waist, not an inch of space between them and she swallowed, knowing she had to get this out.

"Oliver?" she whispered softly and felt his answering kiss, right below her ear, her heart pounding.

"I came to you tonight and trust me, I enjoyed it," she began, taking a deep breath. "But the next time, you have to come to me."

She felt him still behind her and pushed the rest of the words out while she could. "Whenever you
want to, wherever you want to, next time, you will seek me out, you will find me, and you will initiate whatever you want to. And I will welcome you, Oliver. Never doubt that. I'll always welcome you."

Her breath stayed trapped in her throat as she waited for him to react, to do anything but he didn't.

Slowly, he just relaxed behind her, pressing another soft kiss into her neck, burrowing himself into her back, and Felicity smiled, getting all the answer she wanted, closing her eyes.

It was Digg's text.

She frowned at the screen of her phone, not understanding.

**Digg**: Something has happened. Need to meet ASAP. Don't call. Don't tell your boyfriend.

Felicity's eyes flickered to Oliver as he checked something on her tablet, then outside to the dark evening. She glanced at the words again, her mind racing with thoughts. Could it be possible that Oliver's whatever ex sect of ninjas had found her connection to Digg and attacked him? Lyla and he could handle himself but she had seen these guys move and seen how they didn't drop down even under flying objects hurled at their heads. Could they have hurt Sara? Forced them too? But why not go for her mother if they had to blackmail her? Was it because of the proximity?

Or was it something completely unrelated? Something like that security issue a year ago that she had to go to sort? Could it be that simple?

Taking a deep breath, she texted back.

**Felicity**: What's wrong?

An answering text came seconds later.

**Digg**: Can't tell over the phone. The security is down. Have to meet. For protection.

Her heart sank. No. Digg talking in such crisp terms meant it was serious. She bit her lip.

**Felicity**: Is everyone alright?
Digg: For now.

Felicity: Where do we meet?

Digg: The gas station near Wentworth Bridge. You know the place?

That was a few miles out of town.

Felicity: Yes.


Felicity replied with her assent and looked up at Oliver, her stomach churning. She knew she should not betray Digg's confidence by involving him but the fact was that she was not a stupid woman. She knew she had assassins after her head, she knew the nighttime in a deserted place was perfect for them to find her. But she also knew Oliver. She trusted him and though a part of her felt bad for betraying Digg by involving Oliver, her rational mind agreed with her decision. Taking Oliver with her would mean safety, not only for her but for Sara, and that was the priority.

Swallowing, she looked at him, her stress all over her face and called out his name, a small tremor in her voice. "Oliver."

He looked up immediately, his eyes alert and searching her face for whatever had distressed her, getting up from the chair and moving towards her.

She showed him the messages, seeing a frown mar his face as he looked at her, his own face conflicted.

"You are not going alone," he stated firmly, his voice brooking no arguments. She wasn't going to argue.

"That's why I told you or I wouldn't have. But Digg doesn't know you, except he knows you are my boyfriend. Not your name or anything at all. So, he obviously will not like the fact that you are there. That's why we can go together but I'll get down before we reach and walk and you can stay in cover, hidden from view and let me talk to Digg and sort..."

His hand touched her shoulder, quietening her. "I know how to hide, Felicity," he said in a dry tone, almost with an eye roll and Felicity nodded, getting up and quickly getting dressed. He just pulled on a hoodie over his jeans, but seeing the look on his face, she knew there were weapons under the fabric. And that knowledge, his presence, made her feel like the safest person on the planet.
Nodding, she took a deep breath and steady in his presence, she stepped out of the apartment, ready to face the night.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Hey everyone!

Here is the next chapter. :) 

Thank you so much for your incredible patience with me and the stories. You guys are the absolute best! Enjoy!

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts! I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

Sitting inside the car, with the darkness and trees cloaking them, Felicity felt her heart thrum wildly in her chest as she looked at the gas station a little ahead of them. It was completely empty and the lights from the station barely glanced off the road, let alone the small clearing Oliver had parked the car in. The moon was a thin crescent in the sky, hiding behind the thick, grey clouds one second and peeking out from behind them the next. The wind was chilly, not too cold, but enough to raise the small hairs at the nape of her neck.

"I have a bad feeling about this," she muttered almost inaudibly, thinking out loud rather than actually verbalizing her thoughts. The vacant gas station was reminding her of the awful slasher movie she had seen a few months ago. It was the perfect setting to grab the girl and slash her.

"Do you want me to turn the car around?" she heard Oliver mutter almost as quietly.

Yes, she did. Badly. Every instinct inside her was screaming to get the dodge out of the place as soon as possible. But she remembered Digg's message. She owed it to him to stay and wait.

She shook her head, keeping her eyes on the eerie gas station.

Suddenly, she felt something press into her hand and looked down to see a burner phone. Looking up at him, Felicity blinked in confusion. "I'll be right there, Oliver."

"I don't care, Felicity," he spoke quietly, his profile tense, his voice hard. "I need you to keep the line on and keep it in your pocket. The second you think something's wrong, I don't care what it is, you tell me and I'll be there."

She gulped, looking at his shadowed face. "But I'll be with Digg. It'll be..."

"I don't care," his voice grit out. "You leave the car with the phone on or I'm turning around this second."

Slightly affronted at his one, she straightened, glaring at him as he returned her look coolly, completely undeterred. After a small clash of gazes, Felicity sighed, succumbing to his logic and her
own instinct.

Swallowing, her nerves fluttering crazily, her heart in her throat, Felicity took a deep breath and nodded to herself.

"Okay," she muttered more to herself than to him. "I can totally do this. I just have to go stand in the creepy gas station that looks like the set of a horror movie and wait for Digg and then talk to him. As soon as I do, I'm just going to run back out and I'll keep the phone on just in case something..."

His lips swallowed the rest of her nervous babble, his hands spearing into her hair, holding her head in place as he gave her a rough, heated kiss that she returned fervently, her own anxiety mingling with his tension, her heartbeat throbbing loudly in her ears as she clung to his wrists, keeping his hands in place and deepening the kiss. He pulled back way too quickly, enough to look at her with those intense, deep eyes, his gaze unwavering on hers.

"Nothing will happen to you. Trust me."

Felicity returned his look, his soft voice, his words making something inside her clench.

"I do," she spoke honestly, telling him honestly. She did trust him.

He dipped his head again, kissing her softly, once, twice, before pulling back and settling in. Felicity inhaled deeply, her nerves shaken, both from the kiss and from the unknown, and connected their phones, pushing it in her jacket pocket. She opened the car door, and got out without looking back, her legs shaking for some reason, and left the door open, unwilling to make any unwanted sound in the quiet night.

She made her way to the empty road before the station. It was deserted. She doubted there was even a functioning machine here, though how the lights were on she didn't know. Felicity walked with slow, measured steps towards a pillar, listening to the sounds of the night, small sounds of insects in the surrounding woods, small sounds of insects in the stream going under the decommissioned bridge, the sound of her own soft breathing and pounding heart. The hair on the back of her neck was prickling, small shivers running over her body as the wind picked up and thunder rumbled once in the sky.

The sudden vibration of her actual phone startled her and a small shriek of surprise left her before she could stop it. It was a good thing they didn't recruit her to be a ninja. Putting a hand on her thundering heart, she pulled out her phone from her jeans pocket and saw Digg's face on the screen. Exhaling in relief, she quickly answered.

"Where are you?" she whispered into the phone for some reason, not wanting to be loud. Which was weird considering she was carrying a neon bulls-eye standing in the light in the completely dark, abandoned area.

"Felicity, are you okay?"

Digg's concerned voice gave her pause.

"What's going on, Digg?" she asked quietly, her voice trembling as her hand shook, and she closed her eyes, reminding herself that she wasn't alone. Oliver was watching her. She was safe.

"Who the hell are you seeing, Felicity?" Digg demanded loudly. "Who is this guy? I get a message telling me this guy is a hired gun and you're on the run with him?"

Felicity's heart sank as she stood frozen to the spot. She swallowed. She couldn't tell Digg, not like
this. He wouldn't understand. And Oliver couldn't be put on spot right now.

"Wow. I might have to borrow that one," she forced a laugh. "Sounds way more exciting."

Digg sighed. "At least tell me his name."

She couldn't. And realization that Digg was alright dawned upon her the same instant she realized this was a trap.

"Digg, I have to go right now."

"But Felicity, that guy..."

"Is someone who'd do anything for me," Felicity stated with absolute certainty. "You have to trust me on this one, Digg. I promise I'll let you meet him when we get back but don't worry about me and don't listen to random people. He is dangerous to anyone who tries to hurt me, just like you are. No more." A lot more, but she didn't add that.

She heard Digg sigh and started moving back towards the woods where the car was as Digg assented and made her promise to take care of herself. Felicity quickly cut the call and pulled out the other phone, now running towards the car, her antennas on high alert, feeling multiple eyes watching her. She was so screwed.

"Oliver," she panted into the phone as she ran.

There was no response. What?

"Oliver," she spoke, frantic. He wouldn't have left his phone, not when he had demanded she take hers with her. He wouldn't have, but for some reason, he had. Her mind started racing with reasons, scenarios, and she felt the burn in her calves as she pushed herself even more and ran towards the small clearing.

She finally emerged from the small bushes and saw the car exactly where it had been.

Suddenly, she felt that prickle of unease again. The car was too silent, too vacant and she had seen enough movies to know someone could be in the backseat. Shoving the phone back in the pocket, the line still open, Felicity ducked down, picked up a sharp stone, and cautiously made her way towards the passenger side of the car. With shaky hands, her breath stuck in her throat, she pulled the door open and looked in, seeing nothing out of place.

Where the hell was Oliver?

Her hand tightened on the stone, adrenaline surging through her system as her mind pieced everything together. Someone had clearly hacked Digg's phone to send her those messages and they had called her here alone for an ambush. But where was the ambush? She had run to the gas station and back and no men in black had come out trying to slash her. A man in black should have been in the car waiting for her at least. But nothing. Either these guys had totally forgotten how to lay a trap or they had laid it too well. Could it be possible that they had been here to kidnap Oliver, because they wanted him back, and she had been a mere diversion to get him out in the open? They all were aware of his obsession with her (and they called it obsession), so was it possible that she had been used to draw him out? Where else was he? He wouldn't leave the car unless she had been attacked and she hadn't been.
Unsure of what to do, whether to stay in the car or venture out, Felicity sat frozen. This was completely unknown territory. Field work had never been her strong suit. She had hated physical even in high school because the problems her mind could sort in split seconds, her body took time to even understand. She had thrown ice-cream at an assassin in self defense, for goodness’ sake. What more proof was needed? The said assassin turned out to be a gem, that was just sheer good luck. Had it been someone else, anyone else, would she even have made it home alive that first night? Would she have been able to get out of Greg’s creepy hands and would she have been breathing to invite a stranger into her life?

Shaking away her thoughts, Felicity realized she wouldn’t have. Had it been anyone but Oliver, she would have been dead the moment that ice-cream had flown from her hand. She had seen these guys, seen the darkness in their eyes, the death around them. Oliver, even then, had not been a part of that sect. She doubted he ever had been. But she had seen him fight too, and what her brain did on computers, his body did in a fight. She had seen him take multiple men down without a weapon, without a shirt. Which was exactly why she refused to believe he wasn't alright.

Taking a deep breath, Felicity exited the car again, the stone gripped in her hand, and just stood outside for a second.

She felt someone behind her a second before her hair was gripped and a sword came right up to her neck, pressing against her throat.

Felicity closed her eyes, taking a deep breath, trying to calm her trembling and keep her mind straight. Time. She needed enough time to stall the man from killing her, enough so Oliver could come.

"You know," she began conversationally, her voice masking how totally freaked out she was, "killing me won't bring him back. You all seem to think that he will return to your sect if I am dead, but he won't. He has rejected that life."

"That life lives in him," the man behind her spoke neutrally, his voice muffled through the mask. Good, he was talking. "He has lost his true purpose for you are but a diversion. Once you are gone, he will follow the path he is meant to lead."

Felicity wanted to gulp, because she was having a conversation with an assassin with a sword at her throat, ready to cut her any time. It was an odd moment to discover she was still very normal like that.

"You're mistaken," she said in the same tone. "But for argument's sake, let's say what you are saying is true, then why are you still letting me talk. Not that I mind it, thank you very much. I like talking. A lot. Especially when I have a sword on my neck. Not that I have been in a lot of these situations. This is my first of sorts. But thank you, for letting me, you know, talk."

The man was silent for a few seconds, either surprised by her babble or debating his choice. She hoped it was the former.

"The only reason you are alive is because he needs to see you die before his very eyes, or he would never settle."

Where the hell did they manufacture their brains? These guys honestly believed that seeing her die would let him settle?

But that at least cleared up one scenario- wherever he was, these guys didn’t know about it, which meant he hadn't been abducted. Good. That was very good.
Felicity saw four more assassins, dressed in their uniforms, enter the clearing, weapons drawn. Okay. This was getting very, very out of her hand. Where was he?

"What are you guys going to do if he is not here?" Felicity asked, her heart sinking the longer Oliver didn't come.

"Take you to where he would come on his own," the man stated. "His home."

The compound where he had grown up. As curious as she had been about the location of the place, she absolutely did not want to go.

Before she could utter a word, a whoosh cut through the air quickly followed by another and Felicity saw, in stunned fascination, as two of the four assassins dropped to the ground, arrows embedded in their backs at the same spot. She looked up, but saw absolutely nothing in the darkness.

Lightening split the sky.

The sword on her throat tightened.

The rest of the two assassins fired back.

Another arrow whooshed from somewhere above, hitting one assassin right in the chest, downing him, rapidly followed by a succession of arrows at the other on, who dodged and cut them with his sword before they reached him until the speed of arrows became a faster blur than the speed of his hands. He slumped like a bag of flour on the ground and Felicity blinked up, baffled.

Was he in the trees? On the trees?

He jumped down from wherever he had been, landing smoothly on his feet, a quiver strapped to his chest and an arrow notched on his bow, straight, steady, ready to fire.

What was he going to do next? Wear loincloth? Me, Tarzan; You, Jane?

"She is mine."

Pretty close.

The sword pressed deeper and Felicity's eyes fluttered close as it pressed against her frantic pulse.

"You nip her skin, Shebah, and I shall make you beg for mercy."

Felicity's eyes opened at the lethal tone in his voice and a shiver traveled down her spine. No matter how many times she saw him like this, she could never believe he was the same man whose gentleness made her heart clench and tummy flutter every damn time.

Oliver's eyes didn't move to her, didn't even glance at her. He was focused completely on the man behind her holding the sword, his hand completely steady with the bow and arrow, his sweatshirt and jeans not undermining the danger inside him at all.

The sword pressed tighter and Felicity craned her neck to get as far away from it as possible, keeping her eyes on Oliver. His body was flesh and blood of tense lines, muscles hanging on the precipice of motion. The clouds rumbled their discomfort and started pouring, and Felicity didn't even breathe, the sword so close to cutting her now.

"You have a chance of walking away," Oliver spoke in that low dangerous tone. "Take it and leave. But harm her and I will take my time making you beg."
Felicity felt the man behind her still.

"I have made greater soldiers cry, Shebah. Remember that," Oliver continued and Felicity swallowed. So, Oliver was a master of torture too. She added it to her mental list of things he could do, which included recognizing assassins with their uniforms on. Seriously how did he do that?

Felicity could see it in his eyes. He would torture this Shebah character if he didn't let her go, and from the way the sword remained against her flesh, he wasn't going to. Felicity could see the intent in his eyes, could see his knuckles move as he took a breath, coiled like a panther, waiting, quiet, motionless, ready to strike, and in that split second, Felicity knew she couldn't let him do that. He had to kill people to keep them both alive and she still could understand that to a certain extent, but torture was just another level. He might have done it in his past but not anymore. She couldn't let him walk down that road again.

Remembering the sharp stone she still had in her palm, Felicity mustered up all her courage, completely drenched in the rain, mentally apologizing to Oliver because he was going to flip after this and she knew it, and suddenly went limp against the guy.

The assassin's hold on her wavered at her sudden weight and she took the opportunity to slam the stone on his nose, hearing the crack as she broke it and the blood that gushed out, falling on her neck. Nausea roiled in her stomach at the warm, wet liquid against her skin, someone else's blood, and she pushed at him, kicking him in the balls as he was momentarily blinded by the pain, stunned at herself, at what she had done to another person. The man picked up his sword with a loud cry, just as an arrow whooshed past her, embedding into his chest and Felicity jumped back, her heart hammering and mouth trembling.

She closed her eyes, leaning back against the car, holding her neck as the rain washed the blood away, her entire body trembling in the aftermath.

"Felicity?" she heard the panic in his voice and opened her eyes, just in time to see him come to a stop in front of her, his eyes glued to her neck as she held it, red seeping from under it with the water.

His wild eyes looked into hers as he wrenched her hand away, brushing her neck with his fingers, a slight tremor in his hands that confounded her. And then understanding dawned.

"It's not my blood," she reassured him softly as his hands rubbed the blood away, cleaning her wet neck, aided by the raindrops splattering on them.

He closed his eyes, leaning his forehead against hers, his hand on her neck and the other holding his bow, as he calmed his breathing down. Her heart clenched yet again, seeing his reaction, seeing the absolute panic in his eyes, hearing it in his voice, when he thought it had been her blood on her neck. She wrapped her arms around him, feeling the quiver at his back, and buried her face into his chest, listening to his heartbeat, letting the thump thump calm her own down.

After a few minutes, he pulled back, looking down at her with that look of his, that look. The one she still couldn't name but made her feel like she was the only person who existed in this world for him.

Wordlessly, he pulled the car door open, gesturing for her to enter and crossed to enter the driver's side himself. He threw the weapons in the back as she settled in and started the ignition, pulling out of the clearing and back onto the highway, the rain making visibility absolutely nil for her.

Felicity looked out the window, waiting for him to process and consequently explode and go all
alpha on her. He didn't say anything on the road, absolutely nothing, and she got tenser. Almost half
an hour later, he pulled in the apartment parking and got out, picking up the weapons and locking the
car, punching the buttons for the elevator as she waddled over to his side, alternately looking down at
her wet shoes and looking sideways at his clenched jaw.

Within five minutes they were in the apartment, doors and windows locked, and he stripped his
sweatshirt away in a jerking motion.

The explosion was coming. She didn't have to wait long.

"What were you thinking?"

Felicity stilled in the middle of toeing her shoes off and looked up at him. They stood in the
bedroom, almost at the opposite ends of it, and he was shirtless. Of course she noticed.

"I asked, what were you thinking?"

His rough tone made her ire rise as she narrowed her eyes on his before pushing the shoes away and
removing her jacket quietly.

She felt him stride up to her, stand beside her as he looked down intently, furiously. "Do you have
any idea," he growled roughly, "how little it would have taken to make you bleed to death? One little
vein. And I stood there, bargaining for your life, while you recklessly threw that at a stone?"

Flushing, Felicity looked up at him, at his blistering blue eyes, the anger in them so palpable she
could almost feel it. His hand came up to take a hold of her arm, shaking her a bit. "Do you have any
fucking idea how close you were? How dare you play with your life like that?"

That made her eyebrows rise up. "How dare I? How dare I! Excuse me!" she took a hold of his
wrist, pushing it, her tone loud. "I came running back into the car to imagine those guys had
kidnapped you and trying to think of a course of action because you were not on the phone like you
said you'd be, because you were busy pulling a Tarzan."

"A what?" he asked, frustrated and angry. Of course he didn't know who Tarzan was. His ancestor.
The founder of his sect.

She stayed silent as he clenched his jaw. "I was looking for higher ground for attack because I
realized we'd been ambushed and I wanted the upper hand. It was the only way to protect you."

"And what I did was the only way to protect you!"

Felicity felt his grip loosen at her outburst, confusion marring his brow. The confusion made her sad.

"You were ready to torture him," she spoke slowly, putting both her hands on his warm chest,
gazing up at him.

"No one hurts you," he stated softly.

Felicity smiled slightly. Tarzan. "But you told me you're not that man anymore, remember? I couldn't
let you be."

He stared at her with a piercing intensity for long minutes, without blinking, just looked, before
pressing his lips to her head, in the way he did, in the way no one had done, and pulled her into his
arms, wet clothes be damned. She hugged him back, feeling his lips press into her hair over and over
again, slowly, his heart beating a steady staccato under her ears, his musky scent enveloping her as
her own heart steadied.

"That guy said something that stuck with me," she murmured into his skin, not wanting to keep it from him.

She felt his chuckle rumble in his chest as his voice washed over her. "I heard you talking. I think I should be grateful I'm the only one you use innuendos with."

Felicity slapped his back as he chuckled again, smiling, before he asked. "What's bothering you?"

Not 'what did he say' or 'what stuck with you'. He constantly surprised her by how well he knew her.

"He said that if you saw me die, you'd be settled. I didn't understand how," she murmured again, into his skin.

He kept his arms around her, holding her. "He meant that unless I witnessed it with my own eyes, I would never stop looking."

Felicity swallowed, pulling her head back, looking up into his eyes. "And if you did?"

"I wouldn't," he whispered slowly. "Because I will not let that happen."

Felicity looked into his eyes, biting her lips, thoughts arising within her. "Oliver, just in case, I need you to promise me you wouldn't go back. That you'd make a life for yourself. Settle down."

She suddenly felt his hands gripping her head, tilting her face up, looking down at her with a ferocious intensity on his face. "I am promising you this, Felicity. I am not going back. I'll make a life for myself. I'll settle down. With you. Only with you."

How the hell did a girl even breathe after that? Her breath hitched as she pushed up on her toes, pressing a soft kiss to his lips before pulling back.

He pressed another burning kiss to her forehead.

"We can't keep running," she blurted out.

"We can't," he agreed.

"So what do we do?" Felicity asked.

Oliver pulled her wet shirt over her head, and kissed her lips, slowly, softly, not deepening it at all before tugging his head away.

"Oliver..."

He tilted her head, cupping her jaw, his eyes fierce on hers, the blue in them blazing with heat and so much more.

"Felicity, you need to understand this right now," he spoke, something in his voice so primal it made her shiver as their gazes remained locked. "The only thing that stopped me tonight was you. You are the only thing stopping me, Felicity."

She gulped as he continued.

"So they should pray and pray that you stay right here, because if you are not, there is not a single
thing left on this earth that will keep me from burning them all to the ground. With pain and blood and devastation. And when they all die, there is nothing stopping me from burning in that fire myself. So for now, we wait. And then we strike, because you are the only thing stopping me."

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think?

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

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Accepting

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!

Firstly, thank you so very much for the absolutely staggering response to the previous chapter. It surprised me so much and I am so grateful you all enjoyed it! Thank you! :)

Secondly, I couldn't update last week because Trailer Fever was running amok and I had succumbed to watching gifs on a loop. My brain had fried but here we are :) This chapter is important for a few reasons. You'll realize as you read. Enjoy!

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts! I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When Felicity had been 7 years old, her father had come into her room one night to tuck her into bed and had sat beside her, slowly pushing her natural dark hair away from her face. And then, like he had done every night of her young life, he had slowly traced the shell of her ear, murmuring a soft goodnight before pressing a kiss to her head. Felicity had grinned, toothless, at him. "Will you tuck me in bed every night till I get old?" she had asked curiously.

"Yes, munchkin," he had said.

"Even if I am bad?" she had blinked wide blue eyes up at him.

He had chuckled, ruffling her hair affectionately. "Even then. I'll always be with you."

He had left the house the next night, without coming to tuck her in. Felicity had jumped down from her bed and run to the window for some reason in her penguin printed pajamas, her long hair in a braid. She had raised herself on her tiny toes, clutching the windowsill with her tiny hands, her little fingers wrapping all around the metal bars and looked outside. It had been raining, so hard, and she had blinked at her father's retreating figure in that rain. He hadn't look back once, getting engulfed by darkness.

Felicity had stayed on her toes that night for hours, ignoring how her little feet had throbbed, just keeping her eyes vigilantly on the street, waiting for him to come home. She had fallen asleep on the floor, her little body exhausted after a few hours.

When she had woken up, by the sun on her face, she had gone out to the kitchen, because that had been where her father had always been in the mornings, reading the paper. She hadn't found anyone in the kitchen except a note her mother had left her. A note asking her to stay home, telling her that she'd be back soon.

Felicity had sat down in her chair, staring blankly at the closed door of the house, the note clutched
in her tiny fist, her eyes blinking tears away. She had cried then, remembering her father's back, rereading her mother's note. She had cried for a while, until she couldn't anymore, wishing for someone to hold her and tell her it would be okay. She started muttering to herself to keep company, to not feel as alone as she had been in the empty house. And then, she had muttered to herself to never cry over this again.

It had been five hours. And in those five hours, Felicity had changed. She had thought, while she had waited, that her mother had left her too, that she hadn't been good enough to either make her father stay, or her mother. For those five hours, Felicity had let her overactive mind run wild, and accepted certain things, certain truths, holding onto them because they had been all she could have held on to. Those things had slowly shaped her into who she had become, those five hours clear as bell in her memory, each and every one of those minutes stamped in her head.

The one major truth that she had ingrained inside herself as that young girl, a truth that she hadn't been able to shake even when her mother had returned with groceries and tears in her own eyes, a truth that had defined how her relationship with her mother had progressed from that moment on, had been something she had carried inside herself for years.

People left. Staying was not something people did, at least not on a permanent basis, and not with her.

It had been a hard pill to swallow but she had swallowed it and accepted it.

She didn't know why the memory of that day was so stark inside her head at the moment but it was. It had been since yesterday, if she were to be honest. She had felt that calm settle inside her a day ago, a calm that she had never felt before and a calm that she had a really, really bad feeling about. Something had gone off in her. And she didn't know why.

Felicity walked around the store, along the aisle, keeping her eyes on Oliver as he stood alert at the end of it, his hands shoved into the pockets of his jeans, a grey t-shirt stretched taut across his chest in a way that had drawn eyes from females of all generations, not that she could particularly blame them. Aloof as he stood, the hard lines of his body begged for attention so effortlessly it should have been a crime. And for the first time, Felicity felt disconnected from herself as she stared at him contemplatively.

It had been a week since the fiasco near the bridge, or as she liked to call it, the Psuedo Digg Ambush.

A week had gone by and honestly, Felicity was tired and frustrated. Tired because they had been in a limbo between offense and defense for a week, running for what seemed like years now, and it was taking a toll on her. She didn't mind living with him - he was surprisingly easy to live with (most of the times) - but she hated being cooped up with a sword hanging over her head. It was getting on her nerves, straining them taut, ready to snap at the drop of that sword.

She was frustrated because of something else entirely. It had been a week since she had gone to Oliver in the shower, since she had made it clear to him that he would have to come to her. Seven days of living in the same space, passing each other, brushing by each other, small, tentative touches and assured grazes happening on a daily basis. Seven nights of sleeping in the same bed together, wrapped in each other's arms. Seven days and nights of sharing small soft pecks that only toed the line of passionate kisses but never evolved beyond those.

And he didn't seem affected by them at all.

Watching him, day after day, resisting her with an ease she both hated and admired had frustrated
her. But something else simmered under that frustration. The truth she had carried with herself for years, the truth he had made false for a few days, prodded her again.

People always left. Everything was temporary. For her it always had been. Was it the same for them too?

She honestly did not know. She knew he felt intensely for her, but what if it was a temporary thing, till this adventure lasted? Once the threat to her life was done, and he was free to live like a normal man, what then? He had told her, impassioned, that he wanted a future with her. But her father had promised to always be there too. Her mother had promised to never leave her alone. Cooper had promised to never break her heart. And so many other. And usually she wasn't all doom and gloom but it was washing all over her today.

People promised things. Those promises were broken, had always been broken.

But he wasn't like other people. His word was important to him. She knew that. Then why couldn't she believe it? Why did she feel like it was too good to last? Why did she watch him, in instances that had got more frequent since the last few days, as though he would walk away in a sudden moment of epiphany?

Why?

Felicity didn't know.

And she was waiting for that other shoe to drop. Maybe it would drop when this was all over and he realized that there were better things for him than staying with her. Maybe it would after a few years of being together. Or maybe when he met Digg. Or maybe now, right there in the store. Maybe that was exactly why he wasn't coming to her too, because he was waiting for that other shoe to drop as well. She knew he cared deeply about her, knew he would and had killed for her, to protect her. But for how long? And why the hell was she engaging in thoughts such as these?

She was jinxing it deliberately and she knew it, but she couldn't stop herself from spiraling downwards.

It was not a good day, apparently. Depressed by her own thoughts, her mind racing in the empty vortex of 'maybes', Felicity grabbed the stuff she needed and put it in the cart, heading to the counter. She felt him follow her, ever present, and the vortex sucked her in deeper, that need to cling to him and keep him close warring with the need to escape and put space between them.

Distracting herself, she looked outside the store window while the girl behind the counter checked Oliver out unabashedly. Felicity ignored it, the twinge in her chest rapidly unfurling into something more cloudy. Just like the sky outside. Gloomy day it was. Apt.

The girl told Felicity the amount, her eyes on Oliver. Felicity silently snorted at that and quickly paid for the items before he could. He picked up the bags before she could though, and led the way to the parking lot, his body vigilant. Felicity saw him walk to the car, saw his back and the something that had unfurled bloomed inside her chest, making her gasp at the sensation of tightness.

Shaking it off before he could turn around, she quickly caught up to him, getting inside the passenger side, and put on the seat belt. She felt his eyes on her for a long time but studiously stared at her phone, playing Candy Crush to avoid looking at him. The car reversed out of the lot mercifully and they hit the road. Feeling stifled, Felicity rolled the windows down, feeling the cool wind brush over her face, over her warm cheeks and she felt her chest loosen for a second.
"You've been unusually quiet."

Oliver's careful statement broke through her thoughts and she looked at him, to see him watch the road and steal careful glances at her. Not that she could blame him. She had been unusually quiet since morning. And through the afternoon. It was evening now. But the mere thought of speaking right now, with everything inside her all over the place, was making her stomach roil.

"I'm fine," she said quietly, turning back to the window, frustration and hurt for things that hadn't even happened mingling inside her. Yet.

The familiar building came into view as Oliver turned right, entering the open parking lot and driving to the spot. The car came to a stop and before he could even turn the ignition off, Felicity pushed open her door and ran out of the car in a completely baffling move, something she herself did not understand, except the need to put space between them. She was just getting in the elevator when she heard him call out her name but she ignored it, her stomach dropping for some reason, her throat tight. She was standing at the edge of some cliff and for some reason she felt alone. Completely alone. Like in an empty house clutching a note.

She closed her eyes, taking deep breaths through her mouth. She was not that girl anymore. She was a grown woman and there was no reason for her to behave like this. She didn't understand why she was behaving like this.

The elevator doors opened and she stepped out, walking silently to the apartment door at the end of the hallway, her head bowed down, her hands shaking. She didn't know what was happening to her. She had never felt like this before, right on the verge of a breakdown, for no reason at all.

This shouldn't be happening. She had panicked once already, hit him with her fists, gotten it all out. She had even left him. This wasn't supposed to happen. They were happy, feeling their way around the new relationship, living together. She wasn't supposed to be shaking, wasn't supposed to be fighting with her pounding heart, wasn't supposed to feel the vertigo hit her when there was no actual cliff at all.

The moment she reached the door, the stairwell door opened and Felicity looked up to see Oliver slam it shut, his hands fists as they held the grocery bags, his blue eyes blazing in anger, for the first time, directed completely at her. And that made her feel even more miserable. She ducked her head down, her heart shriveling at the red haze she could feel emanating from him as she opened the door and entered the apartment, biting her lip to keep it steady.

She heard him drop the bags on the floor, heard the door slam shut behind her, the sound loud in the thick silence of the room, but she didn't stop. She kept walking, right to the bedroom, and suddenly, his hand was gripping her arm, whirling her around on the spot. Her eyes traveled to his thunderous blue ones in surprise as he clenched his jaw, a slight tic warning her to how absolutely infuriated he was.

"What the hell is going on with you?"

Her eyes flickered shut at the question, the barely controlled voice.

She wished she knew. She really, really wished she knew, just so she could tell him, so she could ask him to make it stop, so she could rely on him to do that. And the fact that she didn't know how to answer that question just pushed her closer to that edge, her body trembling as her heart hammered in her chest, something very, very tight lodged right in her lungs, making it harder for her to breathe.

She swallowed, pushing down the bile that rose slightly in her throat, clawing for some semblance of
calm.

"I just need some space."

Getting the five words out was an accomplishment given how wound up she was. Not even wound up. There was this deep, gaping hole inside her that was slowly growing larger by the second, threatening to suck her inside herself, into that abyss she had lived in for those five hours years ago. Only this time, she didn't think she'd be able to contain it and emerge out. This time, it would consume her, and for some reason she did not understand, it was happening now.

The hole grew larger.

"Space?" Oliver scoffed, dropping his hand from her arm and stepping back, an action which only hurt her for some inexplicable reason, which was odd considering he was giving her the very space that she had asked for.

"You told me once that I treat you like a toy," Oliver said, his voice contained, enraged, a vein in his neck popping. The fact that the vein wasn't even distracting her when it would have made her drool any other time made her panic flare harder. The hole grew.

Oliver continued, completely unaware of the turmoil inside her, lost in his own fury. "You keep playing this push and pull game with me and you say I treat you like a toy?"

His voice had risen by the end of the sentence, the control on his own temper dwindling. Felicity felt a shiver start low in her spine, travel upwards and radiate smaller shivers all over her back. She clenched her hands into fists to keep them from shaking very obviously and gulped.

"People leave, Oliver," she managed to speak in a low voice. It was all that she could manage at the moment.

She saw his nostrils flare as his lips pursed in a straight line, the soft light from the lamp doing nothing to soften him.

"You keep saying that," he began, his voice loud, angry. "You keep saying people leave and believing people leave. But the only person who has been leaving between the two of us has been you, Felicity. Not me."

Felicity jerked at the accusatory words, taking an involuntary step back like she had been slapped, her heart dropping, her mouth opening in a wordless plea, for what she didn't know.

He didn't hear it. He continued, his gaze cold, brutal on hers, unmoved by everything she knew he could see on her face. "You have been pushing me away every time I get close and then you expect me to come to you?" Oliver asked incredulously. "You said you'd always welcome me, Felicity. You don't. You push the moment something makes you question this and you push hard."

He took a step closer, the blue in his eyes cackling with anger. "Do you have any idea what that does to me? I promised that I'd always come for you and I always will but do you have any idea what keeping that promise does to me when you run away? Do you, Felicity?"

Her jaw was trembling from the effort to keep her mouth closed, her lips quivering, her throat tight with sobs she was leashing in, her vision blurring with moisture because Oliver was not lying. He was not saying a single thing she didn't know. But he stood at his distance, away from her, cold in his anger, looking at her like she had done him so wrong. And she had.

"How can I come to you when I don't even know if you'd pull me close that day or just push me
away and run?" Oliver asked, his voice hard. "I don't open up to anyone, Felicity, and you know that. But since you told me that I'd have to come to you, I'm telling you something too. This needs to stop."

Her blood turned cold as her heart froze for a second at the words. What did he mean 'this'?

His eyes didn't soften as he spoke. "This isn't doing either of us any good because you feel miserable and I feel... don't push me, Felicity. I'm no one's savior but I'll be damned if I see you drown that spirit of yours like this. So stop pushing me because you might not like how I save you from yourself."

He rarely ever spoke so much, so passionately. But he had. By the end of his tirade, Felicity knew he hadn't said anything wrongful. Not about her pushing him away, not about this needing to stop. But how could she stop this? How did she do this?

Before she could respond, he turned to leave the room. Felicity watched his back retreat, as he took steps away from her, towards the door, and she fell over the edge.

She crumpled to the floor, everything inside her bursting out, exploding in a way she had never thought possible, never felt herself capable of, never been prepared for. Felicity Smoak did not do this. She never crumpled. She never showed herself out like this. She never, ever broke down.

But there she was, a mess on the floor, sitting on her knees, tears flowing in a torrent down her cheeks, her nose blocking, her eyes clenched shut. Sobs wracked her small frame, her entire body shaking as she hiccuped, noises she had never heard herself make leaving her throat. Something inside her had broken free, something she had been keeping on such tight leash for so long, something she had been reining in since those five hours years ago.

People left. But the thought, just the mere thought, of someone leaving had not done this to her, never done this to her, as it did now. The mere inevitability of his leaving had that part of her loose, that part she had quelled and tamped down under years of experience.

Felicity felt warm, rough hands on her face, cupping her jaw, his thumbs wiping her tears away from her cheeks as she blubbered and sobbed, gasping for air, floundering for something to hold her, to anchor her from falling down that hole of her own thoughts.

"Look at me, Felicity."

There was no gentleness in his voice, just rigid control. Felicity kept her eyes shut, unwilling to open it, unwilling to face him, to see that cold anger in his eyes, to see everything she had done reflected back on his face.

His hands firmly gripped her jaw, containing the trembling, and he commanded this time, his voice compelling.

"Look at me."

Felicity blinked her eyes open, feeling them burn with the tears, swollen, and squinted at him to see him clearly through the blurry haze of the moisture. He wiped her eyes again, and she hiccuped.

"Please don't leave me."

She didn't recognize her own voice, croaked whisper that it was, escaping her sore throat before she
could stop it, drawn from the bottom of that abyss, from somewhere so deep in her gut it was foreign to her. Felicity had always been so realistic, so strategic in planning her future. Oliver was everything unplanned. He had become pivotal to her before she had even realized it. And she knew him leaving would destroy her in a way she would never recuperate from.

He was sitting on his haunches in front of her, his hands retaining their hold of her face, his eyes fierce on hers as she slowly breathed through her mouth, blinking rapidly.

"I am not leaving you."

Felicity swallowed, her hands coming up to grip his wrists. Everything inside her wanted to believe him so aggressively. Every single portion of her entire being was leaning forward to accept this as her new truth.

She stayed silent, searching his eyes. She had heard the words before, believed them before.

"I. Am. Not. Leaving. You," Oliver repeated again, slowly, enunciating each word, his gaze riveted to hers.

Her mouth trembled. "What if I push you away again?" she asked, her voice raspy from the tears, heavy.

"Did I let you do that today?" he asked in response, his eyes clear on hers. "You had your chance to run, Felicity. And you took it. You won't get another again, not unless you truly want to leave. Not because of some insecurity you have harbored for years."

"It's the truth," she corrected.

Oliver looked at her for a long moment before speaking. "There are more than one truths in the world, Felicity. You don't have to just hold on to one."

Her breath hitched as she looked at him, biting her lip to keep it from quivering again.

He continued, without moving. "People leave, yes. They all do." He tilted her head a bit, looking down at her with that intensity of his. "There is only one way I can leave you, and that is when the last breath leaves my body. Till then, I'll always be with you."

Felicity closed her eyes at the exact same words, her heart tightening upon hearing the absolute conviction, the absolute certainty in his voice.

"I don't want to push you away," she whispered, admitting quietly.

"You pulled me in when no one ever had, Felicity," Oliver's quiet voice had her opening her eyes. "Trust me to do the same."

She bit her lip, searching his clear blue eyes, devoid of any anger now, devoid of softness too, only filled with the conviction she needed to see.

Slowly, after long minutes, she nodded. "Okay."

She saw him relax, saw the way his muscles loosened and he took her waist in his hands. He stood up with her in his arms, and slowly headed towards the bathroom, sitting her atop the counter beside the sink. She kept her eyes on him as he moved around, filling the tub with warm water, adding some salts into it. She wiped under her eyes, removing any remains of her tears, her face flushing as she remembered the way she had broken down in the bedroom.
"Felicity?"

She looked up to see him in front of her, his hands on either side of her thighs on the counter as he locked gazes with her.

"Don't wait a day before telling me the next time, okay?"

Felicity felt her heart pound as she nodded, a smile lifting her lips. "You're not the only one with a baggage in this relationship."

His lips twitched at that. "Oh, I'm certain I can give you a tough competition."

Felicity leaned forward, wrapping her arms around his neck and pulled him to her. She felt his body tense for a split second instinctively before he relaxed, accepting the hug, embracing her in his own warmth, his face buried in her neck.

"Thank you," Felicity whispered into his skin, pulling him closer. "I didn't mean to break down like that. I hadn't even thought I would. I just saw you leave and I snapped and thank you, for everything."

His arms tightened around hers, their bodies pressed together tightly. "Remember when you told me we come from different worlds?"

Felicity nodded, not pulling her head back. Neither did he.

"We do," he spoke softly, pulling his head back to look at her. She looked at him, relieved to see the softness she loved in his eyes reinstated. "We come from different pasts and different places, Felicity. And we have lived for so long like that, it gets hard sometimes to believe this."

He smiled then, softly. "But now, this, Felicity, is ours. This is our world and our lives and our future."

A tremulous smile graced Felicity's lips as she looked up at him, only to see that soft look returned and something shifted in the vicinity of her chest, something that had been building up for a long, long time, ever since she had seen him in that alley. It shifted in her chest, unfurling, blossoming, like it had been for a long time, but this wasn't cloudy. No. It made her blood rush through her veins and her heart throb with a knowledge she refused to bring to light, even to herself, as she looked up at him, her heart bursting with it.

It was unacknowledged but discovered. And it'd would stay that way, for now.

Felicity pulled his head down, pressing her trembling lips to his, feeling him sigh against them contentedly and she knew that just like she had changed that day years ago, she had changed again today, forever remade in a minute way that she would not deny.

Because the truth that had been her pillar had been replaced.

The old pillar had crumbled. The man had taken its place.

Oliver, she accepted, had become her truth.
So, what did you think?

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Hey everyone!

You all are seriously flooring me so completely with the phenomenal response to this story. I had no idea how emotional the response to the previous chapter would be but I am so glad you all connected to it so well. Thank you so much for all the love and encouragement. Thank you!

Here is the next chapter. Stuff happens. Enjoy!

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts! I absolutely love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Seeing Oliver eat a cheeseburger was an experience.

He would pick up the big assortment of bread and cheese and veggies in his bigger hands, completely ignore the ketchup, focus on it for a second, almost as though assessing it for possible threats, and then open his mouth to take a large bite. Then his eyes would close as the taste of cheese would explode on his tongue and he would make this noise that was a cross between a hum and a sigh, chewing quickly before gulping it down. And then the process would start all over again till he annihilated that first burger.

And watching him eat was always an experience between erotic and amusing for her.

Felicity had seen him eat a lot of times in their entire time together, yet she never ceased to be surprised by the pure delight he took in just consuming food. It made a small part of her ache even as she smiled at him while munching on her nachos and salsa.

Oliver never talked a lot about the compound or his life there, not aside from the obvious, but when she watched him eat something so simple as a cheeseburger with such unadulterated joy, she instinctively knew. He had never had these small moments of pleasure, simple pleasures that most people in took for granted in their lives. He had never had ice cream while cuddling and watching movies, never had buttery, salty popcorn, never had cheese melt in his mouth like this. While a part of her always got sad for what he had lost without even realizing it, for how long he had withheld himself from anything except survival, another part of her, a bigger part, always got happy at the fact that he was finally letting himself experience it, and sharing it with her.

That lack of guard while he took this pleasure for himself, experienced it for himself, never failed to make her happy.

They were sitting in a diner two blocks away from the apartment, having a simple dinner on a thankfully clear, starry night. Since it hadn't been raining, or stormy at all, Felicity had convinced him to go out with her and share a meal. Dressed casually as they had been, they had walked the two blocks like a completely normal couple, with his arm around her shoulder, keeping her close to his
side as she had kept hers looped around his waist. Occasionally, she had let her palm drift playfully to his tight butt before returning to his waist. The first time she had done that, feeling bold and daring, he had glanced down at her in surprise before his lips had twitched and he had shaken his head, his arm pulling her closer, his musky scent strong. By the time they had reached the diner, she had groped him more than she had ever thought she'd grope anyone, mainly because he had one unbelievable ass and her hands copping a feel had made him smile.

She doubted for all his experience, he had ever been teased like that, just for the sake of teasing and nothing more.

Felicity shook her head at him and looked around, checking the diner out. It was like any other diner in the city, only less crowded and with booths set up in a way that gave a semblance of privacy. They sat in the corner-most booth, right in the shadowed corner under an alcove, sitting across from each other, and Oliver was on his second burger, his eyes closed, that hum-sigh escaping his throat again.

"You know," Felicity started casually, trying to contain the amusement in her tone as she popped a nacho in her mouth. "You might want to chew it instead of inhaling it. That'll make the taste better."

His eyes opened at her jab, narrowing on her, a playful glint she sometimes saw in them dancing in those clear blue orbs, and he deliberately started chewing faster that before. Felicity chuckled at his antics, shaking her head at him, her own food crunching loudly in her mouth, and looked at him contemplatively.

"I don't get one thing," she began, feeling her brows furrow. "You eat like you have lived on grass your whole life, not that I am judging or anything, just saying. How do you cook so well?"

Sipping the plain water he had ordered, Oliver swallowed down the last of his burger and wiped his mouth, leaning back into the cushioned backrest, his face still holding that buoyancy from the evening.

He shrugged. "I was taught."

Felicity frowned. "To cook?"

"To survive," he stated simply, his eyes clear of any shadows which she was very grateful for. Last thing she wanted was for him to brood, especially tonight.

Pausing for a moment, like he did sometimes when gathering words, he continued to explain. "We all had to learn how to cook for ourselves with the most basic ingredients for survival in the most primal situations. Food has always been a necessity and with what we do, anything so simple as that should never get in the way. I started experimenting a little with the ingredients and..." he shrugged again. "I never knew what kind of a cook I was because only I had ever tasted my food. And since I ate for necessity and not taste, my judgement wasn't really a fair one."

Felicity blinked at the information. "You're a really good cook," she mumbled, her mind whirring with questions.

She saw a corner of his mouth twitch. "So you keep telling me."

Leaning forward, she put her elbows on the table, pushing her glasses up her nose, curiosity getting the better of her. "So you enjoyed cooking, even when you were there?"

Oliver tilted his head to the side, considering her question for a minute. "I suppose so."
Felicity waited for him to elaborate. He did. "I just experimented back then. It was something that diverted my mind from daily issues. It is now that I truly enjoy it, when I'm cooking for you."

Sap that she was sometimes, Felicity waved it away before she got mushy, focusing on the first part of it, trying to fill the still blank spaces about him in her head.

"So, apart from cooking, what else did you enjoy when you were there? Something not for survival?"

"Everything was survival," he pointed out.

"But you found a loophole with the cooking thing, right?" she reminded him, very interested. "So what else?"

Oliver looked at her for one long second, without blinking, his finger tapping on the wood of the table. Felicity felt his gaze like a physical caress on her skin, making her flush with the intense scrutiny, that tapping sound somehow reverberating with her heartbeats.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

His eyes piercing hers, he spoke quietly. "Sex."

The heat in her blood was absolutely not because of the way he was looking at her when he said the word. Nope. Absolutely not. Okay. Not the thing she would have thought he would say. Well, she should have knowing how intense he was. Not that that automatically implied he was a sex gobbler. Actually she didn't know. Had he had trouble keeping it in his pants? And if so, why wasn't he having trouble doing so with her?

She swallowed, shushing her brain silently. Questions. He was in a verbal mood. She had to take advantage. Of the verbal kind. Well, she would be happy to take the other kind of advantage too but he had pressed pause. Except now he was looking at her like she was a cheeseburger, only more intensely and well, not that she was a burger. Would he make that hum-sigh if he ate her?

"What's going on in that head of yours?"

She jerked at his words, blushing to the tips of her dyed roots, feeling her heart pound as he continued looking at her, and his lips twitched, very correctly guessing exactly what she had been thinking about. Not that it was that hard to guess because when was she not thinking about that? But he didn't say anything and she shook her head, getting back to the questions.

"When was the first time you had sex?" she asked, trying to keep her brain out of the gutter which was a pretty impossible task considering who she was talking to and how big of a horndog she was for him. Focus. Deep breaths.

"Fourteen," he said plainly, drumming his fingers on the table top.

Felicity glanced at his long fingers, fingers she had felt move inside herself, and her body heated. She swallowed. "And how often?"

He shrugged nonchalantly, his eyes anything but. "Once a week. Sometimes twice."

Felicity gulped. "And what about the women? Like were they older? Like call girls or women who lived in the compound? Did you have preferences? Same women? What?"

He raised his eyebrow again at her torrent of questions but spoke. "These women are specially
trained to please the warriors of the sect. There are older women and younger women. It all depends on the man. I usually did not like to have the same woman consecutively, but over the years, some were repeated, yes."

Holy expletives. He had been having sex for 14 years, once or twice a week, with different women trained to cater to his needs. And she had had sex for one month with an asshole of an ex-boyfriend and then the door had been closed. Till he came and knocked on it. And now he was standing on the threshold and refusing to enter and refusing to exit and just refusing to budge.

Felicity opened her mouth, slightly overwhelmed by the information, but nothing came out and she closed it again, aware of his scrutiny.

Looking somberly at him, she asked the one question that had her stomach in knots. "Did you ever compare them? In your head? Or otherwise?"

He looked at her, long and hard, his gaze never wavering from hers, then said. "Yes."

Her lips pursed and she looked down at the table for a second, her heart sinking. He had compared women who had been trained to please him. What about her? Did he unconsciously do that with her too?

His fingers came in her line of vision, tangling with hers, the strength in them making her look up at him, to see that singular intensity in his clear blue gaze.

"Felicity."

She kept her eyes on his unwavering ones, searching them for a long minute as the softness in his voice washed over her, her own name everything she had never realized she wanted on his lips, reminding her of when he had told her his name. Her knot in her stomach loosened. He had told her his name, showed her his face. He smiled with her and laughed with her and cooked for her. He kept his libido under control with her and yet, he slept and cuddled with her. He ate cheeseburgers with her and held her hand in her moments of doubt. A slow smile came over her face, stemming from somewhere deep as she exhaled and relaxed, holding his fingers back.

"Oliver," she murmured, feeling warmth unfurl in her that she could, that just his name was enough to keep her from overthinking.

His thumb grazed hers, the rough skin abrasive but shooting tingles up her arm from that small movement and he tilted his head at her.

"When was your first time?" he asked and she blinked up at him, her nose scrunching as she remembered that quick, hasty wham-bam in the back of Cooper's truck.

"Twenty," she grumbled, sighing. How could she have ever thought she had been in love with him?

She looked at him, pinning him with her eyes. "My ex-boyfriend. Cooper. We met in college and hooked up for a month before we started dating. We broke up after a month because he got tired and left."

She saw Oliver's eyes narrow a bit but she shook her head. "It was later that I found out he had actually been using me for my codes and had left after he had gotten those. Anyways, there hasn't been anyone since then. Not that it matters because I read a lot. Like I have all the theory down pat. And I have seen a lot of porn too. Not that they are very educational because the women make these horrible, fake noises that sounds like dying whales, and the men all grunt like pigs, which is not something I want to think about when I'm having sex, you know. I actually don't want to think about
anything at all. The books I read though always imply that my brain will fuse with the orgasm. It never really went into that territory with Cooper though. So, I'm really hoping for that. Not that I'm putting any pressure on you at all, don't think that. You shouldn't have performance anxiety when we finally get to it because that would..."

Oliver put his elbow on the table and his head in his free hand, looking at her with such soft eyes and a smile that had those illegal dimples appearing in his cheeks. Felicity bit her lip and shut up, squirming on the seat as he kept looking at her, smiling like a goofball, which was not a word she had ever thought she'd associate with him. Feeling slightly self conscious, she shrugged, words gathering on her tongue, fighting to escape.

"I didn't mean to imply that you'll grunt like a pig," she blurted out the first thing that came to her head and saw his shoulders shake right before he started laughing, the sounds coming deep from his chest, raw and pealing and surprising her yet again. He looked so young when he laughed like that, so beautiful and absolutely impossible to be real. Oliver laughed for a minute, shaking his head, his stubbled cheeks dimpling deliciously and eyes twinkling.

He leaned forward across the table, slightly getting up from his seat, and for the first time in a public place, slanted his lips across hers. Felicity gripped the edge of the table with one hand and his own with the other, her lips locking with his for one long moment as he kept leaning, without deepening the kiss, just keeping their mouths locked and pressed, his smile evident against her lips. He pulled back after a while, sitting back down, a soft smile on his face.

"Felicity?"

"Hmm?" she closed her eyes again, savoring the tingling in her lips that she felt down to her toes.

"You brain will fuse."

Felicity opened her eyes at that, and a giggle escaped her. "Promises, promises."

Grinning, he called for the bill.

Felicity walked out of the small cubicle in the ladies room, washing her hands, and looked up at herself in the mirror. Hair in a ponytail, her cheeks were flushed, a smile on her face that refused to leave and eyes sparkling behind her glasses. She had never seen herself look like this. She had never felt herself glow. But she was glowing and she couldn't deny it. And it was all because of the man who waited outside at the table for her.

Felicity shook her head, and went to the door, turning the knob. It didn't turn. Frowning, Felicity looked down at the knob in her hand and twisted it again, only to find it jammed. Dang, how had this happened? It had been smooth as butter when she had come in two minutes ago. And her phone was back at the table with him. Sighing, she just raised her fist to bang on the wood when her gut churned, the hair on the back of her neck prickling.

Her hand froze midway, up in the air, and her entire body froze, only her heart picking up its pace as her antennas stood on alert. She closed her eyes for a brief second, feeling eyes on her, multiple eyes, and her arm broke out in goosebumps, her pulse skittering. A shiver traveled down her spine as she contemplated her plan of action. She could bang on the door and alert Oliver, but that would most likely end up with her dead in a heartbeat. Or she could stay still and let it play out, which could also
end up with her dead in a heartbeat. Her chances of being dead in a heartbeat were glaringly high. Rock and a hard place could not describe it.

Slowly, not wanting to spook anyone behind her into doing anything hasty, she turned around on her feet, her heart sinking as she saw two casually dressed men in sweatshirts with their hoods up, and one small woman, almost as small as Felicity, standing with them, wearing a similar sweatshirt but with the hood down, her white blonde hair like a beacon and her cool grey eyes trained on Felicity. They just stood, without any weapons, but Felicity knew how lethal they were, how lethal they could be the moment she made a wrong move.

Wetting her lips with the tip of her tongue, she swallowed, her heart thundering as adrenaline flooded her system. She just had to alert Oliver. Somehow, she had to alert him.

She took a step back towards the door and saw the woman step forward while the men flanked her.

"Al Sahhim seems happy with you," the woman spoke in a low, husky voice, her grey eyes watching Felicity more with curiosity than anything else.

"He is," Felicity replied, happy to keep talking even though his other name made her feel weird. It was better than being dead though.

Surreptitiously moving her hand to the door behind her, Felicity gripped the knob at her back, the cool metal under her palm keeping her focused and containing her shivers as she looked at the three people in front of her. "What do you want?"

The woman stared back stoically, not responding. Felicity almost asked them again just as someone knocked on the door, startling her.

"Felicity?" she heard Oliver's voice call out softly from the other side, and her heart clenched, the urge to rip the door open somehow and throw herself in his arms, knowing nothing would even touch her there, overwhelming her.

The woman shook her head at Felicity, pulling out a weird looking dagger casually and pointing it at her. Okay. Point taken.

Oliver knocked again and the woman jerked with her head, telling Felicity wordlessly to answer him.

"Felicity?" she heard Oliver's voice call out softly from the other side, and her heart clenched, the urge to rip the door open somehow and throw herself in his arms, knowing nothing would even touch her there, overwhelming her.

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Oliver knocked again and the woman jerked with her head, telling Felicity wordlessly to answer him.

Heart hammering, crushing that urge to shout and tell him what was going on, she kept her voice as steady as possible and spoke. "I'll be right out."

"Do you want me to get some ice cream for tonight?" she heard him ask and tears filled her eyes as she looked at the assassins, the knowledge that she wouldn't be going home tonight settling in her gut, curling something inside her into itself.

"Yes," she spoke, a tremor in her voice she knew he would hear. "With the nuts."

He knew she was allergic to nuts.

There was silence for one long moment after she said that, right before Felicity felt the knob turn a little, right under the hand she kept on it behind her back and she felt like screaming. Her heart shattered, knowing he was turning the knob, trying to check on her, knowing he would know it was jammed, knowing he was just on the other side of the door while she faced the three assassins. Her mouth trembled slightly but she inhaled, tamping the fear trying to invade her bones. It wouldn't do.
The knob stopped turning. She didn't know whether Oliver was still on the other side of the door, but she didn't hear him, didn't feel the knob turn again. Removing her hand from behind her back, Felicity steeled her spine.

"Are you going to kill me?"

The woman tilted her head to the side, not speaking another word. Taking out some rope from her pocket, the woman pointed the dagger at Felicity's side, the demand for her hands silent but obvious. Quelling down the anger and fear mingling inside her, she extended her hands, knowing a fight would be futile at the moment. The woman tied her wrists in front of her quickly and tightly, not giving her an inch to move, the ropes cutting into her skin a bit painfully.

One of the men came forward then, tall and big but not like Oliver, his hood shadowing his face. With each step that he took, Felicity felt her heart pound harder, the fear she was keeping at bay overpowering her and her knees shook, her mouth trembling and she closed her eyes, knowing she didn't have the strength to face whatever they were going to do to her. She kept her eyes closed, remembering that moment outside ten minutes ago when Oliver had been laughing. She could see him clearly behind her eyes, his dimples and that smile, that glint in his eyes, the pure happiness on his features and the soft way he looked at her.

A tear escaped her closed lids just as she felt a cloth press on her mouth, a pungent, acrid smell filling her nose, making her nostrils flare as she tried to pull away from it, only to find herself imprisoned in solid arms. She kept her eyes closed, staying in that happy place with Oliver, seeing the way he nuzzled his head in her stomach in the mornings, the way he kissed her fluttering pulse, the way he fed her while he cooked, making her test the taste, the way he kissed her behind her ear while spooning her, the way he watched her sometimes just like that. She let the memories wash over her, let them give her strength, let them lock in her mind as the door stayed locked behind her.

She didn't know whether they were going to kill her in a few minutes or take her someplace else. She didn't know when she was going to die. She didn't know if she would even see Oliver again, didn't know what he would do when he found her gone. What she did know was she would lose it. He wouldn't be able to hold it when he found her missing, or god forbid, dead. His words from that night on the bridge came to her.

"They should pray and pray that you stay right here, because if you are not, there is not a single thing left on this earth that will keep me from burning them all to the ground... And when they all die, there will be nothing stopping me from burning in that fire myself."

Sobs tightened her throat even as her lungs seized, the smell making it harder for her to breathe. Her eyes were clenched shut, leaking tears both from pain and the smell, his words ringing in her ears. She didn't want to die. For him, for herself, for them. They had just begun. They had just started. They couldn't end, not this soon.

The world slowly tilted as she felt the images behind her eyes blur. The pictures, the memories, slowly faded away, their grip on her and hers on them breaking. He faded away from behind her eyes and she felt someone pick her lax body up just as her knees gave away, her heart not pounding as hard anymore, her lids getting heavier even as her eyes remained closed. Coldness spread slowly from her toes, washing over her veins, loosening the knot in her stomach, killing the adrenaline in her body, making her pants turn to soft breaths.
Even as she knew in a distant part of her mind what was happening, Felicity made a last ditch effort and opened her eyes, ignoring the weight and the burn in them and blinked groggily once, her gaze seeking something.

And then it landed on the door.

The single door that had separated her from Oliver while he had stood right on the other side, their hands touching the same knob, their beings connected but not together. Another tear escaped at the injustice of it all, at how close he had been, she had been, standing on each side of that door.

The door that had separated them and connected them.

She closed her eyes again, succumbing to the oblivion that beckoned, taking the respite from the pain clawing at her insides, knowing that if she were to die now, she would only die with one last thought in her mind, just one word.

Oliver.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think?

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Hey everyone!

The response to the previous chapter was so, so amazing! Seriously, I had never thought how truly you all would connect to it, so thank you so, so much for all the amazing feedback you give me everywhere. It is so encouraging :)

Here is the next chapter. Stuff happens. Enjoy.

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts. I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!

She couldn’t breathe.

The air just refused to enter her lungs, the burn in her chest making her choke on the little air trapped in her throat.

Felicity became aware of the throbbing behind her closed eyelids, as though someone had take a hammer and chisel and decided to poke her eyes inside out. The imagery, blurred in her groggy mind, made her shudder even as she convulsed, only aware of being horizontal. Why was she horizontal?

Peeling her lids back, Felicity blinked once, her eyes seeing nothing but the black around her as something vibrated under under. Ignoring the pounding headache, she blinked a few times, trying to focus her mind.

She was in some vehicle, that she could tell. But the more she tried to focus, the more the ache intensified. The pounding got harder, so acute that her chest seized as pain exploded in her skull. She tried to move, only to find her hands tied behind her back and some sort of a gag over her mouth. Fear tingled down her spine. What the hell was happening to her?

A dark figure moved towards her, blurry because of the pain and her eyesight, and leaned down to where she lay. Felicity felt her face get warm as the pain increased, whimpers leaving her mouth before she could stop them. The strange man touched the exposed skin of her neck and Felicity pushed away from him, her entire body trembling in the aftermath of whatever these bastards had done to her.

The man remained on the spot, his face, from what little she could see, scarred.

"You are unlike our women," he spoke quietly, his finger trailing over her neck again, venturing over to the tops of her breasts, and Felicity tried to push away, only to find her back against the wall of whatever vehicle she lay in.

The man stared at her for a long minute, before speaking. "I shall enjoy having you."
Dread knotted in her gut as she looked at his vicious face, struggling against the ropes that tied her, fear rushing through the blood that pounded in her head with a vengeance.

Felicity closed her eyes, her teeth clamping down on the rag of cloth in her mouth, her lips trembling as the man trailed his finger over her collarbones. Disgust roiled in her belly, but she stayed still, knowing struggle was futile, knowing it would only provoke him. She needed time. She took a deep breath into her burning lungs, and clenched her hands behind her back.

Oliver.

She knew he was going to come for her. She knew he would rake hell and find her. She knew he was going to kill.

And the fire flooding her veins, as the man moved his hand to her breast like he had any right, told her she wouldn't stop him. Not this time.

A cloth pressed over her nose, the same acrid smell she had smelled in the diner filling her nostrils, her mind clouding even more. Nausea and unconsciousness fought inside her body, making her limbs heavier. Sensation left her skin, muddling her mind, as she looked at the man's blurred face one last time, a thought lingering till oblivion took her, till she felt his unwanted hands on her body.

*He was going to die.*

The next time she woke up, her head almost exploded from the pain. Whatever these bastards had given her had obviously caused the great grandmother of hangovers, only a way more painful version.

Felicity blinked up at the dull, stone ceiling, every muscle in her body aching, every nerve stretched taut to the breaking point, every breath of air painful. She felt like death warmed over, like a roller had ridden over her repeatedly. The numbness in her arms and legs told her she hadn't been freed from the ropes at all. Her jaw hurt from the gag, the corners of her mouth scratched from rubbing against the harsh cloth. The parts of her body she could feel hurt like nothing she had ever felt. She didn't know whether to be grateful for the numbness or not.

Swallowing down her dry throat, she shifted a little and groaned, the sound muffled by the rag, feeling the stone against her back. Stone?

A little more alert, she looked around the darkened room. It was large. The walls were cut out of stones, only housing a small high window with bars, telling her it was dark outside. There was almost no light in the space, only a little filtering in from under door. Stomach in knots, Felicity let herself take the area in when her eyes landed on something. Squinting to see better, she blinked at the two stone pillars in the room, and suddenly realized what it was that had caught her attention.

Chains.

There were chains attached to the pillars.

Realization hit her hard, her heart in her throat. This was a dungeon of some kind. She was being kept a prisoner in a dungeon. Which only meant she was in the compound. A compound crawling with assassins who wanted her dead. A shudder wracked her body, making her groan again, just as
the heavy metal door screeched open.

Felicity saw the woman from the diner washroom enter the door, softly closing it behind her. Sweat trickled down her spine as her heart started pounding, watching the woman move silently and swiftly to where she lay on the floor. Between the throb in her head and the rush in her ears, Felicity doubted she would be able to hear the woman speak. If she had come to speak, that is. Barely controlling the shivers that threatened her, she just kept her eyes locked with the woman.

The woman sat down on her haunches in front of her, her eyes curious as she looked Felicity up and down without speaking for long minutes.

Felicity really hoped she wouldn't have to coerce the woman to verbal communication like she had Oliver.

Oliver.

Taking strength from just his name, from him, she pushed up on her elbows, ignoring the protest in her joints, and somehow wiggled into a sitting position against the wall, panting with the effort behind the gag, her muscles hurting so bad she was sure they were going to shut down on her any second.

"He has not come for you."

Felicity stared at the woman, the words slowly sinking inside her. Before she could process, the woman went on.

"It has been a week since we brought you here," she spoke, her cool grey eyes narrowed on Felicity. "Al Sahhim is our best. He would have tracked you inside a day."

He had. When she had run from him, he had tracked her in five minutes. He had come for her in a day. It had been a week? A week?

"Perhaps we overestimated your hold over him," the woman went on, undeterred.

Felicity kept her face clear of all surprise, all emotions, just staring blankly at the woman, pushing everything in a box for later.

The woman tilted her head, her eyes glinting. "Hope he comes for you. We have plans for him."

Getting up in a smooth motion, the woman turned and walked to the door. Felicity held her breath, waiting for her to be out of the room, before she even ventured to look inside the mental box.

The sound of the door locking made her release the breath she had been holding, as her mind went over what the woman had said.

A week? Oliver had not come for her in a week? No. The woman was obviously lying. Either about the time or about Oliver.

A sudden chill spread over her. What if he had barged in for her and they had taken him over? Everyone said he was the best but would he have been able to hold up against ten assassins? What had they done to him? Was he alive?

Something tore inside her at the thought, tears welling up in her eyes before she could stop them. She clenched them tightly shut, shaking her head.
No. He was alive. He had to be. He had promised her he would live.

Images flashed over her closed eyes. Memories of him fighting. She had seen him stop an arrow headed for him before it had even touched his body. She had seen him fight three armed assassins without a shirt on his back and nothing but his body. She had seen him jump from trees and shoot with deadly precision. More than that, she had felt the way these assassins had feared him. He had survived unfathomable circumstances for two decades. No. He wasn't dead. She knew it in her gut. She couldn't let these evil people let fear overtake her.

Taking a deep breath, one horrible doubt settled in her mind, she pushed it away when the other jumped up.

A week.

It was true they could be, and most likely were, lying about that.

But the seed remained.

Felicity looked around, huddled against the stone wall, when suddenly the lights from the outside died away, leaving her in utter darkness.

Heart pounding, she blinked in the space, looking towards the door, but saw nothing. Absolutely nothing. Like it had been on the night of the black out.

Exhaling once, Felicity pulled her knees up, swallowing her pained groans, and pulled them to her chest, uncomfortable with her hands behind her back. It was too dark. She saw nothing.

It was a psychological torture thingy. Yup. Totally. They were trying to break her. With the lights and the week comment. That's what it was.

Felicity knew this, her rational mind kept telling her this. But the darkness was too stark. She could feel its claws reaching out to her, touching her, brushing against her. She could feel the cool fingers caress her skin, playing with her, ready to tug her when she least expected it.

She hated the dark. She hated, hated, hated this utter darkness.

Felicity bit into the rag to control a small whimper, her heart thundering in her chest, clenching her fists together to keep her hands from shaking.

Words from minutes ago came to her.

"He has not come for you."

It was too dark. People always left in the dark. A week? Could it be possible? Maybe he hadn't found her. Maybe he hadn't wanted to.

"I'll always come for you."
He had never broken his promise. Not when she had had a panic attack in her own living room, not when she had run away, not when she had broken down.

But it had been a week.

"He has not come for you."

"I'll always come for you."

"He has not come for you."

"I'll always come for you."

And repeat.

Her body shook, the throb in her head searing her skull.

Felicity closed her eyes, welcoming the darkness she liked behind her lids, and let her mind remember. She let herself remember the utter darkness on the night they had kissed for the first time. She hadn't been able to see anything then. But she had felt. She had felt his warmth enveloping her, his flesh pressed against her, his breaths brushing her face, his scruff rasping against her palm, their tongues tangling together. She had felt his lips on hers and his arms around her, cocooning her in their safety.

The darkness hadn't dared touch her that night. It wouldn't tonight either.

She let herself remember the fierceness in his eyes when the darkness inside her had threatened to take over, when she had crumbled to the ground after pushing him away. He had picked her up and kept her in his arms. The arms that he loved wrapping around her. The arms that had been a door away at the diner.

A tear escaped her closed eyes, the ache inside her gnawing for those arms, for him, for his smell and his warmth.

There is only one way I can leave you, and that is when the last breath leaves my body. Till then, I'll always be with you."

Felicity kept her eyes closed, never daring to open them, as tears streaked down her face and sobs tightened her throat. She sat huddled in the corner, letting the memories keep her warm as everything in her body hurt, letting his smiles and his laughter, the soft way he looked at her, the heated way he looked at her, all mingle inside her, lighting a small fire. The small fire warmed her, kept the chill at bay. The small fire lit her, keeping the darkness at bay.
And a small smile came to her, even under the gag.

He was with her. Just like he'd promised.

He would come. Just like he'd promised.

The door to the dungeon opened the next evening, as dusk settled in the sky outside the small window and Felicity breathed in deeply.

A man had only come in once to give her some water for her parched throat, removing the gag and making her drink it, before leaving. She hadn't been fed and her stomach had stopped rumbling hours ago. The weakness in her body, along with the pain, had kept her lax against the wall. And she'd wondered what these guys wanted to do with her.

The door stayed open as a man walked in, wearing a heavy, black robe that looked expensive and ancient, flanked by two uniformed men. Felicity looked up at the man's face. He was middle aged, not very tall but muscular, a French-cut beard on his tanned face, his dark hair cut short. As he walked in closer, Felicity saw his eyes, his dark eyes, and a shiver went down her spine. The man appeared to be slightly smiling, but his eyes were cold. Dead cold. And it didn't take a genius like her to figure out, from the way he was dressed and the way he was flanked, that he was someone very high up the crazy sect ladder.

Swallowing, she tamped down her nerves and willed herself to not look away, not letting him know she was slightly intimidated.

"You've caused quite a stir in my people," the man spoke quietly, his accent foreign, and Felicity felt lead in her gut. His people. He was the leader.

Immense hatred for the man suddenly washed over her, its intensity not surprising her in the least. The man had made an 8 year old boy battle to death. This man had turned him into a killer and made him survive every damn day of his life. His entire sect was filled with such people but the hatred roared on behalf of Oliver. So many scars. So much. And the fucking man dare stand over her and smile?

She felt the rage burn in her veins, her hands shaking from the intensity of it, the urge to kill for the first time invading her senses. She could kill this man, this leader, for what he had done to Oliver, and so many, for years. Her nails dug into her palms as she let him see the hatred she felt for him openly.

"I shall be truthful with you," the man spoke. "Al Sahhim is valued to me. I wish him to return. But he has taken a fascination with you."

Felicity stayed still, the fire licking her belly, fury slamming inside her not for her own self as much as for Oliver.

He continued. "I had hoped his fascination to you would draw him here. But it seems he has left for good, for a week has passed and he has not returned."

Felicity ignored the week comment. She had fought that battle and won it last night, alone in the dark. She wasn't going there again.

"My warriors shall look for him, but you have become a liability now."
Felicity clamped on the gag and stayed silent, her heart starting to pound viciously as she stared up at the man.

Her time had run out. They were going to kill her. She could see it in his eyes. Fear licked over her spine, making her shiver but she quelled it.

"So, I shall give you a choice," the leader spoke.

A choice that would make a rock and a hard place look like Disneyland, she bet.

"You can either die tomorrow, painlessly, or you can join our women if you wish to live."

Felicity felt her eyes widen at the latter. The only way for her to live was to join the harem. The women Oliver had told her about, women trained to pleasure these men. Bile rose up in her throat and she broke the stare, looking away to keep it down, her stomach protesting at the nerves taking over.

"You have till dawn to make your choice."

And the man turned away, leaving the room. The heavy door shut behind them and the lights went out, plunging the room in the darkness.

Felicity closed her eyes before it could assault her again, her legs and shoulders completely numb from the stiffness, her muscles hurting acutely with each inhale.

But Felicity kept her eyes closed, ignoring it all.

Her only way to live would be to trade sex, and the one man she had wanted more than anything, the one man who had promised her she wouldn't be able to walk out of his bed, she had never had a chance of having. A hysterical laughter bubbled up her throat, because she knew her choice.

She would be dead in the morning. She could never do that to herself, never do that to him. To them.

The laughter hitched.

Her mother would be distraught. And Digg. She had promised him she would make him meet Oliver, and promised him she would take care of Sara. She wouldn't be able to.

And Oliver.

Oliver.

She smiled at his name, her heart shattering.

They had never had a chance. They had never had a fucking chance to be together.

She remembered the way he pushed her into the bed when they made out, the way his fingers moved inside her, the way he throbbed in her hand. She remembered the way they flirted and made promises. She remembered the way his eyes never left hers, the million ways he said her name, the small kisses he pressed over her skin.

She had never felt more treasured than she had with him, more cherished than she had with him, more loved than she had with him.

She knew. He'd never told her, he probably never would have, as unaccustomed to his own
emotions as he was in such cases. But she knew, because he had showed her, every single day with every smile and kiss and laugh. With every word.

Her chest tightened to the point of pain, everything inside her breaking. She knew he would come for her, but it would be too late. Her breath hitched, imagining his pain. He would lose it. He would destroy himself.

She let the sobs out, uncaring of who heard. She only had a few hours to live, and she would live them. Leaning her head back against the cold stone, knowing it was dark but not opening her eyes, Felicity let herself drift.

Felicity jerked up suddenly, her light doze breaking as her body protested the sudden movement.

Heart hammering loudly in her chest, even as exhaustion pulled at her, she blinked at the darkness, trying to look into it. It was still night, and utterly dark inside the room. Felicity had no idea what had woken her up, but she looked again, before leaning back into the wall and closing her eyes.

A few hours.

A musky scent drifted to her. Felicity smiled a little, keeping her eyes closed, happy that her last few hours would be spent remembering him.

Suddenly, the hair on the back of her neck prickled, like it always did when someone was watching her. Stiffening, she blinked her eyes open again, ignoring the tug of her eyelids, and peered into the darkness just as someone stepped beside her.

Felicity looked up, unable to see anything except the uniform boots she had seen the others wear, and panicked.

Had they decided to kill her early? But if that were so, why was only one guy there? Why not the cavalry and the creepy leader?

Her eyes widened as another thought came to her. The man in the vehicle had groped her and the leader had announced she could be joining the harem. Could someone have come to try her? To rape her?

Panic ran rampant as she pushed deeper into the corner, a jolt of pain shooting up her legs at the sudden movement, her body shaking. No. She wouldn't let herself be raped. She would hold her breath and die. No.

She could see absolutely nothing in the dark but the air shifted around her as though the man had sat down on his haunches.

Pulse skittering as fear and fight warred inside her, Felicity saw a gloved hand as it came into view, and her body shook as she strained away from it.

And then the gloved finger brushed over her cheek.

Once.

Over his spot.

The spot he always brushed, the spot he had brushed that first time.
She closed her eyes as tears leaked out freely, her jaw trembling uncontrollably, sobs heaving as she 
finally snapped, collapsing against the wall, an emotion rising inside her. An emotion more than 
relief, more than pain, more than joy, more than anything she had ever known. An emotion so acute  
it cut her in the best way and she felt the finger move from her cheek to the back of her head, his 
other hand joining as the gag eased.

Her mouth hurt from being opened in the same way for so long, her jaw ached and felt sore, but the 
tears kept pouring and the trembling never stopped.

Pain shot through her arms and legs along with sensation as he cut the ropes open, making her 
whimper even though she couldn't move them.

She looked up into the darkness, trying to see his face but unable to, and her lips quivered.

"You came."

She whispered hoarsely, her throat hurting, her voice rasping from disuse, sobs heavy in them.

He stilled completely before softly pulling her face to his chest, and Felicity inhaled her first deep 
breath, his woody scent, his familiar, beautiful scent, strong so close to him. His heartbeats were 
loud against her ear, fast, and she knew her own matched his. His face turned into her neck, burying 
in her hair and Felicity felt him shiver as he held her, careful not to jostle her limp arms and legs.

She felt his breath ghost over her skin, and his arms came around her completely.

His arms.

His safe, muscular arms. Arms that she had never thought she'd feel again. Arms that were home 
even in the dungeon.

His arms came around her and Felicity let go, falling over the edge, knowing he would catch her, 
steady her, carry her back to him. Sobs wracked her frame as everything washed over her, almost 
muted sobs, just laden with tears, her arms by her side regaining sensation, unable to hold him.

She felt his lips press against her head, planting kisses over her ear as he held her, as he let her break, 
his chest heaving. Felicity cried into him, finally moving her arms, ignoring the pain, and held on to 
him, feeling his own arms tighten around her.

His lips moved over her lobe, his whisper laden with the same heaviness she felt, his words swirling 
inside her with the certainty she had clung on to, the words that had kept the darkness away.

He murmured the words into her skin, and Felicity collapsed against him, safe in his arms.

"I'll always come for you."

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think?

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on
Hey everyone!

Firstly, I am so very sorry for making you all wait for so long. You know I love updating almost as much as you love reading but school deadlines have given me almost no time to sit down and write a chapter, and since I do it all in one sitting, it's not been possible lately. I sincerely apologize for that.

Secondly, THANK YOU - for the absolutely incredible love you all give me every day through the kudos and the comments and the tweets and Tumblr. I know a lot of you feel hesitant about asking me for updates but please don't. When I say I love hearing from you, I absolutely mean it. And I love how excited you all are for the stories, so thank you so much for all the love. And thank you for your patience too. :)

Here is the next chapter without any delay. Stuff happens. Questions will arise too. I hope you enjoy it!

Don't forget to leave me your thoughts. I love all the feedback :)

Happy reading!!!

It was the movement of his hands that broke the spell.

After sitting for long minutes in silence, just breathing him in, Felicity stirred when she felt his hands move over her back, his arms banded around her small, hunched form. It was a quiet movement, the motion of his gloved fingers more inquisitive than intimate, and Felicity pulled her head back, trying to catch a glimpse of his face, her fingers clasping the leather of his uniform over his muscular forearms. The complete darkness did not allow her eyes, with the bad eyesight, to even see his silhouette. But his hands moved over her back, slowly going down to her thighs, the movement precise, but tender. He was checking her for injuries.

Swallowing, her throat dry and raspy, Felicity carefully formed words and murmured. "I'm okay."

His hand stilled, as did his body. Felicity blinked in the darkness, squinting, trying to understand the look on his face, but she didn't see a thing. Slowly, tentatively, ignoring the pain in her muscles that were just regaining sensation again, she raised her hands, her shoulders aching, and touched his face, right under the hood. His scruff rasped against her fingers, and she closed her eyes, a tremulous smile on her lips, feeling the scruff prickle her skin, feeling his breath against her face, feeling his warm muscles against her body, knowing it was a blessing, knowing she'd almost lost it all, knowing she perhaps could have never felt any of it again.

But he had come for her.

Like he had when she had run away from the cabin. Like he had when she had run away from the car.
He had come.

She let herself have this moment, this one moment, of her fingers exploring, remembering what they had never forgotten. She let herself reward herself with the sensation, let herself take this moment as a prize for making it, because it was a prize. Her hands on his face as they breathed each other in was a prize. A precious prize. And she grabbed at it with both hands, taking it, letting her fingers wander down his neck to the back of his head, letting them come back around to trace his eyebrows, his nose, his beautiful lips. Felicity touched the mole she loved at the corner of his mouth, and her heart stuttered because she had come so close, so very close, to losing this, losing it, losing him.

She felt his hands tighten around her thighs as he leaned forward, lining his mouth right against her ear, his lips brushing the shell. Her hands shook as she felt it against her skin.

But they needed to leave. The sect couldn't find him here and she just had a few hours to live if they stayed.

Almost as though he read her mind, she felt his hands settle on her waist, his huge hands gripping her firmly as he stood up, pulling her along with him. Felicity felt pain shoot down her legs as she straightened, the pins and needles worsening with the ache in her unused muscles, her legs shaking as her knees threatened to buck. His grip on her waist never wavered, and she held his arms, letting her legs acclimate to the slight pain, squeezing her eyes closed as sweat broke out over her skin. He stood, ascertaining that she was alright, and she nodded, certain that he could see her.

He straightened completely, and just as Felicity opened her mouth to ask him how they would be escaping, the door to the dungeon opened, the heavy hinges creaking loudly in the silence, a small ray of light from outside penetrating the utter darkness.

Oliver moved before she could blink, wrenching his arms out of her grip, rushing to the shadows beside the door. Leaning against the wall for support, Felicity saw, as her eyes adjusted to the minimal light, a man in uniform enter the room. Heart pounding, she saw his eyes find her, saw him stiffen upon seeing her standing out of her bonds, saw his hand reach for the hilt of his sword. Her eyes widened upon his, her knees still having trouble holding her weight as he entered the room completely. The moment he did, Felicity saw Oliver step behind him. He took a hold of the man's neck with both hands and twisted before she could blink, the crunch of his bone breaking loud in the room, making bile rise in her throat. The man's body fell on the floor in a heap and Felicity watched his dead eyes staring out into the dark, the skin of his neck protruding where the bone had dislocated.

Gulping down, she looked up to see Oliver standing before her, his eyes completely blank of all expression, his face a mask of blandness, aloof, detached. A frisson of unease traveled down her spine at the look on his face. If the woman who had come in earlier was to be believed, it had been a week since she had been abducted. Now that the relief of seeing him was coming down, Felicity looked, properly looked at his face in the light. His scruff was longer than it had ever been, not quite a beard but closing to it soon. His eyes were sunken, gaunt, almost like he hadn't slept in days, the look in them completely dead, almost as dead as the man of the floor, and his lips were pursed in a hard line.

And for the first time, Felicity felt lead settle in her stomach. He had come for her, but at what cost? What had he done for a week to get that look in his eyes? What had he paid to finally get to her, and how?

That look.

That look made a shiver go down her spine. Had she not been completely certain that he would
never hurt her, she'd be scared. More scared of him in this moment than she had been the entire time she had been in the dungeon.

Slowly, hesitantly, she raised her hand again, to touch his face, to reach him, to wipe that look away, but before her fingers could make contact, he shook his head once, his eyes hard. Her hand froze midair, her heart hammering, confusion filling her.

He took a hold of the raised hand, and turned around, pulling her. Felicity felt her feet move even as her eyes stayed glued to the back of his head, acid churning in her stomach. Guiding her around the body on her tottering feet, he tugged her behind him to the door, and Felicity followed, blinking as light from the fire torches lining the creepy corridor came into view. She noticed how he kept her completely behind him, walking as slow as he could to match her aching legs, his hand not holding hers but gripping her wrist instead. Something was wrong, very wrong. She knew it. But she didn't know what.

Suddenly, she felt herself being shoved hard into the wall, her back hitting the stone hard as the breath left her. Gasping, she looked up to see Oliver facing off four men, his stance wide, his arms loose beside him, and she frowned, not understanding why he wasn't taking a hold of his weapon. Before she could go on that train of thought, one of the men spoke from behind his mask.

"Come with peace, Al Sahhim. We shall spare her."

Oliver didn't move, didn't respond, not a twitch, not a breath. Felicity knew what those men would be seeing - those blue eyes completely blank of all expression, that face an ally of death. Biting her lip, wincing because her mouth still hurt from the gag, she waited with bated breath for something to happen. She knew he was good, but against an entire pack?

As though on cue, the men attacked, all at once, and Felicity's jaw dropped, watching in utter horror and fascination as Oliver suddenly pulled out two swords from nowhere, shoving them deep into the chest of two men, the blood spurting on the black fabric as they gurgled and went down. The other two came at him, and he punched one in the throat, right on the Adam's apple, the sound of bone breaking not as loud as earlier but still audible enough to make her flinch. Oliver took a hold of the other man's face, and slammed his head against the wall, and Felicity saw the way his head connected with the stone, the sharp noise and his cry ringing in her ears, and he fell down.

Oliver stood, in the same wide stance as before, his back to her, and Felicity stood frozen to her spot, looking down at the corpses. They hadn't even made it past him. Her eyes swung back to his broad shoulders, her pulse spiking. She had seen him fight before, she had seen him kill before, but this had been different. This had been more brutal. More unhinged. What had happened to him?

He turned around to her, wearing the same look as before, even more blank now, and took a hold of her wrist with his left hand, his right glove smeared with blood of the dead men. He tugged her forward again silently, leading her down the corridor, his body alert as he walked with silent steps. Felicity tried to keep her breathing level, to not let the emotions riot inside her, at least not until they were clear. They needed to be someplace where she could freak out to freak out. Not now.

They turned a left, the corridor narrower here, the lighting even more muted, and Felicity swallowed, ignoring the pain in her muscles, ignoring everything but her footsteps and his hand on her wrist. She saw another uniformed assassin in the corridor with his back to them. Oliver took out some kind of a blade with his right hand and threw it, right in the center of the man's back, in the spine. Felicity saw the man stiffen, the blade embedded deep into his flesh, and saw him crumple to the ground. Oliver did not even pause, walking right past him.

She could understand, as she saw the blade in passing, saw the rivulets of blood pooling around the
dead man, why Oliver had told her he was their best. She had seen him fight with weapons she had never even heard of, seen him fight with nothing but bare hands, and seen him best them. But every time, there had been something in his fights that she did not find this time - restraint. This time, Oliver was fighting with control, but no restraint. And it was visible. He was a force unleashed. And as scary as that was, she knew he was doing it to protect them. Keeping that knowledge, knowing they would be fine once they could talk, Felicity swallowed and followed him, letting him lead her through a maze of corridors, each getting narrower and narrower. Thankfully, they did not encounter anyone else on their way but she could feel the stiffness in her muscles from the adrenaline, feel the high still enveloping her as they walked.

After a few minutes, he stopped. Felicity peeked around his back, afraid that they had encountered more resistance, but saw nothing. There was just a wall in front of them, the corridor so narrow the two of them wouldn't fit side by side. Puzzled as to why he stopped there, Felicity frowned, unsure.

Oliver let go of her wrist, looking to an alcove on their right and Felicity watched as he put his hand in the dark alcove, pressing a small stone. Just as he did, she heard a click. Blinking, she looked down at the spot from where the noise had come, and saw a small crack on the floor.

Oliver looked back towards the beginning of the corridor, making sure no one was there, and dropped down on his haunches, opening the small crack in the floor a little wider, and pulling it up. Felicity felt her jaw drop as she saw a trap door of some kind being revealed, seeing the stone open up to reveal a ladder, her eyes taking in the dark depths of where it led before flying up to meet his gaze.

He looked at her silently before nodding towards the ladder, his face clean of all expression, urging her to climb down. Swallowing, Felicity inhaled deeply, before getting on the ground on her stomach, inching back towards the hole. Her feet felt nothing within seconds, coming into contact with the first rung of the ladder. Her arms hurt, but it was better than being dead.

She had a fear of heights and a fear of darkness and a fear of death, which was pretty normal except if you were in a sect of assassins, but so what? She could do this.

Nodding to herself, repeating that over and over in her head, she closed her eyes and felt for the second rung, feeling the cool metal of the ladder in her fingers, her grip actually hurting her, the metal cutting into her palms.

One more step.

It was okay. She was getting closer to the ground. That had to count right?

Another step.

And Oliver was right there, above her. That counted too.

Another.

Of course she knew he had stayed behind just in case they had incoming traffic. She hoped there wasn't. That look on his face was bothering her.

Another step.

Her body hurt all over. She was so going for a long weekend of spa when she got back.

She didn't know how many more steps she went down before she felt the ground at her feet. Shaky, she stood beside the ladder, collecting her breaths and calming her racing heart, and looked around.
was another corridor, lit with just one torch, only a single door at the end of it.

Shaking her head, she looked up, the trembling in her body slowly subsiding, and saw Oliver get on the ladder, before pulling the trap door shut completely. He checked the door once, and pushed off, jumping all the way down and landing right in front of her in a crouch, completely bypassing all the rungs she had held on to for dear life on her way down. He just jumped and landed. **Seriously?**

Sighing at the unfairness of it, Felicity shook her head and waited for his next move. He straightened, and headed towards the lone door without looking at her. Felicity followed, walking behind him, and stepped inside when he opened the door, closing it behind him. Turning, she looked around the room lit by a few torches, the muted light showing her the area.

It was a room, like a master bedroom, huge. The walls were rough cut rock, jagged and bumpy. There was a small area in the corner hidden behind the curtain that she assumed was the bathroom, a partition of rocks in the floor separating it from the other half. The other half was interesting. There was a tall chest of weapons of all kinds from what she could see, from swords of multiple kinds and daggers and blades to things she didn't even know the names of. In the other corner, farthest from the door and the bathroom, was pillows. Pillows thrown over a mattress on the ground.

Felicity walked to the area, seeing the simple but spacious mattress and the multiple pillows cushioning the walls, looking compact but cozy, and after the week she had had, so very inviting her body hurt to just lay on the mattress and roll over. Swallowing, she turned around to look at Oliver, to see him pull aside the curtain, revealing a tub carved into a stone landing of sorts. He filled it with water, and walked out, heading towards the door. Felicity frowned, not understanding as he closed the door behind him, the water still running. She didn't know where she was, but Oliver had left her there alone, which meant it was safe. Muscles she hadn't known were tensed relaxed, the sound of water inviting her.

It was tempting enough to distract her for the moment. Removing her dirty, ragged clothes from a week ago, her arms protesting as she tried to take her shirt off, Felicity started when she felt hands move hers aside. Turning her neck, she looked back to see Oliver standing behind her, in a simple black undershirt and his uniform pants and boots, his eyes fixed on her neck. His hands took a hold of the collar of her shirt and he tugged, ripping the fabric from the center, the sound loud in the room. Throwing away the scraps, he unbuttoned her jeans, pushing it down her legs, and she looked at him even as she stepped out of them, trying to get him to look up.

He didn't look up. He did something completely bizarre. He took off his own t-shirt, toeing off his boots.

Felicity frowned. Not that she didn't enjoy his naked muscles, but with the way he was behaving, this was off. This was very off.

Biting her lip, Felicity blinked up at him.

"Oliver?"

Words came into existence for the first time since he had held her.

"Just get in the water," he commanded hoarsely, his own voice heavy, his eyes still not looking up at her.

Felicity inhaled deeply, removing her underwear and throwing it aside, slightly self conscious of her nudity under the circumstances. She headed towards the tub, trusting him, the need for a bath kind of pushing everything away. Her toes touched the cool water and a shiver ran down her spine. No hot
water in secret hiding spot. Too bad. Shaking her head, she stepped into the water, sitting down slowly, feeling the cool water envelop her body as she dunked her head in once, her muscles protesting even as they relaxed, a moan leaving her at the feeling of being clean.

Feeling movement, she opened her eyes to see Oliver sitting opposite her, the water lapping at his scarred, muscular chest, his head tilted back against the rim. Felicity waited for him to open his eyes, waited for him to speak, to do something, but he didn't. He just stayed silent, stayed aloof, and suddenly, she felt anger stir inside her. She leaned forward, going on her knees, and moved towards him, the stone hard against her knees. She saw his head shoot up as she straddled his hips, realizing he was just as naked as she was. His eyes opened, his blue gaze colliding with hers as she settled on his lap and took a hold of his face in her hands.

She saw his eyes darken slightly, his breathing intensify as he looked at her, silent, intense, her heart pounding as his unwavering eyes kept a hold of hers, her pulse skittering with the intensity.

They stared at each other for long minutes, before he deflated. His eyes closed, and he buried his head in her chest, right on top of her breasts, his breath hot on her skin as shudders wracked his body. Felicity felt his hands come up behind her, holding her back as he pressed himself into her chest, pulling her body flush into his, his erection trapped between their hips. But he gave it no heed, just holding her close, his body shaking as he let out whatever he had been holding.

Felicity felt her heart clench, feeling him undone, her hands moving to the back of his head, holding his face against her, feeling his lips slowly press into her skin as his huge frame shook, his chest heaving.

"Oliver?" she whispered softly, feeling the scruff on his face rasp against her chest, pushing the slight arousal back in the face of this, whatever this was.

He shook his head, keeping a hold of her, his arms like vises around her, and Felicity held still, letting him unravel, his body shuddering as wisps of exhales blew against her skin. And then she felt the wetness. The hot wetness on her chest.

Stunned, she pulled back, tugging his face up, seeing the small streaks on his cheeks going into his stubble, his lashes wet, his eyes so pained, so pained her heart ached.

"Oliver..." she murmured, not knowing what to say, not knowing how to lessen his pain, to take away whatever was agonizing him.

He burrowed himself into her chest again, his hands completely wrapped around her, hot tears marring her skin where his face was pressed, and she let him, let him take whatever he needed to take from her, holding his head, holding him back, right back, anchoring him, not shushing him. Had he ever let himself shed a single tear in his life? Had he ever had the freedom to just let go? Such a simple thing, but she didn't think he ever had. Which was why she held him like he had held her, like he was still holding her, knowing this was precious.

She felt his lips move against her skin, his small words, soft murmur making her heart clench, making her fingers tighten over his head.

She felt his lips move and she heard the words, words he was whispering into her skin, etching into her heart, and she held him, knowing everything else could wait, everything else was insignificant, everything else was null before him.

She felt his lips move and knew, with bone deep certainty, that things inside her had shifted. She acknowledged them.
She felt his lips move, and her heart stilled, his words ringing in her ears even as he pressed reverent kisses into her skin, knowing what the words meant coming from him.

She felt his lips move and the words etched themselves inside her.

"You are life, Felicity. Everything is dead without you. I am dead without you. You are life."

Felicity closed her eyes and kept him close, a tremulous smile on her lips because he knew.

He was life too.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think? Please do let me know!

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Hey everyone!

IMPORTANT - THIS CHAPTER IS FROM OLIVER'S POV.

Thank you so, so much for the tremendous response to the previous chapter. It just blew me away so completely! Thank you SO MUCH for all the love!

I apologize for being unable to update it sooner. October and November are super hectic months in real life and I really am sorry for making you wait so long on every story. I try to update as soon as I can. Thank you for all the patience :)

As you know, I was debating this for a while but couldn't find the perfect time to get this in. Well, this chapter is it. It's a long one too.

IMPORTANT - THIS CHAPTER IS FROM OLIVER'S POV. THIS IS THE MISSING WEEK. SORT OF.

Only this. Next will be back to Felicity. I really, really hope you enjoy it.

Don't forget to let me know what you thought. I love hearing from you and your feedback feeds my soul!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It seeped out of him slowly. As slowly as the way the blood dripped down from the cut on the limp hand, drop by precarious drop, in agony, aided by a gravity it could not resist.

It seeped out of him slowly. As slowly as the sound of each plop twining with the ticking of the lone clock, the echoes of both sounds indiscernible yet distinct to his ears, feeding his life force as the man in front of him sat unconscious, his body passed out from the writhing pain, the single cut on his wrist fatal but agonizing.

Because the fatality was slow. Deliberately slow. Painful. So painful the man probably felt it even in his unconscious.

Drip. Drip. Drip.

Tick. Tick. Tick.

The sounds matched his heart, the heart he had never thought he had possessed. The heart that was a dormant beast in his body only she could tame. Only her.

Felicity.

His Felicity.

They had taken her, taken the one person who could leash him back from his own unfathomable
capabilities. They had prodded the beast. And they were just beginning to realize how unfathomable his capabilities were.

It had only been hours since he had laughed with her over dinner. Only hours since he'd seen the flush on her face while she talked herself into one innuendo after another. Only hours since he'd kissed her lips, his heart feeling too big to be contained inside his chest.

Hours.

_Lifetimes._

He stood before the unconscious man, his hands stained in red, the warm, wet liquid of life force coating his skin, his knuckles bruised, two corpses lying behind him on the floor. He stood in the empty warehouse he had once cornered her in, remembering how angry he had been at her for running alone in the Glades when danger had been on her heels. And all of that for naught. Because they had taken her, from right under his nose.

They had made him break his promise to her. His teeth gnashed.

_He swore to every breath in his body, if they had even touched a single hair on her..._

He cracked his neck. Inhaling deeply, he kept himself under control, letting years and years of practice take over.

He was the best. And she was his. She was all.

Anyone who touched her would die.

A broken piece of mirror on the floor caught his eye. He blinked, looking back at his reflection, seeing the eyes she loved so much turned to ice, seeing the scruff she loved against her skin masking his tight jaw. Seeing himself. Was this what monsters looked like? Would she believe him to be one, if she saw him this way?

He closed his eyes for a second, containing the brief pang of pain flashing across his chest at the thought. No. She would see him. Only him. Just as she always had. He needed to find her.

He let the stench of copper and rust infiltrate his senses, the scent of his own sweat mingling with it, the ghost of her smell, her sweet, natural smell haunting his memory, giving him the strength to stand and do what was necessary.

He stood, an odd hybrid of the man from a few months ago and the man from a few hours ago. A man of sweat and blood and pain who had touched the sun. The beast of death and fatalities who had been tamed by life.

He stood, as the unconscious man jerked awake, watching the blood drip down his arm, closing himself down as he picked up the knife.

Life seeped out of _him_ slowly with each breath.

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The ease with which he had returned to his old life, albeit a different man, disturbed him.
For two days, he had surrounded himself with death, waded through pain, and drowned himself in torture. The men who had been his brethren once had become his victims. Each broken bone, each shallow cut, each fatal stab. He had felt the chill settle deep inside him, the coldness spreading its fingers over his nerves, the ice settling right inside his very being, only one small flame keeping it from taking over.

Felicity.

He held on to the man who had learned he could smile. He held on to the man who had learned to enjoy emotions. He held on to the man who had felt emotions he had never thought himself capable of feeling.

He held onto that man, clung onto that flame, for her. So he could return that man to her just like she had left him. So she could embrace that man when he found her and be comforted because there was nothing in this world he wouldn't do for her. Including embracing that cold while clinging to that flame.

He felt the pulse of the man in his hand, his fingers wrapped around his throat, squeezing with just enough pressure to stop his breaths but not enough to kill, his demand simple. *Her.*

"Al Sah-him," the man croaked.

His grip tightened, her voice floating through his memory, soft and whispered against his skin.

"Al Sah-him? Nuh-uh. That's a deal breaker right there"

He almost smiled at the memory, even with the man strangling by his very hands. Her voice.

"... Oliver."

The second man wheezed out from the ground. "Al Sah-him."

Another memory echoed, her voice loud and laughing as he'd laughed with her.

"Oliver!"

For two days. Dead, cold voices.

"Al Sah-him"

The memory of her voice.

"Oliver."

So many dead voices.

"Al Sahhim"

Her voice - on the brink of pleasure, a sleepy sigh, a content whisper, a loud shriek, a laughing reprimand, a scream of passion. One word.

"Oliver."

And after two days, a man cracked before death. Told him all he needed to know.

He put the man out of his misery, giving him a quick, clean death, and glided into the shadows. He
piled the bodies and burned them all, watching the fire roar and blaze in the dark of the night. It didn't warm him. Nothing did. Not now.

He walked back to the apartment he had rented, apartment he hadn't slept in since that night. He walked in, his eyes falling on the unmade bed, the sheets still wrinkled from her body where she had twisted under him when he had discovered her ticklish spots in the morning, the ghost of her pealing laughter as she had shoved at him with all her might echoing inside his head, her face, her smiling face and bright eyes, stunning eyes, so stunning they always made his breath catch and made everything inside him still for one heartbeat, imprinted behind his lids. The pillows held the indentations of her head when she had tossed it, her hair fanning over the cotton in the most beautiful way he had ever seen.

He took another second to take in the unmade bed, her tablet, the tablet that was glued to her like a body part almost all the time sitting beside the bed on the table. Seeing her face when she'd discovered it in her clothing had been worth the effort of trying to find it in her old house.

He took it all in, before tightening his jaw and taking out his bag, putting in everything he would need inside. There was no time to waste and he had to be cautious if they both were to make it out alive.

*She couldn't be hurt.*

She wasn't. No. She wasn't. He needed to make it to her. He was going to make it to her and she was going to be fine.

"Oliver!"

He blew out a small breath, easing the throb in his chest to a dull ache.

Her tablet. At the last minute, he snatched her tablet and shoved it in the bag, walking out of the apartment without a backward look at the bed, the image of those sheets, of her, of them, fanning the flame higher, burning his very being.

He clung to the flame.

The first night he had seen Felicity, his mission had been over. There had been no reason for him to not return to the compound, absolutely no reason for him to stay, absolutely no reason for him to delay his imminent return.

Except he had stayed. For the first time in his life, he had done something just because he had wished to.

So he had stayed.

And he had returned. To her. Not to his people.

It had taken them a few days to realize he had gone rogue, a few conversations to realize he had no intention of returning. It had taken him one night of complete silence and utter faith that he had not deserved to know he never would. Not to them.

But he had.
He had returned. To the place that he had grown up in. To the place of his chains. For her.

But he had an advantage. He knew these people. He knew this place. He knew their limits. They were about to find his.

Slinking into the compound he knew like the back of his hand through the east wall, where the patrol was lousiest in the middle of the night, he jumped over the wall on quiet feet, years of training moving his muscles without conscious thought. He picked up his bag, and the extra bag he had bought on the way over, the supplies inside for her rather than him, and looked around, vigilant, alert. The dry night air felt familiar but not unfriendly, and no sounds carried to where he hid in the shadows.

Slowly, quietly, he crouched down, making his way towards the fortress in the north, sticking to the shadows. He would have killed more of these men without blinking but the shadows were for her. His whole plan was for her. She had to be safe.

The north of the compound housed the chambers for the high ranking warriors, including his own, and something only he knew existed. Edging around the wall of the property, ducking into the shadows and moving like one, he infiltrated the building without any event, the lacking security telling him one thing. She hadn't been brought in yet.

Good.

Entering the narrow corridor, he headed straight for the trap door, completely bypassing anybody on his way. Good. He didn't want to attract any attention to his presence there. His entire plan depended on them believing he did not show up. Covertly, he stopped beside the correct alcove, feeling his way around for the small outcropping he had installed when he had discovered the trap door years ago as a boy. He pressed on it and saw the slight movement of the stone floor in his periphery, quickly leaning down to open the door he hadn't used for months.

Looking around to make certain he was alone, he threw the bags inside and stepped on the ladder, pulling the door shut above him. He had work to do.

He stood silently at the dungeon gates the next day, under assumed identity. In the last two days, he had cleaned up the secret cave he had carved out for himself over the years, a cave nobody knew of except for him, knowing it would have to harbor him for as long as he had to wait for her and as a contingency in case she was hurt. His blood boiled over the thought but he remained still, standing alone as guard outside the huge metal doors, wearing the uniform of the guard who stood here till two nights ago. Nobody would find his body either, and nobody would guess it was Al Sah-him under the black.

Oliver.

Felicity's Oliver.

But he was Al Sah-him too. Only for her.

He stood, silent, in wait. He knew, from the word that had passed around, that the leader had some grand plans for the return of Al Sah-him, the man who had disappeared off the face of earth as far they they were concerned, but who stood right under their noses and guarded what he knew would be coming. He had never been more grateful that these people were not as curious or as verbal as her. He closed his eyes briefly, remembering one of her long babbles word of word, every single word entrenched in his memory, her face rapidly flushing as she bit her lip, a strange emotion
washing over him as she went on and on. A strange emotion he later recognized as amusement and wonder, mingled in one. They were not emotions one experienced when surrounded with death. With darkness.

Neither of which he could ever associate with her. She had her own demons and her own darkness, but she didn't realize she was stronger than them - something he had realized very early on. She just needed a pillar to lean on in some soft moments, and he felt undeserving most times that she let him be it, that she allowed any part of him to touch any part of her, even with her demons and her darkness. He sometimes wished she didn't have those, that he could take those from her and bear it alone. But then, were it not for those very demons, she would perhaps never need him, and for that alone he had to be grateful.

She just was. With her penchant for words but understanding of silence. She just was. His, and his alone.

And he stood outside the dungeon waiting. For her. Only for her.

He counted the number of corpses he had piled. Maybe she wouldn't understand. Maybe she would. No, she would. He would make her. There was no other way, for either of them. This was who he was without her. A monster. A cold, unfeeling monster.

But he kept the man safe. The man who clung to the flame in the midst of the snow.

He kept the man safe. For her. Only for her.

The first time he saw her being brought in, every vein in his body filled with rage. It took everything inside him not to rip everyone to shreds just with his bare hands, the beast inside him clawing to hunt and kill, to bathe in the blood of her tormentors.

The color in her face was gone. The light in her eyes was hidden behind closed lids. Her clothes were torn and her hands tied behind her back, in a manner he knew her frailer body could not stand for any longer. And her mouth, her beautiful, soft mouth that said the most ridiculous things at times but made him feel so, so much, her mouth was gagged.

And where ice had taken over, he felt fire burning through his veins, the heat, the blaze licking right under his skin, making his blood pound in his ears like it never had before. He stood, motionless like he was supposed to, ignoring everything but keeping his eyes on her, seeing a man carry her limp body inside the door, the man's gloved hand holding her motionless body, and for a second, everything inside him numbed, fear slithering down his spine as he looked at her closely.

No.

No.

She could not become death. She was not... could not be... no!

"The drug should wear off in a few hours," the woman accompanying them, the woman he had seen in training sometimes, spoke. "When it does, I want to be immediately informed."

Relief flashed through him. He gave a curt nod, like he was supposed to, and watched the man deposit her on the hard ground, her body falling down in unconsciousness, and his palms itched to pick her up off the cold floor and in his arms, tucking her close to his chest. He clenched them.

And then he saw the man touch her.
Just above her breast.

Fury filled him as he narrowed his eyes, memorizing the man, letting the beast roar and rage inside him, letting the group leave and close the door behind them.

The man was going to lose his arm.

He was going to break the man's arm and every single finger for every time he had *dared* to touch her. And then he was going to kill him. Slowly, painfully.

He closed his eyes, calming himself with his murderous thoughts, the ice settling inside again, letting him focus.

He took a deep breath.

She was there. Behind a locked door. But he was guarding it this time.

No one would touch her again. *Never again.*

He heard as she was told it had been a week.

He heard her soft gasp, something in his chest tightening upon hearing the soft sound, and gripped his hands behind his back to force himself to stay still. The woman spoke to her, tried to scare her, and he felt a sense of pride wash over him as he heard her silence. Knowing her, he knew that silence was her way of rebellion when she had nothing else.

And then the night came. They ordered for him to darken the area completely, and he did, remembering how she had reacted at her house in the dark. She was afraid of the dark, and he hated doing it, but he had to. He sat outside all night, outside the door, knowing it wasn't the right time because someone would keep coming to check on her while there was a chance for Al Sah-him to show his face. So he sat outside, willing her somehow to believe he had not abandoned her, that he was right there in the dark with her like that night, that he would keep her safe this time.

Although he was specifically told not to accommodate her, he couldn't resist slipping inside once during the dawn, to see her sprawled across the floor, the gag in her mouth chafing against her dry lips. Willing himself to stay silent, he slowly leaned down, removing her gag as gently as he could and holding up water to her lips. Her eyes never even opened but she drank heartily, and he stepped back, before he could give in to the urge to reassure her or jeopardize the whole plan.

It was after the leader's visit to her that he knew it was time.

He slipped away to the underground cave quietly while another guard took his shift, to make sure everything he needed was in place since he knew she'd have to recover before they could move. More importantly, laying low under the compound was smarter, since nobody would look there. Looking around the area to ascertain everything they needed was there, he took a deep breath, letting the ice take him completely, letting the cold wash over him. He was going to get her out and nothing would stop him. Nothing. Absolutely *nothing.*

Walking to the door, he struck before the other guard could even move, twisting his neck with a snap and watching him drop down on the ground detached. Opening the door just a few inches, witnessing the complete darkness inside, he let his eyes settle to it before stepping in the corner, watching her.

Felicity.
She was sleeping fitfully, small whimpers leaving her chest if she moved even a little, her small body looking even smaller in the huge space. He stepped forward towards her, seeing the tear tracks on her face, knowing had he been late, he wouldn't have found her alive in the morning. The fire started again but he kept it at bay, keeping the ice cloaked around him. They needed it. His head needed to be alert.

He took another step closer just as she flinched awake, her eyes widening as she tried to gape into the dark where he stood. He saw as she scooted away, pressing into the wall, the pain in her body evident on her face and the way she clamped her teeth on the gag.

He sat down on his haunches and raised his hand to remove her gag, only to have her push herself even more against the wall, and his hand stopped, seeing the painful determination on her face, his heart swelling again at her strength. Before he could help himself, he let his finger softly trace her cheek, like he had that first night, like he had every night he had the chance, his chest tightening at the familiar supple flesh under his finger, his gut clenching at the way recognition hit her eyes. He watched, transfixed, as her eyes closed, tears escaping, and her jaw trembled, her entire body shaking.

Having had enough, he slowly removed her gag, as gently as he could, and worked on the ropes behind her back, continuing despite the painful gasps she took as she regained movement of her limbs.

"You came."

His eyes closed, his throat burning with an unfamiliar sensation at the absolute belief in her whisper, the relief and certainty mingling in a concoction that made him freeze, her luminous eyes looking up at him like he had not just spent his week bathing in blood and doing things that would horrify her. But she knew him. Her belief, her certainty, her face said it all. She knew him.

And even though he had broken a promise to her, he had managed to keep one.

"I'll always come for you."

As long as there was a beat in his heart, he would. For her. Only for her.

He was strung tighter than his bow. He was strung so taut he felt ready to snap any second.

From the moment he had stood up with her, after checking her for injuries, after she had let herself fall apart, he had been wound up. The more the attackers had come, the more his beast had fought, the more the cold had spread. He had killed, with abandon, recklessly, without a thought, while she had watched. With his bare hands and his weapons. With his blood smeared over his glove. He had given the beast the reins and given over to the cold.

He had kept her from harm.

And yet, he couldn't seem to find the man he had been keeping safe for her. He couldn't seem to see anything past the death. The death since the night she had been gone. So much death. More death, and more deliberate pain than he had practiced and inflicted in years.

But she was unharmed.

She was standing, right where he had wanted her, taking in the cave he had built with his very hands, a secret respite for him to escape to. He knew she would be wondering why he was the way he was, but he couldn't move. Inside. He couldn't move inside. As though the past few minutes had
cemented something he had no clue how to break. He wanted to speak, to tell her she was safe, to
tell her the plan, to tell her he was happy to see her. Anything. But no words came. Nothing came.
Nothing but cold. Death.

And then she turned, to look around, and his eyes fell on the small splatter of red on her dirty shirt.

He was moving towards the tub before he knew it, opening the valve for water and letting it fill,
feeling her eyes on him. He didn't turn around, something inside him chafed, frayed, unhinged - just
the idea of anything dead and her abhorrent to everything inside him.

He headed towards the outer corridor, gulping in air, unable to understand why his chest felt as tight
as it did, unable to comprehend why every nerve inside him was on fire when he was so, so cold.
Pulling off the blood-stained gloves, he dumped them in the corner along with the jacket and the
weapons, and took a deep breath. It steadied him, somewhat, and he headed inside, any semblance of
calm evaporating at seeing her back. Her blood splattered back that was stiff from pain, so stiff she
couldn't even maneuver her arms out of the shirt.

Before he knew, he was behind her, taking a hold of the garment and ripping it to shreds, throwing it
in the corner, watching her eyes, her soulful, azure eyes watching him with confusion.

Did she see the monster? The beast he let out? Al Sah-him?

"Oliver?"

Her quiet voice, actual voice and not the memory he had been clinging onto for so long, choked the
words in his throat.

Him. Just him.

"Just get in the water," he ground out roughly, barely able to string a sentence with the weight on his
chest, his stomach in knots and his throat working. Except he didn't know why.

He saw her comply, her naked body slipping under the water and he stripped, needing to clean
himself, to clean her, to clean them, with no barriers between them. Sitting down in front of her, he
felt a tremble go over his jaw, and he closed his eyes, leaning his head back, gripping the rock side of
the tub to just process what the fuck was happening to him. He had her, and they should be kissing
and making up for lost time. He didn't understand why they weren't. He didn't understand why the
ice in his chest refused to let go, why the man he had kept safe inside him refused to come out, why
he just sat, aloof and distant even as every nerve ending in his body was on fire from her presence.

He felt her move before he opened his eyes, watching her breasts peek from under the water as he
settled her thighs around him, straddling him, her warm core pressing right into his slowly hardening
shaft. Her fingers came to rest on his neck, her eyes gazing into his, searching for something. What
did she see when she looked inside him? Was he a frozen wasteland or an inferno? Could she see it,
with her beautiful, piercing eyes - eyes that he had spent hours just gazing into?

He stared back at her, unable to give anything back, not with the blood on his hands and the ice in
his heart. He stared back, not knowing how long it would take him to recover, to find the man who
smiled with her again. If ever. He stared back, feeling his jaw tremble slightly again, and she just
gazed back at him, her eyes showing him nothing but what he had been seeing for weeks, reflecting
what was in his, completely open, completely accepting, ready and willing to make his demons her
own like he had made hers his.
The ice thawed.

He exhaled deeply, pressing his nose against her chest before him, his hands coming up to feel the smooth skin of her back, holding her, caressing her, clinging to her like the man inside had clung to that flame.

The ice cracked.

He smelled her, over the sweat and the grime and the soap - he smelled her, the essence of her, the scent of it washing away the rust and copper and stench of death of a week.

He felt her, flesh and warm against him, her wetness pressing against him, her nipples pressing into his pecs, her hands sifting over his head as he just held onto her.

And then he heard her.

The ice melted away. The man coming out where he had been stifled in the cold, letting her fire warm him, letting her breathe into him, letting her let him exist.

The trembling of his jaw worsened, and his eyes burned, his throat tightening to the point of pain. He didn't understand what was happening to him. This was an unknown. This was not something he knew. But before he could get anxious, more anxious, he heard her.

"Oliver?"

And he broke.

He felt the water slip from his eyes before he could stop it, and he sat for a second, stunned.

He was crying.

He was crying?

That's what Felicity did in his arms sometimes. She clung to him and she broke down, and she always felt better after it. Would he feel better? Would whatever this unknown was be gone?

The shaking in his body intensified as he clung to her, for the first time in his life, feeling safe and protected, holding on to her, knowing she wouldn't let him go, wouldn't set him adrift. More tears escaped him, all the maybes and what ifs of the last week crashing over him together, all the times he held himself still and glossed over a possibility hitting him right in the gut, and he pulled her tighter into his skin, pressing her completely to him, feeling her in his arms, knowing she wasn't a mirage, wasn't a hallucination, wasn't a dream.

She was real. She was his.

He pressed himself harder into her chest, the man he was with her, the man he became to save her, clashing inside him, warring for dominance, and he clung. He clung to her to guide him through it because he was so tired, and so, so scared.

For the first time in a week, he admitted he had been scared.

"Oliver..."

Something inside him, the something that had been chafed and frayed, slowly soothed. It would heal too. But for now, it was getting calmer. The ice was gone. The fire was warm. She was there.
Felicity.

*His* Felicity.

He didn't know the words to explain any of it to her. He didn't know the way to even begin to express who she was, what she was to him. He didn't *know*.

But the need to tell her something, *anything* - anything even in the *vicinity* of what he felt took over him.

The tears never stopped, but he let her see them, giving her the honesty she gave him, letting her shoulder his demons like he did hers, knowing she was strong enough for them both.

He gazed up at her, at the face he had been so *scared* he would never see again, at the eyes he had been so *scared* would be closed forever when he found her, at her, so, so *scared* of losing her.


"You are life, Felicity," he spoke, his own voice sounding hoarse to his ears, etching the words onto her skin. "Everything is dead without you. I am dead without you. You are life."

He felt her fingers tighten over his head as she pulled him deeper into her chest, their bodies locked in a rebirth of an embrace, and Oliver heard her.

*Thump. Thump. Thump.*

Eyes closed, he remembered.

*Drip. Drip. Drip.*

*Tick. Tick. Tick.*

He exhaled.

*Thump. Thump. Thump.*

It seeped into him slowly. From every pore in her body, with every exhale of her breath against his skin, with every rise of her breasts against his chest, with every quiver of every muscle in her body pressed against his.

Soft, reassuring beats, right in sync with his.

His heart was beating. Right with hers.

He pressed a soft kiss to her fluttering pulse.

She was life.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think? Please do let me know!

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)
Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Letting Go

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!

Last chapter was a sort of gamble for me. Changing POVs in a story when the flow of narrative has already been established, that too to recall events that have already happened, to say I was nervous is an understatement. But I had really wanted to get inside Oliver's mind in this one. So I gambled. And I am stunned by the way you all received it. I had never, not ever, expected the kind of response I got for the previous chapter. And I am so relieved that it didn't suck, and so awed by the love you all give me. Thank you so much for every single feedback on every single platform! It makes it all worthwhile.

This chapter picks up the story back from Felicity's POV. I am also very sorry for making you all wait so long. Your patience is so appreciated! And also, I haven't been able to respond to all the comments on the last chapter but I absolutely will ASAP. Please do keep letting me know what you thought. :)

Here is the next chapter. Stuff happens. Hope you enjoy it!

Don't forget to drop me your thoughts. I love hearing from you!

Happy reading!!!
hands wrapped around hers. "But I hope one day you'll want one to share your life with. To share your hopes and your fears. To share yourself."

Felicity had deflated then, and looked up at her with big eyes. "The lid is too tight, Mom," she'd muttered. "I don't think I can ever let it go."

"Oh, honey," her mother had brushed her hair away from her face. "If he's good enough to make you want all of him, you will let go."

*Let go.*

**Such simple words.**

Felicity had never thought, in her entire life, that she'd ever want a man like that. She knew that she did not need a man to take care of her. Moreover, she'd never wanted anyone to.

Now, she realized that the men who had wanted to do it had been missing something, something very simple - they had never made her want to take care of them.

She'd seen her fair share of men but none of them had made her believe those simple words her mother had uttered to her years ago. They'd never made her want to wrap them in her arms and protect them from the world even when she knew he was more than capable of protecting both of them. They'd never made her chest tighten and heart clench with simply just being in their presence, never made her want to stare into their eyes without speaking a word, never looked at her with icy blue eyes that only ever softened for her, always for her.

His eyes had captured her prisoner since that first night in the alley, just his eyes. His blue, blue eyes, so deep, so intriguing, so tormented. She wondered what he saw when he looked into her eyes.

Felicity rested her head on the palm of her hand, her head propped up on her elbow as she lay on her side on the mattress, watching him. He was definitely not who she'd ever pictured herself with. Now, she couldn't picture herself without him. She blinked at him.

He hadn't slept.

Not that she'd been aware of it much. And she couldn't have been much anyways since she'd been out of it majority of the time they'd been there. In the underground cave.

Felicity stared at him as he sat against the cushions, leaning against the wall before her, his eyes trained on her like they had been for the past three days every time she had woken up, his mouth in a straight, grim line against the angles of his face, his scruff almost on the verge of a full grown beard. If she blanked her mind, she could almost believe she had traveled back in time to the Stone Age - the woman of this brooding caveman who sat shirtless against the wall, his knees drawn up and elbows loosely hanging against them. Even now, in the flickering firelight from the small fireplace, with his hair wet from his recent bath and face somber from the recent excursion into the open enemy territory, Felicity felt her stomach flutter at the singular intensity directed at her.

Three days.

For three days, he'd clothed, fed and bathed her.

For three days, he'd let her sleep and let her body rest and recuperate while he kept watch.

For three days, he'd done what she'd never allowed, and had never thought she'd allow, any man to do for her. He had taken care of her, completely, utterly, with a devotion whose ferocity both
staggered and melted her. Every time she had woken up, he'd been there, guiding water to her parched lips, or helping her to feed her, or just sitting silently, as he was now, watching her. And it should have been creepy. It should have been unnerving. But it wasn't. Perhaps she was getting used to that intensity. She was getting used to him. The thought, which had scared her once, pleased her now.

Lying on her side, covered in one of his t-shirts and sweats that he'd packed along with her tablet, as she later discovered, Felicity felt awe overcome her even now. How a man who had been brought up as he had been could be so thoughtful, so considerate, was something that always hit her in the gut. Her eyes locked on his, Felicity extended her hand to him, silently beckoning him to lie down beside her. His lips curled slightly, just a glint of life coming on his stoic face, and he shook his head, the corded muscles on his neck and broad shoulders, littered with scars, gleaming in the firelight. So many scars. So much strength. Her heart almost burst just watching him.

They had been in this cave for three days and not once had it bothered her. And not once had she jumped his bones. Not that she'd had the energy to initially. But it was more. The desire was tethered inside her, ever present, but she knew this wasn't the time or the place. She was not the only one recuperating.

"You know," she started quietly, keeping her eyes on his, seeing the flames dance across the blue, burning them to a darkened grey as he watched her. "There is research on sleep deprivation. Your body will collapse slowly if you go more than 48 hours without sleep."

He considered her silently for a few seconds, and she thought he wouldn't reply. It wouldn't surprise her. Even though he had broken down in her arms three days ago, even though he had achieved a modicum of release for his emotions, she could still see the turbulence inside him, still feel the stillness with which he battled himself, still see the uncertainty of every breath washed over his face every second. And she did exactly what she had done months ago when he'd first come to her of his own choice, again and again. She did exactly what she'd done in the tub when he'd cried for the first time. She did what she knew he'd always do for her.

She stayed.

And she knew that was all he needed to come back to himself. He'd come to her.

"I sleep." His hoarse voice spoke just quietly, lips barely moving, two words the most he'd said in hours. She didn't care given he'd almost been mute once.

She grinned openly. "I guess I sleep more than enough for both of us."

His eyes crinkled slightly as his lips twitched, and she mentally fist pumped victoriously, her grin broadening. Wrapping the sheet around herself, she slowly sat up, the ache in her muscles from her abduction completely gone, only fading bruises a reminder of the ordeal.

"So," she began conversationally, crossing her legs under her. "What happens now?"

He raised his eyebrows in question. She rolled her eyes. "How long do we wait before escaping? And even then, won't these guys just track us down again? Do we go back to Starling or somewhere else?"

His face closed up so suddenly she blinked in surprise, before her eyes narrowed. "What?"

He shook his head. "I have a plan."
"Care to share with the class?"

The slight frown between his brows at her words made her roll her eyes again. "Just tell me."

He looked, no gazed, at her for a moment, a long moment, before speaking. "Do you know you make sounds in your sleep?"

A slight smile touched his lips. "You don't really say anything, just make these sounds. I like listening to them when I sleep. They keep dreams away."

Her heart clenched as she looked at the wistful smile on his face, even as she knew he was changing the topic. But for some reason, she let him. For now.

For a moment suspended in time, they just looked at each other, sitting just feet away, breathing in sync, blue on blue, shadows dancing on his torso from the firelight, trying to reach his face but unable to, the fiery glow doing nothing to hinder the intensity radiating from him.

This time, he extended his hand to her. Without hesitation, Felicity placed her own in his, feeling the roughened fingers brush against hers, his huge palm engulfing hers as he tugged her forward. He settled her in the crook of his arms, right against his side, his bare, scarred torso pressed against her skin, only a thin t-shirt between their flesh, his fingers playing with the loose strands of her hair.

Felicity pressed her nose against his neck, inhaling the musky scent that was all him, his skin warm and slightly mottled against her. She pressed her lips to his collarbone, snuggling into his side and tucked her head on his chest, feeling the steady beats of his heart, and suddenly understood why he always listened to her heartbeats. It was their body reaffirming what their minds knew.

"Rest," his soft murmur barely ghosted over her hair, as he pressed his lips to her head. Drawing in a deep breath, a breath full of his musky, woodsy scent, she closed her eyes, wrapped in safety, wrapped in the knowledge that nothing and no one could remove her from where she was. His arms were an unbreachable fortress to the world. For her, they were her haven. They were home.

Adrenaline had been an occasional guest in Felicity's body for more than two decades.

In the past months, it'd become more of a relative that you cursed in its absence and loved in its presence. Because she had to admit, adrenaline did have its perks. It sharpened the senses, alerted the mind and readied the body for any unwanted twitches. That did not mean she wasn't ready to get it out of hers.

Crouching behind Oliver, Felicity tried to focus on keeping her breathing even and follow his lead. Although Oliver had brought her her beloved tablet, it had been more to make her happy than actual use. This wasn't her forte. This was his. And she trusted him. If only her mother could see her now. Actually, no, that would be extremely bad. Inconspicuous was not a term that even existed in the same verse as her mother.

Shaking her head, she trained her eyes on the muscular back in front of her, admiring the way his lithe body made every movement seem effortless. Oliver in mission mode did not run or walk. He glided, barely leaving any impression of his presence behind him, smooth and quick. She felt like a waddling penguin in contrast. In her defense, he was unreal.
He turned his neck to pin her with a look quickly, putting a finger to his lips.

"Was I talking out loud?" she whispered, aghast.

He turned again quickly, his lips twitching slightly as he looked at her, before looking ahead again.

Felicity bit her lip. Focus. She really had to focus and keep her thoughts away from rambling territory. Or she'd turn them into sitting ducks.

She looked around the area. They were in some kind of open ground. Oliver had explained to her before they'd left the cave that he would take them through rarely visited corridors and towards the west side of the compound, that had the least security at this time of the night. They would scale the building till they reached the section close to the compound wall and if the area happened to be clear, they'd make a run for it. The west side was also closest to where he'd parked the car.

They had already done the walk down the empty corridors, thankfully not encountering anyone. Felicity was more worried about Oliver than she was about the men he would kill, odd as it was. She didn't want him spiraling like he had that day.

Now, after scaling the side of the building, they sat on their haunches, crouching in the shadows, as Oliver checked the area out.

Felicity leaned a little to her right, trying to look over his shoulder, curious. She saw two uniformed guards beside the compound wall and the entire area clear of any other assassins.

Heart starting to pound, Felicity saw Oliver's back muscles tense slightly as he turned and leaned in close, lining his mouth right next to her ear, barely whispering the words.

"I'll be right back. Stay here."

Stay here.

Swallowing, she nodded, her hands gripping the side of the building, her eyes glued to his back as he glided away and merged into the shadows, out of her line of sight. Felicity put her hands on her knees, her fingers digging into the flesh, her heart a battering ram against her ribs, her breath trapped somewhere in her chest. The seconds ticked by. She started counting in her head, to keep herself focused, to stop herself from traveling down any unwarranted paths. Focus.

She felt every single breath she took, every muscle in her calves burn, every little tremble that went through her body, the wind dry on her skin, the moonless night lit by nothing but a few scattered torches in the area. Straight out of a goth movie. There was even a dungeon.

After almost three hundred seconds, three hundred very long seconds, he suddenly came to stand before her, his hand extended to tug her up to her feet. Stifling the gasp of relief that wanted to leave her, she quickly stood up, adrenaline kicking in again as he started to run to another shadowed area closer to the compound wall, pulling her behind him as she ran for all she was worth. Within seconds, they stopped, and Oliver scouted the area with his eyes, ascertaining they were alone. Her lungs were burning, her side was in stitches. Damn, they made it look so easy on TV shows.

Before she had her breath back, they were running again, to another shadowed post, almost a few feet from the wall. Felicity looked around, panting slightly, trying to find the two guys who'd been guarding the place, or well, at least their bodies. There was nothing.

A few seconds later, they stood beside the high wall. Till now, reaching here had been the target. Now that they had, Felicity suddenly wondered how the hell she'd ever climb that thing when just
running the entire area had her in stitches. She looked up again at the tall gates, apprehension filling her.

She wouldn't be able to climb it.

She felt a squeeze on her hand.

Swerving her eyes to his, the heaviness settling in her chest, she saw Oliver looking back at her with nothing but clarity.

"I won't be able to climb this," she muttered slowly, the implications of it hitting her square in the chest. Her eyes widened, her hand gripping his. "I can't."

He just looked back at her evenly, almost looking right through her.

Felicity swallowed, turning back to the fence, her lips trembling as facts washed over her. She couldn't climb this wall. Didn't mean he couldn't. He'd probably climbed this when he'd been ten. And she couldn't hold him back.

"You can." She turned to him, gulping. "You can walk away from all of this, Oliver. You have to. You have a chance at a life and you need to take it. These guys can..."

His gaze intensified then, his hands pulling her closer, and he leaned down, his breath brushing over her face, the dangerous edge to his face made her want to weep.

"You stay, I stay."

*Oliver...*

"I'll stay in that cave for the rest of my life with you if I have to, Felicity."

Her heart clenched, her eyes closing. This was the only way out. She knew it, or else Oliver would have never got them here. They were so close to escaping this hell and she couldn't let him abandon it, not even for her, not with his history here. And standing there, in front of a wall she couldn't climb, ready to sacrifice her own life, her own future to give him the chance of having one, she knew...

"But it's not going to come to that."

His voice made her eyes open again, to find him looking back at her almost softly. "We are getting out," he whispered.

Before she could ask him how, he was pulling a rope out from the bag on his shoulders and tying it around her waist, looping it over and over again and securing the knot expertly.

"We have maximum five minutes before another patrol," he spoke softly as she kept watching him, gnawing on her lips.

*"Oliver..."

He looked up at her, his blue eyes intent. "Trust me, Felicity."

She felt her heart soften. "I do."

"Good."
He pressed a small kiss to her head and before she could utter another word, he was gripping a crevice in the wall, hoisting his weight up effortlessly, his other hand finding another nook like he had known exactly where it had been. Felicity watched, fascinated and awed, as he scaled the wall vertically with an athleticism she doubted even athletes had. And not for one second did the thought of him falling even enter her head. It couldn't. Watching him move as he did, he seemed to know exactly where every little nook was, exactly where to place his foot, sometimes hanging on one portion to move sideways- he was in absolute control of every muscle in his body. It was way better than watching parkour videos on YouTube.

Before she even realized it, he was standing at the top of the wall, before turning back to where she stood below. He got down on his knees, setting the bag aside, and Felicity suddenly felt her jaw drop in disbelief as she realized exactly what he intended to do. He was going to pull her up. By the rope. He was *seriously* going to pull her up? That was his plan?

Going by the concentrated look on his face, he certainly didn't seem to find any fault in it. She saw him tie the other end of the rope around a jagged outcropping on the wall, hooking it around it, and suddenly, she felt pressure around her waist. Instinctively, she wrapped her hands around the rope, bending her knees to make herself smaller, and felt her feet leave the ground.

Her eyes closed, her heart thundering in her chest as she hung a few inches above ground, her knuckles hurting from the grip around the rope. What if someone came out and saw her hanging mid-air? What if they saw Oliver in his jeans and t-shirt and not his uniform? What if, by any mistake, he dropped her?

She dismissed the idea almost as soon as she had it. He wouldn't drop her. Duh. Obviously not on purpose. But accidents happened. And as much as she liked to think he was unreal, he was very real and very much a man and she was a grown woman with a rope around her waist being pulled up, slowly.

And she was afraid of heights. Had she ever mentioned that to him? Yup. She had.

She wasn't going to look down.

The pressure increased, the rope digging into her flesh, biting almost, but she focused on the weightlessness, focused on how, slowly, she could feel herself get higher and higher, her eyes clenched shut. She heard him grunt slightly, and almost panicked, because Oliver and grunting was almost as rare as her mother and inconspicuous.

A little higher.

The urge to open her eyes became too much.

Weren't they past the five minute mark? Longer. Anyone could be coming any second now. She swallowed.

Suddenly, she felt his hands gripping her forearm and her eyes flew open, to look at the focused look on his face, just a hint of sweat on his forehead any indication of physical exertion. Before she could inhale air into her deprived lungs, he pulled her up with both hands, much more quickly than she'd have thought, her shoulder feeling the pressure of her weight as he did, and he deposited her on the wall beside him.

Felicity looked down at the ground, feeling vertigo hit her as disbelief filled her.

She'd made it. He'd *actually* pulled her up. Fuck.
"Are you alright?"

Felicity looked back up at him, feeling the wind more strongly on her face, seeing his eyes looking back at her evenly.

She nodded. "Are you?"

He frowned a little. "We need to move. Crouch down."

She immediately did, blowing out a breath because she was pretty sure he wasn't going to use the rope to pull her down. Or was he? Frankly, when it came to his physical excursions, she was in the wind. Literally in the wind too.

"I'm going down. Trust me," he murmured quietly, making her narrow her eyes.

Oliver stood beside her, giving her another of those intense looks, before suddenly jumping into the air. Felicity clapped a hand on her mouth to muffle the shriek that almost left her, her stomach dropping as she saw him drop down on the ground, rolling on his back and sitting up on his feet using the momentum smoothly. So smoothly it almost seemed choreographed.

He stood up and walked closer to the wall. It was only then that she noticed the free end of the rope, the one that had been tied around her waist, in his hand. When the hell had he even removed it? And how had she not noticed?

She saw him tug on the rope, testing it's strength, before he pointedly looked at her, jerking his head towards it.

Oh boy.

He wanted her to climb down the rope? Her? Felicity I-am-shit-scared-of-heights Smoak?

The man sure knew how to test her.

Gulping, calling on every bit of bravado in her small body, Felicity inched towards the rope, gripping it with her hands again, and wrapping her feet around it. Closing her eyes, exhaling heavily, she pushed off from the wall, not daring to even open her eyes once, feeling her shoulder and arm muscles burn as she slowly inched down the rope. And if Oliver was below her, he must be getting one spectacular view of her ass. Not that she minded. Trust her brain to get in the gutter when she was literally hanging.

Suddenly, she felt the rope slip an inch. Her eyes flew open, widening. The rock must have loosened. Fuck.

She went down another inch, and felt the rope slip even more.

No. She couldn't pancake. Not now. Not after being so close to escape. No.

"Let go, Felicity."

She was really beginning to question his sanity tonight.

"Trust me."

And he just had to pull that card, didn't he?

Felicity inhaled deeply, feeling the rope slip some more. She knew she was going down either way.

Swallowing, heart hammering, pulse throbbing, muscles burning, Felicity unwound her legs from the rope, letting them dangle mid air, and closed her eyes, feeling her muscles start to strain in the arm.


Blindly. She trusted him blindly.

She let go.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think? Please do let me know!

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!

Happy New Year, first of all! I hope this year is amazing for all of us. Cheers to that!

Secondly, I'm blown away by what the response to this story has been. It's become this monster and that's all because of your love and encouragement. Every single feedback has been so, so precious, and I always sound like a broken record when I say this but THANK YOU. From the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU SO MUCH for this amazing acceptance you give me, even though I've been super inconsistent with updates lately. I'm hoping to remedy that ASAP.

Here is the next chapter. It's a long one.
IMPORTANT NOTE - This chapter is explicit. *internally screaming* Finally, after SO, SO many chapters of tension, the moment of reckoning. It's smutty so be warned. Also, note that they are both clean and safe, even though it might not be mentioned. I really hope this did justice to the characters and their sexual tension. I'm very, very nervous. *bites nails*

Don't forget to drop me your thoughts. I really love to hear from you (especially in this chapter because I swear my stomach is tied in knots).

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She'd been changing.

Ever since that one solitary night in an alley, where she had witnessed something that should have ended her life but for some reason hadn't, she had been changing. It had been minute at first. Little shifts inside herself she'd deliberately ignored, because that's who she had been. She'd always been a planner, a woman with her own future in her mind and the means to achieve that future. Everything had been neatly stacked in her life, not like pieces of dominoes, but categorized, classified. Organized.

And then he'd swept in. Not like a small gust of wind that had made the dominoes fall. Not like a soft breeze she could feel right on her skin.

No.

Running with him now, her small hand in his large one, through the thick woods, with absolutely no idea where they were heading and no sense of direction, Felicity peeked a glance at him, at the shadows that moved over his intent features.

No. He'd never been a gale of wind. He'd never been a gentle breeze. He'd been a storm- crackling, electrifying, intent to remove anything that stood in its path. Except he hadn't removed her. He'd let her stay, and he'd let her walk right into him till she stood right in the eye of that storm and saw it for
what it was. A thunderous cocoon from outside forces. A shield that kept her in the center, safe, protected, while battling anything that dared to come closer to them.

He had been hollow at the core. Empty. With nothing to protect and nothing to lose, just fighting for a cause he could not find within himself.

Walking into that tempest had changed her. Having her at the center had changed him. And though it was an odd time to have metaphorical epiphanies, Felicity realized it, accepted it. He was a storm and she was his eye. And this realization had dawned upon her the moment he had caught her in his arms, curving his body around her automatically in a protective stance, before letting her slide down his body to her feet. That moment, when their eyes had locked and the realization that they had escaped - _they had actually escaped!_ - had seeped in, a bolt of lightening had split the sky.

Oliver had tightened his hand on hers before pulling her towards the thick woods lining the compound, heading straight towards the oncoming storm without a care, the heat of his palm making her arm tingle, her stomach flipping as the rush of their escape and the flush of metaphors had assaulted her. For almost an hour, they'd been sprinting, with him matching his longer strides to her shorter ones, towards somewhere she had no idea about, but she could tell from his purposeful gait that he did. And as long as he did, she was okay. But the moon had hidden itself behind clouds minutes ago, shrouding the entire area into darkness and only his hand holding hers had kept her from tripping over her feet repeatedly - and the woods had all blurred into one. Her curiosity was getting the better of her.

"You know," she panted slightly, breaking the silence between them for the first time but not breaking stride. "This will probably make me lose those stubborn five pounds that just refuse to budge from body."

She saw his silhouetted neck turn slightly towards her, and she was pretty sure he was giving her a look.

"Also," she continued, huffing slightly. "Are you sure we aren't running around in circles? Not that I'm questioning your judgement or anything. Actually, I am. Sort of. Mainly I am talking just so my voice doesn't go rusty with disuse. Been there, done that. So not doing it again. You can stop me, by the way, if you get bored. Or you can just tune me out like I do my mom at times. Which is a really bad thing to do but I just can't with her when she starts talking about..."

"I won't get bored."

"Of course you won't," she kept speaking as she jogged. "I'm pretty entertaining, right? I talk enough for both of us. It's almost like monologues. Some people like the sound of their voice way too much. Not me, except I do like to talk, and it does require the involvement of my voice..."

"I like your voice," his low, husky timbre sent a shiver down her spine.

She rolled her eyes. "You're such a sap."

She felt him stop, still, his shadowed face turning towards her.

"Excuse me?"

The indignation in his voice and the affronted tone he said it in made her blink, before a giggle left her. She bit her lip, clearing her throat.

"Where are we going?"
"Did you just call me a sap?"

She stayed silent, grateful for the darkness that hid her grin, the clouds rumbling overhead in laughter.

Suddenly, before she could blink, her back was pressed against a tree, and his huge, muscular body pressing into her, his chest rubbing against her breasts, making a gasp leave her. Thunder rolled over in the clouds, in sync with her suddenly thundering heart. Wind caressed her heated skin, making goosebumps erupt over her arms, and a small shiver raced down her spine.

His hand, his big, calloused hand, slowly came up to her face, the back of his fingers caressing the line of her jaw. Her lips parted.

Fingers on her ear, tracing the shell, tugging on the lobe, making her blood pound with a vengeance, he slowly moved them down her neck, his callouses rubbing deliciously against the soft skin, making her breath catch. Felicity blinked up at him, seeing nothing but his shadowed face in the dark cloak of the night, not his eyes, not his lips, not his scruff. And this sensory deprivation was making her other senses roar.

She could smell the rising scent of earth whose thirst was about to be quenched, smell the aroma of flowers and leaves that slept, smell the wood behind her back, the oncoming rain. And she could smell him. The scent of his sweat mingling with that musk that was just him, wafting from where he was surrounding her, his one arm beside her head on the tree, his other still on her neck. She could feel every swirl of wind on her arms, feel every slide on the cotton on her flesh, feel the wetness slowly dampening her thighs, feel her nipples rub his solid chest with every inhale, feel his breaths on her face. She could feel her own blood heating in her body, her own heart pounding in the cage of her chest.

She was about to combust and he was only touching her neck. Good lord.

Her heart stuttered, everything she should be thinking about, like their escape, their running, their destination, pushed to the back of her mind as sensations flooded her.

She raised her hands, placing them on his hard waist, gripping his t-shirt in fists as she gulped, the days of separation, days of missing this, days of pushing the desire back suddenly clawing for release.

His hand moved then. Just his thumb. Slowly. Over her parted lips.

Holy fuck.

Her eyes closed completely, her head tilting back even more, exposing her neck to his fingers that cupped her, a heated breath escaping her lips as his thumb roved over them. Over and over. Not pressing. Just brushing with the lightest of touches. The tingling wherever he touched started to burn, the desire for his lips, for his mouth, to claim, to take, to taste, so acute it made her chest ache.

She was panting heavily as he continued manipulating her lips, just her lips, her fingers digging into his sides, tugging him closer, so close that she could feel his heavy erection right against her stomach, the contact sizzling through her bones as heat pooled between her thighs. But that heat was nothing, absolutely nothing, compared to the heat in her lips. She'd never been so hungry for a kiss, never been so desperate as she was right then, with his thumb just going over and over on her mouth, not letting her suckle it in, not letting her bite.

"Oliver..."
His name escaped those very lips on a wanton sigh, the desire for his mouth more than she could handle, her entire body burning slowly, so much she was sure she was going to evaporate if he didn't anchor her.

A sudden clap of thunder had her eyes opening, only to see the something primal flash in his face before he was shrouded in the dark once more. But that split second where their eyes locked, where the woman in her called to the man in him, sent something completely else washing over her. It was more than desire. More than hunger. More than anything she'd ever experience, even with him. But it throbbed in her body with every beat of her heart. Everywhere.

His scent. His flesh. His effect.

He was everywhere. Inside her. Burning her. Outside her. Burning her. She was burning, everywhere, and he didn't stop. She didn't want him to stop. She wanted more.

She raised her head, trying to capture his lips, only to feel his hand tighten on her neck, holding her in place. Her lips trembled. A thrill shot through her.

He leaned down suddenly, his lips a breath away from hers, so, so close she could almost touch them. Her entire being moved, like a magnet, seeking them out. So close. Just a little closer.

His fingers flexed on her neck, keeping her pinned. So far.

"Is this sappy, Felicity?"

His murmured words ghosted over her burning lips, his soft tone making her nipples pebble even harder as her hips rubbed against him. He spread her legs with a muscular thigh, pressing it right against her burning core, making her back arch away from the tree even as his hand on her neck held her against it. Holy fuck, the man was making her all kinds of hot.

"Is this sappy, Felicity?"

Despite the situation, despite her need, she felt a small grin curve her lips, a grin he felt against his thumb.

"I should have called you a sap a lot sooner," she whispered breathlessly.

She felt his smile for a second before it was gone, felt his piercing gaze on her even though she could not see it. Her fingers slipped under his t-shirt, feeling the warm muscles against her palm, raking her nails down his sides softly. He tensed slightly and leaned closer, his lips just there, right there, in the ghost of a presence that she could feel across hers.

Her heart pounded frantically.

"Not here," he ground out harshly, and before she could come out of her lust induced haze, he was tugging her arm and walking off. Her legs suddenly gave away beneath her but before she could crumple, he was there, picking her up in his arms like she weighed nothing more than a trembling leaf in the wind, and started striding purposefully towards somewhere.

Felicity looped her arms around his neck, her heart fluttering at the way he was carrying her, her body shaking at the hunger gnawing inside her, her breathing heavy. She could feel his heart beating where she was pressed against him, and suddenly, where he was taking her was the least important thing in her mind. They had just escaped the compound where she had been kept captive to die and he had rescued her. She had just had epiphanies in the span of hours about him, about how far she was willing to go to save him, to keep him happy, to take care of him.
Her arms tightened around him, her eyes closing. She knew, in that one moment when she could hear his heart beating as he held her. She knew.

And for the first time in her life, the knowledge did not scare her. It did not chill her. It did not make her weak. It was empowering. Potent. Heady.

The wind picked up speed as the thunder crackled in the sky, making her shiver slightly as she snuggled into his warmth. Oliver's arms tightened around her protectively, and her heart melted. His protection, she'd realized over time, was not a need for her. It was a need for him. It was who he was.

The first cool drop of rain hit her cheek and she looked up at the sky.

Just as she opened her mouth to speak, something solid took shape in front of them, in the middle of the woods.

A cabin.

A cabin? Her brows furrowed. "Another contingency?" she asked quietly as he placed her down on her feet.

"You don't want to know," he muttered under his breath.

Her brows raised. She did want to know. Maybe later.

Felicity saw his muscular back move towards the door. Did he have a key? Or was he going to break the lock?

He leaned down, his torso obscuring her view, and suddenly the door slid open. What? And then she remembered the number of times he had broken into her house. She should not have been surprised. At all.

He stood beside the door, turning his face towards her. The hair on the back of neck prickled as she felt the intensity of his gaze rest on her, his body cutting an impressive silhouette against the cabin. The tingling that had simmered suddenly flared to life in her body. Her breasts heaved. Her toes curled.

A fat raindrop hit her shoulder, spurring her into action. She walked quickly into the dark cabin, trying to look around. The wind howled outside the windows as rain started pouring down, hitting the glass like an army of bullets. Felicity heard the cabin door shut and the heavy latch come into place, and then the quiet. Only the sound of the rain hitting the wood. The sound of the drops on the glass. The sound of the wind roaring in defiance.

The sound of their breaths.

Slow.

Heavy.

The sound of the blood rushing in her ears.

She closed her eyes, waiting for something to happen.

A matchstick flared to life.
She turned around, to see him sitting on his haunches in front of a fireplace stacked with wood, a match in his hand. The small flame cast his profile into light, the stubborn line of his jaw littered with scruff, the regal tilt to his nose, the parting of his lips. Felicity gripped the wooden chair in front of her, her knees weakening as the setting, the situation, everything got to her.

Oliver threw the match into the hearth. Felicity kept her eyes glued to him, seeing the fire go from on a flame to a blaze on his skin, seeing the heat touch his body where he sat prodding the stack, building that very fire. The amber glow spread on his flesh like a fever, slowly, gradually, intensifying, warming. Felicity felt the same heat that touched him warm her skin. She saw the man slowly burn as the same fire filled them both.

Her heart stuttered.

It was the same fire. Consuming the darkness. Consuming the pain. It would consume them both.

He turned to her then, his blue eyes blazing with a need that matched her own. But there was something so hopeful in them, so petrified, that it gave her pause. Felicity blinked at him, keeping their eyes locked, and sat in the chair, confounded. The most fearless man she knew, the man everyone else feared, was absolutely terrified for some reason, and she had no idea why. There was a sadness in his gaze that lingered behind the desire, a sadness that was making her stomach tie itself up in knots.

Extending a hand towards him, she beckoned him forward, letting him see the everything she felt for him in her eyes. He inhaled deeply, closing the distance between them, kneeling on the floor in front of her like the time he had when he'd found her. She spread her legs for his torso, running her hands over the small scars on his head. He leaned into her touch, before inhaling again.

"Remember when I told you I could not see our future? That I was worried?" he asked softly, his voice rasping over her, his focused blue eyes locked on hers.

Felicity nodded, waiting for him to elaborate.

He looked up at her, something so raw, so pained in his eyes it made her breath catch. "I can see it now."

Felicity held his face in her hands, piercing his gaze. "Then what are you so afraid of?"

"Of what I'll have to do for it."

Her heart sank, the demons in his eyes flaring for a second before he shut them away.

"What do you mean, Oliver?" she demanded, her chest tightening.

His hand came up to hold her cheek, his thumb brushing over his spot, his eyes heavy on hers.

"Promise me something, Felicity."

Her breath caught, throat tightening. His blue eyes searched hers. "Promise me you'll see me when you look. Like you always have."

"What is..."

"Promise me."
She held his jaw, her conviction mingling with worry. "I promise."

He smiled tentatively at her, pressing a soft kiss into her palm. Before she could question him about it, though, his hands came up to her hips, his eyes heating, even though that frisson of worry lingered in them. He bent his head, his hands spreading her legs even wider, and brushed his lips over her cotton covered mound. Felicity felt electricity rush through her veins, her hips arching towards his mouth before she could stop him, her hands digging into his shoulders.

"Oliver," she murmured, trying to hold onto one strand of logic. "We really should talk first..."

He leaned forward in response, his nose brushing against her, right there, right against her, his hands holding her hips down. "Not tonight, Felicity," he muttered against her flesh, sending currents all over her body. "Not tonight."

Not tonight. That seemed like a fabulous idea. Yup. If only he could press his mouth a little harder...

He didn't. He brushed his nose against her. Once. And then he pulled back.

Felicity blinked her eyes open, to see him standing before her, his impressive erection denting his jeans. She reached for the snap but his hand caught hers, his eyes inflamed, looking own at her. He shook his head once, before leaning forward and pulling the sweatpants off her legs, peeling her panties down in one go.

Felicity swallowed, but kept her eyes on his, seeing how he didn't even look down at what he had bared, even though he's seen it a few times. He kept his eyes on hers, his gaze unwavering, and with each breath, her heart thumped harder, the chilled wind stark against her bare, wet flesh. Feeling daring suddenly, she gripped the hem of her t-shirt, and whipped it over her head, dropping it down to where he'd dropped her pants, sitting on the chair, completely naked, completely aroused, completely his.

She gripped the back of the chair with one hand, sitting sideways on it, and gulped, riding the wave of bravado.

"You can ravish me now, you know," she murmured and saw his lips twitch slightly, his eyes heating even more. He removed his t-shirt slowly, never breaking their intense stare, and kneeled again, pulling the chair closer.

Felicity felt her heart become frantic in its beats, his hot stare on her own eyes as he completely ignored her lady parts turning her even hotter. Slowly, never removing his eyes from hers, he hitched one leg over his broad shoulder, turning his head slightly to rake his teeth over the soft flesh of her inner thigh. Felicity gasped at the sensation, her eyelids fluttering close and her head tilted back.

"Eyes on me, Felicity," Oliver growled against her thigh, and she felt wetness pool her at the wild look in his eyes, the tone of his command making her toes curl.

Slowly, when she kept her gaze steady on him, after long moments, he leaned forward. His scruff rasped against her skin in the most delicious way, his hot breath fanning over her small nub. Her heart stopped, for a moment suspended in time, as she watched him come closer and closer, and suddenly, she felt his tongue swipe over her. Her spine curved, her hand clinging to the chair with one hand and on his head with the other, a whimper leaving her as her chest heaved.

His hands pulled her to the edge of the chair, flush against his mouth, and sucked on her clit, hard.

"Oh fuck..." Felicity heard her own breathy voice come out, her leg curving harder around his shoulder, her breasts getting heavier with arousal spreading like a wildfire through her body.
He continued feasting upon her, his teeth and tongue wreaking havoc at the juncture of her thighs, his stubble rubbing raw against her sensitive skin. The noises coming from her throat combined with the noises he made as he ate her out, the heavy growl that rumbled right against her, the soft licks and open mouthed kisses he generously distributed all over the exposed area made her pant harder.

The man had a wicked, wicked tongue. And even more wicked eyes, that somehow, always found hers. The act, of him staring deep into her eyes even while tasting her, made her heart pound. It was carnal. It was heated. It was almost feral.

"Oliver," she panted loudly, the rain pelting against the windows and the fire crackling in the hearth only adding to the sweat on her skin, to her fingers wrapping around his neck.

His tongue took, and took, and took, mercilessly, spearing her one second and rubbing her the next, and she got only wetter, feeling the heat that had spread all over her body slowly start to coil in her belly. She closed her eyes, her head tilting back as his mouth kept marauding, moving, melting her. The coil tightened, right below her belly, her breaths getting harsher, her moans getting louder with each swipe and lick and flick of his tongue, with each tug of his teeth, with each kiss of his mouth. Her spine tingled, arching towards him, thrusting her hips towards his seeking mouth, her thighs starting to tremble, the heat coiling tighter and tighter and tighter, and her muscles tensing more and more and suddenly, it snapped.

She came on his tongue with a scream deep from her chest, her hips almost completely off the chair and his hands holding her up, her muscles locking for one split second as she rode the wave, her panting loud in the room. His tongue kept stabbing at the heart of her, never stopping, even as she exploded, and she felt another wave of pleasure assault her, right on the tail of the first one.

Eventually, the blood rushing in her ears slowed down, and she heard her own loud breathing in the otherwise silent room, her eyes closed, her hand gripping the chair for life as she came back to herself. She wet her lips, opening her eyes, feeling languid but not sated, and looked down at him. Only to see his eyes closed, almost like he was savoring the moment.

Then his eyes opened, finding her gaze.

"This is what I'll be tasting for the rest of my life."

Her eyes misted at the tenderness in his eyes. Her breath caught as his softly uttered words, her heart clenching at the wonder in his eyes, at the meaning in his words. She pulled her leg back down, pulling his head up, leaning down to rest her forehead against his. For a man of few words, he sure knew how to slay her.

"I want a taste of you too," she murmured quietly, only to see his eyes shutter.

He shook his head. "Not yet."

She felt herself frown. "Why?"

There was a beat of silence before he sighed. "Because that's what the women always did. I don't want you to do that. Not yet."

"But I want to."

His lips curved a little. "Another time. Not tonight."

She pulled back slightly, seeing the promise in his eyes, and nodded. One day. She could work with
that.

"Is there something else you aren’t comfortable doing with me tonight?" she asked, hoping for a negative answer.

He shook his head, standing up. Phew. She tilted her head to the side, biting her lip as she gazed up at him.

He silently extended his hand for her to take.

Her breath froze for a moment in her lungs, her eyes on his, just like they had been that first night in that alley, the storm raging outside nothing compared to the storm she knew him to be, to the storm she could see in his eyes. Without hesitation, with a deep inhale, Felicity placed her hand in his palm, feeling his fingers wrap around it, engulf it, as he tugged her up. Questions raced through her mind, but none were voiced as their gazes held.

His other hand came up to her breast, cupping the underside, his thumb slowly circling around the puckered nipple, never truly touching it like he had done with her mouth. Her body, which should have been satiated, flared up to life in an even more profound hunger, her chest expanding as his thumb traced everything but her nipple. Was it possible to come just from a touch? Very. She was already so ready.

Her fingers tightened around his, her body rising on her toes of its own volition, seeking his hardness, his solid body, his friction. *Something.* Anything but his thumb going round and round and round and driving her crazy.

"Are you trying to kill me?" she muttered as he stayed away, and watched his lips twitch, the danged mole at the corner of his mouth making her salivate, the scruff on his chin still wet from moments ago, the sight spreading fire through her.

He leaned forward, his lips landing just below her jaw, pressing such a soft kiss into her skin it made her heart melt. His scruff rasped over her as he traveled down to her fluttering pulse, pressing soft, soft kisses on his way, that infernal thumb still nowhere near her nipple. Her breast ached, needing the attention he was lavishing everywhere, needing a touch. She raised her own hand, ready to provide some relief when suddenly he growled against her neck.

"Only mine, Felicity."

The growl only made the ache more profound. She growled back. Or tried to. It didn't come out quite as effective.

He slowly walked them backwards, his lips leaving a trail of kisses all over her neck, so soft they were almost tender, his hand switching breasts and driving her other nipple insane. Her walls clenched emptily, the fire in her belly not being allowed to run rampant through her body, even as she tried wiggling and rubbing herself against him like a wanton cat. He just growled. Which would have made her drop her panties had they not already been dropped long ago.

After a few steps backward, her legs came in contact with what she assumed was the bed. She tipped backwards, landing on the blankets, and pulled her hand out of his where their fingers were still twined, letting both her hands go to the zip of the jeans he was still wearing. That needed to be remedied. Immediately.

The sound of the zip coming down was loud in the room, the fire sizzling in the hearth to their left, casting his glorious, scarred torso in an earthly aura. He was so real. Flesh and bones and sweat.
Scars. His entire body was a story untold. His entire body was a memorial of sorts. Felicity touched a long scar along his side, beside his abs, stroking it once, feeling the muscles tense under her touch. Had he ever had anyone touch him with love? Worship his flawed body, his beautiful heart like he deserved?

She looked up into his eyes, his fevered eyes. "This okay?" she asked softly, tracing one scar after the other.

He nodded, his lips pursed tight, his jaw clenched. She could tell he was unused to the touch. Felicity gave him a soft smile, keeping their gazes locked like he had, and pressed a soft kiss to the scar on his right.

His eyes flared with something raw at her action, his hand suddenly gripping her hair at the back of her head, his other hand clenching into a fist beside him. Her heart ached for him. Felicity never removed her eyes from his, brushing her lips over the mottled flesh, before kissing another scar. The rawness in his eyes deepened. His fingers flexed. She kissed another. And another. And another. Never breaking their gazes, never blinking away from him to even see the flesh she kissed.

He leaned over her suddenly, his jeans pooling around his feet, his hand tilting her head up as his lips finally, finally, slanted over hers.

Felicity's eyes closed on a moan. She'd missed this. His kisses. His drugging kisses.

Passion burst between them as his tongue opened her mouth, demanding entry, and sweeping inside, claiming it, and she tasted herself on him, the fact sending a wave of carnal pleasure washing over her. Her hands came up to hold his neck as she leaned back, pulling him down over her, their mouths never moving away, only angling to deepen the kiss. She felt it in her bones, each brush of his tongue against hers, each suck of his in her mouth, each nip of his teeth on her lips.

She felt herself flatten on the bed, his body coming over hers, naked as she was, his heated muscles pressing into her overheated skin, her legs hitching high on his hips of their own accord, opening her up to him completely, ready, willing, waiting to be consumed. His rigid shaft pressed against her, sliding over her wetness, his size, pressed there, right against her, making her heart flutter even as she arched closer to him, their lips branding each other, mouths sipping, tongues tangling.

His hand flattened on the small of her back and suddenly, he rolled, lying on his back as she straddled him, the sudden change in position making her legs spread even wider over him. She broke the kiss, pulling back for air, her heart racing in her chest, her fingers hanging on his broad shoulders, and he sat up, breathing heavily, right against her ears.

"Heal me, Felicity. Give me life."

Her heart clenched at his words, her fingers squeezing his muscles before she raised herself up slightly, his hands holding her back. She lined him right against her entrance, and hovered, locking their gazes together, knowing this was it, this was the only bridge left to cross. His blue eyes, heated, but tempered, looked back at her, the same realization hanging in them.

He leaned forward, pressing their foreheads together, sharing breaths, one hand holding her hips and the other coming up to caress her cheek right at his spot, and Felicity inhaled deeply, lowering herself.

She felt him stretch her wide, her walls quivering around his length as he slid deeper and deeper, stretching like she'd never been stretched before, a shaking breath escaping her as her lips parted, his jaw clenching as he let her take him at her own pace. Felicity lifted up, moaning at the sensation of
his erection going out, just till the tip, and lowered down again, taking more of him that she had.

"How much more is there to go?" she asked, feeling full but knowing there was still more to take and felt his breath huff out.

"A little."

A lot.

She went up again, groaning, her walls tightening around him, and came down harder, making him exhale loudly, and finally, finally, he was sheathed inside her. Felicity stilled, her arms wrapped around his neck, her chest heaving, and gazed at him. She could feel him throb inside her, like a live being, feel her walls clench and unclench around him, feel him fill her.

Moving up once, she saw a vein throb in his forehead, and saw the control he was exercising on himself to not make any movements. Nuh-uh.

"Oliver," she murmured softly, kissing him once, pulling back, eyes locked. "Give yourself to me."

His hands froze on her back.

"All of you," she whispered. "Let me see you."

His eyes shut tight, his head pressing into her neck. He breathed. Once. Twice. His erection twitched inside her.

And then he moved.

She was on her back before she could blink, her legs wrapped high around his waist, a whimper leaving her at the sudden jolt of pleasure the movement elicited. His hands came beside her head, his lips taking possession of hers and he pulled out of her almost completely, before suddenly thrusting in, hard.

Felicity moaned into his mouth, her fingers digging into his back, feeling the marred flesh under her hands, and he pulled out before she had caught her breath, pushing in again. Her legs shook around him, her walls trembling as his erection speared in and out of her at a pace that her hips matched without her knowledge. His tongue tangled with her, exploring her mouth as his hips pulled back, snapping right in, so hard they pushed her into the bed on every downward thrust, his unfamiliar size making her walls weep with pleasure, her nipples brushing against his chest, her hands wandering his back, her thighs trembling where they encased him. Her pulse fluttering, her heart pounded in a staccato it never had before, almost bursting as she took him in every time, as her body and soul welcomed him, accepted him inside her, leaving everything open for him to take, and took he did, over and over and over again, repeatedly, a fine sheen of sweat coating both their skins, the heat between them more than the fire that still burned, the friction between them more than the storm roaring outside. Their mouths separated for air and he went straight to her neck.

"Felicity."

The one word, his first word to her, the only word he ever needed to say to her, had her walls clamping onto him, her breath stuttering as the pleasure rocked her body into his. And then his hips sped up. At first just a little. And then more. The pace increased, along with her heartbeat, the heat previously coiled in her belly teetering on an edge she'd never felt before. Just with him.

His hips snapped in and out of her faster than she could keep up, the ardor of his movement, the speed, relenting her own hips useless as she just stayed there and he moved, almost like he was
exercising, each thrust quick and brutal and hard, right inside her, hitting her right there, that spot she'd never had anyone touch. Her eyes closed, vision blackening as the thrusts increased almost to a blur, her breath coming out in loud moans she had no control of anymore, the friction, the fucking friction destroying her as she waited to explode, right there, on the precipice, but unable to.

And then he muttered her name into her skin, putting his weight on one hand and bringing his other down to rub her small nub of a muscle, making her toes dig into his back and pleasure speared through her. His hips never stopped, fucking her into the bed like a wild animal, only his voice chanting her name anchoring her as she clawed at him, a low scream building in her throat, heat spreading throughout her body, his finger rubbing and rubbing and his erection fucking and thrusting and...

Stars burst behind her clenched eyelids, her entire body lifting up off the bed with the force of her orgasm, her hands hanging onto his still moving body for dear life as her walls spasmed around his length repeatedly, milking him, clamping, his name a scream on her lips that had no end.

She was still in the middle of the best orgasm of her life when Oliver suddenly pulled out, flipping her on her stomach, and entered her in one smooth motion, burying himself to the hilt from the back, the new position, the new angle allowing him a depth it hadn't earlier, before he started moving again, making the orgasm continue as shocks after shocks of currents assaulted her body.

Felicity gripped the pillows beside her head, keening as he kept pistoning in and out and in and out of her, his speed never decreasing, his considerable length giving her walls no reprieve. His hands covered hers beside her head, their fingers lacing together, and she felt his entire body covering her at her back, his head buried into her neck, still whispering her name, his legs anchored beside hers.

She felt his cock twitch on a thrust and heat pierced her bones, her chest constricting, her skin over sensitized. She shook her head frantically as she felt another orgasm coming, knowing she wouldn't be able to it. It was too much.

"Too much," she screamed between her moans, gripping his fingers.

His scruff rasped over her shoulder, his voice right next to her. "Let me come inside you, Felicity."

Felicity felt herself clench around him at his low, rough voice. "What?" she panted.

"I've never come in anyone," he grit out through clenched teeth, his lips brushing her lobe. "Let me be yours."

Her heart stuttered for him, at the need in his voice, that need to belong like he'd never belonged, that need to possess like he'd never possessed, the same need filling her senses.

Felicity bit her lip on a loud moan, her eyes closing again, her forehead pressed into the bed, for once grateful for the painful shot she took every three months.

She turned her neck towards him, locking their gazes for a second, before whispering.

"Come inside me, Oliver. Let me make you mine. Make me yours. Come in me."

A deep rumble vibrated his chest, and she closed her eyes, letting the pleasure blacken her mind, knowing she wouldn't be able to stand this.

His hips pulled in and out and in and out as she pushed back, their breaths loud, their noises heavy, their bodies pressed, and suddenly, he bit down on her shoulder in a move so primitive and so wild and so him that everything inside her stilled for a split second before shattering to a million pieces,
her orgasm not exploding but imploding inside her, taking everything she was, everything she would be, everything but him away from her, leaving her heart running, throbbring everywhere inside her body like a caged animal finding freedom, her blood rushing through her veins but focusing on where they were joined, the heat inside her burning her, consuming her whole as she screamed herself hoarse, her lips parted silently when nothing was left, nothing but him, just him, taking her, giving her, destroying her, saving her.

Nothing.

Only him.

She was surrounded by him. She was filled by him. She was a part of him.

"Felicity..."

With a loud shout of her name, she felt him still above her, his fingers gripping hers tight, his teeth raking over her skin.

He came.

He flooded her with his essence, her used walls trembling, her body limp, shaking, tears rolling down on the bed from her eyes.

Him.

She was surrounded by him. She was filled by him. She was a part of him.

Like the storm outside, like the fire inside, he'd consumed her, purified her, resurrected her.

She'd been changing ever since she'd met him. But now she knew she would never be the same again.

She was his. He was hers. For life.

Chapter End Notes

So, what did you think? Please do let me know!

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Declaring

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!

Okay, the response to the last chapter? I pretty much left the galaxy. That's how blown away I was. Seriously, you guys are unreal. I'm so, so stunned and happy that you enjoyed their first time so much. Thank you!

Writing this chapter also made me realize there are only a few more left (probably 3-4) before this story is complete. I'll let you know the exact number by the next one.

Here is the chapter. Enjoy!

Do let me know your thoughts. I love to hear from you.

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A finger stroking her cheek woke her up.

His finger. Even in the haze of slumber, she knew it was his finger. That probably had a lot to do with how her entire body, her very naked body, was pressed to his front, his very naked front. That probably also had to do with the fact that skin all over her flesh was throbbing, little aches from their intense sex marathon last night flourishing in the aftermath of the dead sleep she'd had. And to do with the fact that she could smell him and sex all around them.

She peeked one eye open, seeing the fire in the hearth down to orange embers, keeping the little cabin warm, the darkness outside the window telling her it was still night and the storm had passed.

The rough finger stroking her cheek kept up the rhythm, the touch affectionate, not sexual, and Felicity snuggled back into the warmth of his embrace, her head on one muscled bicep as his chest shielded her completely.

"That night when I touched your cheek," his voice murmured right against her ear, rough from sleep, its husky timbre sending shivers over her body. But she listened silently, knowing how rarely he discussed anything. He continued, slowly, choosing his words like he always did. "I was wearing my glove."

Felicity waited for him to continue, to elaborate, and when he didn't, she whispered. "I remember."

There was silence for a few beats, before he spoke again, just as softly. "I'd never done anything as impulsive before. And that night, touching your skin just seemed like the most important thing. I returned for that, you know. That first night when you fell asleep and I left you in bed, I touched you right here," he stroked her cheek, "with my bare hands, as I've never touched anyone before. And that simply, you were mine."

Her heart stuttered, and she brought up a hand, tangling her fingers with his other one beside her head, squeezing softly, urging him to continue.
"Also, I hate pink."

The random statement, out of the blue, suddenly made her giggle as the image of him wearing her fluffy pink blanket blasted through her mind. She turned her head, grinning, to look at his face, to see his lips curled just a little.

"You never said anything," she chuckled.

He shrugged. "It made you happy."

And just like that her smile disappeared, something softer, more intense squeezing her heart. Never, in all her life, had she imagined the sheer need anyone could've had to make her happy. She arched her neck, pressing her lips to his once, before snuggling back into him, the sound of his breathing against her ear soothing, his finger moving lethargically over her skin, as she rejoiced in the feeling of being so close to him, watching the embers flicker and crackle in the hearth, throwing a soft glow all over the cabin.

"I need you to stay happy, Felicity," he whispered in her ear, his lips brushing against the shell, before he kisses the lobe softly. His words, though, broke her content bubble and sent a frisson of unease down her spine, the memory of him before they'd made love, of his fear, of his promise, suddenly vivid in her mind.

She swallowed, pushing one hand behind her towards his neck, turning her head to look into those blue, blue eyes again. "I am happy with you," she told him, leaving no room in his mind for any concerns.

His eyes softened as he looked at her, the look on his face slightly melancholic. And it made her stomach knot.

Before she could utter a word, though, he leaned down, brushing their lips together, so, so softly it made her tremble. Her hand fisted against his neck, her upper body turned towards him, as he continued to sip from her lips, slowly, gently, almost as if he was savoring her, memorizing her. The thought sent a wave of panic crashing through her, and she pulled back, about to open her mouth when he put a finger over her lips, the same soft, sad look in his eyes.

"Not tonight," he muttered gruffly, his throat tight with something. Her own tightened with emotion, because knowing him as she did, she was pretty certain why he was avoiding talking. It was for his sake as much as hers. Her lips trembling as moisture gathered in her eyes, she nodded silently, pulling his head down again, memorizing his own lips.

She felt his hand wrap around a thigh, stroking her bare skin, and pull it over his hips, opening her to his length. There was no warning this time, no exploration, nothing, as he slipped inside her, slowly. She whimpered against his mouth, her used muscles aching but hungry for him as he filled her, sliding home to her welcoming walls, making her breath catch as she pulled back her head, keeping her eyes on him.

"Let me have this, Felicity," he ground out, thrusting shallowly inside her, as her walls clenched around him, keeping him prisoner just as she wanted to hold him to her.

She nodded again, knowing there was nothing in her he did not already have, nothing he had not claimed. His eyes never heated, just stayed on hers, soft and sad, roaming over her face, taking in her expression even as he moved his hips against hers, in the same languid, soft strokes, his hand coming to rest on her breast, not stroking, not massaging, just laying there. Her walls quivered around him at the exquisite gradualness of his movements, the heat in her body not blazing but fanning out from
where they were joined, not consuming but warm, almost glowing in its intensity.

Their eyes never moved away from each other, her hand resting behind his neck, his on her breast as he moved inside her in shallow thrusts, never pulling out, never hitting hard, just moving, spreading warmth through her body even as her heart cracked at the look in his eyes. There was a finality in his movements, a finality that scared her even as she understood it. A finality that was making them both savor this, remember this, for future, by silent agreement.

Almost like a fever, the pleasure spread, fanned out, and suddenly took her by surprise as an intense wave washed over her, making her eyes close, making her walls grip him, making her sigh. And just as softly, he sighed her name behind her, flooding her as he came, their hips flexing together as aftershocks hit them.

He gripped her body close, holding her tight to himself, staying inside her for a while before suddenly pulling out and getting up off the bed.

Felicity looked at him, her heart breaking, suspicions taking root.

He picked up his discarded clothes, his back to her.

"We need to leave."

And she knew.

She couldn't believe it. Her house. Her old townhouse, which she’d thought would be attacked and ravaged by now, was completely intact and untouched.

Picking up the spare key from under a rock beside the door, she turned it, surprised to hear the sound of the lock, and entered hesitantly. The early morning sunlight filtered in through the drawn curtains, showing the dust mites in the air and the dust covering the place. Scrunching her nose at it, she walked into her kitchen, the last place she'd been in when she'd been in the house, remembering the way she'd left the back door gaping open. It was shut tight, with a padded lock on it which had been missing previously. Come to think of it, all the windows had been tied to a security system beside the front door, surprisingly.

Frowning, she turned to see Oliver enter the house, putting one bag on the island counter, his face completely wiped of all expression. She knew that look. It was his I'm-going-to-fuck-the-world-and-watch-like-a-boss look.

He stood beside the granite top, his hands pushed into the pockets of his jeans, his body seemingly relaxed. But she could see the tension in his arms, see that one vein throb in his, see the tightness in his shoulders. He was anything but relaxed.

He had been that way ever since they'd left the cabin in the dark, trekking silently down to a road where a car had been waiting for them. Oliver had thrown in their bags just as silently and taken the driver's seat as she'd buckled herself in, and started driving, doing nothing to break the tense silence. For hours he'd driven, not once asking her anything, not once inviting her to break the silence. Not until he'd driven up her old street and stopped in front of her old house. And Felicity being Felicity already knew why he'd done that. And the time for breaking the silence had come.

Swallowing the lump in her throat, she unzipped the bag, to occupy her hands, keeping her voice casual.
"Why are we here?"

The tablet on the pile of her clothes, the tablet that he'd always gotten for her because it made her happy, almost choked her with emotion.

"Your house is safe now," his voice came from where he stood, clear of any tone, plain, simple. But she knew him. She knew what he was masking. She was masking the same thing. To make it easier for him.

"Great," she forced a smile on her face. "So, do you leave after breakfast? We can order something."

She felt his surprise as he looked up at her, surprise that she'd bring the topic up so casually. Felicity shrugged at him, keeping up with the casual charade. "It doesn't take a genius to figure it out, you know, which might I remind you I am. And because I am that genius, I know you won't rest till this is behind us."

He didn't say a word. Just looked at her, with his heart in his eyes and Felicity felt a heartbroken smile form on her lips. He was standing exactly where he'd been standing that first time, and they'd come so, so far since then. Closing the distance between them, even as her eyes moistened, she came to a stop right in front of him, tilting her head back to keep their eyes locked.

She placed a hand on his jaw, feeling that scruff against her palm, scruff that had left his mark all over her body, marks that throbbed even now, her heart aching.

"What do you plan to do?" she asked quietly, searching his eyes. He stayed silent, not speaking a word, nothing, just gazing back at her. She would have put up a fight but she knew he wouldn't budge on this. Not when it was their lives, their futures on the line. And she would have put up a fight if she would have been any kind of asset to him at all. She wasn't. In that world, she was a weakness he could not afford to have.

"I wish I could do something to help you," she spoke her mind, rubbing his jaw, a smile trembling on her lips. "But I know I'll only make you more vulnerable. You know that world, you understand that world, better than I ever could. And I understand you. So, it's okay."

His mask cracked a little, the glimpse of his own guilt at leaving her behind, the glimpse of that insane protectiveness in him, more than enough to prompt her on, to make her break the tension.

"No funny business with any harem girls, okay?" she rubbed the side of his neck, as his lips twitched even as his eyes clouded.

"Okay," he rasped in his husky voice, his eyes turbulent, locked on hers, making her realize how hard this was for him. She bit her lip, seeing the blue in his eyes so tense it physically ached her.

"Just promise me one thing."

"Anything," he whispered, the one word holding everything he couldn't say, the word brittle with need.

"Come back to me," the words left her just as her voice shook, her hands holding his face as her lips trembled. "Just come back to me."

Before she could blink, her back was pressed to the door, his forehead pressed against hers, their noses touching as they breathed each other in, his hands tight on her hips, caging her completely.

"I wish I could be selfless enough to tell you not to wait for me," he growled in the air between them,
all masks, all facades, everything crumbling, leaving nothing in its wake but brutal, raw need. "But
god help me, I am not."

His gaze pierced into hers, making her heart race, the ferocity in them nothing like she'd ever seen
before, holding her captive against him.

"I am yours, Felicity. All the way down to my bones, my scars, good, ugly, everything, is all yours.
So, I will come back to you. I just cannot promise how far gone I will be."

Felicity shook with the every word he rasped against her skin, his declaration shaking her to her core.
"Just come back."

"You'll be with me the entire time," he murmured, his eyes softening. "I'll hear your voice guiding
me back to you."

The lump in her throat suddenly seemed too big, her eyes burning as a single tear fell down on his
hand. He looked at her tear for a moment before his lips sipped it away from her eyes, her heart
clenching at the gesture as she gripped his t-shirt, holding him to her, never wanting to let go.

She breathed in deeply, his woody, musky scent, and looked up at him through the tears. Slowly,
quietly, she slipped a piece of paper into his pocket, a piece of paper with her heart on it, a piece of
paper she'd found before they'd left the cabin, for him to hold on to.

She saw the way his eyes completely softened, the slight sense of wonder in them, and suddenly
realized he'd never heard anyone give him a note. He probably didn't even recognize the emotion she
clearly could in him. Standing on her toes, she pressed her lips to his, opening her mouth to his
tongue, taking him in, giving him everything, wrapping her arms around him. He kissed her softly
once, before slanting his mouth solidly over hers, the tenor of the kiss suddenly changing, becoming
more aggressive, more desperate, their lips holding on to the other, both of them unwilling to let go,
knowing that he had to walk out the door the moment they did.

He kissed her in desperation, memorizing every inch of her mouth, his hands memorizing every inch
of her body as hers did the same, like two lost lovers meeting only to part again, the ache, the need,
the desire to stay evident with every breath and every touch of lips, clinging to the other to stay,
delaying the inevitable.

Suddenly, he pulled back. Felicity opened her eyes to see his slightly swollen lips, his eyes tracing
her face one more time, before he pressed something in her hand and stepped away.

Heart thudding, splintering, Felicity looked down at her hand to see a piece of folded paper, just like
the one she'd slipped to him. Chest tight with emotions, she looked up to see him opening the door,
and suddenly it crashed down on her.

He was leaving.

He was walking out that door to do something for their lives with nothing but a kiss and a letter, and
she had no idea when she'd see him again.

"Don't look at me leave, Felicity."

He turned to look at her just once, before she saw the mask fall back into place, his face clearing of
all expressions, his body turning away, shutting the door behind him.

Felicity stared at the closed door for long minutes, knowing she wouldn't let him go if she saw him
leave, knowing he wouldn't be able to go if he saw her watch, frozen to the spot. Knees weakening,
the reality crashing down upon her, even as her body ached from last night, almost as though from a
different reality, she sat down on the floor, and opened the letter with trembling hands, surprised to
realize she was seeing his handwriting for the first time, the bold, masculine scrawl littering the page.
She read the letter once, then again, before tears streamed down her face, her breath hitching even as
a smile lifted her lips, her heart bursting as she read it again.

Sobs wracked her frame even as her heart swelled, her stomach in knots, the letter, the simple letter,
everything.

Felicity,

I've never written a letter before, so I don't know if I am making any mistakes. Fact is, I never had
anyone to write a letter to, and I'm writing this, as I watch you sleep, as much for you as for me. I
remember the last time I disappeared for five days, you told me you were doubting your sanity and
doubting my existence. You need something to hold onto while I am away and so I am attempting to
write you a letter. Also, because I need to know you have something to remember me by other than
memories.

I don't know when I will return, because what I am going to do will not be done quickly. It will take
time and that scares me. Because the more time you are without me, the more I'm afraid I will lose
you. And I cannot. I can live with pain and torture and death but I cannot exist without you. I know
these fears are irrational, because if you had to leave, you would already have by now. The fact that
you haven't constantly surprises me. It also sinks me deeper into you.

You are happiness, Felicity. And I am happy with you.

You are beauty. And your beauty hides my scars.

You are strength. And your strength makes me want to kneel.

And you are life. And my heart beats for you.

But most importantly, you are mine. And I will return to you, because though I have told you all of
this, I still have one thing left to say, one thing that I realized very early but never truly found the
correct word for till recently. I do not know how I will return, as the man who left you on your door
or the man you found in the alley or something much, much worse. I am leaving in the hope, and I
will live with the hope, that you will still see me and bring me back to you. Don't give up on me,
Felicity. Even when I become a monster, find the man.

Because for this man, you are love, Felicity. And I am in love with you.

And I will return because I need to tell you.

Yours,

Oliver

Chapter End Notes
So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Hey everyone!

What are you guys doing to me? Seriously, the response to that last chapter had me gaping at the screen. I could not BELIEVE how much you loved it. Honestly, thank you so much! I cannot tell you how happy I am that you all are enjoying this story. It's coming to a close soon though. Till then, it'll be updated every Sunday as it used to be in the good old days. LOL.

Also, I haven't been able to respond to any of the comments from the last chapter but I absolutely will ASAP. Do leave me those because I adore hearing what you thought.

Anyhow, here is the next chapter. Slightly late for a Sunday but *kicks rocks whistles away*

Hope you enjoy it!

Do let me know your thoughts. I love to hear from you.

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Pain.

It was pain.

The hole in her chest was tied so tight the stitches threatened to rip in the blink of an eye, between this breath and next.

It was a pain unlike she had ever felt before.

It started every morning when she woke up, blinking her eyes open slowly to a bedroom that had become strange to her, to a bed too empty, with memories of muscular arms covering her waist and soft breath tickling her skin as scruff rasped against her neck. It started every morning with a weight in her chest, the weight of remembered kisses pressed to the lobe of her ear from behind, the weight of rare, whispered words making her smile, the weight of big, rough palms sliding under her top and settling on her skin. It started every morning - every, single, morning - without fail, traveling to her chest and blossoming into breaths she took.

She welcomed it.

Every morning, she got up from her bed, happy to leave it be, and went to take a shower after sprinting downstairs. She went to her kitchen and made herself coffee, always aware of that spot in her periphery where boots and clothes had once been dropped. She went to her study and worked on projects, the memory of the time she had left her office late at night and collided into a tall body that had scared the daylights out of her in the back of her mind. She sat down to watch movies, alone, and drifted off to sleep, waking exactly where she had been.
And every night, she picked up that pink blanket and carried it with her to her room, closing her
eyes, wrapping it around her like those arms had been wrapped around her once, and even knowing
that the scent had faded from the soft, mink, she still pulled it up to her nose every night and took a
deep breath. Hints of musk and wood teased her memory again, and she smiled.

That blossoming pain in her chest tightened some more.

And even then, she welcomed it.

And even then, she kept the stitches locked.

She worked on multiple projects for companies, went out with some old friends on weekends, had
dinner with Digg and his family twice a week. She called her mother every Sunday and avoided all
questions that made the hole in her chest peek through those stitches. She smiled and laughed and
steered clear of any questions that made her feel exposed. It hadn't been until late that night, wrapped in
the blanket, that Felicity had pulled the letter out of her pocket, where Digg had seen her touch it.

The letter that sealed the hole. The letter that healed the wound.

In spite of everything, she had not cried. No. After breaking down on her floor that day, she had
picked herself up, dusted herself off, and not shed a single tear. It hadn't felt right, not when she'd
known... No, she'd never allowed herself to think about it.

The hole had needed to be kept closed.

So, she'd not cried. Not complained. Nothing. She'd just stayed in the blanket and in the memories.

She'd not cried.

"Felicity, it's been almost two months since you came back from that trip," Digg spoke quietly, his
eyes a deep, warm brown, the concern in them making her stomach knot.

"So?" Felicity asked, blinking innocently on purpose.
Digg sighed. "So, are you going to talk about him or not?"

Felicity looked around the cafe they were sitting in near his office, taking a small lunch break. Although it had been a business lunch, they had been friends too long for it not to be this casual.

The sun had been blocked out by thick, dark clouds rolling in the sky, the wind whipping outside in a soft frenzy. Two forces of nature with leashed potential waiting to go berserk. It hit too close to home, and while she wouldn't have minded indulging in the thoughts, she couldn't, not until she was absolutely alone.

Felicity looked back at Digg, shaking her head. "There's nothing to talk about."

Digg raised his eyebrows, putting his arms on the dark wooden table and leaning forward, sudden anger flashing in his eyes. "Yes, there is. Who is this guy and where the hell is he?"

The sides pulled apart, the wound opening like a bleeding flower in her chest, tied together by sheer threads of force while still open enough to hurt.

"He is tying up some loose ends," she replied, her voice betraying nothing. When the hell had she gotten so good at pretending? With Digg of all people?

Digg's warm hand closed over hers, squeezing. "Felicity, I'm worried about you. I gave you time but you're killing yourself."

"I'm fine, Digg."

"No, you're not. You've shut yourself in so much I don't even know what to say, scared something will push you over the edge."

The sides pulled apart, stretching the thread taut, so taut they would snap if she even dared to breathe in that moment.

Digg practically shook her hands once. "You need to talk about it, Felicity, or you'll explode. If not to me, then Lyla. Hell, to anyone. Just talk to someone!"

She wanted to. She really wanted to talk. But the one person she wanted to tell everything to wasn't there. The pain in the chest started to become unbearable.

"He is okay, isn't he?"

Fuck. Felicity tugged her hands back, or tried to. Digg's grip on her was iron. Eyes wild, for the first time, her calm demeanor cracking, the letter in her pocket burning like a beacon, calling to her.

Felicity pulled her hands back. She had to touch the letter. She had to feel that paper, the same paper he had touched, the piece of paper that had become fragile at the multiple folds but still held, almost like that hole in her chest. They were both connected, so connected. And the wound was bleeding.

She needed to touch it, to stop the pain that was becoming unbearable.

"Dig, please let my hands go," she begged, her voice slightly frantic and something she herself didn't recognize.

He looked at her for one long minute, before nodding and relaxing his grip. Before she knew it, her hands were shoved into her jacket pocket, a breath of air burning its way through her lungs as she felt the piece of paper against her palms, the coarseness of it against her soft hands a reminder of those rough hands, the hands which had once held the same paper as he'd written the words to her. The words which had etched themselves on her bleeding heart, night after night.
She'd thought to preserve the letter, in case it became too fragile, in case she needed it for longer than she had realized, in case...

She couldn't let herself go of it. It became, over the two months - as she'd gone home before 10 PM night after night, with a fragile hope that was never fulfilled - her anchor. Even now, she'd made it a point to be home before 10. Even now, the intensity of that hope never failed each night she stood on her doorstep. Even now, she woke up in the mornings with that hope, that it would be the day.

It hadn't been the day for two months.

She had never been this girl that she had been for two months.

But then, he had never been that guy either.

That was why the paper, that fluttering piece of paper holding a handful of words, had the power to sew her up. Again and again and again.

She became aware of the way Digg was watching her hand, a sort of understanding in his eyes, before he got up from the chair. Her hand clenched around the letter protectively, even though it was a moot reaction with Digg, but a churlish part of her was possessive of that letter. It was hers. Only hers. Only meant for her. No one was allowed to even see it, even know of its existence. The fact that it didn't bother her that Digg did was only a proof of her love for him.

Digg nodded at her, his hand squeezing her arm once. "Anytime, Felicity. You need to talk, I'm just a call away."

Throat tight, chest tight, her entire body coiled with so much tension she felt she would explode with the next breath, Felicity nodded and watched Digg exit the cafe.

Her hand remained in her pocket as she breathed in slowly, evenly, letting the paper sew the wounds shut, her eyes closing.

He had said he wouldn't be the same when he returned.

She doubted she would either.

Wounds, she realized, sown up again and again and again, left scars.

How in the world it escaped her mind, even for one tiny second, she did not know.

It wasn't until she was out of the car and walking towards the step of her house, the steps where she always paused out of habit, wondering if she would see him behind the tree he had been standing at the first time, or if he would be inside the house like he usually had been, or if he would be on the couch waiting for her with a hot mug of cocoa. It was the moment she habitually paused, almost twenty steps into her walk, that she blinked against the water.

The water that was pouring with a vengeance from the sky, the water that was gushing down her body in small rivulets, the water that had drenched her to the bones.

It wasn't until a split second later that her chest seized as horror filled every single cell in her body.

She started running towards the porch but slipped hard, crashing down on her ass. Her lips started trembling slowly, as her hand slowly made it's way inside the pocket of her jacket, her shaking fingers coming in contact with the wet pulp that had once been paper. Taking it out, as the rain
seeped deeper into her clothes and the wind chilled her blood, she held it in the palm of her hand, the paper that had once been fragile but crisp nothing but mush, it's folds pasted together, the words written inside lost to her forever.

'I need to know you have something to remember me by other than memories.'

Now she didn't.

The fine threads of the wound in her chest broke free, the hole she'd been covering up day after day and night after night for two months suddenly the only point of her existence.

She just stared at the letter that had become her talisman, the letter that had been her anchor, the letter that had been her light.

It had been so fragile, and now it was destroyed beyond repair, sitting in the palm of her hand with raindrops beating down on it.

Her eyes burned. Tears escaped, for the first time in months, mingling with the water flowing down her face as she sat on the ground before the porch, lighting flashing, thunder rolling in the sky above her, the sky that seemed to be crying for her.

The wound wept blood.

For the first time, she allowed the doubts to take over. For the first time she allowed herself to consider, for even one second, that he might not make it back. For the first time, she allowed herself to imagine what her future would be without him. She couldn't. It all seemed blank. She had known exactly what she had wanted from her life for years, and within a few months, everything had been tipped. She had tasted life. She had tasted him. And in doing so, she had made him a part of her, like she was a part of him too.

Two hollow halves, filling each other, becoming whole.

She had never believed in such a thing before she'd met him. And now, the profound ache right in the middle of her chest was proof. The agony of every burning breath was proof. The hiccuping whimpers were proof.

Her chest hurt. Her throat hurt. Her heart hurt.

But she didn't move, didn't howl the pain she wanted to like a lone wolf who'd lost it's mate, didn't bawl at the toll of those hopes dashed inside her everyday. Because he was somewhere, all alone, embracing someone he wasn't, breathing in that darkness for them, for their chance at a future, and she could not give up that hope, not for anything in the world, no matter how many scars it caused and how many wounds never healed. Because he would come home to her. He had to. Theirs was not a normal connection. She could feel his beating heart with every thump inside her. She could feel his every breath carried over the winds to her. She believed she could. Because believing anything else would never let her get up from that wet ground.

She clung to the hope, that hope more fragile than it had ever been, its need for survival more staggering than it had ever been.

She clung to the hope even as her hands clenched around that piece of destroyed paper, even as things inside her tore apart, even as her body shook and noises contained in her chest escaped in an agonized whimper.

The letter was gone.
Her eyes burned. Her body burned. Her heart burned.

Everything burned and the rain never stopped.

The hole never closed after that.

She didn't want it to.

The pain was the reminder of his reality.

Life went on. So did she. But the pain that had once been contained inside her heart was now out in the open.

But the loss of her letter spurred on something else, something that sort of mixed with Digg’s advice, something she started eventually looking forward to.

She came home every night and opened her laptop, switching on her webcam and talked. She pretended he was on the other side, watching it, staying silent like he always did but holding that almost smile on his beautiful face that made the mole at the corner of his lip peek out from under his scruff. She pretended she was talking to him and she told him everything she wished to, everything that had happened in her day - from some asshole businessman to something new Sara did to her elderly neighbors. She recounted memories for him, recording them all for when he would come back, so he could catch up on anything he’d missed.

The pain never came across in those sessions. She was talking to him and he had always made her bone-deep happy.

Sometimes the session went on for an hour if she was feeling particularly chatty. Sometimes just for mere minutes. But it became something she did every night before going to bed, telling him she loved him, telling him she’d see him soon.

And though her hands still went to her empty pockets out of habit right before dropping away, though it hurt so bad on some days the pillow pressed to her chest couldn't alleviate the pain, though she missed those arms around her every single morning, it slowly got better.

The hope and the hurt went hand in hand.

"Felicity, I don't want to scare you but there's someone standing in your backyard."

Katie's words had Felicity shooting up in her bed where she'd been slumbering.

She was out of the bed and rushing across to her bedroom window before Katie could utter another word. The bedroom window had a complete view of her backyard, and her heart hammered as she pushed aside the curtains to see. The entire area was shrouded in darkness, the moonless night sky offering no comfort to her eyes as they searched the small area frantically for a body, the hope in her chest swelling to a level it never had before, not in the two and a half months since he'd gone. The phone was clutched in her grip so tight her fingers started to ache, her eyes scanning the yard constantly.

She saw nothing.

Clinging to that small little flame, Felicity took a deep, stuttering breath, wide awake.
"Katie, I can't see anyone," she said quietly, her eyes never moving from the place.

"What? Wait a second, let me just..." Katie paused, her voice soft and Felicity could feel her neighbor drawing her own curtains aside. "He's not there anymore. I swear there was someone. I'd just come from a bath and seen the guy lurking so I thought I should warn you. But he's gone, I guess."

Felicity stared at the backyard, her heart pounding ardently in her chest, a small tear leaking down from the corner of her eye.

He'd come back. One day.

One of the men she had been designing a software for called her during the day cancelling on their meeting. There had been some sort of an emergency and he wanted to know if he could collect the software from her anytime later. Since she did have meetings at her house, she asked him to drop by and take it later in the day.

Later came way after sunset, after dinner time.

Vaughn, the tall businessman with dark hair and green eyes, dropped by after 8, apologizing profusely for the late hour but the emergency had been unavoidable and the software had to be installed before midnight. There had been no other way. She nodded and opened her door, inviting him in.

"Please sit down," she led him to the study and went to open her drawer.

"I'm fine," he said, standing in the doorway. "I was wondering though, if you'd like to have dinner with me sometime?"

Felicity's head shot up at the words, her eyes widening. "I'm seeing someone."

Vaughn nodded, a wry smile on his lips and took the drive she held out towards him silently. He took the drive, and took a step closer to her and her hackles rose as she stood her ground.

"I believe it's time for you to leave, Mr. Andrews," she said in a firm tone.

He nodded, except he didn't move. "Are you sure you don't wish to go out with me?"

"I said no the first time. I am saying it again. You won't like how I say it a third time," she told him quietly, her heart pounding hard as adrenaline filled her system.

"Look," the man said, taking another step, just a few feet away from her now as she moved back, "I respect you. But I do believe we can be great together. You're smart and beautiful and.."

"Felicity held up a hand, her eyes narrowed as her lips pursed, anger flushing her system. "Respect is accepting the no for what it is. If you respect me, walk out that door."

The drive inside his pocket, the man took another step closer and Felicity felt the table dig into her hips as she took one back, her hands clenched into fists, her eyes eyeing the spare CPU beside her. She'd chuck it over his head if she had to. Dang thing was heavy enough.

"Get out now," she warned him for the last time.

"I just..."
Two things happened all of a sudden, with a strange coordination she couldn't describe. She turned towards the CPU and picked it up, her arms aching from it's sudden weight and turned to face the ass of a man when she froze.

Because she couldn't see them man.

All she could see was the back of another.

The back of another tall, muscular man under a black t-shirt.

The back she knew like her codes, the back she'd scratched and clench and clung to, the back she had nibbled and bit and kissed, the back that was covered in scars that she'd mapped with her eyes and hands and mouth.

Everything inside her crumbled seeing that back, seeing the muscles expand and ripple as he took a breath and exhaled, seeing the muscles tensed and coiled and ready.

The wave of euphoria clashed with such utter ecstasy and such poignant pain in her she gasped. The wave of disbelief mingled with such conviction it was staggering. The frustrations and fears and tears and joy and anger ripples through her body, making her heart pound like a bird who'd seen the door to her cage open, making her blood rush through her body in a way she would not have believed possible.

She saw the back move with breaths, the head never turning towards her, and relief, such sheer, sheer relief, soothed the wounds.

She saw the back move as his hands clenched into fists, the hands that had worshiped and possessed her, the hands that had shielded and protected her, she saw them be and suddenly, in that moment, everything she had been keeping at bay pounced upon her like unleashed hounds, the blow to her system from her own raging emotions so staggering her body shook.

And then, almost as if he knew, he turned his neck, and the CPU fell from her hands, crashing down upon the floor with a loud noise, the parts flying off and hitting her legs as her heart stuttered, her eyes glimpsing that gaze for the first time in lifetimes.

But it was the look in those eyes that made her breath stop in her throat and her heart stop.

His blue eyes.

His cold, dead blue eyes.

There was nothing else in his eyes as he saw her, no pain, no softness, nothing.

Absolutely nothing.

'Don't give up on me, Felicity. Even when I become a monster, find the man.'

The words tattooed on her heart flashed across her eyes, a renewed hope filling her heart. Though she saw nothing in his eyes, he had come to her.

Taking a step towards him, she extended her hand, everything else forgotten.

His eyes never flickered to the hand, never turned away from her own, the intensity of the gaze as staggering as it had always been, hitting her full force in the chest.

She kept her hand uplifted, an invitation, an offering, a plea and murmured the one word she had not
uttered in months, the one word that was the bane of her existence, the one word that was the anchor of it.

"Oliver."

And she waited.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Hey everyone!

Thank you all so much for the stunning response to the story.

Here's the next chapter. Enjoy!

Don't forget to drop me a line with your thoughts. I love to hear from you.

Happy reading!!!

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Her heart stopped.

It was a moment suspended in time.

The clock ticked, unaware of the rapid pounding of blood in her ears, pulsing through her body with every beat of her heart. The sound of her own shallow breaths mingled with that of the other man in the room. The barking of a dog somewhere in the neighborhood broke the strenuous silence.

Her small, soft hand hovered in the air between them, trembling slightly under the waves of emotion coursing through her body. His muscular back stood ramrod straight, his hands clenched into fists, his neck turned just enough towards her for her to keep a hold of his blue, blue eyes with her own. His intent stare left her face, drifting down to where her hand lingered, extended, palm out, towards him.

One breath.

Two breaths.

Three.

He just looked at her hand, with that same blank expression on his face, not a hint of anything flashing over even for a split second.

Her heart stayed stuck in her throat, acid burning her lungs as she waited, and waited, and waited more, for him to even lean forward a bit, just a bit. She was on the precipice to cover the entire distance if he even swayed towards her.

He didn't.

"Um, thank you for the work, Ms. Smoak."

The words broke whatever trance he was under. Felicity saw him tense as he turned around to face the other man, the muscles of his back under the dark t-shirt completely still under his control, not even daring to move without his permission. That control both awed and scared her. A shiver traveled down her spine, watching that back. The last time she'd seen him like this, they had been in
a narrow corridor in a secret compound where she'd been held captive and he'd just killed three men without getting a cut on himself, protecting her.

Swallowing, having no idea of how far gone he truly was in the moment but not willing to risk it, not after all this time, she opened her mouth and addressed the other guy.

"Just get out."

The back muscles flexed as soon as she spoke, and she heard the sound of shuffling feet beating a hasty retreat out of her house. She didn't even want to think about what her client would think or what he'd been about to do. Her entire focus, her entire being, was solely centered on the man standing before her.

As soon as the other man left, the silence permeated again.

Thick, heavy silence.

Broken only by her breathing and the ticking clock.

The subtle lights in her study created shadows over his tall physique, making Felicity stare at it and finally, start to notice the changes that had eluded her before.

His back was more muscled, the raw physicality of him somehow even more amplified from her vantage, the cords of his neck strung taut like a bow. The little hair he had grown over their weeks together was gone and it's place was the buzz cut he had sported the first time she'd seen him. There was a small scar in the back of his head, a scar that hadn't been there before, and her heart sank, seeing the evidence of something she had known he would have been doing. The sudden urge to strip him and search him for other scars overcame her, the chant in her blood to not find any more even as she knew he had more, many, many more that he'd had before. Her entire body just wanted to lean forward, towards him, gravitated to him by the same unknown pull as it always had been.

Except right now, she couldn't. The same instinct that had allowed him his precious silence and secrecy week after week screamed at her to not move an inch, to let him refamiliarize himself with everything. And it hurt. The inability to run to him and hold him to her hurt. The vigorous tamping down of all her other emotions rising to the surface as her eyes burn hurt. The sheer need to touch him, just once- only to know for herself that this was real, that he was real - that sheer, profound need almost pulling her body forward, almost making her hands ache and her fingertips burn, her skin so, so famished for the sensation of his skin pressed against it, her heartbeat pattering and her entire body trembling with the need and her resistance of it - it all hurt.

His back expanded with one long inhale, the muscles stretching the cotton taut, before he turned and walked out of the room, the door gaping open behind him.

Felicity stood there, her heart bleeding, that need, that need for him searing her flesh, her hand curling into the air as it slowly dropped beside her, her head bowing.

Memories assaulted her, of the man who'd pinned her under him in bed and nuzzled her neck, leaving his scruff burning her skin; of the man who'd smiled shyly as he'd cooked for her, feeding her little bites in between; of the man who'd written her a letter when he had trouble using words.

Her lips trembled.

He had come back. That was all that mattered.

'Find the man'.
She'd find the man. He was hidden underneath those cold eyes, buried deep. The fact that he'd come to her was only proof that he was somewhere in there. She had not waited for so long to give up now. She had not held on to that fragile little hope and sealed the hole in her chest night after night to let it all go now. No. He's come to her because she could find him. And deep down he knew that.

With renewed resolve, Felicity marched out of her study, and turned towards the kitchen, her throat parched and tight. Taking a deep breath, she started walking towards the open area, her eyes glued to the closed front door. She hadn't heard him leaving. But then, she knew how silent he could be.

She looked around the entire space, biting her lip, but couldn't see him anywhere.

Blinking away the moisture, pouring herself some water, she lingered near the closed front door, hesitating, not knowing why.

Slowly, carefully, she put her hand on the knob and turned, pulling the door open, and looked out into the dark night.

The streets gleamed from the afternoon rain, the wet asphalt shining under the harsh street lights. Since most of her neighbors were old people and since they went to bed early, most of the houses were already dark. The grass in her small lawn glinted with droplets of rain hanging from their tips like dew drops, the dark of the night cloaking the entire area around her house.

Taking a step onto the porch, Felicity bit her lip and looked around, trying to peer into the shadows, trying to make out a silhouette against some tree, anything. After minutes, when she couldn't, she walked closed her door and walked around the house, just barely resisting the urge to call out his name. The chilly wind sent small shivers over her exposed arms as she came to the back of her house.

And froze.

He sat on the lawn chair she'd dragged a few days ago on the porch, his huge body laid out over the chair, making it appear smaller. His head was leaned back against the headrest, his strength coiled in those seemingly relaxed muscles, his eyes closed as his chest rose and fell evenly. To anyone looking at him, he would appear asleep. But Felicity had seen him sleep. And she knew better than to know he'd be anything but alert out in the open.

Felicity swallowed down the emotion rising in her throat, tightening her stomach as the realization that he hadn't left but just put distance between them sank into her. That was okay. Distance she could handle, for now. It was a start. A good start. A better start than trying to hunt him down and wait for him to come.

His body jerked slightly as the wind hit him and Felicity stared, letting her hungry eyes take their fill of him. His face seemed gaunt, his scruff almost a beard, his lips a flat line even as his eyes stayed closed. She could make out another thin scar on his forearm, running from his elbow to his wrist. Gut clenching, she shook herself out of her stupor and turned on her heels, running back the way she'd come, inside the house, straight up to her bedroom. After a few seconds of rummaging, she ran back down again and opened the back door, the light from the kitchen flooding the porch he lay on.

Swallowing, she took a few steps forward, and saw his body tense even as his eyes remained closed, the fact that he didn't open his eyes to look telling her he knew it was she, and that somehow, even in his state, he trusted her not to do him harm. Taking a deep breath, fueled by that deep, intrinsic trust he had in her, she stood beside him for a second, before draping the warm, pink blanket over him - the blanket that had been waiting for him as eagerly as she had.
His body tensed slightly more but he didn't open his eyes, only his warm breaths against her hands a sign of his life, and for now, she took that and didn't speak.

Tucking the blanket around him, she stepped back and entered the house, leaving the back door completely open, not that it made a difference since he could come in anyways if he wished. But it mattered to her, and she knew it would matter to him.

Leaving the door ajar, she switched off the lights, plunging the house into darkness as she went up to her room, and got into her bed, pulling her pillow into her chest and letting a tear slide down her face.

For the first time in a long time, it was a tear of joy.

Something woke her up.

Felicity blinked her eyes open, her mind immediately alert, and looked around the room, trying to understand what had woken her up.

The slight morning light peeping in through her windows made everything that had happened the previous night rush back to her. She shot upright in her bed, about to throw the sheets off when she stopped.

The pink blanket was draped over her sheets.

Heart hammering at the realization that he'd come into the bedroom to tuck the sheet gently over her, Felicity pulled the said blanket up to her nose, and for the first time in months, smelled the raw, magnificent scent wrapped into it so completely. She inhaled, once, twice, letting that scent, the reality of that scent, seep deep into her, a small smile curving her lips. After taking a few minutes to gather herself, she jumped into the bathroom to freshen up quickly, and then ran down the stairs.

She didn't really know what she'd expected, but a tall, broad hunk of a man quietly sitting on her kitchen stool, staring out the window with a steaming mug of cocoa in the kitchen wasn't it. Stopping, thrown for a curve, she just stared at his profile, at the heavy muscles and the clean lines of his body.

He was still wearing the same t-shirt and jeans, and still not looking at her even though she'd bet her degree he knew she was in the room.

Her insides trembling, not understanding why he had decided to stay while grateful that he had, she took a deep breath and walked forward into the kitchen.

"I'm reheating some noodles from last night. Is that okay?" she asked, her voice light and carefree, keeping her back to him.

She could feel his eyes on her as she moved around the kitchen, opening the fridge and pouring some juice into tall glasses, but when she turned, he was looking away. She almost wanted to roll her eyes and ask if he really thought she wouldn't know. But she didn't, an actual smile flirting over her lips as she unlocked her phone and called Digg deliberately in front of him, knowing that even as he pretended nonchalance, his ears would be glued to every word.

Digg picked up on the third ring, surprise in his voice. "You're calling early."
"Yup," she said, the joy in her voice so genuine she paused for a second, before smiling widely again at the cardboard box. "Just wanted to tell you I won't be coming for the meeting today. How about lunch later over the weekend?"

There was a slight pause, before Digg's warm voice came back. "Sure, as long as you keep whatever's got you so chippy."

Felicity glanced at the silent man across the kitchen, as he still looked outside. "Oh I plan to keep, don't worry. See you later, Digg!"

"Later, Felicity," Digg's smile became evident in his tone.

Everything warmed, she hopped on a kitchen stool across from him and served them both, feeling hungry, really hungry, after days. She dug into her noodles with relish, never looking up at him, her heart leaping and such utter, utter joy filled her every being she almost felt breathless. Just being in presence did that to her. Just knowing he was there, in all his silent glory, did that to her.

She had no doubts that joy would fill him too, maybe slower than it did her, but it would. Maybe it already was. He had always been good at keeping his emotions down.

Almost on her fifth bite, she realized he wasn't eating.

She stopped, looked at his untouched plate, and finally glanced up at him.

He still wasn't looking at her. His steaming mug was untouched as well.

Some of her joy muted but she shook it off.

"Remember Star Wars?" she spoke and saw absolutely no reaction on his face, at all. Gulping down some juice, she pressed on. "I made you watch the entire series in apartment number 4, or was it 5? I can't even remember. Anyhow, the new movie came out a few months back and in all the crazy we totally missed it. And well, I was holding off on watching it till you came back. Now that you're here, there is no way in hell I'm not dragging you with me to see it. You can stay silent and brood and not eat anything all you want but you, me and Star Wars is so happening."

He didn't reply. Didn't react.

He would.

She refused to give up.

She was infuriated.

So, so raving mad.

She didn't know what his deal was and she was at the end of her very, very long rope.

It had been a week since he'd showed up. A week since she'd started babbling to him again, genuinely telling him of things she'd wanted to tell him, avoiding certain glaring topics. And it became a pattern.

He stayed at the house, spending the nights outside on the porch with the blanket, which he'd taken himself the second day without her needing to bring it to him. She woke up every morning with the
same blanket draped over her, and spent the entire breakfast talking to him while he never looked at her, and never ate a bite. And though she did know from the missing food that he fed himself later, it stung. Afterwards, she spent the day working and going out to meet clients, and he stayed at the house. Which had warmed her heart.

The first evening, she'd rushed back home, quelling her fear that he wouldn't be there, to find him in the lawn, chopping a huge block of wood, sweat gleaming down over his back and dripping down on the grass, his muscles flexing under the damp grey t-shirt, his ass tight in those jeans. She'd stood there, gaping, drooling and it had been Mrs. Swanson from across the street, whistling louder than her sixty year old body should have been capable of, that had broken her out of it. Flushed, she'd smiled at her and waved before turning to find him gone.

It had been after she'd entered the house that she'd had shock flood her again. A chunk of wall in her living room had been missing, construction tools and supplies littering the floor. And seeing them, she'd realized. He'd been building her a fireplace. Still shocked, she'd gone up to bed without a word, not knowing whether to take his actions as something which had indicated his intentions to stay or just his boredom.

The next night, half the fireplace had been roughly built.

More the night after that.

It had warmed her heart even as it had stunned her, to return home everyday to find a part of him in her house, making it a home.

And even after all that, he never spoke a word, never looked at her, nothing. He just continued building that fireplace like his life depended on it and continued to sleep outside and continued to eat without her.

Her neighbors had started asking, in their curiosity, about him - old ladies with glinting eyes, old men with approval. Any man who could break logs was a keeper, in their eyes. Felicity had rolled her eyes at that one. Katie, in particular, had been inquisitive, since she'd never seen him or heard of him. Felicity had subdued her attempts to know him, telling her they were taking their time.

But that wasn't why she was mad.

She stood beside him at the mall, a trip she'd realized they needed with all the physical work he'd been doing with his limited wardrobe. She'd asked him over breakfast if he wished to come with her as she went to shop for him. His non-reaction had been the answer, as per usual. So, Felicity had driven out herself and walked in to the men's store where she'd bought stuff for him the last time. And she'd been explaining his sizes to one of the assistants when he'd just shown up, out of the blue, walking right into the store.

Felicity saw the way men stopped in their tracks, intimidated by the sheer aura of danger he carried around him, saw the two men standing beside her swallow as he stopped right next to her. And then he looked at her.

Felicity felt her anger sputter inside her, as she looked at his clenched jaw and his slight glare towards the men, the realization that after all her efforts, after everything, it had been his possessiveness driving him to look at her, his possessiveness which had driven him out of the shadows in the first place a week ago, infuriating her.

Gritting her own teeth, it was she who looked away this time, her tiny frame shaking in all the pent
up anger of over weeks.

"Pack the ones I picked out, please," she told the frightened assistant in a cool, controlled voice, handing over her card, and walked towards the counter without sparing him a glance.

She was aware of him moving behind her, following her quietly, his eyes on her, but she didn't look back, the haze of red making her teeth gnash. She didn't know why she was being so angry, she just knew that she was. And that was it. She was mad and she didn't want to acknowledge him for a change.

Taking the bags and the receipts, she walked out of the store, with clothes and toiletries for him, along with an electric razor and other male stuff. She walked out of the mall, aware of him right in step behind her, and went to her car, dumping all the bags inside.

"Why did you come?" she turned on him, her eyes spitting fire as she locked gazes with him for the first time in days. His eyes weren't the cold, dead blue ones they had been. They were sentient in their own way, looking at her almost cautiously.

But he didn't speak. Her temper flared.

"So is that it?" she demanded. "I just need to talk to a man to get you to look at me? After days of getting tired of listening to my own voice, all I needed to do to get your attention was look at a man? Is that it? And you come out of whatever hibernation ready to thump your chest and claim me?"

He blinked. Just blinked.

With a small cry, her body trembling with her rage at everything, frustrated beyond belief at her inability to touch him, hungry with the need to just hold him, just once, she turned away, getting into her car, and watched him walk to the other end of the lot, towards a black Range Rover. When the fuck did he buy himself a muscle car? And why the hell didn't she know about it?

Frustrated beyond belief, she pulled away from the parking lot, and headed towards the rose gardens, knowing she'd only blow up in his face if she didn't calm down before going back. And she needed to calm down.

With a decisive nod, seeing as he turned back towards the house in the rear-view mirror, she turned left and went in the opposite direction.

Something woke her up again.

She blinked her eyes open, and looked around the familiar room, only to freeze. She wasn't in her bedroom. She remembered distinctly that she'd gone to bed without seeing him again. In her bedroom.

And she wasn't in her bedroom.

She blinked again, removing the sleep from her eyes, and looked around, to realize she was in the living room. Why was she in the living room?

The couch under her was soft like it had always been, the lights switched off and the entire room dark as she lay under the blankets.
He'd carried her down here, blankets and all, and she hadn't even twitched. Shaking her head at herself, she squinted her eyes, peering into the dark room, trying to make out anything. Nothing.

Getting up, tangled in the blankets, including the pink one, she looked around when a sound from her front had her focusing.

A match struck.

A small flame grew.

And suddenly, a fire flared, swallowing the chunks of wood around it, growing, blazing, crackling.

The fireplace. Their fireplace. The one he'd built with his own hands.

And he sat before it on his haunches, prodding the embers, making them burn, just like he had at the cabin, right before he'd walked over to her. Her heart started hammering painfully, as she watched his back muscles flex over and over again as his arm moved, the warmth of that fire filling the room, cocooning itself around her.

Her chest heaved as she saw him get up and turn, his huge body a silhouette against the fire at his back.

Their gazes locked.

And he started walking. Towards her.

Heart pounding, her hands fisted the blanket pooled around her, tension cackling with the fire in the air, the knowledge of the last words she'd screamed at him, the knowledge of not knowing what was going on in his head, completely making her pulse throb everywhere in her body, the blood rushing across her system like wildfire through a forest, consuming her, thrilling her.

Renewing her.

He stopped just inches from her and she tilted her head back completely, not daring to blink lest the gaze be broken, not able to read anything in his eyes at all, not being able to reach across the inches and touch his warm flesh. Her fingers tingled with the need and she curled them in her palms, keeping that need at bay like she had been for weeks, starving but holding it together.

His eyes closed. She almost whimpered at the loss.

And then he raised his hand.

And put his finger.

On her cheek.

Her heart stopped.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)
Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
She was tired. So, so tired.

Felicity stared at her reflection in the mirror above the sink.

She saw the shadows under her eyes, saw her pale face, saw her blue irises. She just looked like she'd had a bad night, like she hadn't slept properly. Fact was, she hadn't slept at all.

She was tired.

She'd waited for him for months, long, excruciating months. And though he'd come back to her, he still hadn't. Felicity realized she was still waiting.

He'd taken her down five nights ago, touched her cheek, and she'd thought he was ready. She had felt that hope flutter in her heart as he'd looked at her and kept his finger on her cheek. She'd thought he was coming back to her. Completely.

He hadn't.

He'd left her on the couch, warm and alone in front of the fireplace he'd built, and for the first time, he'd entered the guest room downstairs. He'd made the house his own, moved into one of the guest bedrooms and taken the blanket with him. The next morning, he'd started eating with her even though he still remained as distant as he'd been, not looking at her, not talking.

It was almost two weeks now. And still, she kept smiling and hoping, happy to see him with her, happy to have him with her. She knew he would come back, with baby steps. He'd already started taking those, and he would come back. She never let herself lose that hope. Except when she was alone.

She saw moisture fill her eyes in the reflection, her heart clenching as her lips trembled. She pressed them together tightly, ignoring the tightness in her throat, locking her breaths down. He was downstairs, doing something on a laptop he'd brought with him. She had no idea when he'd bought that too, just as she didn't know when he'd bought the Range Rover than now sat beside her own little car. She had no idea of what he did and what he thought. And she couldn't sleep anymore. The stress was killing her. The waiting was exhausting her. She was coming apart at the seams, and he was right there and he couldn't do a thing about it.
Air. She needed air. Alone.

Closing her eyes, she took a deep breath and walked out of the bathroom, pulling her sneakers on below her jeans. The sky was dark outside, the roads empty near midnight. She didn't care.

Taking her phone and sliding it in her pocket, she took the house keys and walked down the stairs to the door.

The hole in her chest seemed to grow bigger and bigger with every step she took, her throat tightening, but she kept her head bent low, knowing he was sitting on the couch with the laptop. And though she owed him no explanations, she knew the way he was, he would go crazy if she left without a word.

Swallowing, without looking at him for the first time since he'd come back, Felicity opened the main door.

"I'm going out for a while."

Her voice shook slightly but she left without glancing at him, even though every inch of her body urged her to. She resisted and walked out towards her car, quickly getting inside and reversing out of the driveway, pulling on to the road. As she turned the vehicle, she saw him standing at the window, watching her.

A tear escaped her eyes. She wanted to stop the car and walk inside. She wanted to put her arms around his neck and pull him into her body. And then she wanted to cry while he held her and whispered her name in her hair. Every single fiber in her whole being wanted that, right in that moment, more than anything else in the world. She was starved for his touch. Starved for his gaze. Starved for his affection.

And he had no idea.

Sobs shook her frame as she let them out in the privacy of her car, driving slowly away from where she wanted to be. Was he as starved for her as she was? Did he hurt to hold her as much as she did? He never looked at her, never touched her, never showed anything but tensing of his body when she came too close.

Felicity cried loudly, tears rolling down her cheek, her nose blocking as the sobs shook her completely. She pulled over on an empty stretch of road and put her face in her hands, her shoulders shaking, everything inside her that she held together for him breaking and shattering like shards of glass on the floor. The woman she'd been before him would have scoffed at her right now. The woman she was now could not remember the woman she'd been before. She knew he'd given all that he was to her before he'd left. She could not fathom what he'd done in those months and how much he'd survived to somehow just come back to her. And he had. She was so grateful for that.

But sometimes, just some moments, things started taking their toll. Some moments she needed him but couldn't have him. Those moments, increasing in frequency with the proximity over the days, had started to chaff inside, slowly, gradually, until she was rubbed raw and bleeding from her heart.

Felicity wiped her eyes, and started the car again, driving aimlessly, knowing she couldn't go back right now, not like this. Seeing her like this might undo whatever progress he'd made with her, and she couldn't have that, not after everything.

Somehow, after half an hour of no traffic at that hour, she ended up at a movie theater in the city. Swallowing, Felicity parked her car, checked her phone and bought herself a ticket for an action
After two hours of watching a mindless movie she didn't even remember the plot of, her eyes burning but empty of tears, burning with the need to sleep, Felicity drove back home at 3 in the morning, completely exhausted. Her battery had died at some point, and she'd been too depressed to care. For two hours, she'd let herself be consumed by that pain, let herself shatter, before picking up the pieces and getting herself back together in the semblance of herself.

She turned on her street, just wanting to get inside and up into her bed before starting tomorrow with better spirits. For both of them.

Except the moment their house came into view, Felicity blinked in surprise.

It was lit up completely, unlike what it usually was at this time of the night, all the lights in the house turned on.

But it wasn't that which stunned her. No.

It was him, on the porch.

Pacing.

In all the time Felicity had known him, she'd never seen him pace. She'd seen him with the stillness of a hunter and seen him move with the grace of a predator. She'd seen him use control on every muscle of his body and not waste a single movement when he could be saving them. She'd seen him relaxed and plaint too.

But she'd never seen him pace. Like a caged animal. He'd never been a caged animal.

Except now. As he paced. Back and forth on the porch, his movements agitated, hands rubbing over his head before falling to his sides.

The moment she turned the car in the driveway, his head shot up, clear, sharp eyes on the vehicle as she parked it. Felicity turned the engine off, and saw him stride down the two steps, right across to where she got out.

His blue eyes locked on hers, blazing with something, in a way she hadn't seen since he'd come back.

Her breath hitched, her feet glued to the spot as the keys dug into her palms, her grip on them tightening, her heart pounding as he crossed the distance between them with quick, long strides, his gaze never moving from hers, his eyes that same electric blue they had been the first time she'd seen him.

And then she remembered she'd been crying. And her eyes were swollen. She couldn't let him see that, not if it could damage their progress.

She broke their gaze, hoping he hadn't been able to make out the swollen red-rimmed eyes from the distance and in the darkness, and looked down, locking the car.

She felt his body in her personal space before she saw him. Keeping her eyes down, she saw his feet
in shoes, saw the hem of his jeans, and realized he'd changed clothes from when she'd left. Where had he gone?

Before she could follow up on that thought, he put his hands beside her shoulders on the car, crowding into her space, caging her in.

Her eyes burned harder, some moisture from the recesses coming forth to hang on her lashes as she kept her face down so he couldn't see. Her hands burned with the need to touch the flesh she could see right in front of him, his warmth so, so tempting, so inviting, everything inside her bending towards him to just encase itself in that warmth, the woody, musky scent that was purely him surrounding her, wrapping itself around her. This was the closest she'd been to him in months. The closest she'd been since he'd returned. And yet she'd never felt farther away.

She could feel his breaths over her hair, feel his quick exhales, feel the tension rolling off him in waves.

And then she felt him tremble.

Surprised, Felicity raised her eyes to his chest, to find it heaving as he breathed in and out quickly, the muscles in his arms quivering as he gripped the car tightly under his hands, almost as if to keep himself there. The last time she'd felt him react like this, they'd been in an underground cave in a tub and he'd broken down in her arms after rescuing her.

Felicity breathed in deeply, the need to touch him in every single cell in her body so acute it hurt.

And then she felt him.

Pressing his head against her lowered one.

A shiver wracked her frame her eyes closed, a tear escaping the corner and sliding over her face. He never saw her tear, never raised her face, never moved her at all. He just stood there, keeping her between his arms, his body away from hers, only touching her where their heads were pressed together.

They stood like that for long, long minutes.

And Felicity felt him still like he usually was, the caged animal who'd been pacing on the porch pacifying somehow, the agitation being replaced by his usual neutrality. She didn't know if it was better or worse. She just knew that the knots in her stomach never loosened, the weight on her chest never really came off, the beat of her heart never stopped drumming in her ears.

And she could feel him slipping back into his mode.

God, she was so tired.

Keeping the urge to scream and pull her hair under wraps tightly, Felicity didn't move when his breaths evened out and he stilled before her.

And pulled his head back.

She knew he was waiting for her to look up at him. She knew at any other time, she would have. She would have looked at him, locked gazes with those magnificent blue eyes that said so much, and taken that slice, keeping it close to heart. But right then, in that moment, she just couldn't.

She was raw. Aching. Bleeding. And she knew if she looked up right then, only to have him look
away in moments, she wouldn't be able to keep it together. She had to keep it together. For them.

So, she kept her face down, her eyes trained on his big feet and dark shoes, noticing the distance he kept between their feet as well.

She stayed trapped between his arms for long minutes, never looking up, never touching him, never doing anything except breathing, slowly, in and out, through her tight chest.

One of his hands moved-

Felicity took in a breath, ready to go to the house.

-and came up to brush her cheek.

No. No. Not like this. Not because she wasn't looking at him and he wanted to make her look.

His huge hand cupped her jaw tenderly as the rough pad of his thumb brushed across her wet cheek. Her lips trembled as she pressed them together, swallowing down the tightness in her throat over her hammering heart, the wind picking up speed around them, chilling her.

She felt the pressure he exerted on her face, raising it up, and she closed her eyes completely, knowing she didn't have it in her to lock gazes with him right now only to have him revert back. Her neck tilted back as he raised her face up to his own, and she kept her eyes shut, keeping the moisture inside, the puffiness, the redness, nothing visible to him.

She could feel his eyes rove over her face, feel the caress of his gaze on every inch of exposed skin that his fingers held quietly, feel the quiet breaths exhaled over her flesh. She kept her hands fisted by her sides, her keys painfully hurting her palms, and kept her eyes shut, not giving in to the urge. Her jaw trembled once, and his grip on her face tightened as he felt it.

She felt him tug her face a little, as if silently urging her to open her eyes.

She wanted to. She really, really did. But she couldn't.

Instead, as the bleeding inside her grew worse, each drop sapping her of everything she was, Felicity pulled her head away from his hand.

Or tried to.

He refused to let it budge.

Her lips pinched together, anger stirring inside her. Now he decided to hold on?

She opened her mouth, and almost said 'let me go' before she stopped herself, rephrasing.

"I want to go inside."

He didn't say anything. Not that she really expected him to. At this point, if he uttered a word, she'd dance naked on her roof. Or maybe not.

He didn't let go of her face either. Waiting her out. Waiting for her to open her eyes and see him. Nope. Not today.

"I said I want to go inside."

His grip loosened on her jaw enough for her to pull out of his hold. She turned away in the next
breath, jogging towards the house with the last vestige of her strength. She knew he was walking behind her, but she didn’t turn, just entered the door and dropped the keys in the bowl, before rushing up the stairs to her room.

And for the first time since he’d come back, Felicity closed the door.

"Yes, I'll have it mailed by Friday evening," Felicity spoke into the phone, rubbing her tired eyes.

Her client agreed and cut the call, and Felicity put her phone down on the table, staring at the bowl of soup in front of her.

Something had changed.

Something had happened to him last night. She just didn't know what.

After spending another night tossing and turning, sleepless and even more exhausted than she'd been, Felicity had managed to drag herself out of bed and into the shower. The cold water had helped awaken her a little, but the stress of the past few days, weeks, hell the months, seemed to have been crashing down upon her all at once. Her body had ached in muscles and bones, and all she'd wanted to do was sleep for endless days at a stretch.

But that hadn't been a option. So she'd come down the stairs in the morning, her hair pulled back into a low ponytail, in leggings and a loose t-shirt.

And that was when she'd sensed the change.

He'd not turned when she'd come down. He'd not spoken. But he'd tensed slightly, and continued to cook. It had been the first time he'd cooked since coming back. And Felicity had stared at that back, stunned, a wave of memories washing over her, of multiple apartments and a life on the run, but with his shy smiles and soft words. Her heart had ached more than her body had, but by that point, it had been bruised, by her own self.

She'd not said a word, hadn't had the energy to, and simply taken a seat at the table, pulling her tablet and phone out and checking up on her mails.

She'd been in the middle of calling a vendor when he'd pushed the bowl of steaming chicken soup across to her silently, as he'd taken the seat across from her.

She'd not looked up at him, but slowly stirred it, blowing on it to cool it down.

And then she'd felt his eyes on him.

It had been hours since then. He'd gotten up, gone out for a while to do god knew what, and returned with some supplies, before taking his seat on the couch with his laptop. She'd gotten up, reheated the delicious soup and sat down with the second bowl.

And all the while, she'd been aware of him watching her.

She had never glanced at him. Not once.

And something had changed.

Because his eyes seemed to be checking up on her one second, as if reassuring himself of her
presence, and seemed to be just watching her the next. She'd been gazed at by him long enough to differentiate his gazes. She knew them. Which was why she knew something had altered last night. She didn't know if it had been her going out that late which had triggered it, or her absence for two hours, or her refusal to give him what she had been previously - her eyes. Or if it had been the fact that she'd closed the door to him. Or a combination of them all.

But for some reason, he was watchful of her.

Felicity didn't really let it bother her at the moment. All she wanted to do was crawl into a hole and sleep. Her joints hurt, her eyes burned, her head pounded.

She needed to sleep.

Picking up the empty bowl, Felicity pushed her chair back and stood up, and a wave of dizziness washed over her, stars dancing in front of her eyes as the world spun.

She gripped the table beside her, the hand holding the bowl shaking as her body disintegrated on the inside, coming apart and shattering away from how she'd pieced it together. She swayed on the spot, the energy in her hand deserting her and the bowl slipped from her fingers, crashing down loudly on the floor, shattering into a hundred pieces that flew everywhere, just like the pieces on the inside.

Her eyes blinked at the noise, going to the couch, to see him running towards her, his eyes ablaze with something.

The grip she had on the table loosened, her knees quivering as her body slowly shut itself down from the exhaustion, and she tilted sideways, right towards the pool of glass on the floor, knowing it would hurt but unable to stop her fall.

She fell down, her body almost touching the floor when a hand cushioned the back of her head, and another came around her to under her knees, lifting her up before she had even touched the ground.

He always did move fast.

Dazed, she blinked her eyes once, twice, to finally see him peering down at her, with stark terror in his eyes, the naked fear making her heart clench.

She tried to find the energy to move her lips and tell him she just needed sleep, but couldn't.

Suddenly, she couldn't even find the energy to stay awake.

And in the last moment before she closed her eyes, she heard his voice, cracked, husky, rough with disuse, but home.

She heard his voice, pleading, begging, trembling.

And all he said was one word.

"Felicity."

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.
Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER: @dorky06
Hey everyone!

So, this story is drawing to a close. Just a few chapters left now. I can't tell you how much your responses are giving me life! Keep the love coming, y'all! It's amazing :D Thank you so much!

ALSO NOTE : This chapter begins with Oliver's POV and then switches to Felicity's halfway. Hope you enjoy it!

Don't forget to let me know your thoughts. I love to hear from you!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Oliver,

I haven't written notes like this since school, so I'm a little rusty, but then I don't think you've ever had notes like this. Somehow I can't picture little assassins exchanging notes over class. Not the point. The point is, I don't know what you are going to do, but I can imagine it will make Game of Thrones look like a TV show in comparison. Which it is. Sorry, I'm rambling. I'm nervous. I don't think I've ever been this nervous in my entire life. So, I can only imagine how nervous you must be too.

That's why I'm writing this. So that when the going gets a little tough, you can sneak this out and know I am here. I am right here. Exactly where you left me, waiting for you to finish kicking ass and making sure our future is safe. But at any point if it seems that it's too much, that you cannot accomplish it alone, don't you dare stay there and try and be a hero.

Come back. I'm ready to live my entire life on the run with you if that's what it takes, changing
apartments and living out of bags. I'm willing to go anywhere you take me, because of a very simple thing. You are my home, Oliver. You, with your amazing cooking and those soft smiles you give me. You are home.

And I am yours. So come back to me. Do whatever it takes, but come home.

I don't care who you think you are. I don't care how far you think you're gone. I don't care what you have to do, but you haul that ass right back to me.

I'll be here, waiting, no matter how long it takes.

Come home.

Also, I love you.

Happily and only yours,

Felicity

It sliced through his skin.

Every drop.

*Drip. Drip. Drip.*

Blood.

It sluiced through his skin.

Every drop.

*Drip. Drip. Drip.*

Rain.

It cut and speared and slashed.

But nothing inside him moved. Nothing had moved for a long time. It was only in some place deep, deep inside him that something soft glowed, something that he didn't dare bring closer to the surface. It was his to protect, his to keep, his to nurture.

His.

*Her.*

He stood beside the tree like he's stood a long time ago, just a shadow lingering in the dark night, watching the light he couldn't touch. The blood flowed through his body painfully. The rain slammed against his skin painfully. But he stood, his eyes on the figure of the small woman on her knees, curled in on herself, sobbing out to the sky as her hands gripped pieces of wet paper.

The paper that held his touch, his words, his heart.
He felt the hollow in its place howl with her, the ache that had never truly left snapping into him with every drop of rain hitting his skin, the cold touching him, seeping into him, only a small kindled flame tethering him to the spot.

He kept his eyes on her, the man he'd stifled inside him rising like a chained animal scenting freedom, thrashing against his bars to run to her. He stayed on the spot, his hand gripping the rough bark of the tree, the wood anchoring him momentarily, the pain harboring him temporarily. He stayed on the spot.

He watched.

Watched every single line of her face. Watched the curve of her torso. Watched her lungs rising and falling with life. Watched the tight grip of her fingers on the paper.

His own fingers tightened on the tree.

And then she raised her head to the sky, her eyes closed, her mouth open in a silent scream, before a sound wrenched out of her. A sound that wasn't a howl of agony, that wasn't a cry of devastation, that wasn't a scream of pain. It was an amalgamation of all three. He had never heard that sound in all the deaths he perpetrated. That wasn't the sound of just death. It was the sound of something much, much worse. It was the sound of loss of life.

The sound came again.

His hand tightened on the bark.

Blood seeped out of his palm, mixing with the rain, a trail of red washing down onto the grass.

It sliced. It sluiced. It cut.

Not the blood. Not the rain.

But the sound.

Her sound.

He was cold. So cold. Cold like he'd never been before.

He burned. Burned like he'd never burned before.

The man continued to thrash, awake, alert, her scent etched upon his soul, her sight glued to his sight.

He kept the man leashed, uncertain of who he was, uncertain of who he himself was.

*Oliver.*

A memory ghosted over him, ready to trigger others. He resisted. He had to.

That flame had to be protected at all costs. He could feel it flaring brighter, burning him from the inside, as everything outside remained cold.

He sat outside with his back against the tree, the same tree that had sucked his blood into its roots, memories of deaths he had accepted and blood he had shed hanging over him in the night, his eyes on the soft lights in the house.
Those lights beckoned something deep, deep inside him. Deeper than the flame. Deeper than the man.

He could see her silhouette against the window, shoulders slumped with defeat, and the hollow where his heart had once been ached upon the sight.

The man whispered at him to get up and cross the distance, to take a hold of her in his arms and feel her flesh against his. He resisted.

The man screamed to take a hold of her face, to let her warm him, to accept the heat of her existence unconditionally. He resisted.

And stayed against the tree.

So cold.

Yet burning.

Red.

He saw red.

There was someone inside her house. A male.

There had never been any man in her house. That was his right, and the right of the man he'd caged. The man rebelled violently at the sight of the stranger. As did he.

He could see the male through the window, see his slow steps, see his predatory stance.

He stayed outside, watching, waiting.

And then he saw her shiver. From fear.

He lunged in.

She was no prey. She was his.

He bared his teeth to the male, seeing red, seeing death, his hands aching to feel the snap of the bones and the wetness of blood. He inhaled, scenting the male's scent over hers, in her house, and the fire reared its ugly head, flaring through his flesh, seeping through his bones.

He could see the male turn pale, see him step back.

Red.

The blood roared in his ears.

And then everything froze. Ice touched him. The male's death was determined.

Red disappeared. Blue took over.

"Oliver?"

The flame flickered. The man roared. The walls shook.

He knew turning would make the man more uncontrollable. He knew turning would fan the flames.
He knew turning would crack the walls.

He turned.

*Blue.*

Deep, soft blue.

He saw blue.

He saw *her.*

It was the blanket.

The blanket that she draped cautiously over him, like he would bolt. He wouldn't. The man had promised her he would return. He had delivered. She had promised to bring him back. He let her.

He smelled the soft flowery smell, dewdrops on the grass, spices from the house. He smelled her, like soft, warm, languid breeze after a destructive storm. He kept his eyes closed, as her small hands tenderly put that blanket over him, the same way she had ages ago, when he had been a stranger invited into her home.

He was the stranger again, the stranger who knew her better than he knew himself, the stranger who had claimed her like he hadn't claimed himself, the stranger who had fulfilled the one promise he'd made to her.

*I'll always come for you.*'

He had.

He had come for her, to her.

And she was still inviting him, leaving her doors open, her house open, her heart open.

And somehow, wrapped in a pink blanket, in their pink blanket, he didn't feel so cold anymore.

"Oliver..."

The chains loosened.

"Oliver!"

The man responded.

"Oliver?"

The ice retreated.

*Oliver.*

With hope, with resignation, with triumph, with defeat.

*Oliver.*

With anger, with pain, with tears, with smiles.
Oliver.

His name.

A prayer she repeated every chance she got.

A promise she kept with every breath.

A reminder she etched into him.

Oliver.

Who he had been. Who he was. Who he had to become. Again.

Oliver.

Her Oliver.

"Oliver, are you listening?" she huffed for the fifth time in a row.

He was listening, to every word, every breath, every heartbeat of hers.

He wasn't looking, but he was listening. As was the man.

He was responding. As was the man.

To "Oliver."

Panic.

It started the moment she left without looking at him, only to disappear without a trace. The tracker he had put in her phone was dead. The man inside was fanatic. He was panicked.

He searched.

Searched and searched and searched.

She was nowhere to be found.

The panic worsened. Thoughts invaded.

He had been her home. He hadn't been home since returning.

She could have left. He had seen her defeat, seen her exhaustion, seen her agony.

She could have left - tired and pained and sick.

She could have left - to feel away from him, because he didn't feel, didn't make her feel anymore.

He searched some more, the man pacing in his cage. He was frantic himself.

In the dark of the night, she could have left him just as she had found him.

In the dark of the night, she could have gone to not return.

The hollow of his heart started to bleed.
This was what she felt every night she ran back to see him. This was what she felt everyday when he disappeared. This was what she felt.

The man thrashed again, wanting out, wanting to hunt. He had searched already.

She could have... but she hadn't. She returned.

But didn't look at him. She didn't look at him. She locked her door.

She was at the end of the rope tied around his neck.

He panicked.

Twelve hours.

She'd not woken up for twelve hours.

For the first time in ages, he felt the hollow of his heart fill with something he hadn't felt for a long, long time - fear. Utter fear. The doctor had told him it was mere exhaustion and sleep would cure her. He knew it wouldn't. He'd seen the tears she'd tried to hide, seen the pain she'd masked with hope, seen the defeat she'd swallowed everyday. It had all been for him.

Him.

He hated the man for causing her this pain, for making her strong, stubborn self collapse. But then he stopped in that hatred. Because she loved the man. She waited for the man. Even now, as he sat with her.

Twelve hours, and counting.

The clock ticked somewhere in the house.

Tick tick tick.

She breathed slowly, peacefully, her eyes sunken in her colorless face.

He sat alone in the dark by the window, his eyes on the rise and fall of her chest, never daring to blink lest she stopped breathing.

His chest rose and fell, in sync with hers.

She'd not opened her eyes.

She had to open her eyes.

Tick tick tick.

Soon.

Tick tick tick.

He needed to see her eyes.

'Oliver.'

He needed to hear her voice.
'Come home.'

He was home. He needed her to wake up.

'Also, I love you.'

She was life. She had to wake up.

'Oliver.'

The man snapped the chains, breaking them.

'Just come back to me.'

"Come back to me," he whispered in the dark room.

Silence.

Tick tick tick.

Twelve hours and counting.

(Felicity)

Her body refused to move. The good, lazy kind of refusal she hadn't felt in a long, long time. A yawn escaped her as she blinked her eyes open, stretching languidly, feeling every joint in her body ache in that good way. A smile lifted her lips. She'd missed this feeling, this feeling of oversleeping and waking with a very happy body overdosed on happy dreams. She'd missed being able to just stretch and roll over in her bed...

She rolled over, the bed suddenly seeming too big. Empty.

She'd missed some things more. Her chest tightened. She turned her neck, staring at the ceiling for a moment, seeing the shadows made by the tree outside in the pale moonlight. A soft wind caressed her bare arms, and she turned her head towards the window with a sigh, only to have her breath trapped in her throat.

He sat there.

Under the window, on the floor. Just sitting, alone in the darkness, watching her.

He was watching her.

For the first time since coming back, he was watching her.

Her memories did not come close to the intensity of that singular focus, did not do justice to the unnerving gaze of his. Those beautiful blue, blue eyes, haunted with so many shadows but blazing so much brighter than them. She'd missed those eyes. She'd missed that gaze.

Slowly, carefully, she pushed herself up onto her elbows, her heart pounding frantically as she kept their gazes locked after ages. She wanted to ask him why he sat there. She wanted to invite him up into the bed that was too big without him. She wanted to thank him for taking care of her. She did none of those things. She didn't dare breathe wrong, afraid she would break whatever this was, this
fragile, fragile thing that was just tottering, learning to walk again.

It took her a few seconds to realize she'd actually stopped breathing.

Taking a deep breath, feeling the air burn its way through her lungs, she exhaled and broke their gaze. She had no idea why he was willing to look now, and till she did, she wasn't going to exhaust herself again. Collapsing once was enough to last her a lifetime. She never wanted to feel that low again.

Shaking her head, she pushed the sheets off herself, and hopped down from the bed, surprised to note she was wearing a t-shirt of his. Just a t-shirt of his. He'd changed her clothes? Biting her lip, she turned left towards the bathroom, pushing her feet into slippers and walked towards it without sparing him a glance. She needed to freshen up a bit before dealing with him and his brand of surprises.

Quickly entering the space, she switched on the light and freshened up, before turning out the light again and walked out.

And stopped after two steps.

Black.

The room was pitch black.

The window was closed and heavy curtains drawn.

Everything was dark, so utterly dark she couldn't see her own hands.

Breaths fastening, Felicity stood glued to the spot, her chest heaving as she looked around, trying to see but completely failing to, her residual fear of darkness trying to take hold of her but unable to because she knew he was there, right there, somewhere in the room with her. She could hear his soft, steady breaths, smell the woodsy scent of his flesh, feel his presence close to hers.

But she couldn't see.

Her body tingled, a slow shiver wracking her spine, making her even more aware of the single piece of short fabric covering her body.

She could have called out his name, said something completely awkward or made an innuendo. But she bit her lip and stayed silent, aware that this, whatever this was, was important, and she didn't want to do a thing to break it.

Inhale. Exhale.

In. Out.

She swallowed, getting antsier and antsier with each indrawn breath.

And just as she was about to take another step forward, she felt it. The rough pad of his finger, slowly stroking her cheek.

Her breath caught, heart stopping, before thudding against her chest, loud and wild, her eyes trying to see him as the warmth of his body invaded her personal space, his scent getting stronger, his breaths washing over her face in that familiar way she'd missed so much. His finger traced her cheeks, over and over, before moving up her eyebrows and coming back to her cheeks, tracing them
gently, almost as if memorizing them again.

And then it stopped on her lips.

And it hit Felicity, in that moment, that this was exactly what she had done that night months ago during the black out. She had taken courage and traced his face with her hands before tasting his lips for the first time.

Her heart started to pound harder, her lips trembling against his finger. He felt the tremor, and lifted his finger. Her lips parted.

She waited for his finger to come back.

She waited, her chest heaving, breasts heavy, nipples pebbled, heat flushing her body in this way in months, arousal licking deep into her belly, making her clench her thighs together. And he hadn't even touched her.

His thumb touched her lower lip, the rough pad brushing over it once, twice, soft, harder, and the breath she'd been holding escaped her in a silent gasp. She heard nothing but her own breaths, her blood pounding in her ears, and the clock ticking somewhere.

He moved his thumb over her lips, tracing them over and over again, circling her entire mouth just on the lips, never dipping the digit inside even as her lips parted, never letting her suck it in even as she touched it with her tongue, tasting his skin after so, so long. His other hand suddenly speared into her hair, fisting handful of it in his grip and tilting her head back completely, her face up, open, vulnerable to his.

His thumb continued tracing her mouth and she felt each and every circle deep in her belly, her walls clenching with each circle, fire licking across her lips, making her mouth burn for the taste of his. She went on her toes and tried to raise her mouth to his. His hand in her hair tightened, keeping her pinned in place, the warmth of his muscles searing her own skin. She gasped as that infernal thumb circled her mouth again, just on the lips, driving her crazier and crazier, winding her tighter and tighter. Her toes curled in the carpet and she pulled her head back to bite her lips and send some sensation into them. Or at least she tried to. She couldn't move, not an inch. His hand in her hair kept her on the spot, the thumb of the other writing madness with every stroke.

The fire coiled between her thighs, pooled in her mouth, and spread out all over her body, the flames fanned with every rub of that rough skin against her soft, swollen lips.

She'd never needed to be kissed as she was then. She'd never been so ready to be kissed as she was then. She'd never needed his mouth like she did right then.

"Kiss me, damn it!" she demanded roughly, barely recognizing her own voice, smoky with lust. Her eyes closed, she waited.

The thumb stopped on her lower lip, her mouth open.

Her heart hammered chaotically, her hands going up behind his neck, feeling, finally, finally feeling his skin against hers. The tightly stitched hole in her chest closed a little and she inhaled deeply, letting his scent wrap all around her, letting her fingers explore the corded muscles of his neck she knew like the back of her hand, the warm muscles healing her in a way nothing could have. He had come to her. He had watched her. He had walked over to her. He had initiated this intimacy with her. He was slowly coming home.

Felicity felt a small smile lift her lips, a smile he felt against his thumb and traced it again.
And then, she felt his breaths come closer as he leaned forward, his lips barely a breath away from hers, so close she could feel them barely but so far she couldn't completely.

Her mouth trembled, as did her body.

He hovered, stayed, just sharing breaths, his thumb still on her lower lip.

And then, before she could blink, his lips moved, not to kiss her, but to speak.

"I came back," he murmured, the sound of his voice sending such intense pleasure coursing through her it almost knocked her to her knees, that voice of soft, soft dreams and home and fireplaces. She'd missed his voice. She'd missed him.

"You did," she whispered back, feeling their lips brush as they spoke, making her heart thunder.

"You waited," their lips brushed again.

"I did."

The silence stretched, taut, heavy with unspoken but not unheard things.

She knew. She knew because every single word of that letter was etched upon her soul. She knew because he had returned and though he wasn't where he'd left, he was looking, touching, speaking. He was coming to her. Her hands fisted in his hair, and before he could utter those words, before she could utter them, she closed the small gap between them.

And for the first time in months, she felt him.

For the first time in months, she felt herself.

He was bringing her back to life.

_He was life._

_Oliver._

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Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I'd love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR: [supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com](http://supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com)

TWITTER: [@dorky06](https://twitter.com/dorky06)
Hey everyone!

It has been so long since I've updated this and I'm so sorry about that (real life issues). But I am stunned by how absolutely fantastic the response to this story has been. Thank you so much for all the love y'all have sent me on every single platform and for all your patience! I'm so very grateful!

This is the second last chapter. I'll update the last chapter within the week too. And I'm all kinds of emotional right now. I'm also slightly nervous about this (because it's been so long) so bear with me :)

Also, THIS CHAPTER IS EXPLICIT. Stuff happens. Hope you enjoy it!

Don't forget to let me know your thoughts. I love to hear from you!

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She was a little cold.

Felicity sat on the couch, curled up in the pink blanket while she watched Oliver stir the embers in the fireplace he’d made with his hands, carving a literal niche for himself in her house, making it theirs.

It was reminiscent of that first time in the cabin, watching the growing flames lap over the wood, engulfing it within itself, the light dancing with the shadows over the scarred flesh of his back in an intimate tangle of limbs, beginning where one ended and ending where the other began. And though
it wasn’t stormy or rainy outside, it was chilly, and cold and perfect for a warm fire.

Felicity let her gaze wander over all of the skin exposed to her eyes, taking in the new littering of scars, some small, some not so, and felt her heart clench. She hadn’t asked him about his time away, hadn’t brought up the subject, and seeing those scars, she knew she wasn’t going to. Not today, or tomorrow, or anytime soon. He’d come back to her, and that was more than enough, and he was just slowly returning to his true self. She wasn’t going to do anything to put a stop to that. And if someday, he felt like sharing, she would listen and hold him.

He put the metal poker aside on the stand and sat down on the carpet, right in front of the fire, staring into it while she looked at his form, taking in his burnished body as he leaned back on his palms and stretched his legs in front of him, still in his thoughts like he usually was.

Heart pounding softly, Felicity removed the blanket from her body, clad only in the t-shirt he’d put over her when she’d been asleep, and draped the blanket over the couch. Standing up on bare feet, her toes digging into the rug, taking in a deep breath to calm her racing heart, she walked on quiet feet to where he sat, standing beside him, looking down at his bent head.

She stood still, breathing in and out slowly, waiting to see what he would do next, if he did something. All he’d done had been to pick her up, bring her down, and wrap her in that blanket so far.

She waited.

The clock ticked in the house. Nocturnal creatures chirped somewhere outside. The fire crackles against the logs.

Her heart hammerd, pulse pounding in her ears, her eyes glued to his form right beside her leg, his shoulder barely inches away from her knee as he leaned back on his hands.

She waited.

And waited.

Her heart beat madly, her breath catching in her chest on every inhale. There was so much left unspoken between them, so much they could talk about, yet she couldn’t find it in herself to break the silence. They had connected in this silence, come together in this silence, become one with the silence. And for all her love of words, she’d never been more content to be quiet with someone than she was with him, just their eyes locking, talking in a language of their own making, sharing secrets and fantasies and truths while their lips never moved.

No. She didn’t want him to break the silence. She wanted him to breach the distance.

He’d taken the first step upstairs, and she knew it only needed some time before he took another, and another, and another. She could wait. He was worth it.

Just as she shook her thoughts off, Felicity saw him turn his face towards the side of her thigh, his eyes closed, as he brushed his jaw across her soft skin. Tingles shot up her spine, the flesh in contact with his jaw burning from the abrasions of his scruff, the bristles rubbing against her skin over and over again.

Her toes curled into the soft rug as he continued to rub the side of his jaw against the side of her thigh, inhaling the scent of her skin and her arousal, keeping every other part of his body away from her, even his lips. His nose drew a line over the back of her knee, and her pulse spiked, her hand automatically going to his head, taking the back of his head in a grip, her knees turning to jelly as he
continued his soft assault, keeping it completely focused on the side of her thigh.

She could feel the abundance of sensation on one thigh and the complete lack of it in the other, feel the contrast that made her legs tremble slightly, feel the heat travel to right between her legs and coil tighter.

Her lips trembled even as she gripped his head, not moving him nor making his stay, just holding him because it had been so long. So long since she’d felt his caress. So long since she’d felt his flesh. So long since she’d felt him. She’d been starved for touch for months - endless months - and he was slowly feeding her hunger, not to make her purge but relish the sensation of being fed, fed from the burn his scruff had always left on her, burns she’d loved and cherished and missed for so long.

Her breath left her in a quivering exhale, her hands relishing the feel of his short hair against her palms, relishing the feel of his presence, of his return. She didn’t care if he never made love to her again as long as she had him beside her, holding her while she slept, keeping the hole in her chest close and keeping her whole. She didn’t care if he never expressed his emotions as long as he kept those eyes on hers. She’d read everything she needed to know in them.

She just needed him.

The movement of his face stopped, and Felicity looked down at him, to see him looking back at the fire, leaning back on his hands as before, not a single part of his body touching hers.

She knew this couldn’t be easy for him.

But she needed to know what was going on through his head.

Before she could have another thought, Felicity stepped in front of him, spreading her feet apart slightly for balance, and lowered herself to straddle his hips, doing all this slowly enough to give him time to move if he didn’t want her to.

He remained leaning back on his hands, unmoving, just watching the flames dance in the fireplace.

Swallowing hard, Felicity settled on his hips, straddling him in a way that made the hem of her t-shirt ride up to expose her thighs completely, her core sitting directly over his semi-hard cock, his eyes level with her neck.

Felicity gulped, her breaths coming out faster even as she tried to calm herself down.

“Tell me you don’t want this,” she murmured softly in the space between them as his eyes remained on the fire. “Tell me you don’t want this and I’ll go.”

His eyes flew to hers, brilliant blue locking with her own in a way that still made her breath catch.

He didn’t say a word, nothing, just looked at her with that focused, intense look of his, his eyes saying so much all at once she couldn’t understand any of it.

He remained leaning back on one hand, supporting his weight with one hand as the other came to the small of her back, his huge, rough hand completely spanning the area as he tugged her down on himself, his face leaning forward to press his cheek to hers, rubbing that scruff over her cheek, against her cheek, beside her cheek in a way that made her hips roll against him involuntarily, her hands coming up to the back of his neck, holding him as he guided her hips with one hand, his cock completely hard under her, just the fabric of his sweatpants separating them, getting wetter with her arousal.
Her breath stuttered as his face dipped to the juncture of her neck and shoulder, and he continued to rub his scruff all over her skin, marking her with his burns, all the while rolling her hips against him, her clit rubbing in delicious friction over his hard length, the rhythm slow, unhurried, erotic but rife with something so profound, so powerful her chest felt heavy with it.

The musky scent of his skin, the scent she’d yearned for deep in the recesses of night, surrounded her, cocooning her, making her feel so safe, so cherished, so protected she knew this scent would never be anything else. This was the scent of safety, of home.

His face moved from her neck, as he let his lips brush over her fluttering pulse, planting a soft kiss on the beat of her heart, over and over again, before burying his face in between her breasts, his own chest heaving with harsh breaths.

Felicity held him, stilling her hips over his and just held him, a tear falling down her face, the fact that they were there together still hard to believe, despite having him tangible in her arms.

“I want this,” his gruff voice murmured into her cleavage, his warm breath washing over her skin as his rough tone sent tingles over her body.

“But?” she asked quietly, hearing the unspoken word, her hands moving over his shoulders in a soothing way, feeling the tight muscles across them.

“But I don’t know how to have this.”

Her heart clenched.

He was still so lost. Lost in this new world that he’d accepted for her. Lost in this new identity of himself. After the way he’d spent the past few months, it must have been so much harder to return, and yet he had, with no idea of anything else. Just his return.

Felicity pulled back slightly, pressing her forehead to his, and squeezed her arms around him.

“We have this like we always have, Oliver,” she whispered quietly, seeing his eyes flicker close at his name on her lips. “Together.”

He didn’t say anything else. She didn’t expect him to.

There was silence for a few moments, before he leaned forward, brushing their lips together, making her grip on him tighten as her mouth trembled against his. She’d missed his mouth, his kisses - his soft little pecks, his smiling brushes of their lips, his deep searching of their mouths, his tangling of their tongues. All of his kisses had slowly, surely, branded her from the inside.

And touching his mouth with hers again, she glowed from the inside, her brand coming to life, recognizing its maker, her mouth opening with a little desperation to remember the taste of him, the scent of him, the feel of him completely.

He kissed her lower lip lightly, reverently, pulling it between his lips and sucking on it just as his hand on her ass tugged her down on him, her hips bucking against his as he nipped on her lip, opening her mouth with his tongue and taking over, tangling with her tongue, tasting her just as she fought to taste him. It was unrefined, sloppy and wet. It was nothing like she imagined their first kiss after his return to be. And it was perfect. It was him, and her, in front of a fireplace, in the house they’d begun their relationship in, in which he’d left her and she’d waited for his return. It was them together, and there could be nothing more perfect than their incomplete beings coming together to become whole.
Tilting her head to the side as she ground on top of him, her arms completely wrapped around his neck as their mouths remained locked, tongues brushing, retreating, meeting again, the fire warming her on the outside as heat pooled in her belly, rushing through her veins and going to her head, Felicity let drown in sensations for a long moment, before pushing on his chest, laying him down on the rug as she leaned over him, coming up for air, her hair falling on the sides like curtains, closing them in their own world.

Slowly, she pulled back, sitting up, and looked down at him.

The room was completely dark, all windows shut and drapes pulled, enclosing what was inside in and keeping the outside world out. The only light in the room came from those dancing flames that kissed shadows and came apart, before merging with them together, the warmth from the fireplace behind her caressing her back through the fabric of the t-shirt.

Felicity looked down at him, laid out before her, his torso a maze a scars and burns, cut with muscles and veins like a work of art splattered with splashes of paint that only enhanced its beauty rather than take away from it. Slowly removing her hands from behind his neck, she brought her fingers to a new scar on the side of his right pec, just below his nipple. It was slightly pink, on its way on becoming a permanent mark on his body.

Felicity wondered how he’d gotten it, and even though he didn’t tense when she touched it, she didn’t ask. Instead, she leaned forward, pressing her lips to the mark, kissing it softly, before moving to another new scar below his abs, kissing it as well, before moving to another, and another, and another, just like she had that night in the cabin. She touched and caressed his scars, and not one did he tense, not once did he stiffen. He just lay there silently, watching her, letting her love him, his eyes slightly wild but completely focused on her, the blue in them even more brilliant in the firelight.

His hands made their way to her t-shirt, tugging at the fabric, signaling her to raise her arms silently. She did, her heart pounding erratically as he removed the cloth, throwing it aside somewhere, his hands cupping the back of her head as he pulled her down again, her spine curving as their mouths locked again, this time desperate, hurried, hasty to get closer, her naked breasts pressing against his warm chest, hardening her nipples as they brushed against his pecs, sending heat shooting through her body to her core, molten lava accumulating inside her, waiting for the eruption, for the explosion that would set it free.

He kissed her with a ferocity this time, the ferocity that made need pulse in her body, made her kiss him back ferociously as he ravaged her mouth, her hair in tangles with his fingers as she lay on top of him, her knees rubbed raw against the rug but uncaring for any aches, knowing his back would be burning too.

They were burning.

Inside. Outside.

With some crazy ninja movement, he moved his hips, dislodging the sweats from his hips and pushing them down without missing a beat, freeing his cock. Felicity ground herself on his hard length, rubbing herself up and down, the friction lubricated by her arousal, rubbing her sweet spot against him in a way that made a small gasp escape her lips into his, a gasp he swallowed down with a growl that rumbled from his chest, the vibrations sending her sensitive breasts pulsing.

They moved instinctively, torn between sweet caresses and desperate kisses, torn between the now and then, torn between themselves. But they never stopped. The tearing continued. And even as they tore each other apart, Felicity felt herself be put back together again, new, different, but with the same old pieces, in a way she hadn’t been before, and she knew she wasn’t alone in it.
She pulled back her lips, feeling the burn from his scruff all around her mouth, reveling in the rush of blood to the spot as she licked her swollen lips, opening her eyes to lock her gaze with those blue ones, her thumb caressing his cheek as she held his face in one hand, her hips slowing, her heart crashing, stopping, starting again all in the space of a beat as she took in a shaky breath.

“Oliver,” she murmured, blinking at him once, a small smile tugging her lips, the taste of his name on her lips a luxury she’d not had in a long time like this.

She felt him take a sharp breath, felt his chest rise against her breasts as something moved in his eyes.

“Felicity.”

Just her name. God, she loved the way he said her name - like a prayer, a benediction, an endearment all rolled into one.

Felicity placed her hand beside his head, looking down at him as she held his face with the other, her heart beating wildly as the moment got to her, the words tumbling out of her lips, words she’d been holding back for so long, words she’d been keeping safe inside her heart to give to him when he returned.

“I love you.”

She saw him blink once as her whisper reached her, saw his eyes flare as closed them for a long moment, tugging her down, covering his mouth with hers, adjusting his hips in a manner that lined him up right against her entrance.

He pulled his mouth away, his intense gaze on her, his hands shaking slightly over her hips.

“Again.”

The word was a rough demand, a growl that came out like an expletive, and Felicity almost smiled, understanding him in a way he probably didn’t understand himself.

“I love you,” she whispered to him.

His hands flexed on her hips, and suddenly, he thrust inside her in one stroke.

Felicity gasped, her back arching as she sat up, her head thrusting back, her hair fanning out over her back as he filled her to the hilt, completely, in a way that only he could, her walls clenching around his girth, in welcome of their lover, squeezing him as he stayed still inside her, his eyes clenched shut, as though savoring the moment just as she was.

His jaw clenched tight, teeth gnashing as he grit out. “Again.”

Her heart thundered, pulse beating in her ears with the rushing blood, her muscles clinging to him as her legs spread apart even more, taking him deeper than he already was, making her moan at the delicious friction.

“I love you.”

His hands pulled her up, every hard inch of him slipping out of her almost completely, before bringing her down again, hard, so hard she felt her teeth lock, her neck arch against the pleasure exploding in tiny currents over her body.

He was breathing heavily, his teeth locked together as well, his muscular thighs supporting the
movement of his hips as his hands pulled her off again, almost completely, before he demanded. “Say it again.”

Her heart soared even as heat crashed down on her, her pulse an electric current in her body.

“I love you.”

And down she went on his cock, harder, so much harder a scream tore from her throat as tinges zapped up her spine, the pleasure so intense it made her arch, her pelvis completely touching his, taking him in all the way as his own neck arched, the muscles bunching and the veins standing out in stark relief, his grip on her waist tightening.

Felicity saw the pulsing veins, and leaned forward, licking them the way she wanted to, rotating her hips over his, with him completely inside her, the head of his cock pressing on some pleasure nerve deep inside her as one of his hands came forward to her clit, rubbing it hard with his thumb.

Felicity writhed on top of him, rhythm and reason forgotten as her hips continued moving instinctively, her mouth open over his neck, nibbling, tasting, biting as his thumb continued to assault her sweet little nub. The pleasure climbed up, notching higher and higher as the heat coiled tighter and tighter inside her, her toes curling and hands gripping his chest, her heart bursting inside her chest.

“God, I love you,” she moaned against his neck, moving faster and faster, his thumb speeding up as his own hips started pounding into her relentlessly, snapping up into hers and out and back. “I love you so fucking much my heart feels like it’s going to burst. I love you so fucking much I’m never going to let you go.”

He went wild.

His free arm came around her back, holding her still as she lay over him, his hips hitting hers so hard it made her teeth ache, her moans turning to screams as his free hand rubbed and pinched her clit, bruising it in the best of ways, his cock thrusting in and out as she lay still held down by his arm, her pants brushing over his neck, her breasts rubbing against his chest with every thrust, the heat pooling and coiling and coiling inside her tighter and tighter and tighter, and suddenly it snapped. Her vision went blank as she clenched her eyes shut, a loud noise she didn’t recognize erupting from deep inside her throat, her entire body nothing but a ball of fire, of pure heat getting only hotter as he continued thrusting and rubbing and pinching and moving and just refused to stop.

Felicity came undone.

Oliver suddenly sat up, pulling her legs around his waist, going deeper inside her as his hands held her close to him, his breaths harsh over her head, his chest rising and falling rapidly with hers. Her mouth opened over his chest as she gasped against him, again and again, feeling her walls quivering around him as he continued to piston his hips into hers even as she straddled him, her body pliable as he rubbed her swollen clit, his hips flexing against hers, the continuum of pleasure bordering on sheer ecstasy.

“Tell me again, Felicity,” Oliver growled into her hair, his entire body shuddering as he thrust hard, shaking with the need to come.

Felicity couldn’t feel her mouth, her tongue, her face. She could only feel her walls squeezing his.
He cursed, and suddenly she was on her back, her legs thrown over his shoulders as he looked deep into her eyes, his gaze feral in a way she had never seen before, his cock pounding into her and his hand never stopping in its fervent rubbing.

“Tell. Me. Again.”

Felicity moaned, her jaw quivering as she opened her mouth to speak, her hands gripping his biceps.

“I- I love- you-ah,” she managed to get out, and suddenly, he stilled inside her, pinching her clit so hard her eyes rolled back into her head, stars bursting across her vision as she completely blanked, feeling nothing but heat everywhere in her body, feeling nothing but him pulsing inside her like a wild, caged animal, feeling nothing but the searing lava that exploded from deep inside her just as he exploded inside her, filling her completely with his warm release and covering her mouth with his.

Felicity felt her walls milk every single drop of his release from his pulsating cock, felt herself come down from the high to feel his lips kissing hers softly, moving to her cheek, her eyes, her nose, her head, and every part of her face that he could cover. Panting, her chest still heaving with wild breaths as her heart slowly calmed down, Felicity opened her eyes to find him looking down at her, his intense blue eyes holding that slightly soft look in them that she’d seen before with her.

The firelight was dimmer now, the embers embracing the lowered flames, leaving them in a cozier cocoon of warmth, a tangle of flesh and limbs that was so carnal and so vulgar it left her breathless.

Felicity traced the shape of his face with her hand as he slipped out of her, leaving her holding their combined releases in a way she found intimate, his eyes taking her in before he took hold of her hand on his face.

He swallowed, a concentrated look on his face that he wore when he gathered the right words to speak, and Felicity held her breath.

He licked his swollen lips, and opened his mouth, his voice low and soft, making her heart clench.

“I don’t know what love is, Felicity.”

Felicity blinked, waiting, knowing he wasn’t done.

“I have never known love. Never been familiar with love. I’d never even heard of it.”

The hand holding hers squeezed once. “But I like when you say that to me. I like when you tell me you love me. I like it.”

Felicity felt her lips turn up, but she bit down on it, being silent.

He inhaled deeply, taking her hand in his and placing it on his chest, over his quickly beating heart, those heartbeats so reassuring, so beautiful that she marveled in feeling them.

“I don’t know what love is, Felicity,” he spoke softly, squeezing the hand over his heart. “But I know this is yours.”

She melted.

She melted completely, irrevocably, and fell in love with him a little bit more for that.

Because he would probably never understand the world as she did, never know the importance of
words or gestures as she’d grown up knowing, but he was the man she loved because of those very things.

And he told her everything she needed to know by simply being himself.

Felicity swallowed, her eyes tearing up as sheer happiness filled her being. “I’ll keep it safe.”

Oliver blinked at her, once, twice, before a soft smile tugged on his lips, the shadows lessening in his eyes.

His first smile since returning home.

Felicity pulled him down into her arms, love for this man suffusing every pore in her body, as she looked at the long shadows in the room, seeing the fire just dim down to a lone flame on hot embers, realization dawning upon her.

She wasn’t cold anymore.

Chapter End Notes

So, tell me what you thought? I’d love some feedback.

Also, check out my other stories if you liked this. :)

Come say Hi to me on

TUMBLR : supersillyanddorky06.tumblr.com
TWITTER : @dorky06
Living

Chapter Notes

So, this is going to be a little long (bear with me).

I know this has been such a long time coming and I can't thank you enough for your patience in waiting for this final chapter. That this incredible journey has come to a close is still a little surreal. What started as a curious idea became an emotional monster and I truly had no idea of the kind of warmth and love it would get. It was something different, writing this story, mainly because there are no other main characters apart from Oliver and Felicity - everything is just THEM. I had no idea that you would get so involved with this version of them, that you would explore them as they explored themselves, and slowly fall in love with the quiet, stoic man as she did. I had no idea how phenomenal the response to this story was going to be and I had been so unsure about it in the beginning (as I am about most stories, to be honest).

But you, my dear amazing readers, have encouraged me so much on this journey, been by my side. I have made incredible friends and met so many amazing people in this fandom because of this, and The Firebird has such a special, special place in my heart. It was a challenging, hard story to write and emotionally draining at times but I loved every second of it because you did too. It would not have been the same without any of you.

So thank you. Thank you so much, to all of you who told me you looked forward to it and commented and liked and just read it. (I may not have been able to respond to the comments, and I will ASAP, but trust me, I've read all of them and they MAKE MY DAY). To all of you, you are the incredible people. You are amazing. And I thank my lucky stars every day for being a part of such an amazing group of people.

Here is the last chapter for you. I hope you enjoy the way it is wrapped up. Stuff happens.

Happy reading!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was a funny thing - birthdays.

Felicity had never really given them much thought. Sure, she’d thought a lot about it when she’d been a kid, but she’d grown out of it. For years, she had celebrated her birthday with a few close friends or better, some wine. The most excited she’d ever been for a birthday in recent years had been baby Sara’s. Now, that was one birthday Felicity went all out for, giving her goddaughter all the squishy gifts and love any godmother worth her salt would give.

And in the conundrum of the years, she’d never really realized how much she’d taken birthdays for granted.

A fact, jolted into her conscience unknowingly, by the man she loved more each day.
For the last few weeks, life hadn’t been easy, but it had been good.

Oliver may have been ready to accept her world but he was, in all truth, still a stranger to it. It had been different back when they’d been on the run - living from place to place, running for their lives, always with one foot out the door. Running was easy for him. That nomadic existence was all he’d ever known.

But putting down roots?

He fumbled.

He fumbled every single day, the shadows from his past hovering over him like a cloud.

He fumbled every time they went out. He fumbled even in the safety of their home.

And yet, he tried.

Every day. Every time. So simply, it seemed liked breathing. So beautifully, it felt like art.

He fumbled, he tried, and he made her fall even more in love effortlessly.

She saw it when they went out. She saw the way his muscles tensed and his body coiled with the snap of a finger if anyone walked into their space by mistake. She saw his beautiful eyes rove all around them, searching for threats even where there were none to be found.

She saw it in their own home sometimes - that sudden jolt in his body if a car ever backfired down the street, or firecrackers lit up the sky. She saw it sometimes when he stared too long at a knife in his hand before shaking himself out of it. She saw it in the way he had weapons stashed in secret places in the house he never talked about. She saw it when he woke up in the middle of the night drenched in sweat, breathing hard.

She saw it all.

And she just twined her fingers with his and smiled at him.

And he took a deep breath and squeezed her hand back. Always.

It told her that normalcy, which she’d taken for granted too, was a gift for him. Waking up every morning wrapped around her, cooking her breakfast while she got ready to work, remodeling the little house bit by bit, by his own hands every day - it all made him feel good. He brought everything he needed for his little projects, and the one time she’d asked him about his money situation, he’d just shrugged while buffing a block of wood.

She’d never asked him again, knowing he was using the money he’d made with his past for their future.

Felicity remembered one night a few weeks after he’d come home. She’d walked in to see her entire kitchen draped in plastic, signs of destruction behind it while tools were scattered all over the place. That night, after they’d gone to bed and Oliver had spooned her, pressing lazy kisses behind her ear, Felicity had asked him about it.

"What’s with the kitchen?"

He shrugged - his new favorite gesture he used at least ten times a day - his muscles flexing behind...
her back.

“I’m building something new.”

Yes, he was.

“And the fact that it’s my kitchen?” she teased, rubbing her leg over his.

“A. I spend more time in that kitchen than you, so it’s mine,” Oliver grinned, biting her ear. “And B. It’s our home.”

Felicity smiled, her heart bathed in warmth and fell asleep, surrounded by him.

He never said it but she knew he loved being in their home, loved making things with his hands to make himself believe he belonged more. She never corrected him because she knew he’d have to come to terms with it on his own eventually. What she did was tell him she loved him, every chance she got. He never said it back but he smiled, that shy, happy smile that brought out his dimple, his blue eyes clear of those shadows and brought her hand to his heart.

"This is yours."

*Three words.*

Three different words, but somehow more powerful than any other words could be.

Sometimes, he said it. Sometimes, he didn’t.

Sometimes, he just slipped inside her slowly and touched his forehead to hers, breathing her in. Sometimes, he growled her name while demanding she speak his. Sometimes, he stroked her cheek in the middle of the day for no reason before returning to work.

But some moments, deep in the night, when they lay tangled in an exhausted heap of limbs and flesh, bodies sated with pleasure, he just looked at her.

"Felicity?"

"Hmm?"

*He brought his hand to her heart in a move she had memorized perfectly, feeling the thump under her palm, under the warm, scarred flesh as he looked deep into her eyes.*

"This is yours."

But he made her tell him, all day, all night, every chance he got. He liked when she told him "I love you" in all its variations. So, he demanded she tell him. It was just their way.

Inside their home, he thrived, he moved, he breathed.
Outside, he closed, he stilled, he survived.

Some days, when she was working on a project of her own, she wondered what he would do for work in their new world. Even though she knew he didn’t need to, not with the mysterious sum in his multiple accounts, he wasn’t an idle man.

“For now, I’m living, Felicity,” he told her, whipping eggs in the bowl while gazing softly at her. “For the first time, I’m just living. I’m enjoying the simplicity of my days - cooking for us, making a home for us, making love to you. I’m living.”

And that had been a pretty epic response that had had her jumping out of her stool and on him for a long session on the counter, eggs forgotten.

So, life wasn’t easy, but it was good. She had a man who loved her beyond love and whom she loved obsessively in return, and though there were cloudy days, there was the sun just behind the clouds, waiting to peek through.

Although, at the moment, Felicity looked at the sun dipping down the horizon and smiled wryly.

She turned in the passenger seat of the Rover he’d bought when he’d returned, and faced him as he pulled into the parking before Digg and Lyla’s beach house. A few hours out of the city, the house had been a gift from Digg’s grandfather to his grandmother, a fact that had melted Felicity when she’d learned it years ago. Built almost a century ago, the house was a thing of beauty - double storied, white and gray stone making up the front while the wooden wraparound porch opened to a small lawn and further to the beach at the back.

When Felicity had told Oliver about the place, he’d smiled.

“Remember that stone cabin we went to in the woods, near the river?” he asked, stroking her cheek as the moonlight gilded across his naked skin, his mouth traveling down her jaw as his hand cupped her intimately, his fingers playing havoc on her.

“You mean the one where I lost my shit and ran away from you?” Felicity moaned, arching her back, her nails digging into his back, legs spreading as she opened herself to his questing fingers, cheeks flushing at the memory.

His other arm tightened around her waist, mouth traveling down her neck to suck at her throbbing pulse point.

“It was beautiful.”

He nibbled on her tender skin, adding another finger inside her while kissing her breasts. “I’m refurbishing it.” Kiss. "Making it a place" lick "where we can go” bite "to get away.”

Felicity tugged at his hair, her voice breathy. “You own it?”

His mouth went lower, biting her hipbone before he looked up at her. “We own it.”
Warmth infusing her at the memory of that night, she squirmed in her seat. Felicity couldn’t wait for it all to be done, to go away for a few days with him on a romantic vacation to the stone cabin. At the moment, though, she watched the sea behind the beach house and inhaled deeply.

Their reason for being there was simple - it was baby Sara’s birthday weekend.

Digg had planned (long before she’d met Oliver) to bring out Felicity and his brother’s family to the beach house for two days for a much-needed vacation before they all returned back to the city. She could already see Digg’s brother’s black car parked neatly beside Digg’s own.

It was also the first time Oliver would finally meet the other important man in her life.

While they both knew of each other - Oliver because she talked a lot about Digg and Digg because he was curious about her new man - they’d never actually talked.

And possibly, Oliver was more nervous about the first meet than she was. She couldn’t even imagine what it must be like for him.

He’d been quiet for the past few miles. Now, turning off the ignition, his hand clenched slightly on the wheel before he loosened it. Felicity undid her seat belt and shifted over the console, swinging one leg over the side of his hip, maneuvering in the tight space to straddle him, her hands on his broad shoulders.

His large, rough hands left the wheel to settle on her ass as he exhaled loudly, his woodsy scent wrapping itself around her.

Felicity slowly pushed her fingers up, through his soft hair, now growing out from his old buzz cut. The fading sunlight danced upon his face with the shadows, burnishing him while simultaneously dampening him, making her heart flutter at the beauty of his physical form. Stroking his scalp in silence, she let him gather his thoughts for a moment before whispering in the space between their faces.

“You got her a good gift.”

He had. For someone who had no experience with toddlers, he certainly had chosen a beautiful gift for baby Sara. He’d made her a gorgeous bracelet with wood and copper, adding little hooks for charms she could add as she grew up. For now, it held little wooden figurines of a gun for her parents, glasses for Felicity. It had been on her insistence that he’d later added a simple bow for himself. The bracelet was beautiful and thoughtful and yet another reason she loved this man.

“I’ve never attended a baby’s birthday,” he muttered, his eyes glued to her collarbones.

Felicity grinned. “Look at you, Mr. I-can-kick-anyone’s-ass, being terrified of a toddler’s birthday party.”

His blue eyes came up to hers and narrowed. Felicity grinned harder.

His eyes drifted to her lips, one hand coming up to cup her jaw, his thumb idly tracing the outline of her mouth.

And then, she asked the one question that had been on her mind for days.

“When is your birthday, Oliver?”

Silence.
He didn’t speak.

For long moments, he stayed silent, his gaze on her lips but eyes far away, fingers distractedly tracing her skin.

After minutes passed, when she got ready to change the subject, he finally looked back up at her again, his blue eyes heavy with those clouds that never completely left.

“I don’t know.”

Three words.

Three innocent words.

*Gutted her.*

In that moment, he looked like a small boy, lost as he wandered alone in the world. Her heart clenched.

In a second, in watching him look a little lost, a little vulnerable, in realizing this beautiful man had never known something most people took for granted, her heart cracked wider than she’d thought it possibly could. Swallowing down the lump in the throat, Felicity took hold of his face in her hands, his scruff tingling against her palms, and gave him a smile with all the love she felt in her tiny body.

“You’re special, Oliver.”

He frowned slightly, that vulnerability not having disappeared from his eyes.

Felicity went on. “People are born by fate, you’ll be born by choice. You can choose any date out of all the dates in the world and make it your birthday. You can decide. How cool is that?!”

He stared back at her for a second, his face completely blank.

And then, that intensity she loved seeped into his eyes. He looked at her with that intensity that set her heart on fire, and his lips twitched at the corners. Bringing her hand to his heart, he leaned forward, pressing his lips to her softly in a simple kiss, his hand squeezing hers once before moving back.

Felicity leaned back to look into those gorgeous eyes, to see him holding that intensity and something so tender as he looked at her that her heart started to pound.

He slapped her ass lightly and smiled. “Let’s go in before we’re late.”

Knowing that he was okay, Felicity moved back to her seat, intentionally grinding on him twice before giving him a teasing grin, and watched him shake his head at her antics. He got out of the vehicle gracefully, before coming around to her side and opening the door for her. Felicity grabbed her bag and turned to face him.

Putting his hands on her waist, he picked her up and out of the Rover, locking it behind them.

“Are you nervous?” she asked as they started towards the house.

She saw him slanting a look in her direction, making her laugh. Tangling their fingers together, Felicity pulled him around the side of the house, straight towards the lawn, excitement churning in her stomach.
“Where is the birthday girl?” she yelled, getting around the porch.

The small party was right on the tiny lawn that opened into the golden beach. Balloons and streamers decorated the small area. A large chocolate cake rested in the center on a big table, beside which baby Sara crawled on the grass. Lyla stood to the side with a camera, clicking pictures while Digg’s brother’s family sat around the table on folding chairs. It was a small, cozy affair Felicity immediately loved.

Digg looked up from where he was kneeling beside Sara and smiled widely upon seeing her. Then, his eyes moved to the man standing quietly beside her, his smile still in place but gaze examining everything for an imperceptible minute. She turned sideways to look at Oliver, to see him hold Digg’s eye contact with his own - no flinch, no nerves, nothing but calm on his face.

They stared at each other like men did sometimes before Digg gave him a slight nod, to which Oliver responded with his own.

That was that.

She understood not a lick of it. And people said computer codes were hard. Men.

Digg came forward with two bottles of beer, his gargantuan body hiding most people behind him from her line of vision. She felt very small in stature standing with the two men towering over her, whose biceps were most likely thicker than her thighs.

Shaking off the thought, she went on her toes and gave Digg a warm hug, closed her eyes and sighed happily. Digg’s hugs.

“You look good,” he smiled at her.

Felicity grinned. “You look huge.”

Shaking his head, a smirk on his face, he finally turned to Oliver, extending a bottle to him. Which was man-code for an olive branch... Oliver accepted.

“Good to finally meet you, Oliver. I’ve heard lots about you.”

Oliver nodded. “Likewise.”

Just one word before he turned to look around the place. To anyone else, he would look polite, and possibly bored. To Felicity, he looked tensed, guarded and a little nervous behind it.

This was the same look he'd sported when he'd opened the door one morning to find a strange lady on the porch - her mother. For all of five minutes, while Felicity had made introductions, he had been stoic. And then her mother had brought out the big guns - baby pictures. Suffice it to say, her mother was the only person Felicity had seen him grin at and relax around, for hours. That weekend, though hugely embarrassing for her, had been interesting. Her mom had gone away knowing her daughter finally had a hot boyfriend; Oliver had understood where she got her crazies from and all had been right in the world.

Snorting at the memory, slipping her other arm around his bicep while holding his hand with hers, Felicity clung to him like a monkey, giving him a reassuring squeeze, and introduced him to the adults present. He nodded, paid attention, but remained rigid, aloof, unable to relax or smile. And yet, coming in a houseful of strangers, she was proud of the way he was interacting.
That was, until, almost an hour later, after cutting the cake and handing over the gifts, Felicity walked towards the side to get some drinks, leaving Oliver alone for a few minutes.

That was when baby Sara decided he was her new favorite person and crawled on her chubby little feet to where he stood.

Felicity watched from where she was getting the beer, fascinated to see her composed lover get slightly flustered as the little baby sat on the ground before him, staring with rapt attention at his shoes. She leaned forward, her mouth a pretty little “O”, her tiny fingers bumping against the shoe, and gurgled out a baby laugh.

Oliver blinked. Felicity suppressed a giggle.

“He a soldier?” Digg joined her, his voice not distracting her from the sight. Oliver’s hands clenched and unclenched, but he remained motionless, his eyes on Sara.

“Yes,” Felicity replied simply, not elaborating. If Oliver ever wanted to share anything with Digg in future, he would. It wasn’t her secret to tell.

For now, she saw Oliver look down at the little bundle of her goddaughter with part-terror, part-curiosity. Wanting to see what he’d do, she leaned back against the table.

Baby Sara had had enough of poking Oliver’s shoe apparently since she moved on to tugging on the hem of his jeans in her minuscule fists. Taking support from the block of the man standing helpfully rigid, she tugged fist after fist of jeans near the ankle, trying to stand on quivering legs.

Oliver stood completely still.

Felicity bit her lip.

Sara continued tugging, standing for seconds on shaking legs, before falling flat on her cute rump. Fisting the fabric again, this time, she clung to it instead of letting go, able to stand despite her knees moving towards the ground.

Felicity saw her tilt her round little head back, looking up at the huge man she’d been using as a stand, and saw her give Oliver the biggest toothless grin a baby could give, right before she fell back on her tush.

Digg chuckled beside her and went ahead to pick up his daughter.

Felicity shook her head, her heart warmed at the whole scene.

Oliver still stood exactly as he had been for minutes, then shook his head.

Sounds of distant celebrations broke through her daze. Felicity turned to see a group of teenagers having a bonfire down the beach.

Sighing in contentment, she slipped off her shoes and walked out onto the sand, looking at the gentle waves in the gentle breeze, her toes digging into the granules under her feet, wiggling with joy. The moon hung low in the sky, the wind smelling of sea, the sounds of people and waves mingling together in a beautiful cacophony.

A moment later, she felt him behind her as she always did, his arms coming around her, pulling her deeper into his muscular chest as she felt the tension slowly leave his body. His breaths warm on her hair, fingers interlocked over her torso, Felicity reveled in the moment, before taking a sip of her
beer.

“Felicity?” he murmured near her ear softly, his breath ghosting over her skin, making a shiver chase down her spine.

“Hmm?”

“I want one.”

She took another sip of her beer before passing it back to him. He didn’t take it.

Turning to look at him, she found him watching baby Sara, who was trying to stuff her face with the cake that was less in her mouth and more on her.

Felicity smiled.

“Felicity?”

“Hmm?”

“I want one.”

Her eyes flew to his as she choked on her beer. Throat burning, eyes watering, Felicity looked up at Oliver to find the damnedest thing.

He was grinning - an all out grin that made his lone dimple wink out and curled her toes.

“Not today, Felicity,” he chuckled, the sound traveling through her entire system, warming her body. “Just someday.”

“Thanks for the clarification,” Felicity cleared her throat.

He shrugged, that shy smile on his face.

Unable to resist, Felicity went on her toes and pressed her lips against his, kissing that shy smile. He opened his mouth, his tongue licking over her lips, her own coming out to tease his. One hand on her ass, the other on her jaw, he tilted her head and fit their mouths together, pulling her up as she clung to his shoulders, tasting the beer and chocolate on him, their tongues flicking against each other, dancing around each other, slowly, feverishly, in a way that made a tiny whimper escape her chest, her nipples pressed into his torso. Lifting a leg up and hiking it over his hips, she pressed herself against him wantonly, mimicking his hips as they thrust over her, her fingers scratching over his back as his tightened on her ass.

A loud catcall from somewhere made her grin against his lips and pull back.

Breathing heavy, pupils blown, he looked down at her with that intensity of his, his thumb slowly stroking her flushed cheek.

Felicity gazed up at him, looking at his beautiful face, his heated eyes and felt her heart clench, remembering the man she’d encountered in that alley months ago, the man she’d invited into her house on nothing but instinct, the man who’d not shown her his face for so long, the man who’d worn a mask for so long, the one who’d not uttered a word for so long. She remembered the focused way he’d taken the simple pleasures of a blanket's warmth on a rainy night and hot chocolate. She remembered the way he’d kept returning, lured by that unknown kindness nobody had ever shown him. She remembered every single step they’d taken on this journey.
It had taken so much for him to let her in, to let his strength carry him to her, to be the man in casual
clothes living a casual life she brought to her friend’s place. There were things about him she’d never
know, things about his past he would never share, things about what he’d done that would never
reach her. But seeing him now, with his arms around her on a beautiful beach, with his eyes on her
like she was the most precious thing in the world, with his breath in sync with hers, Felicity felt her
lips tremble.

“Someday,” she promised, and watched that lopsided, boyish smile tug his lips, his dimple peeking
out at her as he stroked her cheek softly with his finger.

“Someday,” he promised back.

That was all that mattered.

That ‘someday’ would come.

For now, they were free.

For now, they were together.

For now, they were living.

And life wasn’t easy, but it was good.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for being with me till the very end. You have no idea how much
that means to me and how much it has inspired me.

Thank you!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!